

AM Apartment

Sarasota, FL

2008-2009

The design for the renovation at the AM Apartment undertakes a redefinition of the boundaries of the “container” of the apartment interior to unify the main living space through continuity of form and material. The container before renovation was a simple reflection of the expedient placement of structural and plumbing elements, access to light and views of the outside having little relationship to the space of the interior. The new container translates the sharp edges and haphazard arrangement of the existing shell into points of inflection along continuous surfaces, allowing light and material to smoothly enfold the space of living. A negotiation between the set exterior restrictions of the building shell and the desirable interior conditions of the living space gives rise to new forms that redefine the space of the apartment.

The ceiling plane of the main living space became the most significant element involved in this negotiation. Before renovation, the main living space had a cathedral ceiling with multiple dropped beams, recessed coves and soffits over the kitchen and entry hall. Reverse Architecture devised a single undulating plane to cover the low-hanging structural beams and take advantage of the height afforded over the living room. This form visually unites the entire space with an unbroken surface upon which subtle gradations of light and shadow play.

In the kitchen, a single countertop surface winds its way around the space, folding down and narrowing in front of the lone window to allow better access to light and views of the dense foliage outside. In the new master bathroom, the wall below the sink counter swells out to conceal plumbing required by the relocation of the toilet. Again, a change made to allow the single window to have more presence within the space. The integral bathroom sink and counter is a custom design tailored specifically to its location, fabricated from a 3D digital model using thermo-formed corian.

All designs by Reverse Architecture place a high value on employing sustainable materials and minimizing energy use for the life of the building. At the AM Apartment we determined that all lighting would be high-efficiency LED or compact fluorescent. This led to considerable complications in the design for the linear recessed lights in the main living space. The standard fluorescent tube light would not fit within the ceiling structure, and with LED lighting, still a developing technology, there were few available off-the-shelf products that would meet our requirements. Working with Yoder Homes, we devised a solution for a custom recess and diffuser using LED cove lights.

Rapidly renewable materials are used throughout the apartment, with bamboo cabinetry and bamboo and palmwood flooring. The kitchen countertop is made of Icestone, a recycled concrete and glass product manufactured in New York. The material palette in general focuses on simple juxtapositions of basic materials such as stone, wood, and glass.

The project name “AM Apartment” has a double meaning. In terms of the way one experiences the space, it references the changing qualities of light across the interior surfaces from morning (AM) until dusk. AM is also short for “Amplitude Modulation,” a technique for varying the amplitude of radio waves to produce sound (AM radio). At the AM Apartment, folding and undulating surfaces are modulated by the unseen structural and mechanical shell behind the walls, yet are calibrated by the qualities of living that give form to the interior.