

GULFSHORE LIFE.

# HOME

THE DIARY OF A MEANINGFUL + WELL-DESIGNED LIFE



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## EXPERT INSIGHT

### One With Our Environment

The indoor-outdoor living concept is not new in Southwest Florida, but it is evolving, experts say.

"This is a trend that is now becoming more prolific in our design industry as well," Matthew Kragh, founder of MHK Architecture & Planning, says. "We want to make the indoor and outdoor areas of our dwellings flow seamlessly, instead of living in air-conditioned boxes."

Floor-to-ceiling windows, natural materials and textures, and even live plant walls can help achieve this look. "Pocketing sliding glass doors, so you can conceal them when they are opened," also add to the effect, Kragh adds. He predicts homes will even start to shrink on the inside to make room for more open-air living space.

"We're actually seeing people wanting to merge the inside and outside together. It's almost like an erasure of boundaries between the two," Lisa Kahn, lead designer and CEO of Lisa Kahn Designs, says.

But the growing trend is more than sprawling lanais and oversized windows. It's about connecting to the outdoors on a deeper level. Kahn calls the concept "design ecology," suggesting it's society's response to the current status of our environment.

"Human beings are not really living in a way that's harmonious with the earth, and I think we know that. We're coming to the place that we are now aware of radical climate change, the exhaustion of resources, mass extinctions—there are really big phrases floating around out there," she says.

Design ecology merges outdoor aesthetic with conscious design choices, with professionals like Kahn approaching projects with extra environmental care in terms of sustainable products, sourced goods and so on.

"This is really looking at an entire industry of design from an ecological lens. As interior designers, we have an incredible opportunity to step into a role of deeper understanding of the impact we have on our projects and our clients," Kahn says. "We make really big purchasing decisions, and I think the more we can educate ourselves as designers, the more we can design ecologically friendly." Kahn predicts large organizations, like the American Society of Interior Designers, "will continue to pick up on educational opportunities."

"The more we can connect people inside with their spaces outside, the better it is all around," Kahn says. "Our spaces have a major impact on our mood, health, sense of wellbeing, and relationships." And if we can balance indoor-outdoor living while keeping the earth in mind? Well, that's a trend we can get behind. ✕



This MHK Architecture & Planning project seamlessly blends the indoor and out with pocketing doors and a spacious uncovered pool area. Courtesy of MHK Architecture & Planning



Form & Function

# DESIGNER SPACES

Southwest Florida's accomplished interior designers are always inspiring us—so what exactly inspires them? Five local designers share the concepts and materials that make them tick.

By  
Tess Raines

Photography by  
Gregg McGough

"I always incorporate a live element in the room: live or live trees," says Louisa Parsons, founder and designer at Pure Design. "It's just as important as linen and wood. One live plant makes or something more alive."



Form & Function

"I tend to go into a space considering who is going to be using it and how I can best create a space that is going to nurture that person," says Lisa Kolins, Interiors Designer and CEO at Lisa Kolins Designs





**LISA KAHN**

Interior Designer and CEO, Lisa Kahn Designs





**LISA KAHN,**  
Interior Designer and CEO,  
Lisa Kahn Designs

*What is your favorite material?*

I love wood. I'm so inspired by trees; it's just my thing. I particularly love black walnut. I use it in floors, for ceiling details, we make furniture out of it. Nature is so important ... and anything we can bring inside that can tie us back to nature—it is so healing.

*What are some concepts that move you?*

I tend to go into a space considering who is going to be using it and how I can best create a space that is going to nurture that person. A space to open its arms and welcome those people in and hug them every time they come in. I call it a sanctuary—it's evocative of a safe place, a refuge, a place to refresh your spirit.

*What is your design philosophy?*

I really believe that when we create peace in our environment with the elements and energy we put into it, I believe it helps inspire peace inside of us. I find that one of the greatest ways spaces can help our creativity (is by having) a place to do that on an everyday basis.

**DIANA HALL &  
ELIZABETH MANCHEGO,**

President; Senior Designer,  
Diana Hall Designs

*What are some of your favorite materials to work with?*

**Hall:** Wall covering, because it's a product that ... (is) a great way of incorporating texture to a wall. We've used it in backsplash material; they add so much dimension to an area with colors. Some are natural fibers. They can get really customizable. Mica is a natural material with a natural sparkle to it. Grasscloth has come a long way and has incredible depth; they do them a lot in silvery and gold tones, as opposed to earthy tones. That adds texture richness and depth.

*How have you incorporated these materials in projects?*

**Manchego:** (We'll use them) behind shelving to add some interest to floating shelving ... we'll cover a whole wall behind picture frame molding with mica inserts. We'll do one wall behind the headboard—in one area not to overdo it; it just gives it that special effect.

*How do you determine what concepts you'd like to incorporate into a home?*

**Hall:** We draw inspiration from clients. What's the ideal use of the space?



**LAURIE WALTER,**  
Interior Designer, Cardamon Design

*What are your favorite materials to work with?*

I get excited by the combination and juxtaposition of material you may not normally put together, but they make such a statement when you combine them: a mirror with a ceruse wood detail. ... I love doing a custom concrete counter, and the juxtaposition of maybe also then combining that with things like a sheer fabric, something sheer and luminous, along with something that has a cool feel, like a nail head in a pewter.

*What is a recent project you've done where you used these materials?*

One project I'm doing now ... is a whole gut and remodel. With that home, we did a mid-century modern-inspired flavor ... all the lower cabinets and the cabinets for the island are a natural, soft, flat-panel cerused wood, big floating chunky shelves, and a complementing champagne flat-panel, high-sheen upper cabinets. The backsplash is in those two tones with a mirrored glass that's chisel cut, so that gives depth and dimension.

