

THEIR CREATIVITY STARTS HERE

Inside the
inspired
workspaces of
some of our most
creative minds—

Robin Cook,
Paul Arsenault,
Joyce Owens
and Norman Love



By Jennifer Adams / Photography by Craig Hildebrand

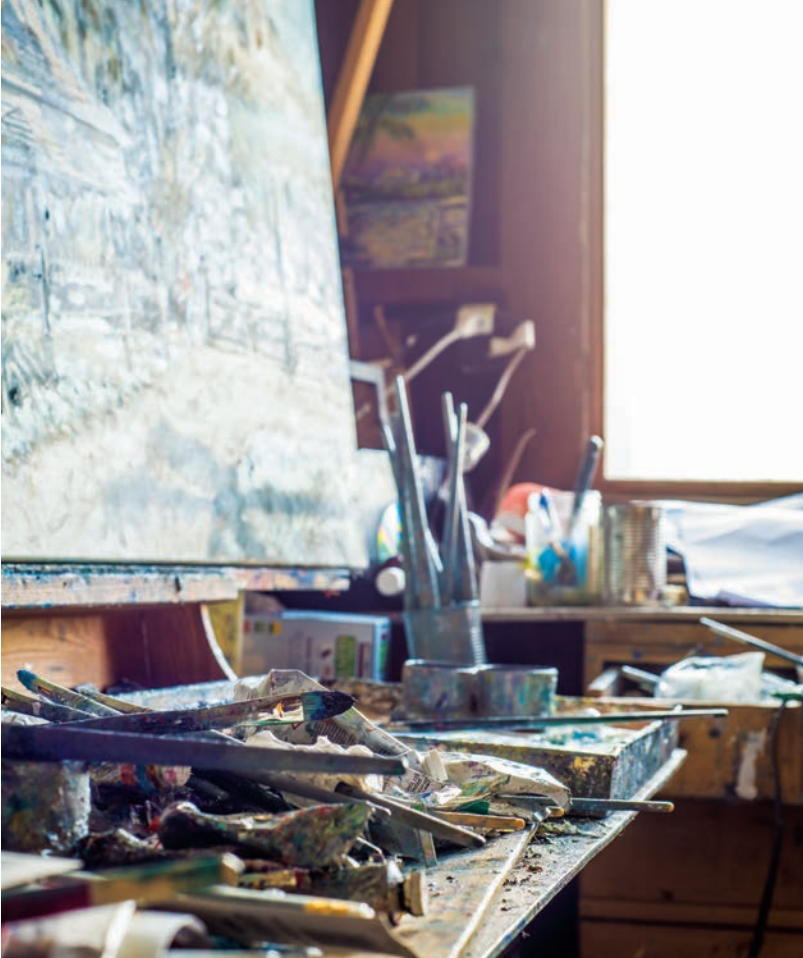
Genetics. Copious amounts of coffee. A picturesque spot where Gulf breezes ruffle the century-old banyan tree overhead. When it comes to Southwest Florida's most creative people, it's nearly impossible to pin down precisely what separates them from the rest of us. We can, however, peek inside the workspaces where some of their best ideas come to life—and that's kind of the same thing.

Robin Cook *Author*

After a writing career spanning 36 novels (with the 37th currently in the works), you might expect to encounter a bout of writer's block now and again. Not, however, if you're Robin Cook, whose medical thrillers have sold nearly 400 million copies worldwide. "Creative writing takes a lot of discipline, but discipline is something I don't have to strive for," he says. "When I have time [to work], I take it."

For him, routine comes naturally—perhaps a result of his rigorous schedule as a physician, too: He rises every morning around 5:45, works out (biking or basketball are his activities of choice) and eats a healthy breakfast before settling in to work, which may take the form of planning, storyline development or actual writing.

While at his home in Naples, his workspace is any given spot amid an impressive collection of Greek and Roman statuary and white Greek marble flooring, a design choice inspired by the blue and white hues of the Greek islands. The airy space is accented by views of miles of the Gulf. "Sometimes when I look out early in the mornings, I can't see anything but clouds," he says. "This space is otherworldly."



Paul Arsenault

Artist, Arsenault Studio & Banyan Arts Gallery

Paul Arsenault's colorful paintings are as instantly recognizable as the cottage where he lives and works. Built in 1918, the iconic, banyan-shaded home at the corner of 12th Avenue South and Gordon Drive, just steps from the Naples Pier—which has itself appeared in several of Arsenault's paintings—recently celebrated its 100th birthday.

Primarily a plein-air painter, Arsenault, who has long been known for capturing the buildings and sights of historic Old Naples in his expert brushstrokes, doesn't require an expansive studio, as he does most of his painting on location. "Then it's to really look at the painting when I bring it back home, carefully, and to know just where to finish off the painting without tickling it to death with detail," he says.

That flexibility has served him well, as he's currently working in an interim space while he and his wife, Eileen, await the development of the new hotel across the street from their property. Still, from his temporary perch in "a gnarly little corner upstairs," he can see the neighborhood that inspires him and be reminded of the concentration of artists and writers, including poet Robert Frost, who have passed through the compound over the home's storied past century.

"The proximity of painting so close to the old town and underneath the banyan tree—it's a nice energy spot that is inspirational for all those reasons," Arsenault muses. "There's something about the authenticity of the space. It hasn't been changed since it was built. It hasn't been painted on the inside. What you see is what you get."



Joyce Owens

Architect, Architecture Joyce Owens

All those who wander past Joyce Owens’ downtown Fort Myers architectural, interiors and design studio get a glimpse into her creative world—and that’s exactly how she planned it. Beginning with the storefront conference room, where a large TV screen rolls images of her past projects 24 hours a day, the space unfolds in strategic layers.

A sleek, wall-to-wall bookshelf immediately catches your eye. “It’s a very organic bookshelf,” she says. “We make it fun and colorful. It has all the books and samples and things we need to be architects, and it has building blocks and lots of building materials that we’ve picked up on-site. When clients bring in their kids, they’ll rearrange the shelves. Nothing’s ever static.”

On the other side of the shelves is an open, collaborative workspace, where her team of four shares one large table. (No individual desks here.) Understandably, when the team digs into a project, the space can become overrun with computers, sketches and plans. But Owens took that into account, incorporating a dividing screen into the design of the multipurpose bookshelf to keep the occasional creative mess out of view of passersby. “The overall concept is incredibly organized, but there’s a lot of disorganization within that organization,” she says.





Norman Love
Chocolatier, Norman Love Confections

Even if you’ve never met Norman Love, spend a few moments peeking around his Fort Myers office and you’ll feel like you have. The space is lined with photos and memorabilia of what inspires him most: his wife and business partner, Mary, and the 1980 Miracle on Ice hockey team, which earned a notable gold medal victory at that year’s Winter Olympics. “I’m a hockey buff,” he says simply.

You might also spot a crystal Ritz-Carlton credo, a nod to the luxury hotel where Love once served as corporate executive pastry chef. “I’ve been out of there for more than 18 years, but the philosophy values that built The Ritz-Carlton were very important to me and something that today helps me to be better every day,” he says.

And though Love says he’s most productive on weekends and in the quiet hours before the daily bustle begins, one companion you’ll always find sharing his workspace is his dog, whom he adopted from Gulf Coast Humane Society three years ago. His name? Sid, after Pittsburgh Penguins hockey player Sidney Crosby. 🐾