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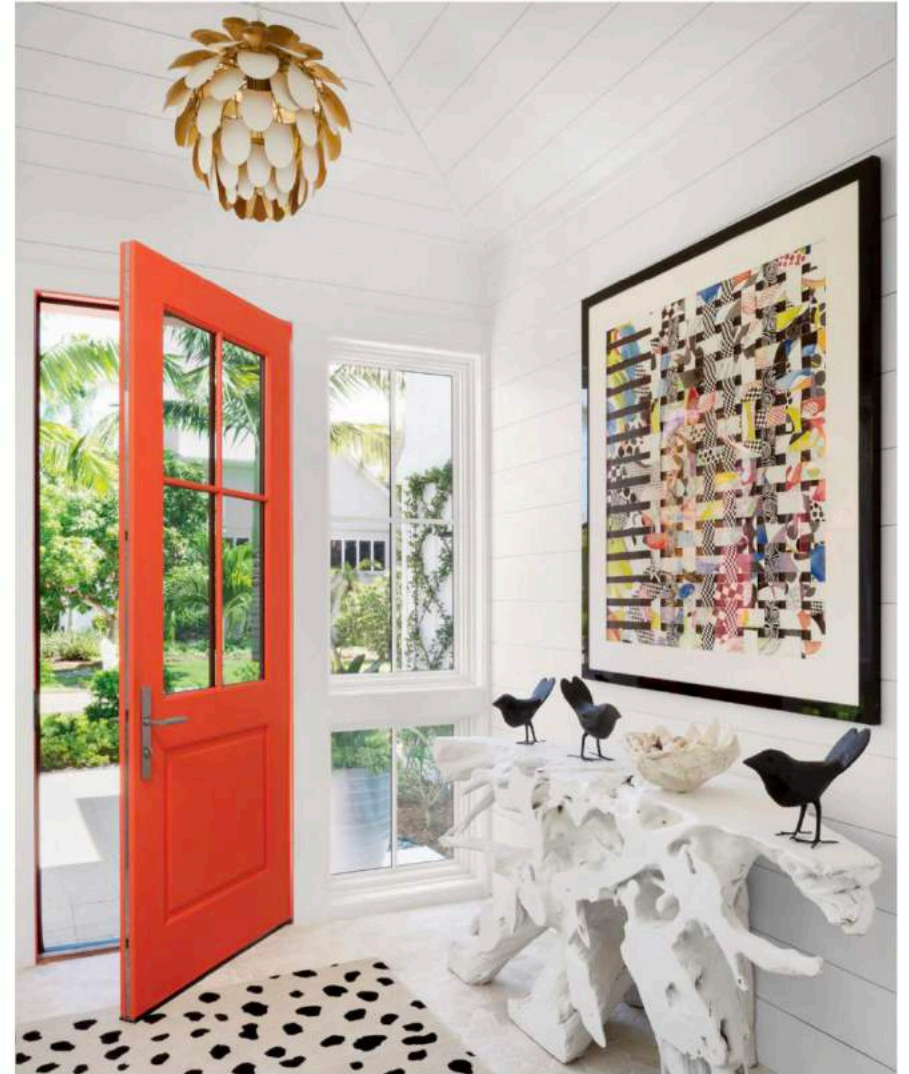
**g**OLD LIST 2022



# Say Cheers

Art and whimsy infuse a Sanibel abode with a sense of joy and playfulness.

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Architecture: Leslie Kelly, Leslie Kelly Architecture Interior Design: Jamie Merida, Jamie Merida Interiors  
Landscape Architecture: Robert S. Walsh, R.S. Walsh Landscaping



Artwork by Darryl Pottorf hangs above Global Views' Cade daybed in the living area of a Sanibel home by designer Jamie Merida. Higher up, he displayed a neon sign inspired by a Mae West quote. Unknotted by Leila Walker sits next to three Phillips Collection sculptures on Mirage European white oak flooring. Trimcraft of Fort Myers fabricated the built-in.

It was hardly a surprise when a longtime client of designer Jamie Merida requested his help for her new Sanibel residence. A "perennial home builder," he affectionately calls her, she had renovated several houses over the years and recently took on a new project. "She has a real joie de vivre," he says of the owner, a competitive ballroom dancer and former designer who collects art. "She knows how to really enjoy life."

Conceived by residential designer Leslie Kelly, the oceanfront dwelling is the result of the renovation of an existing dilapidated structure. "From the outside, the house seems like a traditional Florida cottage," Merida says, pointing to the vertical board-and-batten siding, peaked roof and rectangular windows. Landscape designer Robert S. Walsh incorporated plantings that offer striking aromas for the journey to the front door, including gardenia and jasmine. "Our job is to take you softly in there—and give you some good scents on the way," he says. But details like a concrete figurine sculpture and a pebble-lined walkway leading to a coral-hued door hint at a sense of quirkiness and joy. "It sets up that this is going to be a happy place," Merida says.

The façade's traditional features continue in the interior, although presented with a contemporary twist. White shiplap walls, for instance, are set within modern, angled framework. The open-plan living area has a vaulted ceiling but also a window wall that offers a magnificent view of the water. Then there's the glass bridge that connects the upstairs rooms, overlooking the airy, light-filled spaces below.

The clean backdrop paved the way for Merida to create interiors that capture the homeowner's whimsical aesthetic. Working with a skilled client, he viewed the project as a collaborative one that was largely about editing. "With her, most of the design process is letting the fabulous things she loves shine and pulling back on everything else," he explains. This began with arranging her art collection, which includes pieces such as a Darryl Pottorf painting the designer hung above a living area daybed. A few feet higher, he displayed a neon sign inspired by a Mae West quote that reads, "I was once Snow White but I drifted." ("That phrase is just so

appropriate to her," Merida muses.) The living area is also home to the client's assortment of vintage sand pails, which the designer lined on the bookcase. Floating from the vaulted ceiling is a flock of three-dimensional birds, cut from sheet metal. "They're hung on fishing lures, so they move," the owner says. "My theory is: If you love it, buy it." And when not collecting art, she creates pieces herself—like the colorful paper-and-fabric collage Merida displayed in the entry, near a white driftwood-like console table and a dalmatian-print rug.

To let the artwork shine, the designer ensured the furnishings remained neutral. "All of the upholstery is pretty innocuous—good quality, nice shapes—but it's all covered in white," he notes. "It's not going to draw any attention." Merida selected pieces that respond to the homeowner's Moroccan rugs, such as living area armchairs with raffia backs and sculptural side tables that play supporting roles. In the kitchen, he commissioned a live-edge dining table that is connected to the island and centered with a stripe of poured epoxy, complementing the white cabinets and countertops. "It breaks it up with something soft and organic," says the designer, who surrounded the table with two sets of similar stools.

Upstairs, the catwalk separates the client's art studio from the bedroom suites, where the mood is more subdued—"but she still wanted bold," Merida says. He went monochromatic with a black-and-white theme, like the thick stripes on the guest bathroom wallcovering. The color combo allows the greenery outside the window to pop while also relating to the rest of the house. "A lot of her art has black and white in it," the designer points out.

Outside, a plunge pool rests in a wood deck buffered by lush vegetation, such as white bird of paradise and philodendron. Benches offer a spot for yoga or meditation, and a pebble sculpture echoes the front walkway. "It almost feels like Bali," observes Walsh, who added plantings like coconut palms and beach grasses to enhance the natural look of the property's seawall.

Whereas some residences require a heavy hand, Merida enjoyed the process of holding back. "There's something to be said for a really fabulous house that doesn't look decorated," he muses. But with a client who is willing to take chances, the next project is likely right around the corner. "I never say it's over," the owner adds. ■

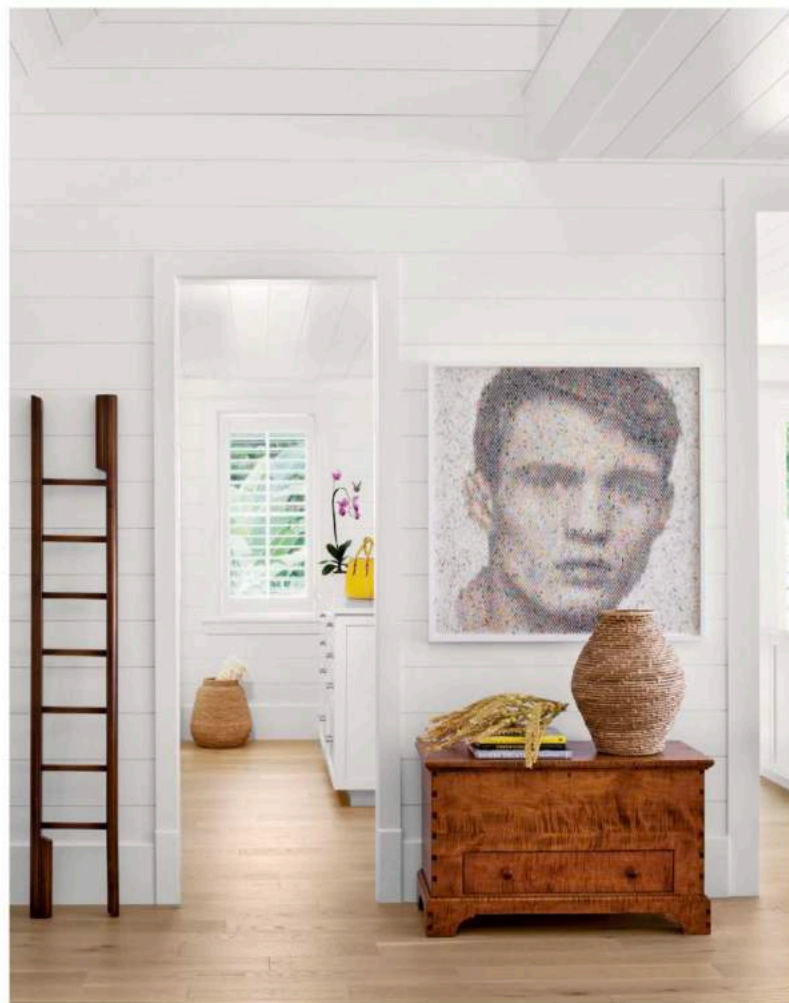
Birds crafted from sheet metal float above the living area seating, which includes Universal Furniture's Pebble chairs and a Phillips Collection side table around a rug from Marrakech. Adding to the white palette are armchairs, a sofa, an ottoman and stools, all by Westley Hall. Hooker Furniture's Aman coffee table and Arteriors' Fitz accent table complete the scene.

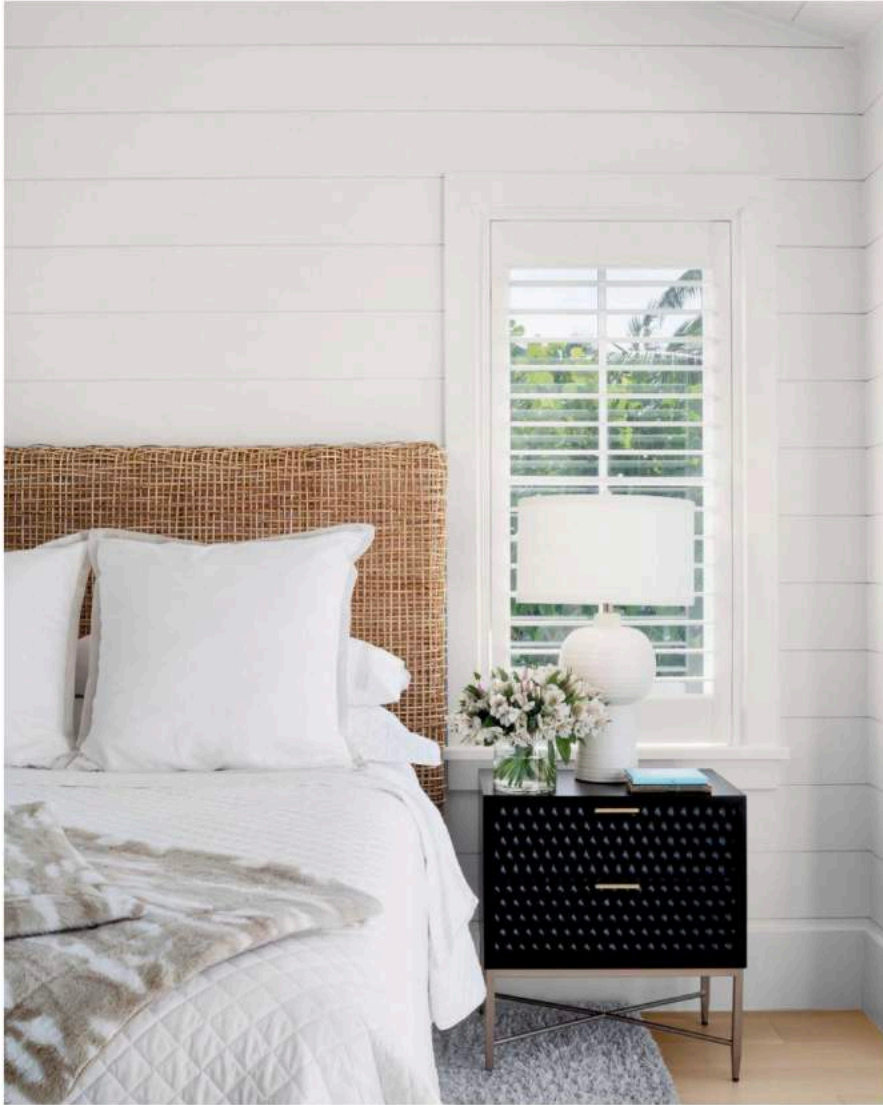




**Above:** Polceck's Pratt and Vero counter stools surround the kitchen's live-edge elm dining table, which has a stripe of white epoxy resin and is connected to the island. Richelieu faucets and hardware accent the cabinets by Mouser Cabinetry as well as the Cambria countertops and backsplash.

**Opposite:** The owner's antique ship ladder leans against a wall painted Sherwin-Williams' Extra White in the mudroom hallway. A Peter Combe portrait from Robert Fontaine Gallery in Palm Beach hangs above a Thos. Moser blanket chest. The baskets are from Menda's store, Bountiful Home, in Easton, Maryland.





**Above:** Thibaut's Easton Awning wallcovering creates a striking moment in the guest bedroom. The tub, filler, faucet, sink and wall sconce are from Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery. Flooring from Marble Works Inc. complements the Corian countertop beneath the custom mirror.

**Opposite:** Universal Furniture's Nesting wicker headboard adds texture to the guest bedroom, softened by Matouk bedding and an Arnie Seike rug. "It's a clean, simple room for a variety of guests," Merida says. The lamp and Universal Furniture rightstand are from Bountiful Home.



**Above:** At the back of the property, landscape designer Robert S. Walsh provided erosion control by installing golden creeper, spartina and mully grasses, sea oxeie daisy, and lowgrass to create a native buffer that blends in with the waterline. Merida offered a spot to enjoy the view using chairs and a side table by The Best Adirondack Chair Company.

**Opposite:** "Tranquility and seclusion define this private pool and deck space," says Walsh, who added plantings such as philodendron and heliconia. A calm rock sculpture stands between two benches on the oiled-ipe deck.

