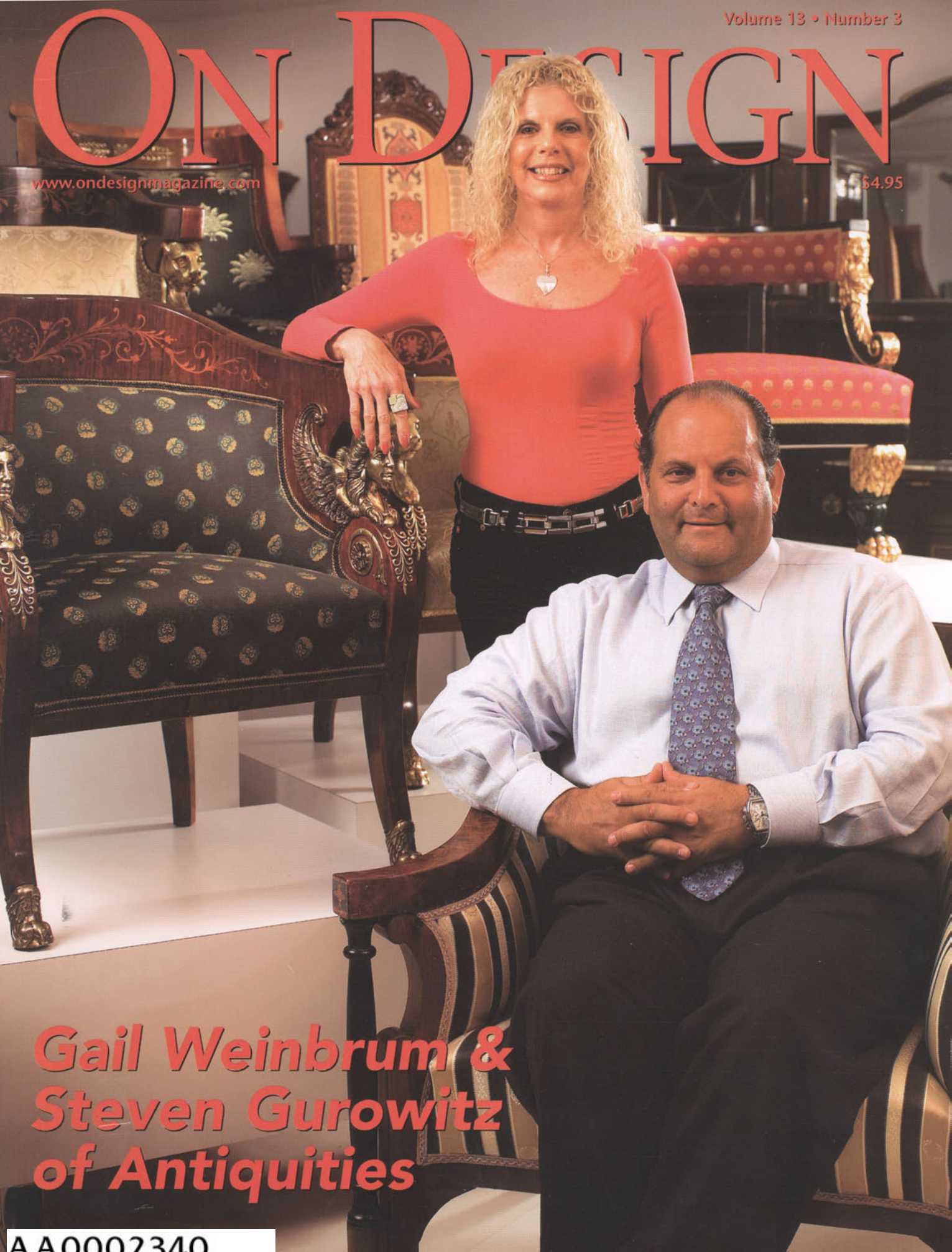


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BALCONIES

Creating Romance, Grace and Style

Story by Elaine Stewart

When visiting historic districts either in this country or abroad, there are usually balconies incorporated into the streetscape and architecture of the area that contribute to its romance, grace and style. Whether its Rome or New Orleans, balconies add a dimension to architectural design that is both esthetically pleasing and functional. It can be a charming overlook, framed with window boxes full of flowers or a majestic marble promenade, with balustrade railing overlooking acres of gardens.

In South Florida, homeowners are requesting architects to design balconies for their homes. Taking advantage of beautiful views often come into play in designing here, and in the Bahamas, and balconies are a perfect way to do it.

"Most people only consider incorporating a balcony off the master bedroom," said Mitch Kunik, president of Affiniti Architects. "There are many other dramatic choices. A door to a balcony off a stairway landing offers a view of the entry below and interest to both the interior and exterior of the home."

Often there are views in front of the house that balconies can emphasize. A game room can open to an outside game room. Courtyards, especially those with fountains or pools, create an opportunity to open up any of the second floor rooms to the views below. Courtyards can be used in the front, side, or rear of the home.

Knowing that there are many options, the next question is what type of balcony will work best. There are three types of balconies: an overlook, which is small enough for a person to stand out on it; a sitting balcony, offering room for chairs and other furniture,



ABOVE: Balconies incorporated on the front of the home offer depth, perspective and the creation of additional living space.

BELOW: This dramatic stone arch balcony creates an opportunity to take advantage of the beautiful pool and gazebo view.



and a covered large balcony which can be the size of a living room allowing for additional functional space. This is especially used oceanfront as the ground level generally offers less view or in areas where privacy is desired from neighbors or the street.

Balconies are now designed large enough to incorporate fireplaces, summer kitchens, media centers and entertaining. They can be covered or partially covered. If they are left uncovered, a gazebo area creating a separate sitting area can also be incorporated. There are also balconies that are designed at multi levels, generally stepped down, to diminish any railing obstruction to the view. Finishes may be similar to the interior of the home with mouldings, curtains, picture walls etc.

The least practical balcony is one continuous balcony that wraps across or around a second level. "If it is all open, no sense of place can be created," said Kunik. "There is little architectural interest and/or privacy. Even in the newest multi-family buildings, balconies are designed to have framed views instead of wide-open views and have different shapes. They are more esthetically pleasing and offer privacy."

Balconies also vary in style based on the architecture of the home. If the style is Mediterranean, stone accents are used, especially arcades or arches with iron or stone railings. A West Indies design would have balconies that are more open and airy, with wood detailing and railings. A contemporary home would incorporate glass and metal, for instance, a glass railing and metal columns.

The most important consideration is to make the balcony as practical as possible, especially since they can cost as much as finished interior space. It shouldn't be a place never used, collecting dirt and dust, where you need a hose to wash it off and use. A practical application must be applied so that the balcony can be a functional, as well as esthetically pleasing addition to the home. ☀



ABOVE: A West Indies designed home will have more open and airy balcony spaces.

BELOW: Each level of this estate home was designed to include balconies, which creates architectural interest.

