

# LUX LIFE

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THE ELEMENTS  
OF HOME

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SARASOTA AND THE BARRIER ISLANDS | LUXURY HOMES + LIVING



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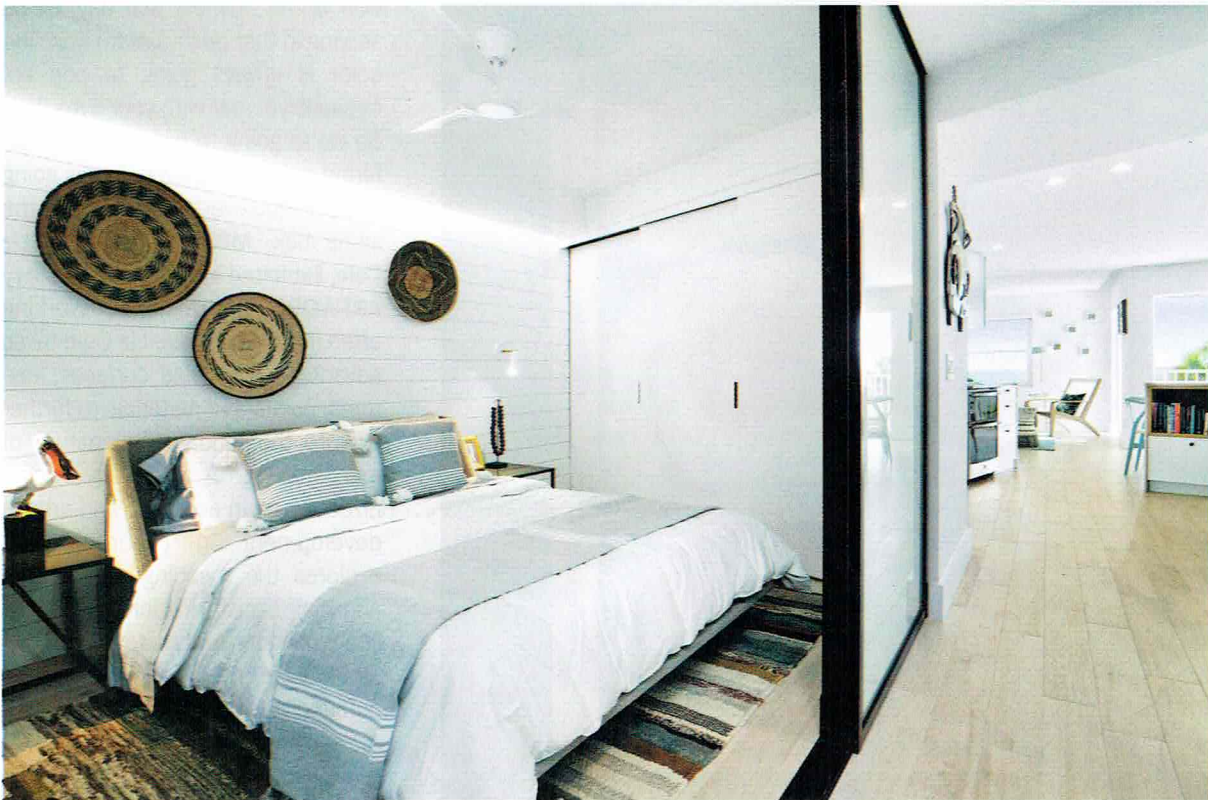
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# CALYPSO BLUE

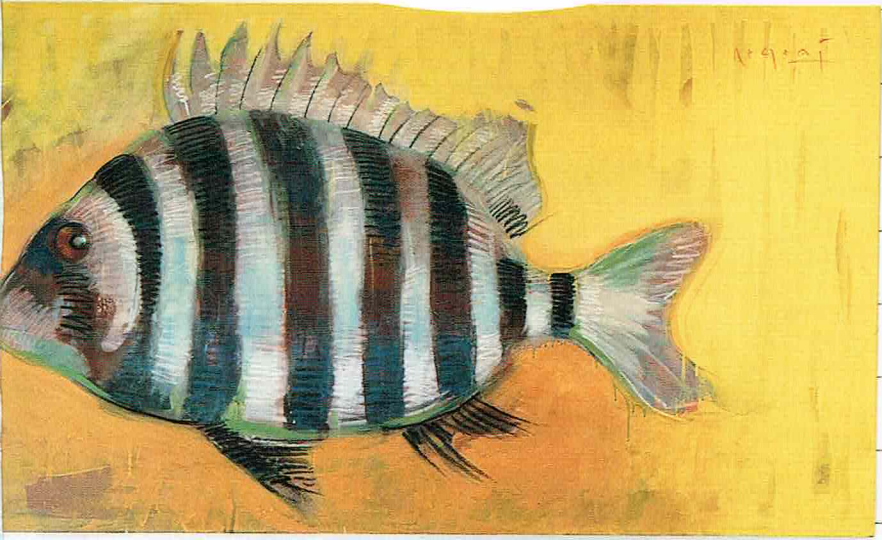
*Leader Design Studio and SAWA Design Studio transform a Longboat Key vacation home.*

**THE PRINCIPALS OF SAWA DESIGN STUDIO AND LEADER DESIGN STUDIO** join creative forces to produce pure synergy in an unstoppable partnership that operates on the principle that deeply personal customization is the cornerstone of exceptional design. Architect Chris Leader specializes in the schematics and mapping out of the skeletal structure of a new home base while Punit Patel of SAWA pursues the interior design of the home's core aesthetics and design etymology. Whether brainstorming plans in their impressively modern office in the old City Waterworks Building or in the field getting their hands dirty, they're continually collaborating and pushing each other to execute the project at hand. "If I'm thinking too routine on something, and he's thinking too out-of-the-box on something else, we kind of reel each other in," Leader explains of his and Patel's yin-yang relationship. Making sure projects maintain an edge with a balance of practicality is the complementary coalition creating some of Sarasota's most jaw-dropping and celebrated homes.

Leader and Patel devote themselves to exploring innovative design concepts and creating customized solutions, but more noteworthy is their commitment to working with every client on a highly personal level—from initial concept to final construction. The intimate, open environment ensures that homes are built to distinctly suit the lifestyle of the individuals inhabiting them. Along the way, they often find themselves building genuine, long-standing relationships with their clients that continue to develop even after the home is completed. "It's an incredibly personal experience building a home together," says Patel, "so you've got to resonate with people and you have to meet them and get to know them. That dynamic as a group, along with the



*Written by Brittany Mattie | Photography by Ryan Gamma Photography*



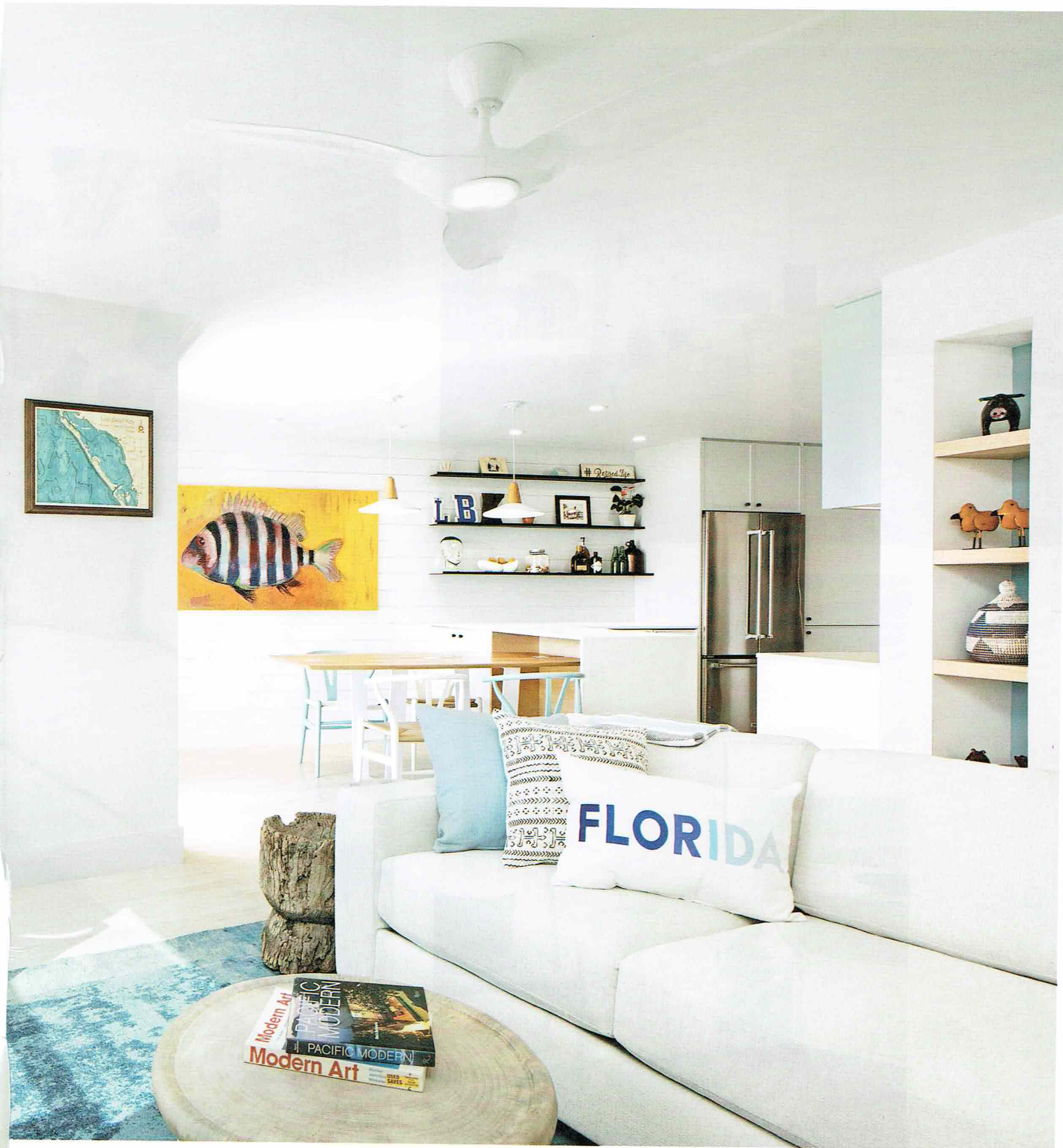
contractors and side staff is what makes for a great project." Every judgment call becomes a team effort, from exterior paint finishes to cabinetry and appliances. "There's not a thing that goes into the house that we don't specify," Patel continues. "I mean everything—every door handle or spout, down to the pillows, furniture and flooring. Every single thing that they're going to live with, we know about." Customizing the space to the client becomes even more intimate as he learns the necessary details of how they live, from their preferred shaving location to how they store their clothes and their morning coffee routine. "Every detail is thought about," he says.

"If you like to wake up with the sun and not have shade, then we'll put your bed in a certain place," says Leader. "If you like to be totally blacked out, then we'll do something different to make that happen. We really thrive on crafting. We design our stuff from the inside out to make sure it lives well first, and then we figure out how to make it look good." More than simply designing a box to be lived in (even a customizable box), each project is about making the space work for the client and adjusting as they get to know them. "There's a type of curated feel with everything that we do," he continues. "We communicate succinctly and thoughtfully with our clients, because detail-oriented people seem to gravitate towards us and understand what we do."

This project in particular however, was something neither of them was accustomed to. "The client literally came in, showed us a picture and said, 'Alright, this is what I want. I'll see you on November 15th,'" says Patel of his first meeting with the laidback snowbird. He shared a desire for an eclectic vacation home he could entertain guests in and that was it. Though the owner completely trusted them, this proved to be slightly unnerving for Leader and Patel. "We normally have really hyper-involved clients," says Patel. "They're on the job sites during construction every single day and we run everything by them. We're used to keeping them really engaged, so this was really weird for us. He never saw anything. He wanted to be surprised."

They ultimately locked in to a linear vision for this 700-square-foot property, staying true to its integrity and shepherding the original concept through to completion. "What we tried to do was dissect the 'funk' that he was attracted to and implement it in an elegant way," says Patel. "So instead of just making four walls in the unit four different colors, we tried to make a timeless backdrop with the architecture and then bring in the pops of color and accessories." The furnishings and decor were specifically sourced from local craftsmen to capture a beachy, Floridian vibe. The dining room showcases a custom-made table as the centerpiece, made by Greg Pennenga, a local furniture designer and owner of Pennenga Creative LLC in





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Sarasota. The coordination of the 'X's' on the table carry onto the kitchen's X-patterned backsplash tile, so these visual features tie together. The paintings come from Tim Jaeger, a local fine artist with Ringling College of Art and Design. The painting with the dynamic aerial beach perspective above the couch, was actually a picture from a drone the team flew right outside the condo's back door. Jaeger was given the photo of the crowd on the beach, and transformed it into art. 'LBK' letters (standing for Longboat Key) come from Circus City Architectural Salvage, and a giant wooden bowl for the owner to store seashells brings a personal touch for found art.

The unit's layout was completely flipped, gutting everything on the inside to reconfigure the living room, kitchen and dining areas to the beachfront side, allowing both the owner and guests to enjoy the prime panoramas of the Gulf. The sand-colored tile flooring provided a simplistic and coastal setting to everyday life and the natural-finished white oak accented with pops of blues bring the warmth inside, keeping the home feeling light and airy. The relocated bedroom situated now in the back, while modest in size, was maximized by utilizing a set of frosted sliding glass doors in lieu of a traditional entry door. Valuable space was kept a priority with floating shelves and mounted reading lights. The renovation conceptualized into a bright, waterfront retreat, breathing life into its domain with personality and comfort in mind. It shows off the practical yet playful framework envisioned.

"It was actually really fun to watch their reactions when they first saw it," says Patel. "And every corner they came around they were surprised. Everybody loves it. It's got the funk!" Adds Leader, "And everything that you see in the photos, nothing was staged. He kept it all. None of this is something he brought from another home. I think he showed up with a box of plates and a rolling suitcase, move-in ready." The client even emailed Patel and Leader recently, "Hey, just wanted to let you know that I had nine guests for a football game last night and, of course, everyone loved the condo. But just being able to entertain nine people in this 700-square-foot condo comfortably is awesome." A job well done yet again for the dynamic duo of SAWA Design and Leader Design studios. LUXLIFE