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Florida Suncoast Edition

Front Elevation: The front entry sits between brick-clad columns and two illuminated water features. Traditional Old Florida detailing meets smooth stucco and a contemporary roofline, positioning the home as a strong example of Coastal Contemporary style. Nearly all of that detailing is stucco over masonry, a material that weathers hurricanes without sacrificing character. “You have to have a good stucco company doing the work to get the detailing right,” Architect Matthew Kragh, Founder and President of MHK Architecture explains, “but when they do, it creates a hard candy shell over the structure.”



FROM WATER’S EDGE TO WELCOME

A RESIDENCE THOUGHTFULLY COMPOSED
FROM SEAWALL TO STREET



Three canals converge at this corner of Bird Key, and the lot that meets them has more seawall than street. That’s what gives this waterfront property its hidden allure, an allure this team knows exactly how to unlock. Architect Matthew Kragh, Founder and President of MHK Architecture, describes the site’s geometry as an opportunity — one a rectilinear lot could never offer. “We angled the two-story part of the house along the right side, and we kept the primary suite on the same angle as the seawall,” Kragh explains. “The house is set up on two different angles and really opens up to the back.”

It’s here at the back of the lot where this design-build begins. “We spend all our time outside,” shares Steve Murray, President of Murray Homes, “and if we don’t give enough thought to outdoor living, we are missing a large part of why we live in Florida.” That back-to-front approach requires a foundation of trust built over time. Murray and Carrie Riley, President and Principal Interior Designer at Riley Interior Design, have collaborated for more than twenty years, fostering a rare shorthand. The same shorthand carries through Riley’s office, where she works alongside Project Manager and Interior Designer Lea Lennox and Design Assistant Emily Roma on the project. Drawing inspiration from the home’s Coastal Contemporary exterior — a style with roots in MHK Architecture’s Naples portfolio — the design team crafts an interior that translates seamlessly to Sarasota. ►

Great Room: “We rode that fine line between casual comfort and elevated contemporary, because these homeowners entertain family and friends, and they want their guests to feel welcome in a beautiful and inviting space,” Riley shares. Nickel-gap ceilings keep the backlit floating panels feeling relaxed, the fireplace’s textural stone repeats on the outdoor fireplace beyond, and the club chairs carry backs and arms in a clear material — a selection Riley liked enough to commission the manufacturer for a matching console table.



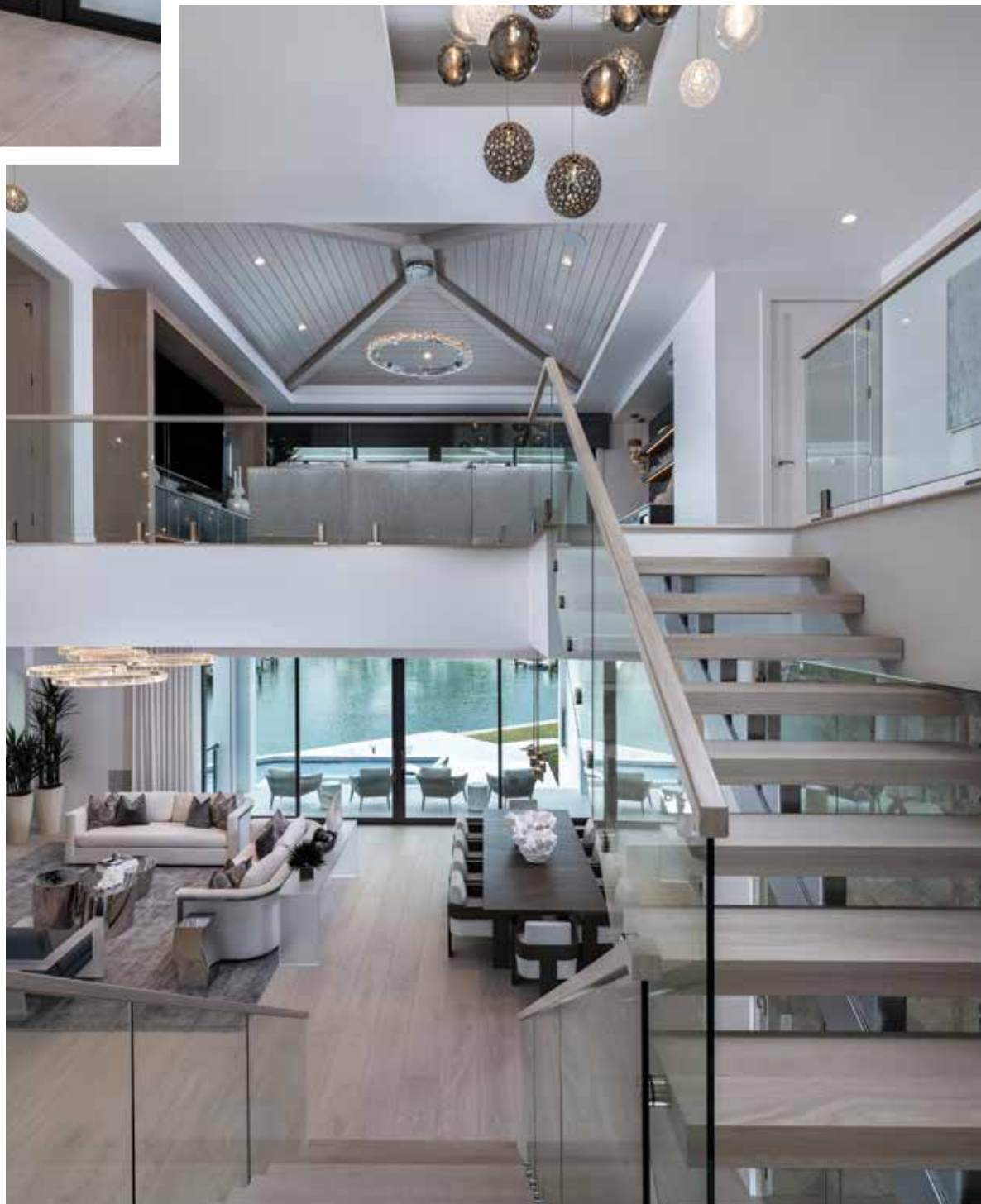
The 23-foot foyer makes a dramatic first impression, establishing the home's palette from the moment of arrival. Shades of gray and blue carry throughout each space, beginning with a light-toned white oak floor subtly washed in gray to complement the home's blue-gray finishes.

The design team's furniture plans inform far more than seating arrangements; they also guide the ceiling treatments overhead and the placement of concealed equipment. "You cannot have a build in isolation; you have to have a collaboration of the entire team," Murray says. That coordination begins early in the construction process, with key design decisions resolved before the trusses are engineered. ►



Foyer: Warmth of wood and translucence of glass define the experience upon arrival. Through the floating staircase, the wine display glows against a backdrop of textured wood. Underfoot, wide-plank white oak flooring carries a gray undertone and the stairs are stained to match, reading as an extension of the floor rather than an object upon it. Overhead, custom hand-blown glass orbs — layered with smaller spheres in smoky, silver, and gold tones — animate the volume with color, texture, and luminous detail.

Dining Room: A substantial dark-wood dining table and sculptural upholstered chairs establish a sophisticated gathering place at the heart of the home. Framed by the kitchen, great room, and floating glass staircase, the open setting maintains visual connection throughout the main living spaces. Layered tray ceilings, soft cove lighting, and contemporary pendants add architectural dimension, while the neutral palette keeps the composition light and inviting.



"This was the interior designer taking our raw space and working magic with it," Matthew Kragh, Founder and President of MHK Architecture shares.

Powder Room: A dramatic wallcovering sweeps across the walls in large organic forms, its smoky blues and graphite grays installed as precisely aligned panels rather than continuous paper. Below, the floating vanity's fluted facade remains uninterrupted by traditional hardware placement; instead, a sleek silver pull runs discreetly along the top edge. "This was the interior designer taking our raw space and working magic with it," Kragh shares.





Kitchen: “All of the decorative metal details share connectivity throughout the home,” Riley states. Here, polished nickel highlights different forms and focal points, even framing the glass fronts of the built-in curio cabinets. White cabinets from Campbell Cabinetry Designs make for an airy space, while beneath the waterfall quartz carrying soft blue undertones, the island base takes on a dark stain to coordinate with the dining table and chairs from Vanguard Furniture.

Laundry Room: The homeowners pass this room every day coming in from the garage, so Riley refuses to treat it as a closed-door space, instead making it whimsical enough to enjoy rather than just work in. A silver metallic grasscloth wallcovering from Phillip Jeffries lines the walls, patterned with palm leaves that echo the real fronds through the window. Overhead, a sculptural chandelier catches the light, while a marble floor grounds the space underfoot.

Gallery (Opposite): With reflecting pools on either side, this passage to the primary bedroom feels like crossing water — a design inspired by tropical overwater bungalows. The glass pieces overhead form a montage of blues that seem to float. For Kragh, the finished passage is more than a route. “That whole hall is like an art gallery,” Kragh describes. “You have a painting at one end, an opening at the other, nature on each side, and art on the ceiling.”



“Once the homeowners knew we had their best design interests at heart,” Riley recalls, “they would say, ‘We flip you the keys,’” granting the team creative license as if the house were their own.



Tying the two structures together is the gallery, a glass-walled passage with lit reflecting pools on either side. At the end of the hallway hangs a canvas commissioned by the homeowners, the work of Stephen Balut, Studio Director of MHK Architecture’s Sarasota studio. The canvas holds more of the coast than its imagery suggests. Balut studies the horizon on nearby Lido Key and works sand he brought back from that beach into the paint, layering thread, string, yarn, and ribbon. “One of my favorite experiences was creating artwork for a home I helped design,” Balut shares, crediting Riley as the visionary behind the composition. “The wood flooring creates the impression of a dock extending toward the waterfront horizon depicted in the painting.” ►

Primary Suite (Opposite): This private wing remains single-story, allowing the ceiling to vault to a generous height and creating a luxurious sense of volume. Nickel-gap paneling introduces a subtle coastal note, tempering the room’s grandeur with warmth and texture. The focal wall’s custom wallcovering, sourced through Riley Interior Design, is installed in panels to create a soft ombré effect that echoes Balut’s custom artwork, while the headboard stitching carries the same horizon-like rhythm. Lutron automated solar and blackout shades from SmartHouse Integration provide effortless light control and privacy without compromising the waterway views. A jewel-like chandelier hangs above two Palecek chairs in the seating alcove, where uninterrupted views extend to the waterway.

Her Closet: Floor-to-ceiling glass-front cabinetry by Carefree Design Center transforms this luminous dressing room into a boutique-inspired gallery, with dedicated display storage for shoes and accessories. A marble-topped island, sparkling chandelier, and sunlit views elevate everyday function with polished elegance.

Morning Bar: Kragh positioned this niche along the gallery side of the primary suite, placing morning conveniences just steps from the bedroom while keeping the noise and light associated with those amenities outside the sleeping area.

The bedroom’s wallcovering continues into the niche for visual continuity. With the water view requiring no privacy shades, Riley extended open shelving uninterrupted across the window. White cabinetry inset with stainless-steel door details carries forward the home’s metal accents from the main living areas.





Primary Bathroom: A serene, spa-inspired primary bath pairs a sculptural freestanding tub with a glass-enclosed rain shower, a tailored double vanity, and a private outdoor shower. Textured walls, dramatic stone flooring, sculptural lighting, and lush tropical views create an elevated retreat designed for daily indulgence.

With a richly veined stone floor in steel blue and gray, Riley keeps everything above it light. The sculpted tub from Gorman's Gallery Kitchen & Bath Studio centers on the window, flanked by rows of rolled towels for a spa effect. The same textured tile behind the tub repeats on the shower wall, while the enclosed outdoor shower waits just beyond, its Tabby Shell stucco wall studded with real shells. "It makes you feel like you're showering at the beach," Kragh shares.



Guest Suite: Kragh vaults the ceiling with beams tracing the hip roof's ridge lines, honoring a traditional form while fixtures and finishes bring the space into the present. Pendants hang from the ceiling in place of table lamps, while contrasting grasscloth wraps the vault and highlights the painted-white beamwork. A compact kitchenette extends the suite's hospitality, pairing dark wood cabinetry and tailored angular pulls with a deep gray tile backsplash, pale stone counter, and a sleek gooseneck faucet. An exterior door beside the kitchenette opens to the balcony, bringing in natural light and an easy indoor-outdoor connection.



The hallway ends at the painting, but the horizon continues. Inside the primary suite, a wallcovering carries the same water-and-sky line across the focal wall, and out back, the real horizon waits past the dock. The ample dock ties the property directly to the water, while the pool and hardscape echo that connection across the two structures. With multiple terraces across the outdoor living, the resort-like nature is best emphasized in the drapery-lined cabana.

“Once the homeowners knew we had their best design interests at heart,” Riley recalls, “they would say, ‘We flip you the keys,’” granting the team creative license as if the house were their own. The trust sustains the three-year process, and by the end, clients become lasting friends. ■

Outdoor Living & Cabana: A conventional outdoor living area worked on paper but left nowhere to dine. The elegant solution drops the dining terrace off the main level, under its own roofline. The lower plane is deliberate: “You don’t want to be sitting on top of your grill when you’re eating,” Murray shares. “You want to be looking at the view.” Riley furnishes the space to feel like a resort, with a rope-wrapped chandelier and rope-backed Brown Jordan dining chairs. A Samsung Terrace outdoor TV integrated above the fireplace and James speakers from SmartHouse Integration providing outdoor audio extend the cabana’s resort-like comfort into evening entertaining.





Fire Pit: From the cabana, a short flight of stairs flanked by two uplit palms lands on an organically shaped pad where the paths around the home connect. Set on the point, the fire pit waits for the few winter evenings by the water. Riley selects a solid natural stone for the hardscape with a bit of texture and no veining, keeping the ground crisp and clean rather than busy with movement.

Aerial (Opposite): This sweeping view reveals the home's answer to the lot: across the back, the house opens wide to the water. The dark standing-seam metal roof brings an island feel over the crisp white exterior, and Riley's PebbleTec selection reinforces that island tie. "We did not want a pale blue that looked commercial," Riley describes. "We wanted a rich Caribbean blue." A synthetic-wood deck runs the seawall to the dock.



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