

BEACHSIDE LIVING ON A GRAND SCALE

An ocean-front home by Dorothee Junkin

When it came to the interior design of an ocean-front house in Florida, Dorothee Junkin needed to think big. The floor space of this weekend retreat extends over 18,000 square feet, with surrounding gardens bringing it up to a total of 20,000 square feet. That's a little less than three football pitches - super-sized, even by Florida standards. Was she intimidated? "Quite the reverse," says Dorothee. "I was excited. I thought, 'Wow, imagine what could be done in that space'."

Slightly more challenging 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 electric points, plumbing and lighting cables could be laid down early on," says Dorothee. "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."

Dorothee Junkin is no stranger to creating large-scale projects from scratch, 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 for 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 the 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," Dorothee recalls. ►



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. Her European design sensibility also appealed to the client: "She definitely didn't want a look that shouted 'Florida beach house' and was curious to see what a European outlook could bring to the space." So Junkin freely mixes designs by Christian Liaigre, B&B Italia and Porta Romana with her own bespoke pieces and classics by 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 textures create a seemingly effortless flow from one area to the next.

The lofty formal dining looks out onto a lush internal courtyard filled with palms and a collection of traditional wooden longboats. Diaphanous curtains and deep upholstery continue the mossy tones while the lines of the Saarinen dining table echo the flow of palm trunks. "This was always going to be a very special, elegant, sophisticated room," says Junkin. ►



Kitchen

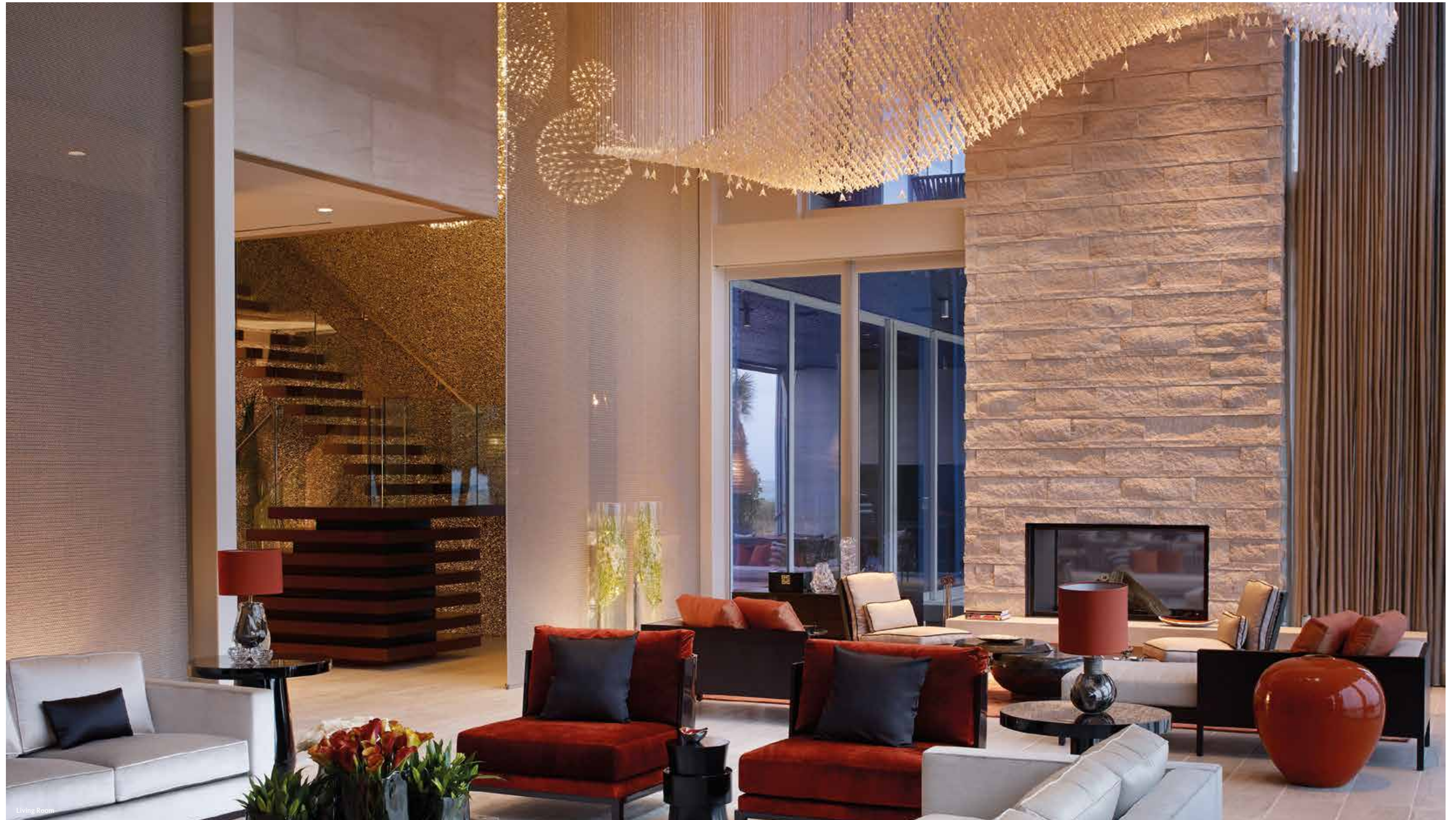


Living Room

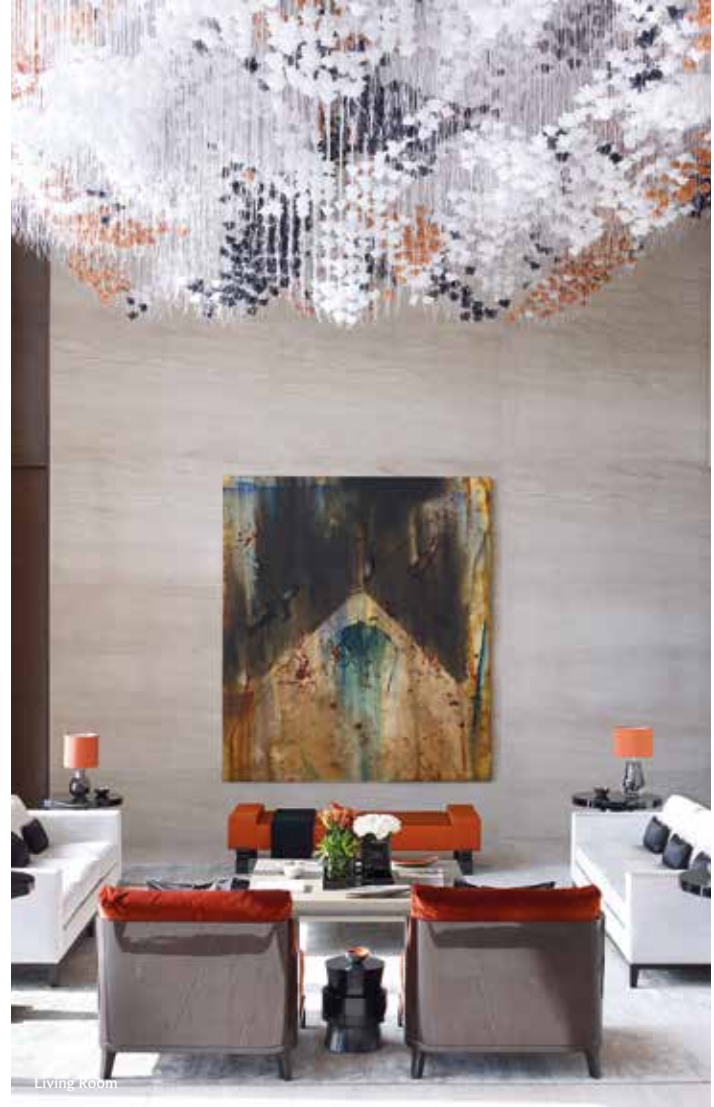
Lighting is a key focus of the home — by both necessity and design. In the 50m long cathedral-like living room, the void above the seating area is filled with an ethereal cascade of LEDs in a shimmer of white, black and copper shades, a piece created by Junkin in collaboration with architectural lighting maestro Sharon Marston in London. The finished masterpiece was 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 a light that would function as an art installation during the day, but also illuminate the huge area at night."

The family dining room celebrates the elements, with the ocean view enhanced by timber, linen and a textural wall. "The variations add character and a tonal richness that you just don't get from a plain painted wall," says Dorothee.

This magical formal dining room is presided over by a light installation created in collaboration with Swarovski, using 60 candles. "Nothing like this had been attempted in a residence before, but we figured it out," says Dorothee. This lofty formal dining looks out onto a lush internal courtyard filled with palms and a collection of traditional wooden longboats. Diaphanous curtains and deep upholstery continue the mossy tones while the lines of the Saarinen dining table echo the flow of palm trunks. "This was always going to be a very special, elegant, sophisticated room." ►



Living Room



A through corridor leads to the family room fireplace. “The central fireplace’s chimney works as a pivotal centerpiece. It simultaneously separates areas of the family room and acts as a meeting point for the spaces.” Its sculptural quality is matched by two sculptural pieces on the left, while a painting on the right enhances the hallway.

The beauty of this home is how such spectacular statements dovetail with everyday comfort. “When you’re sitting on the sofa, you still want a human scale to the space,” explains Dorothee, who uses artworks and antiques to refocus attention on the smaller yet equally satisfying details.

When in London she’s a habituée of Talisman and confesses to a growing addiction to online emporium 1st Dibs... “I can get lost for hours on its pages”. Finds from the owner’s travels, such as a collection of Balinese ceremonial spears, add a further dimension to the adventure.

Dorothee Junkin’s next project is back in Manhattan in a space that is generous by New York standards, but not quite on this scale. But then, as Dorothee adds, “Whether you have 180 or 18,000 square feet to play with, good design comes down to quality not quantity.”

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