



# *Il Nostro Sogno*

This Modern Mediterranean is a study in contrasts and combines old Hollywood glamour with modern romance and elegant drama.

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*“In this home we knew that we wanted to scrap the minimalism and shift to ‘maximalism.’” –AMMAR ALSHASH, DWELLING DESIGNS*



This stunning modern Mediterranean is a study in contrasts: dark and light, exuberance and restraint, drama and whimsy. The over ornamentation typically found in classical Italianate architecture was pared back and the cleaner form relies on high contrast exterior finishes to give the home texture. The juxtaposition of white and black blended with layered textures and metallic finishes brings a touch of Hollywood glamour to the interiors. The project, christened as “Il Nostro Sogno,” translates from Italian to “Our Dream.” The homeowners, inspired by their travels and favorite destinations, assembled a team of the finest design/build resources in the Twin Cities to realize their vision and make their dream come true.

The homeowners’ journey began with Streeter Customer Builder. They spent months in search of a parcel in a highly coveted neighborhood. When they finally located a pie shaped lot they faced some challenges, as they wanted to maintain as much of the yard as possible while building a home that would accommodate a young, growing family with a very active lifestyle. “When building in a well-established neighborhood, the scale and proportion of the house, as it relates to the street is everything,” remarked Nate Wissink, VP at Streeter Custom Builder. “The site plan married landscape and architecture and fits beautifully into the fabric of the neighborhood.”

The next step was to take the homeowners’ ideas and inspirations and bring them alive. “These clients came to the table with a strong vision of the interior aesthetic and their vocabulary included words like ‘Hollywood, glam, modern, and art deco,’” said architect Andrea Swan. “As for the exterior, they wanted ‘Modern Mediterranean’ which gave me a lot of room to play!” Andrea’s degree in classical architectural from the University of Notre Dame, including a year spent in Rome, certainly gave her the arsenal to envision a truly authentic Italian Renaissance design. “But, for this project I stripped back those ornate details and went a bit more art deco/Hollywood with the exterior,” remarked Andrea. “A more modern approach seemed appropriate for the interiors so I designed open spaces to allow for movement and flow, while still defining each function architecturally.”

The exterior of the home is rich with contrast - white stucco and cast stone surrounds are a counterpoint to the dark clay tile roofing and dark clad windows and doors. “Special care was taken to make the windows look like metal/steel frame windows,” said Nate. “We kept the frames very thin, and enameled them black on the interior.” The very dark finishes on the exterior can be a challenge to achieve and maintain. “In Minnesota we have to accommodate 100-degree swings in temperature from season-to-season, and those dark surfaces absorb the heat year round,” said Nate. Streeter’s expertise in building high-end custom homes ensured that the important aspects of creating a resilient exterior finish were masterfully achieved.

Ammar Alshash, owner of Dwelling Designs, had worked with the homeowners on a previous project, so he understood their personalities well. “Their first home was a very clean and contemporary design,” said Ammar. “With this house, we knew that we wanted to scrap the minimalism and shift to ‘maximalism.’ They wanted edgy design and they were willing to take some risks, but we had to keep it family friendly.”

The dramatic arched entry and custom double doors open to a spectacular foyer with high ceilings that features several of the elements that define the luxe Hollywood Regency style that characterizes the interior finishes of the home: the iconic gold Jean de Merry ‘Lumiere’ chandelier, the faux elephant tusk console table by Bernhardt, the antique mirrored insets and black enameled walls. Painting the ceiling black added a layer of unexpected drama. “Once again, the degree



**project team:**  
 architect: swan architecture  
 andrea swan, aia  
 constance chen, aia  
 landscape architect: travis van liere studio  
 interior design: dwelling designs  
 ammar alshash, owner & principal designer  
 rachel drewitz, interior designer  
 builder: streeter custom builder  
 nate wissink, vice president  
 julie lindeman, senior project manager

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—NATE WISSINK, STREETER CUSTOM BUILDERS

of difficulty in achieving the smooth glossy dark finishes was high, but we achieved success,” remarked Nate. The eye-catching mixed marble tile on the entry floor was a specific inspiration the homeowners provided; they wanted to create a lasting impression as you enter the home.

The use of rich, layered textures is another trademark of the Hollywood Regency style. “We started with the backdrop of bold black and white elements as the foundation,” remarked Ammar. “We very judiciously added elements of color, layers of texture, and metallic accents.” The contemporary merlot sectional by Arketipo, along with the rotating swivel chairs with the brass surrounds by Covet, anchor the living room and provide a comfortable place for the family to relax. An unexpected touch in the room is the “antler” chandelier. Floors throughout the main living area are white oak, dyed to a deep espresso, almost ebony finish.

Witty and whimsical details are evident throughout the home. The coiled architectural metal wire mesh curtains from Cascade Architectural are located between the dining room and bar area. The dining room table was designed by Ammar and built by a local craftsman, Bruce Allen. “I sourced the materials locally,” stated Ammar, “and I wanted to keep the live edge on both sides of each walnut plank and have them joined by the brass inset. The brass had to be scribed to match the live edge perfectly; it wasn’t an easy ask.” The dining table sits on clear acrylic legs, which makes it seem as if it’s floating. The three-legged pearl leather chairs from Arketipo were another “controversial” choice, but they work in the space, and everyone seems to love them. Gold leaf chandeliers from Currey & Company provide the metallic accents in the room, while the damask patterned wool & silk rug from Chandra softens the room and accentuates the perfect setting for long, leisurely dinners.

The homeowners love to entertain, so creating a kitchen that could accommodate large, festive gatherings, as well as intimate and simple family meals, was essential. The kitchen features custom cabinets by Braaten Creative Woods; they are made of white oak with a heavy wire brush finish and a deep espresso finish. The backsplash, countertops and kitchen island are made of large slabs of Agata marble. The Enda bar stools from Brabbu are covered in gold Holly Hunt Noblesse velour. The lighting fixture from Slamp looks like it’s made from metal, but is, in fact, acrylic.

Easy access to outdoor living space was important to the homeowners. The shaded, covered patio space outside of the main living area extends their living spaces, especially during the coveted summer months. The addition of the fireplace extends the season as long as possible. A relaxed outdoor dining vignette features a concrete topped dining table from Four Hands surrounded by ‘Masters’ chairs by Kartell. The shiplap wood ceiling and large columns are painted black to continue and extend the drama of the dark/light contrasts from inside to outside.

This beautiful and elegant home represents months of painstaking work and collaboration between the homeowners and the team of professionals they engaged. “For me, the goal was to have the design reflect the homeowners’ personality, style and taste,” said Ammar. “Although these clients pushed all of us a bit out of our comfort zone, we accomplished the goal – the realization of their dream. We captured the essence of their personalities and their style.”

Andrea Swan echoed his remarks. “My clients are classic and modern in the way they dress, the way they live, and the way they act,” said Andrea. “Their home is a reflection of that spirit.”

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