

NOTHING SERIOUS

Alan Rogers chooses local color and fun

BY JULIETTE GUILBERT PHOTOS BY JOHN ELLIS

Cruise ships bore me, but container ships I love," Alan Rogers said, contemplating the view from his seventh-floor balcony in the Murano Grande in Miami Beach, a view that includes a marina, a Coast Guard station and, beyond that, the gantries of the Miami container port. "My favorite view of all is the port," he said. "It's industrial and gutsy. Anywhere you go, to find something gritty is not easy anymore."

The former chairman of Douglas Elliman, the well-established New York real estate firm, Rogers has an air of British refinement that belies his affinity for urban-industrial grit. But he describes himself as "a downtown person in uptown clothing"—which may explain why, when selecting his condo, he rejected an upper floor, and a view of the ocean, in favor of a good view of the cranes and passing cruise ships.

"It's like sitting in a cafe in St. Tropez; there's always something going on down there," he said, gesturing to the busy marina below his terrace, filled with boats.

"I like to watch people messing about on them," he said. "If you go up 10 floors, you completely miss that. All you get is the Coast Guard station."

As a veteran of New York's real estate business, Rogers was cautious when he approached Miami's heated condo market two years ago. "Miami has been



LIKE ST. TROPEZ
Alan Rogers relaxes on his Art Deco sectional sofa with a view of the harbor; behind him, his collection of art glass and his "statement piece," a Lucite library table.

MURANO GRANDE



MOOD INDIGO
In the master bedroom,
blue mosaic tiles and a
Pierre Paulin ribbon chair.


WHITE/WHITE
A tufted leather
headboard and white
lacquer set off the
vibrant blues.

built, to a very large extent, on speculation, which is not healthy for a real estate market," he said, likening the city to Manhattan in the 1980s, when many gambled on real estate and lost. "People forget that—they have such short memories. The banks took the buildings back, and I think that's what will happen here, because so many people have bought to flip."

Rogers, who has homes in New York and a small medieval town in France, acknowledges that Miami's real estate market has the advantage of a growing economy and a constant influx of people. But he suggested that buyers proceed warily in Miami, restricting themselves to good buildings in desirable locations like the prime blocks on Brickell Avenue and along the beach. He regards his new neighborhood as a safe bet, since, because there are no more waterfront building sites, and because heights are restricted, the number of potential units is limited. As for new construction in marginal areas, around downtown, Rogers said that he "wouldn't touch those buildings over there with a barge pole."

Rogers may grant Miami real estate only a provisional pass, but he has embraced the local style enthusiastically, telling his designer, Jeffrey Lamb, that he wanted "a Florida look, not a generic New York loft look." Rogers believes that minimalism has been overdone in Miami and isn't appropriate for the region. "Miami has a certain pace and vibrancy—it should have some fun and color," he said. "My first words to Jeffrey were, 'Let's have some fun with this, and do the opposite of what everyone else is doing.'"

Lamb and Rogers found themselves remarkably in harmony on exactly what "fun and color" should mean. "It was so easy, because we were thinking alike," Lamb said. "Alan has a bunch of different houses, and he wanted this one to be fun and funky and very Miami Beach—and I love retro furniture." Lamb (whose shop in Normandy Isles, Jeffrey Lamb Home, sells new and vintage furniture and accent pieces) chose postwar items in what he deems "great shapes"—some by designers like Eero Saarinen and Pierre Paulin and some anonymous antiques shop finds. He then refinished many of the pieces



TWIN SET
Nearly identical '50s chairs
face the sofa with its
Jonathan Adler pillow.

'My favorite view
of all is the port.'

MURANO GRANDE



SUNNY
Yellow is the signature of the guest room; the fabric on the headboard is by Knoll.

in white lacquer, just like the condo's walls. Atop this foundation of glossy white midcentury modern bones, Lamb scattered brilliant colors keyed to the flecks in the terrazzo floor. Each room is defined by a single supersaturated hue: orange in the living area (with a single contrasting accent wall in a daring, but perfectly harmonious, shade of teal), yellow in the guest bedroom, blue in the master suite. "We decided to do the three different bathrooms in three different colors, so there's a green, an orange and a blue," Lamb said. "I love color, and I love combining a lot of different colors together." The white lacquer on the walls and furniture exerts a modulating influence, rendering the colors coolly vibrant, never garish.

In the living area, a glamorously curved Art Deco sectional sofa from the '40s, covered in orange mohair and topped with shaggy red-orange Jonathan Adler throw pillows, faces floor-to-ceiling windows with a water view that is unimpeded by balconies. "Most of the designs here have a balcony straight off the living room, and you're looking into the back of the balcony furniture," Rogers said. "With this, you've got Miami in your living room, and that's what I love about it. It's in your face." Across from the sofa, Lamb placed two nearly identical low-slung '50s armchairs reupholstered in red Holly Hunt cotton bouclé. The cocktail table is an original Eero Saarinen tulip table with a matte-white Carrara marble top.

"I bought everything for the shapes, and it's super comfortable," Lamb said. "It looks great because everything has beautiful finishes and great fabrics." Period elements—a vintage Arteluce floor lamp in primary colors, a pair of brass-and-copper wall sculptures from the '50s—are kept from crossing the line into kitsch by the austerity of Lamb's composition, and by the striking contemporary art on the walls, including work by James Nares and Ross Bleckner. (Regarding art, Rogers is characteristically self-deprecating: "It would be presumptuous to call me a collector—if I like it and the price is right, I buy it.")

Art glass enlivens the adjacent dining area: along one wall, a dramatic assortment of deep orange glassware fills a '60s glass-and-chrome étagère; on the adjoining wall is a row of white glass lamps that look like huge space eggs. "I thought they were very sculptural, so I bought all four," Rogers said. "I loved the look."

He decided that, since he never cooks, he didn't need a dining table. Instead Lamb substituted a large library table in '70s Lucite. "Alan eats out," Lamb said. "But you still need a statement piece when you walk in the door, because there's no entryway." Should Rogers's habits ever turn toward the domestic, of course, the table could be used for dining.

In the master bedroom, the vibrant reds and oranges of the living and dining areas give way to deep-blue mosaic tile and smooth, white lacquer, complementing the more brilliant blues and whites of the harbor view outside the windows. Vintage '50s furniture in white lacquer and chrome, a white leather headboard and austere Italian bed linens provide a sleek backdrop for an attention-grabbing Pierre Paulin ribbon chair. Rogers's workspace is a '50s splayed-leg, steel-and-glass table paired with an Eames wire chair with white Spinneybeck leather cushions.

"We grew up being told that these sorts of things were in terrible taste," Rogers said of the cutting-edge postwar designs he now lives with. "But it was groundbreaking. I'm learning about midcentury design, but I still make terrible mistakes. I learn as I go, rather than doing research—I just ask do I like it, is it amusing, is it fun?"

In the guest bedroom, a brilliant-yellow accent wall is tempered by earthier tones on a pair of Warren Platner for Knoll chairs and the Knoll fabric on the headboard; white lacquer on furniture and walls keeps the palette feeling airy. The gleaming curves of chrome ball table lamps add retro zing to the simple, angular bedside tables and white, stitched bedding.

Rogers approved of the sleek, blond-wood cabinetry in the builder kitchen, but not what he called the "dreadful granite countertops"; Lamb replaced them with white quartz. The vintage modern theme is picked up again by a re-lacquered Richard Schultz for Knoll dinette table and stainless steel Eames chairs with new red-and-orange vinyl upholstery. In the morning, Rogers loves to sit here, or on one of his balconies, with a cup of coffee, watching the big container ships and cruise ships go by and basking in the whimsy and color of his beach pied-à-terre.

"When I come here I get a giggle out of it," he said. "I wanted something that had some humor and was reflective to me of what Miami is, upbeat and fun. I try not to take myself too seriously, and I hope this reflects the same thing. And living in Miami keeps you young, don't you agree?" ■



A KITCHEN WITH A VIEW
Rogers sits at a re-lacquered Richard Schultz for Knoll table. Sitting is Jeffrey Lamb. Standing is Rogers's friend Pedro Girao, deputy chairman of Christie's Europe.