



# *European Affair*

ON SARASOTA BAY, A NEW HOME REVELS IN FRENCH NEOCLASSICAL TRADITIONS.

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ARCHITECTURE / JENNIFER SMITH AND SCOTT HUTTON,  
SMITH & HUTTON

INTERIOR DESIGN / HEATHER WELLS, MARI THOMAS  
AND KENDALL MILLER, HEATHER WELLS INC.

HOME BUILDER / RICHARD PERRONE,  
PERRONE CONSTRUCTION

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / KEITH WILLIAMS,  
NIEVERA WILLIAMS LANDSCAPE

“CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE WAS THE INSPIRATION, BUT OUR GOAL WAS TO CREATE A HOME WITH MODERN AMENITIES.”

—JENNIFER SMITH

Building a home can be a uniquely trying experience for even the most unflappable clients. But the owners of a grand new house in Sarasota proved they were more than up to the challenge. Over the course of the 5-year project, they were there for it all—weighing in on everything from the furniture and wallpapers to the flowers that scent the garden. They even took a trip to Italy to design a chandelier for the home.

The property on Sarasota Bay had been part of the couple’s empty-nest strategy, and they waited until their kids were grown to develop the site. Their brief to residential designer Jennifer Smith and architect Scott Hutton was crystal clear: an elegant, classically inspired home that would be as authentic as it was livable. “We wanted a European Neoclassical feel,” the wife explains, “but it had to be a place where we could put our feet up and our kids could come and stay.”

Smith and Hutton responded with a French Neoclassical-style plan that leans heavily on principles like symmetry, proportion and balance, but their goal “was to create a home tailored to the clients’ needs with all the modern amenities,” Smith says. Taking cues from the couple’s favorite Paris hotel, La Réserve, designer Heather Wells continued the theme, creating a richly layered interior detailed with crystal chandeliers, mirrored pilasters and a mix of luxurious textures. “Our job as designers is to find the essence and soul of the clients, edit it and bring it to its highest point,” Wells says.

The desired classical underpinnings are clear from the outset. From the parking court, a limestone walkway leads through fragrant, terraced gardens, where landscape designer Keith Williams incorporated clipped boxwood,

date palms, citrus trees, gardenias and star jasmine. “The wife wanted a manicured, clean-lined, layered garden that was flowering and scented,” he says. But the subtle rise of the garden isn’t just for show. Since the home’s waterfront location makes it vulnerable to storm surges, the first-floor living space had to sit 14 feet above grade. Working with project manager Christopher Deemer of Smith & Hutton and builder Richard Perrone, the architects came up with a solution that was at once elegant and practical— setting the house atop a plinth protects it from water and allowed them to tuck a parking garage beneath.

Past a portico of hand-carved Syrian limestone is the front door, where a stunning view of the bay unfolds. “A strong axis through the house and then out to the water was very important to the clients,” Smith says. Further inside at the core sits a skylit atrium, illuminated at night by the chandelier that the owners designed in Murano, Italy. “The atrium brings light into the core of the residence, which could have been very dark,” Hutton says. “It’s a space that is very dynamic and really offers the best vantage point for the rest of the home.” The floor, inlaid with a large quatrefoil, serves as a kind of amuse-bouche of the limestone, marble, onyx and black granite found throughout.

The clients requested an open plan for the public rooms, so Smith and Hutton created a 50-foot-long grand salon parallel to the loggia. The large space is surprisingly intimate, owing to the layout Wells devised: a central sitting room bookended by a dining area and second sitting area beside a reclaimed French fireplace. A dynamic mix of furnishings spanning modern, transitional and antique gives the space a vibrant ambience, as vintage Baccarat chandeliers and parquet de Versailles-patterned French oak floors sit alongside chairs by Swedish modernist Kerstin Hörlin-Holmquist and a moody painting by Charles White.

Throughout the home, Wells, working with designers Mari Thomas and Kendall Miller, arrayed the rooms in muted hues of ballet-slipper pink, taupe, mocha and plum. The palette deepens in the husband’s office, which was outfitted with fumed oak paneling and a blue-green Venetian plaster ceiling, and brightens in the wife’s office, dressing room and closet, where mirrored cabinetry and shades of blush, silver and mocha lend sparkle. “The colors are so rich and unusual, different from the bright tones you’re used to seeing in Florida,” notes Wells.

The end result is a home that feels classic and timeless. “The rooms have a feeling of peace and Zen because of the layers of wallpapers, fabrics, paints and textures,” the wife says. “It’s like we’ve been here forever. This house was meant for us.”



In the entrance hall of this Sarasota home, architecture firm Smith & Hutton and designer Heather Wells combined a hand-forged brass-and-iron railing from Belt with walls finished in Venetian plaster. An Ironies bench from Studio 534 sits beside an antique Persian rug from J&D Oriental Rugs, while a vibrant canvas by Ed Clark animates the space.



Vintage Baccarat chandeliers hang from a coffered ceiling covered in a Fromental silk in the sumptuous grand salon. The Rubelli-covered sofa from The Bright Group and Holly Hunt chair upholstered in a Kyle Bunting hair-on-hide emphasize the residence's muted palette.



The owners didn't want a separate dining room, so the team set a dining area at one end of the grand salon, where armchairs by Bernhardt and side chairs by Milano Smart Living complement a dining table from Hudson Furniture. Next to a vintage Louis XVI-style server from Old Plank Antiques is a sculpture by Agustín Cárdenas.



The muted color palette deepens in the family room, where mixed-media artwork by Hugo McCloud takes pride of place against a paisley wallcovering from Elltis. Sitting below the Cloud Shade Pendant from Ochre are a Casamance-upholstered Holly Hunt sectional and James Duncan coffee table from Profiles.

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-HEATHER WELLS



**Opposite:** Custom cabinetry by Mayfield Design Group is outfitted with nickel and brass hardware in the kitchen. The Urban Electric Co. lanterns light up the island topped with white quartzite from Opustone. An antique Persian runner sits atop fumed French oak floors from Exquisite Surfaces.

**Below:** The homeowners often dine in the octagonal solarium, which offers uninterrupted views of Sarasota Bay through doors and transoms by Tischler und Sohn. Wells hung a vintage Murano glass lantern from Modernism Fortuna above a table with a faceted, polished-bronze base from Ailanthus, Ltd. and chairs by Kravet covered in a faux leather from Designers Guild.





**Left:** In the wife's bathroom, a freestanding tub from Signature Hardware occupies a vaulted niche finished in Venetian plaster. In the adjacent dressing area, a floral wallcovering from Pierre Frey is complemented by an alpaca rug from Organic Looms and a chair by Liz O'Brien covered in a Dedar velvet.

**Opposite:** A custom beaded de Gournay wallpaper panel adorns the entry to the master bedroom, where a chaise from Rose Tarlow Melrose House covered in a Zoffany cut velvet rests atop an antique Persian rug from J&D Oriental Rugs. Set against a wallcovering from Innovations is a sconce from Zonca International.