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HOME & DESIGN

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## SELLING THE SIZZLE

*Designer furniture all about glam, but these offer a South Florida sensibility*

BY CHARLYNE VARKONYI SCHAUB  
Special to the Miami Herald

Furniture manufacturers know most consumers can't name their brand, but they will remember to tell friends their sofa is from Ralph Lauren or Tommy Bahama.

That's what marketers call "selling the sizzle." The manufacturers know they can increase sales by licensing a famous name or place that evokes an image of style, glamour or recognition. Ralph Lauren, the grandfather of this trend, first created a collection for Henredon in 1983. (He is currently licensed with EJ Victor.) Past collections have been named after designers such as Mario Buatta and Alexa Hampton, dead icons such as Humphrey Bogart and Ernest Hemingway or places such as Charleston, Savannah or Newport.

The trend continued at the spring High Point Market in North Carolina, with Bea Pila and Michael Wolk of Miami, Jack Phillips of Palm Beach and Allison Paladino of Jupiter.

All are known way beyond our state borders. Pila, whose work has taken her to South and Central America, has been on HGTV's Design Star and as a host on DIY shows. Wolk's award-winning work has been published in numerous regional, national and international publications. Phillips has done work throughout the U.S. and the Caribbean; the term "Jack Phillips designed house" has appeared in real estate ads. Paladino's work has been featured in regional, national and international design publications.



B. PILA DESIGN STUDIO

Bea Pila pays homage to the classic Barcelona chair with her Player's chair that is updated with acrylic.

This foursome offers furniture with a South Florida sensibility that is often missing in other collections.

Namesake design contribution can range from very little to almost total. You don't really think that Tommy Bahama designed the furniture? He's a fictional marketing tool. Some famous names merely give their approval for the manufacturer's designs. Others do most of the designs themselves.

The payback is a percentage of the net price (what the furniture stores

pay), which can range from 5 percent and up depending on negotiation with the manufacturer. Designers admit the revenue is unlikely to make them rich unless their name is Ralph Lauren or Martha Stewart.

"It is not an easy task and it is time consuming," Phillips says. "At times it can be as frustrating as all get out and is not as financially rewarding as people think. It is rewarding to one's self. When you see it in a showroom or client's home you get satisfaction."