

OCEANFRONT HOUSE

VERO BEACH

ON FLORIDA'S ATLANTIC COAST, INTERIOR DESIGNER DOROTHEE JUNKIN HAS MIXED CELESTIAL LIGHTING WITH TACTILE SURFACES, AND BLENDED THE BEST OF NORTH AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN DESIGN / *By Jo Leevers*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM WALDRON



With a choice of lounging areas and a sunken firepit, the deck makes the most of its oceanfront location



Ⓐ Shortlist

When it came to the interior design of this oceanfront house in Vero Beach, Florida, Dorothee Junkin needed to think big. It extends over 1,700 sq m – 1,850 sq m if you count the covered outdoor spaces – super-sized, even by Florida standards. Was Junkin intimidated? “Quite the reverse,” she says. “I was excited. I thought, ‘Wow, imagine what could be done in that space.’”

The more immediate challenge was the fact that the builders had already begun construction work. “This meant I needed to hit the ground running and swiftly decide on the layout so that the electrical points, lighting cables and plumbing could be laid down early on,” says Junkin. “Even then, it was very hard to envisage exactly

how the gardens would look as, ideally, I try to respond to a house’s setting. But here, the starting point was a building site.”

Junkin is no stranger to creating large-scale projects from scratch, however, having worked on the five-star hotel in the Abu Dhabi World Trade Center mall and Munich’s celebrated Lenbachhaus museum while she was at Foster & Partners in London. But as she explains, designing a residence calls for a slightly different approach: “With a home, you develop more of a relationship with the client and have more scope to seek out unusual, personal touches, from special surfaces to antiques, artworks to custom-made lights.” For this project, Junkin did all this and more, working closely with her client

to track down exactly the right items. The two of them worked side by side on several occasions, road-testing sofas (“I lost count of how many we sat on in one day”) and heading out to marble suppliers to select surfaces. “At one point, the client and I were standing in the middle of a baking hot stone yard – two women surrounded by dust, stone slabs, workmen and cranes – deep in conversation about the subtle differences in the types of marble.”

This attention to detail could have something to do with Junkin’s background, as she trained as an architect in Germany and Switzerland before moving into interior design in London and New York, setting up her practice, Architecta, in >



LEFT: Acting as a centrepiece, the open fireplace, with its huge chimney, breaks up a large space. The painting in the hallway is by Richard Gorman

OPPOSITE: With its mossy tones and diaphanous curtains, the dining room is almost as lush as the palm-filled courtyard outside

2009. Her European design sensibility also appealed to the client: “She didn’t want a look that shouted ‘Florida beach house’ and was curious to see what a European aesthetic could bring to the space,” says Junkin. So she freely mixes designs by B&B Italia, Nella Vetrina and Porta Romana with her own bespoke pieces and classics from Herman Miller in a cohesive, considered way. “I keep up to date with what’s going on in Paris and Milan, but I never design by brand or label; I pick from styles and eras to find pieces that chime with the space and the architecture.”

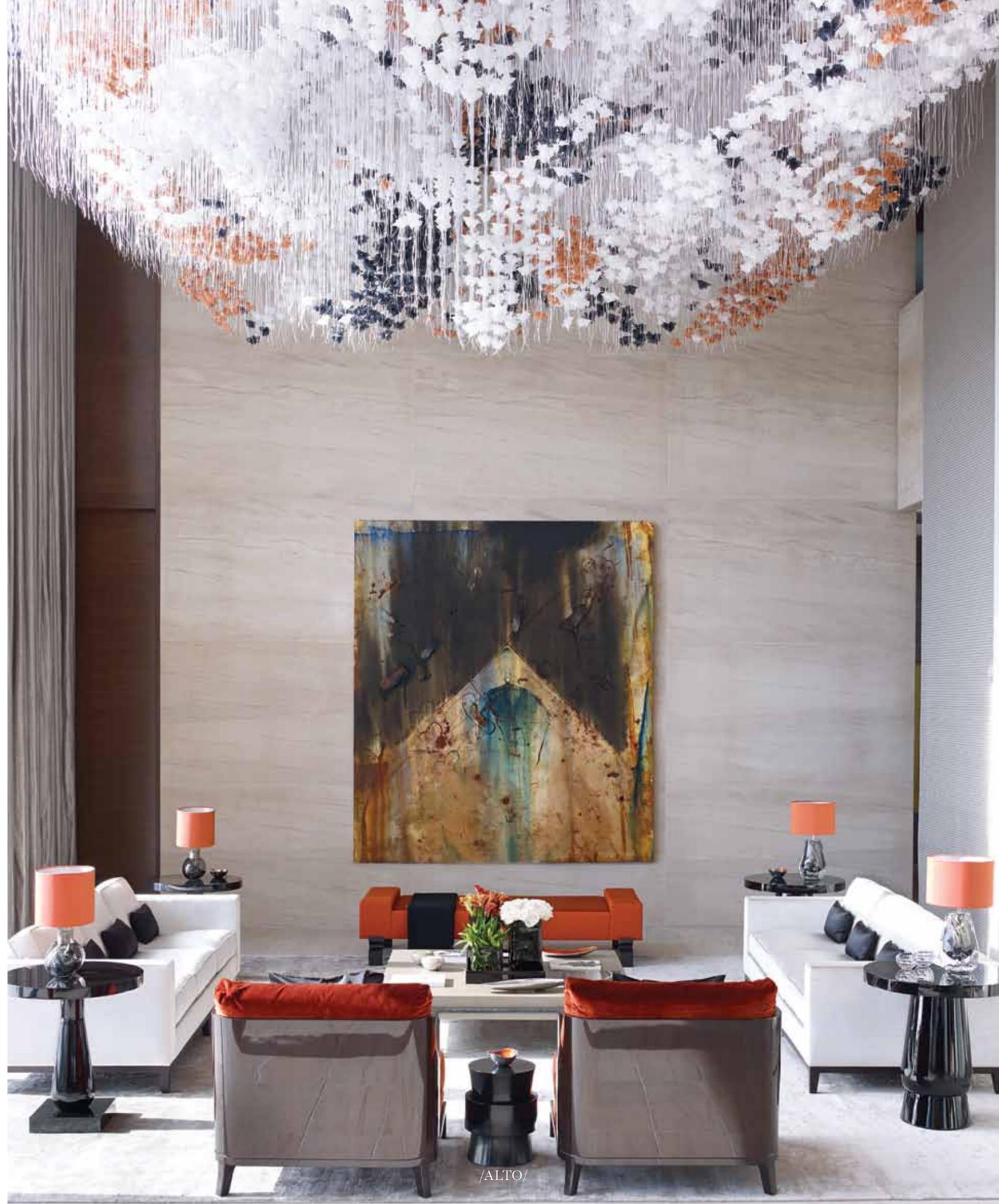
Junkin sums up this home’s style as “contemporary elegance with international influences,” and it’s this mix that helps

imbue each of the soaring spaces with its own distinct feel. Then, artfully applied lighting and interesting textures create a seemingly effortless flow from one area to the next. For example, a wall of split-face Alabama limestone that adds gravitas to the family dining area is subtly repeated in the seating surround of the central fireplace. “Texture works on an almost subconscious level,” says Junkin. “If you can feel and sense something, you really appreciate it.” It’s one of her favourite ways to add richness to a space. “That’s far more my style than, say, adding bold colours,” she adds. Layers of texture range from hewn stone to extruded aluminium panels and wallpapers and curtains shot through >



ABOVE: Textures play an important role in every room, including in this calming bedroom, with its layers of pale neutrals, contrasted with black

OPPOSITE: By day, Sharon Marston’s glorious light installation acts as a sculpture. Furniture includes pieces by Porta Romana and Holly Hunt





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This sitting room in the master suite is more cossetting than the 'public' living areas, with metallic-weave wallcovering, embroidered curtains and leather seating. The mirrored coffee tables are by Gallotti & Radice

BELOW: The Rifra kitchen can carry off its dramatic black shade in such a generous space; it's softened by custom-designed stools by Arteriors



with the gleam of metal. "A wall that radiates different shades when the light hits it adds so much more character than a plain surface," says Junkin.

Lighting is another key focus. In the cathedral-like living room, which is some 15m long, the void above the seating area is filled with two ethereal cascades of LEDs in a shimmer of white, black and copper shades – pieces created by Junkin in collaboration with architectural lighting maestro Sharon Marston in London. They were sent over in 20 pre-constructed sections to be reassembled on site. "In a space such as this, even a statement chandelier would get lost, so we needed lights that would function as an art installation during the day, but also illuminate the huge area at night," says Junkin. The piece is visible from the beach, stopping passers-by in their tracks: "People tend to stop and gaze in, not quite able to work out whether it's a sculpture or a light. Which was exactly the intention."

Breathtaking illuminations also adorn both the family dining space and the more formal dining room. "This was always going to be a very special, sophisticated room," says Junkin, who collaborated with Swarovski to create an installation of 60 candles to hover over the table. "Nothing like this had been attempted in a residence before, but we figured it out," she says.

The beauty of this home is how such

spectacular statements dovetail with everyday comfort: "When you're sitting on the sofa or eating dinner, you still want a human scale to the space," says Junkin, who uses art and antiques to refocus attention on the smaller yet equally satisfying details. Finds from the owner's travels, such as a collection of Balinese ceremonial spears, add a further dimension to the adventure.

Global influences continue in the bedroom suites – all eight of them. Again, the sheer size of this project presented an exciting design opportunity: "Each bedroom needed a different feel, so guests can choose which is their favourite style," says Junkin. Decadent metallic textures were reserved for the master bedroom, where raw silk upholstery and steel- and gold-toned wallcovering were the starting points. "The wallpaper pattern recalls the ripples of the ocean, which feels very appropriate," says Junkin. She added a slender fireplace between the bedroom and bathroom to further enrich the space.

Junkin's next project is back in Manhattan, in a space that is generous by New York standards, but not quite on this impressive scale. But then, as she says: "Whether you have 180 or 18,000 sq ft to play with, good design comes down to quality not quantity." **A**

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LEFT: Near-invisible frameless glass isolates the wet room in one of the guest en suites