

DESIGN + DECOR

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MODERN LUXURY WITH LAKE SIDE VIEWS

A Florida Model Home Awaits its New Owner

Story by Meryl Siegman | Photography by Venjhamin Reyes







Imagine designing a fabulous home for no one in particular. That's exactly what Freestyle Interiors does regularly. Founded by interior designer Faith Fix in 1981, Freestyle Interiors is an award-winning design firm in Bonita Springs, FL, that specializes in creating luxury model homes throughout the U.S. The firm works with builders from the ground up as part of a collaborative team, designing the thousands of details it takes to create and furnish a home, from floor plans and layout to bedding and table settings—and everything in between.

Designing a Model Home

"Designing a model home is a completely different beast," says Arlynn McDaniel, senior lead designer at Freestyle. "It requires a new way of thinking, with an approach that is broad rather than specific. We anticipate what the public is going to like to get a buyer for the home. It's a delicate balance to appeal to the majority of people." For the purchase price, the new owner gets a brand-new home that is completely furnished and ready to move into. The typical buyer, Arlynn explains, is someone looking for a second, third or even fourth "snowbird" home. "People don't want to be



Floor-to-ceiling windows with Pindler & Pindler drapery panel fabric offer stunning views of Lake Miramar.



involved in the building process,” she continues. “They just want to bring their toothbrush and move right in.”

A lot of teamwork goes into the process of creating a model home. Freestyle gets involved in each project at the very beginning, working with the architect to help create the floor plan and set of interior design drawings, which pave the way for the construction to start. The drawings include ceiling design, cabinet layout, wall details, flooring, paint selection, lighting and even where each piece of furniture will be placed. Arlynn prides herself in designing each home as a unique and special project. With two decades of interior design and construction experience under her belt, she’s the consummate pro. “I never duplicate a look, specify the same furniture or use the same color scheme,” she says. “It’s more fun to create something new each time. It keeps things fresh.”

One of the tricks of the model home trade is to do the basic design—walls, tiles, floors, cabinets and countertops—in neutral colors such as white, cream and taupe. The colors are pulled in with the accessories, so if the eventual owners do not like existing hues or grow tired of them, they can switch them out. As Arlynn explains, “It’s easier to change the artwork, accessories and rugs than it is to replace tiles.”

As challenging as it is to create a completely customized luxury

home for a future inhabitant, designing a model home comes with its advantages. “With a model home, I don’t have to constantly run things by the owner,” the designer says. “I can get creative and do what I want, pushing the limit and designing new details, such as a really fantastic fireplace.” And because Arlynn is in charge of all the material selections and specifications, there is never a problem with going over budget.

Location, Location, Location

This home, completed in 2020, is located in the exclusive community of Miromar Lakes, a development of luxury homes offering waterfront living, three miles of white sand beaches and a golf course. The community’s amenities include a European-style wellness space, tennis courts, beachside cabanas, boating and social activities. The freshwater lake covers 700 acres.

The completely private two-story house measures over 4,500 square feet on the ground level and 1,500 square feet on the second floor. The entire property totals more than 10,000 square feet in all, including its lanais, balconies and garage. With four bedrooms and four-and-half bathrooms, the modern home features an open floor plan with a two-story grand entryway, floor-to-ceiling windows, cathedral ceilings and a catwalk connecting one side of the house to the other. It offers sweeping views of the lake from all the rooms, except the study and one guest bedroom. Standing on the wooden



catwalk, a visitor can see the front door through the foyer in one direction, and get a glimpse of the lake through the great room in the other.

The large outdoor space figures prominently in the overall design. “This area is very important,” says Arlynn. “In these homes, the lanais are sometimes as large as the interior. Especially because of the pandemic, the outdoor living concept is huge. People want to be outside as much as possible.” The home’s external environment features a sun deck, swimming pool with hot tub, and several covered balconies. An outdoor kitchen complete with undercounter refrigerator, gas fireplace, fire pit, sectional sofas and TV make it ideal for dining and entertaining al fresco.

The views of Lake Miromar are so spectacular that the designer planned her entire design scheme around them, arranging the seating throughout the house to maximize the panorama. She chose swivel chairs so anyone seated in the living room can easily turn to gaze out at the water.

The Design Scheme

The overall design has a contemporary look with clean lines offset by soft, textural fabrics. The background colors are white with taupe/mushroom tones. “I threw in a lot of color with the art and accessories,” Arlynn explains. “I wanted to get away from the traditional blues and greens typically associated with a Florida home.” Navy blue, turquoise, aqua and black were used as strong accent colors. The designer was inspired by the pervasive view of the water, which she wanted to bring inside. Although much of the house has painted walls, wallpaper is used to highlight certain areas, including the wet bar, club room and dining room. The lighting throughout the house is chrome with glass or white accents.





The open kitchen features counter stools by Wesley Hall and pendant lamps from Hudson Valley Lighting.







The wood and stainless-steel dining room table is from Bernhardt, with chairs by Wesley Hall.

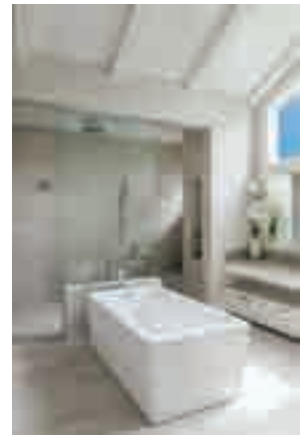


The study has a mid-century feel, with a Hooker Furniture desk, a steel-framed chair and ottoman by Vanguard Furniture, and a leather Hancock and Moore desk chair with a chrome base.





The master bedroom is intentionally clean and crisp so new owners can add their own personal flair. The poster bed and nightstands are from Hickory White.



Arlynn's signature style involves designing the inside of the home to reflect its exterior. The general feel of the outside, along with the paint colors, are carried inside for a clean, modern look. She believes the area's prospective buyers are not drawn to a "hard, ultra-sleek modern look," so she tries to find a balance with a soft, contemporary approach. She favors blending clean-lined furniture with textural fabric, and mixing and matching walnut wood with white, high-gloss finishes to evoke a modern vibe. While she doesn't describe her work as eclectic, she likes to mix styles, such as adding a touch of mid-century, which is evidenced by the classic chrome-framed upholstered chair and ottoman by Vanguard Furniture in the study.

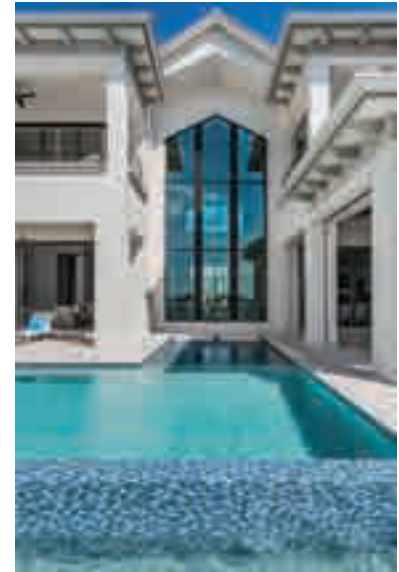


White cabinetry and high gloss prevail in the kitchen. Overall, its design is straightforward and simple, without an abundance of accessories. The goal was to keep it soft and clean, so the future owners of the home could add the colors of their liking. The pale gray backsplash is made from Alpha Tiles subway tiles, and the Pompeii Quartz countertop adds both beauty and practicality. "This is where the movement and color come in," Arlynn explains.

The ground level, with its open floor plan, is actually a single large living space. The kitchen and dining room open up into the great room, which in turn merges into the club room, with its built-in wine cellar and glass cabinets. The wet bar's knee wall is covered with glass tiles from Ceramic Matrix. The tiles are all the same deep turquoise, but because half are concave and half convex, their arrangement creates an eye-catching and colorful pattern.



The spacious lanai features outdoor furniture from Jardin de Ville and accent pillows by Elaine Smith.



Resources:

Interior Design

Freestyle Interiors

Faith Fix

Arlynn McDaniel

3525 Bonita Beach Road SW #105

Bonita Springs, Florida 34134

239.949.2210

freestyleinteriors.com

Builder

Fox Development Custom Builder

7550 Mission Hills Drive

Naples, Florida 34120

239.261.1082

Architect

Weber Design Group

Rob Mongillo

8970 Fontana Del Sol Way #2

Naples, Florida 34109

239.594.9778

weberdesigngroup.com

Cabinetry

Distinctive Kitchen Studio

Vincent Tormey

6230 Shirley Street #101

Naples, Florida 34109

239.591.8535

dksnaples.com



The great room's gracious floor-to-ceiling windows afford a magnificent view of Lake Miromar, which can be seen from the entryway. Arlynn strategically placed four wingback swivel chairs instead of a sofa to allow for an unobstructed vista. "I didn't want people entering the room to see the back of a couch," she explains.

This gorgeous model home sold soon after it was completed.

When asked if she knows who purchased it, Arlynn becomes a little wistful. She usually doesn't meet the folks who move into the houses she so meticulously creates, one of the drawbacks of designing model homes. But even without their feedback, she can rest assured that, whoever they are, they have moved into the house of their dreams.