



# THE Natural

ARTIST **MICHELE OKA DONER** TAKES REFUGE  
IN A MIAMI APARTMENT THAT EPITOMIZES HER SPIRIT  
OF COOL, CALM AND COLLECTED. **PHOTOGRAPHS BY FLOTO + WARNER**

**M**ichele Oka Doner may be most well known for her public art piece *A Walk on the Beach*, a bronze and mother-of-pearl installation at the Miami International Airport, but for the 68-year-old artist and author, the work represented more than a career highlight—it was a tribute to her city. Born and raised in Miami (her father was a judge and the city's mayor), Oka Doner now resides in New York but feels most alive in the beach town. Her apartment on Miami Beach's Millionaire's Row (which Oka Doner has owned since 1991 and constantly updates with new pieces) represents a homecoming and an escape. Filled with natural objects, it possesses a contradictory quality—sparse yet busy, ornate yet subdued—inspired by the artist's mother. "She was a minimalist," Oka Doner says, "who understood that you have to pull back to let the fabulous shine through." —J.C.





**MODERN  
MINIMALISM**

*The cast concrete bust is of Oka Doner's brother as a young boy, created by American sculptor Albert Vrana. It sits in front of a black lacquer Josef Hoffmann chair (ca. 1900) Oka Doner purchased at Sotheby's.*



**PRODUCTION  
VALUE**

*The coral art pieces were from Italian decorator Galileo Chini's early-20th-century set for the Wagner opera Das Rheingold—Oka Doner happened upon them in Miami. The white-gold-leaf chair is Greek Revival; Oka Doner upholstered it in Foil Wrap fabric by Knoll.*



**LESS  
AGAINST  
MORE**

*Oka Doner contrasts the sleek marble dining table (crafted from the same marble used throughout the apartment) and teak dining-room chairs (ca. 1951) from Craftsmen's Village in Miami with a Murano-glass LED light she acquired from a Beverly Hills estate sale.*



**EARTHLY  
DELIGHTS**

*Most of the natural pieces Oka Doner collects herself: found objects from the beach (for their glyphic quality), the bronze-cast seed-bearing inflorescence of palm (which she created) that sits on the black buffet console from Craftsmen's Village in Miami. In one corner is an armless 1951 Scandinavian sofa from the Miami house she grew up in. She keeps variegated pandanus leaves in the 1940s ceramic fan vase. In the living room are more of the same white-gold-leaf Greek Revival chairs as well as a black-and-gold Roman Revival chair she bought at a New York antiques shop and upholstered with Manuel Canovas fabric.*



**LIGHT MY FIRE**

Because the concrete walls don't allow for wiring, Oka Doner uses burning bushes she created as candelabras. After seeing the marble used throughout her apartment at the original Dean & DeLuca in New York's SoHo, she called on her friend Jack Ceglic, the company's aesthetic director, to find out where to source the same material.

**FROM HER PERCH**

Oka Doner (shown here) gutted the apartment to create a loftlike space with banquettes upholstered in Jack Lenor Larsen fabric. The midcentury Egyptian Revival chair comes from the Newel Gallery in Manhattan and is a favorite with her four-year-old granddaughter.