

# HOME & DESIGN<sup>®</sup>

Luxury Homes | Interior Design | Home Furnishings



| Suncoast Edition |



Comedically placed, almost protecting specific areas of the home, one can find original KAWS sculptures guarding the wine room, screening room, and perhaps sharing a joke in the great room. "It's theatre, and we create the stage," says interior designer Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz referencing how he creates a design experience to be felt, rather than only seen.

# STRAVAGANTE DESIGN







**Above:** “The countertop is Sequoia Brown and it almost looks like wood with its texture. It went through a wire brush technique that takes out the softer material leaving behind the higher, dense material giving the wood-like texture. The coloring and seamlessness also make it look like one extraordinary, single piece of Redwood,” describes residential designer Jeremy Strong.

Welcome to this penthouse filled with whimsy and unexpected details. Sip your *aperitivo* and whet your appetite for exquisite design filled with illusions and *stravagante*.

“This residence was a 14-month build out on the 19th floor. The homeowner purchased two penthouses, so we took out the firewall making the one unit 6,700 square feet,” explains Joe Menna of Cabex Construction.

The architecture and layout of the penthouse has an Italian courtyard theme, as if several buildings are stacked next to each other where each surface is unique in texture and color. The main hallway in the unit acts as a street in this *al fresco* design and branches off to the different rooms in the house. ►







This type of whimsy, using parodies and sensual art, evokes a feeling beyond traditional interior design. Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz, interior designer and principal of BNO Design, tells the story of the homeowner's life. "I began this project, much like with my other projects, with a theme; the theme can be a poem, a picture, or artwork. It all must tell a story," Noriega-Ortiz says with grace and appreciation, describing his own masterpiece.

This story begins when you enter the unit through the kitchen, since as Noriega-Ortiz says, "That's where we all go anyway!"

In agreement, Strong adds: "The client wanted an open concept and modern kitchen without being ultra-modern or cold. So, we used natural products that would give warmth and texture. The entire back wall is textured marble. All the cabinet doors are Servo-Drive. You just touch them and they open by themselves. Touch a button, and they close." ►

**Left and Below:** Cloaked in sensuality, the screen room is draped in cherry-red velvet. You can't see it here, but long, black feathers densely dress the theater's back wall from floor to ceiling. More of the client's extensive artwork collection is displayed with a pair of sculptures flanking the television. Two original, iconic KAWS spoof art Mickey Mouse statues "guard" the entrance to the room.



"This client knows a lot of people in town, so we were very fortunate to get this project. We worked hard to do so — it was almost a year's worth of design, one-on-one with the homeowner to design the whole thing," adds residential designer Jeremy Strong of Cabex Construction.

This homeowner's extensive art collection is on display in every room. The great room features two large wood-carved statues by one of the most popular living artists today, KAWS. Known for his satire and repeated use of iconic characters with double X's for eyes, KAWS uses provocative poses spoofing mostly wholesome figures, such as Mickey Mouse. Comedically placed, almost protecting specific areas of the home, one can find these statues guarding the wine room and screening room as well as possibly sharing a joke in the great room. ►

**Left:** Iconic, original artwork by KAWS amusingly keeps a precious wine collection safe.







**Above:** The master bedroom's personalized closet system by Elmwood Custom Cabinetry was supplied by Cabinets Extraordinaire and installed by Cabex Construction.

**Right:** This master bedroom might be the cat's meow but the Barrel of Monkeys chain on the custom-designed chandelier should take credit as the most hidden gem. Draperies behind the vanity conceal a glass window to the spectacular tub. This en suite, complete with private balcony, features an incredible panoramic view. Lutron motorized shades from Wicked Smart Homes can be lowered to block early morning sunlight.

**Left:** This Italian Garden theme is not complete without the master bath's exquisite Flower Tub. Created by glass artisans, this smooth, lightweight fiberglass tub is available in five exterior finishes: black, red, white, and silver or gold leaf. The tub is located inside the shower on a raised glass tile floor and has an unobstructed view through the terrace.







**Above:** The powder bathroom wall has several layers of Venetian plaster giving the illusion of age. A thick Cristallo Quartzite countertop vanity engineered by Cabex Construction and wall-mounted toilet look heavy and yet float weightlessly above the floor.

**Right:** Aptly named, “The Man Cave” doubles as a smoking room, equipped with its own HVAC system. The floor is layered with another collection: around twenty antique, hand-made rugs, accumulated from around the world. Floor-to-ceiling windows flank the custom-made wood door and pediment and support the old-world, Italian garden theme.

To conceal the necessary yet unsightly components of HVAC and sprinklers, beams are perfectly placed, since “the locations can ruin the illusion” as Noriega-Ortiz explains. The great room’s pink sofa is much like a bright garden flower, and the custom-dyed feathers on the dining room chandelier add to the outdoor motif.

With all the trickery of how to open doors, hiding cooling and safety elements, a wine cellar-guarding mouse, is this just a penthouse or truly a *fun* house? ►



With conviction, Strong concludes: “I design from a functional mindset. I work backwards from how the client utilizes the room, and from there we can make anything look aesthetically pleasing. If the space doesn’t function for the client, then it’s not a truly successful design.” ■

**Below and Right:** Spectacular views of Sarasota Bay, Bird Key, and John Ringling Causeway — which is colorfully lit at night — can be seen from inside the home and enjoyed from the balconies. The great room’s pink sofa is much like a bright garden flower and the custom-dyed feathers on the dining room chandelier add to the outdoor motif of the Italian courtyard design.



Written by Tye Davis  
Photography by Blaine Johnathan

**Luxury Home Builder & Residential Designer**

Cabex Construction  
5686 Fruitville Road  
Sarasota, FL 34232  
941.342.3443  
cabexconstruction.com

**Resources:**

Cabinets Extraordinaire  
5686 Fruitville Road  
Sarasota, FL 34232  
941.342.3443  
cabinetsextra.com

The Plumbing Place  
5678 Fruitville Road  
Sarasota, FL 34232  
941.378.5678  
theplumbingplace.com

Wicked Smart Homes  
527 South Pineapple Avenue  
Sarasota, FL 34236  
941.928.0343  
wickedsmarthomes.com