A commanding bronze sculpture by Cundo Bermúdez titled *Flora, La Recogedora de Sueños* anchors the foyer. Standing 6 feet tall, the work is among the artist's final creations and one of only three bronze pieces he produced. Sculptural Arhaus consoles, A Bella Casa lamp, and tailored window treatments complete the welcoming composition.

Art and Soul

AN EXPRESSION OF FAMILY AND HERITAGE, A REIMAGINED SOUTH MIAMI HOME TELLS ITS STORY THROUGH RICHLY LAYERED INTERIORS AND A CHERISHED COLLECTION OF CUBAN ARTWORKS



INTERIOR DESIGN ELAINE TORRICELLA CUERVO, TOP SHELF DESIGN STUDIO, MIAMI, FL
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE SUPERIOR LANDSCAPING, MIAMI, FL
TEXT JEANNE DE LATHOUDER | PHOTOGRAPHY NICK MELE, WEST PALM BEACH, FL

WHITE BRICK, WARM OAK DETAILING, and a landscape dense with mature greenery set the tone for a farmhouse-style residence in South Miami that is as personal as it is polished. Spanning 9,229 square feet, the newly constructed house was entirely reimagined as a richly layered home for Jose and Heide Dans, a Cuban American couple whose appreciation for art, architecture, and family life informed every aspect of the design. To realize their vision, they turned to Miami-based interior designer Elaine Torricella Cuervo, founder of Top Shelf Design Studio, continuing a creative partnership that has evolved over three major projects.

ABOVE: Commissioned by the homeowners, an untitled oil painting by Humberto Calzada features an architectural sensibility that lends quiet distinction to the hallway, where a simple wood bench from Victoria's Armoire in Coral Gables provides a quiet counterpoint to the painting.

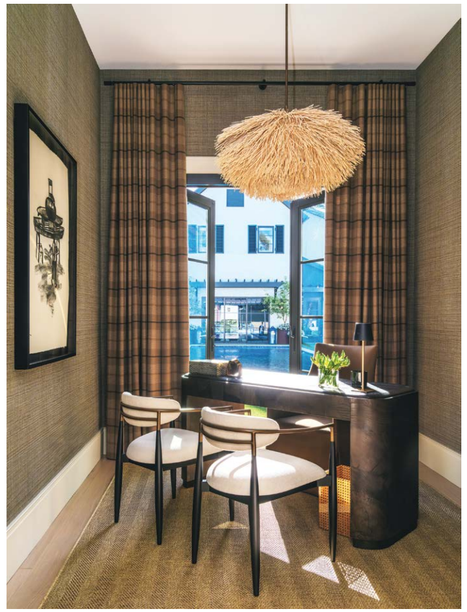
"A home's design needs to be about more than beauty," says designer Elaine Torricella Cuervo. "It should be a reflection of the people who live in it, their art, their collections, and the things that bring them joy."

Longtime Coral Gables residents, Jose and Heide sold their former home in the Ponce-Davis neighborhood and explored several properties before discovering this house, drawn to its architectural character and the chance to create a home that suited their family's lifestyle. They knew the interiors needed a comprehensive overhaul to achieve the level of refinement they envisioned, and after years of working with Cuervo, they knew they could trust her to understand what mattered most to them.

"This is our third major project with Elaine, so at this stage, working with her feels completely effortless," says Jose. "She knows our taste, how our family lives, and what we value in a home without us having to overexplain it."

Cuervo began by stripping the interiors to the bones and replacing the existing flooring, kitchen, bathroom tile, and vanities with custom finishes that elevated the farmhouse architecture without diminishing its warmth. Earth-toned wood floors, textured wallcoverings, and tactile fabrics create a luxuriously layered backdrop, while streamlined furnishings keep the rooms feeling fresh and inviting. Bespoke millwork

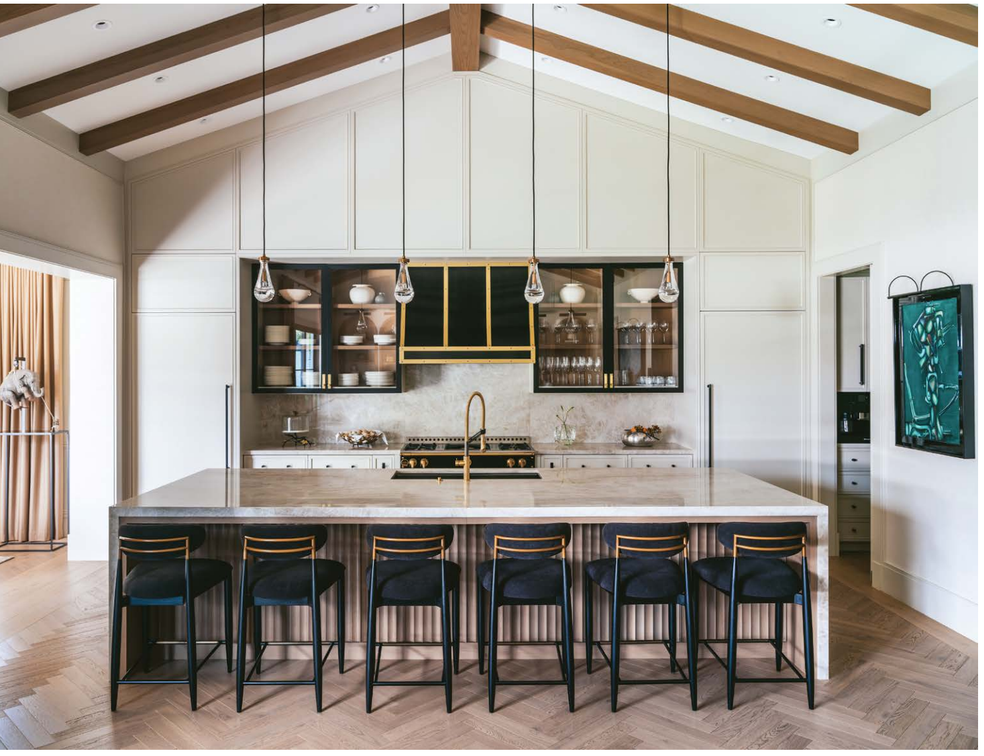
RIGHT: Symmetry informs the living room, where RH furnishings complement custom oak cabinetry that displays treasured objects collected during the homeowners' travels. Above the fireplace hangs Alessandra Puppola's *I Threw Seeds into the Wind and the Sky Began to Bloom*, acquired in Venice. Hernan Rodriguez's *La Nube y el Cielo* completes the art-filled composition.



LEFT: An untitled oil painting by Kcho brings artistic depth to the home office, where Schumacher plaid wool curtains introduce pattern and warmth. A textured pendant adds a playful counterpoint to the tailored furnishings, including an Arhaus desk and chairs. The layered materials lend the workspace a distinctly personal character.

BELOW: An untitled oil painting by Jose Maria Mijares introduces an expressive note in the kitchen, where custom cabinetry and an expansive island establish the architectural foundation. A bespoke hood, crafted to complement the La Cornue Château range, reinforces the refined aesthetic. RH pendant lighting and Arhaus stools complete the room.





ABOVE: A pair of untitled oil paintings by Cundo Bermúdez bring color to the dining room. A solid travertine table and coordinating chairs from RH introduce a sculptural presence, while Holland & Sherry window treatments soften the setting. A handmade onyx centerpiece from Cocoon Gallery in Palm Beach adds another layer of natural materiality.

brings continuity throughout, from arched oak cabinetry, stained to complement the beams and kitchen island, to custom bar areas, bookshelves, and bathroom vanities.

"The true soul of the design lies in the layered materiality," says Cuervo. "We paired linen and grass-cloth wallcoverings with wool, alpaca, and cashmere-like fabrics to create incredible depth. The result is elevated and sophisticated, yet warm, cozy, and approachably lived-in."

In the powder room, the palette takes a more dramatic turn, with an arched wall and floating vanity fashioned entirely from leathered marble set against black grass-cloth and a backlit mirror. The effect is intimate, entirely in keeping with Cuervo's ability to balance polished detailing with a sense of ease.

Art is equally central to the home's identity, and the couple's curated collection includes works by Tomás Sánchez, Cundo Bermúdez, Manolo Valdés, Humberto Calzada, Kcho, and José Maria Mijares.





A ceramic wall installation by Kaiser Suidan makes a striking artistic statement in the family room, reinforcing the homeowners' commitment to meaningful art. Placed amid the room's relaxed furnishings, the vibrant piece commands attention without sacrificing the welcoming atmosphere that defines this gathering space.

ABOVE: Designed for both convivial gatherings and relaxed afternoons, the family room features a generous sectional with ample room for family and friends. An untitled oil painting by Cundo Bermúdez adds artistic character, while a custom bar and carefully layered furnishings create an inviting atmosphere for entertaining or simply settling in.

RIGHT: A sculptural arched wall and floating vanity, both fabricated in leathered marble by Armina Stone, establish the powder room's dramatic character. Black grass-cloth from Twenty2 Grasscloth deepens the palette, while a custom mirror from Two Brothers Custom Glass introduces a luminous counterpoint. The interplay of texture, shadow, and stone gives the intimate space exceptional presence.



Rather than treating those art pieces as decorations, Cuervo considered their placement and lighting integral to the design, allowing the collection to form a dialogue with the architecture.

"As Cuban Americans, our art collection is the soul of our home," says Heide. "Elaine gave every work the spatial weight and lighting it deserved, making the art feel like a natural extension of the architecture rather than just decor on a wall."

The landscape brings another cherished memory into the picture: the couple's former home in the Smoky Mountains, where dense woodland and abundant wildlife made the property a favorite family gathering place. To recreate that feeling here, Cuervo collaborated with landscape architect Orlando Otero of Superior Landscaping to introduce mature magnolias, cascading bridal veil plants, sculpted boxwoods, and flowering begonias throughout the grounds. Pagoda-style aviaries shelter toucans and other rare birds, rabbits wander the grounds, and a miniature chicken coop echoes the main house, right down to its copper gutters and weathervane.



"For me, the most rewarding part of a project is seeing how the design comes to life through the way a family lives," says Cuervo. "The details matter, but what makes a space meaningful is how naturally it brings people together and becomes part of their everyday lives."

With a large, close-knit family, the Dans wanted spaces that could welcome a lively celebration as naturally as a casual Sunday dinner. Generous seating, a spacious family room, and two custom bar areas encourage gathering, while the gardens extend that convivial spirit outdoors. Throughout the residence, authentic materials and considered craftsmanship are balanced by warmth, humor, and the small details that make a house feel genuinely lived in.

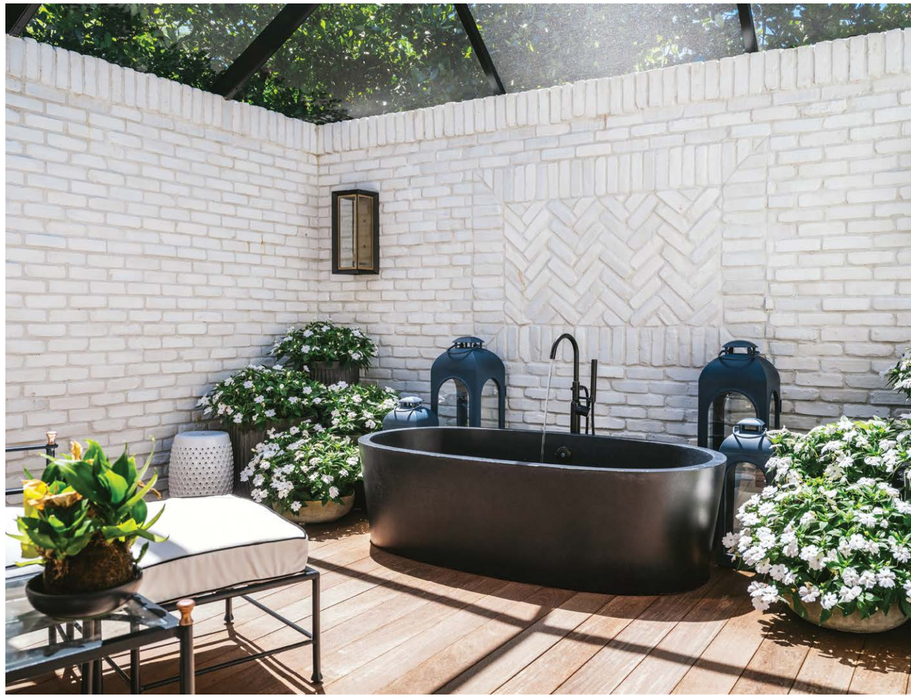
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ABOVE: Kina Crow's mixed-media work, *Little Polly Got Carried Away*, brings an unexpected note of whimsy to the primary bedroom. A poster bed and bedside chests from RH establish a refined foundation, while custom beams lend architectural definition overhead. Soft furnishings and carefully layered window treatments create a restful retreat with a sophisticated, collected sensibility.



ABOVE: Custom cabinetry designed by Top Shelf Design Studio establishes a sleek aesthetic for the primary bathroom. Textured shower surfaces and bespoke arched glass doors add refinement, while RH sconces provide a warm glow.

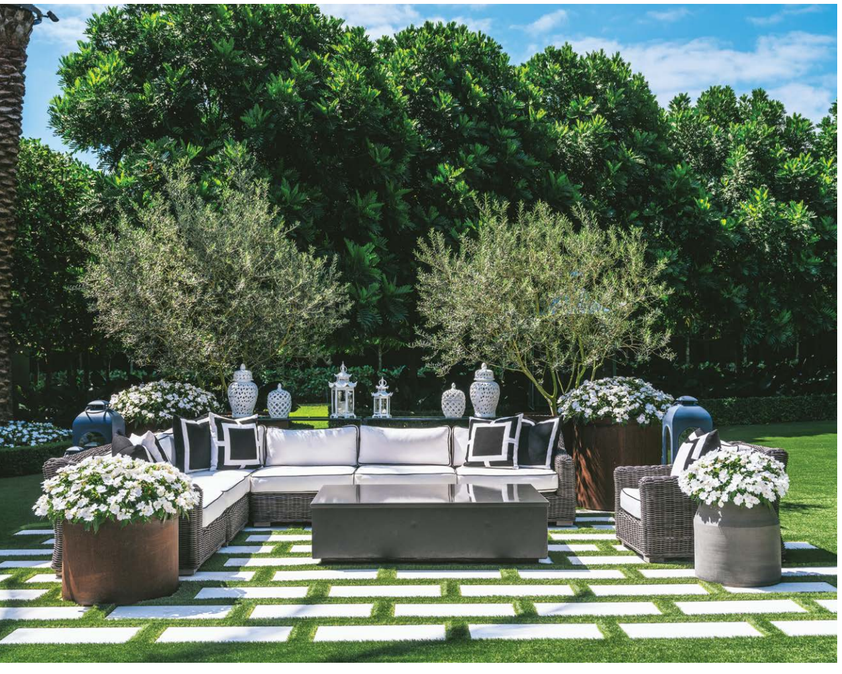
BELOW: White brick carries the home's exterior material palette into the primary outdoor bathing area, creating continuity between the architecture and the garden. A sculptural outdoor tub by Concretti Designs anchors the setting.





LEFT: Designed as a miniature counterpart to the main residence, the chicken coop echoes the farmhouse aesthetic with remarkable attention to detail. Copper gutters and a weathervane complete the diminutive structure, transforming a practical feature into a whimsical architectural accent.

BELOW: The patio extends the home's inviting character outdoors, with a relaxed seating arrangement surrounded by lush greenery. RH furnishings and a fire pit complement the layered landscape designed by Orlando Otero of Superior Landscaping. Sculptural planters from Bent into Shape complete the outdoor setting.





SOURCES

ENTRY
Consoles – Arhaus, Coral Gables, FL
Lamp – A Bella Casa, Miami, FL
Sconces – RH, West Palm Beach, FL
Flooring – William Munoz, ProWill Wood Floors, Miami, FL
Drapery – Schumacher, Dania Beach, FL

HALLWAY
Wood bench – Victoria's Armoire, Coral Gables, FL

LIVING ROOM
Sofas, table, chandelier, and area rug – RH, West Palm Beach, FL
Drink tables – Arhaus, Coral Gables, FL
Fireplace – Artisan Kraft, *artisankraft.com*
Wall cabinetry and wood beams – Designed by Top Shelf Design Studio, Miami, FL, and fabricated by Viking Kabinets, Miami, FL

OFFICE
Desk and chairs – Arhaus, Coral Gables, FL
Chandelier – Fine Line Furniture & Accessories, Coral Gables, FL
Drapery – Schumacher, Dania Beach, FL
Area rug – Carpet Boutique, Coral Gables, FL

KITCHEN
Cabinetry and island designed by Top Shelf Design Studio, Miami, FL, and fabricated by Viking Kabinets, Miami, FL
Hood – Custom, Bell's Appliances, Coral Gables, FL
Stools – Arhaus, Coral Gables, FL
Pendant lighting – RH, West Palm Beach, FL

DINING ROOM
Table, chairs, chandelier, and area rug – RH, West Palm Beach, FL
Drapery – Holland & Sherry, Dania Beach, FL
Onyx bowl – Cocoon Gallery, Palm Beach, FL

FAMILY ROOM
White sectional – Pottery Barn, Coral Gables, FL
Tables – Fine Line Furniture & Accessories, Coral Gables, FL
Floor lamps – Arhaus, Coral Gables, FL
Drapery – Holland & Sherry, Dania Beach, FL
Area rug – Carpet Boutique, Coral Gables, FL

POWDER ROOM
Wall and floating sink – Designed by Top Shelf Design Studio, Miami, FL, and fabricated by Armina Stone, Hialeah, FL
Mirror – Two Brothers Custom Glass, Hialeah, FL
Wallcovering – Twenty2 Grasscloth, *grasscloth.twenty2.net*

PRIMARY BEDROOM
Poster bed, chests, lamps, and area rug – RH, West Palm Beach, FL
Drapery – Holland & Sherry, Dania Beach, FL
Wood beams – Designed by Top Shelf Design Studio, Miami, FL, and fabricated by Viking Kabinets, Miami, FL

PRIMARY BATHROOM
Cabinetry – Designed by Top Shelf Design Studio, Miami, FL, and fabricated by Viking Kabinets, Miami, FL
Sconces – RH, West Palm Beach, FL
Shower doors – Primos Welding, Miami, FL
Shower wall – Innovative Surfaces, Coral Gables, FL
Outside tub – Concretti Designs, *concrettidesigns.com*

BACK EXTERIOR
Sofa grouping, chair, lanterns, and firepit – RH, West Palm Beach, FL
Pool – Forever Pools, Miami, FL
Firepit metal top – Primos Welding, Miami, FL
Umbrellas and lounges fabric – Premium Upholstery, Miami, FL
Planters – Bent Into Shape, *bentintoshape.net*

ABOVE: The pool terrace offers a relaxed counterpoint to the home's tailored interiors. Reupholstered pool loungers add a personal touch, while custom umbrellas provide shade. RH lanterns complete the setting around a pool designed and fabricated by Forever Pools in Miami.