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Architecture Joyce Owens | Studio AJO



“When a house works and functions right, it feels better,” said Joyce Owens. “It lifts the spirit. It’s great to have a fantastic piece of art that makes you happy, but it’s a whole different experience to be in a building that’s designed well; the experience reaches your soul.”

Owens has long felt a deep connection to architecture. She stresses that when a home’s design and stylistic elements are done correctly, with careful planning and forethought, it’s possible to create something almost transcendent—a structure that both looks appealing and is capable of altering your mood in profound and meaningful ways.

While based in Fort Myers, Florida, where she’s the Principal at Studio AJO, Owens also works in the United Kingdom and Italy. She got her first taste of international experience through the yearlong Rome Program, while studying architecture at the University of Notre Dame. After graduation she won a Rotary Foundation scholarship to study in London.

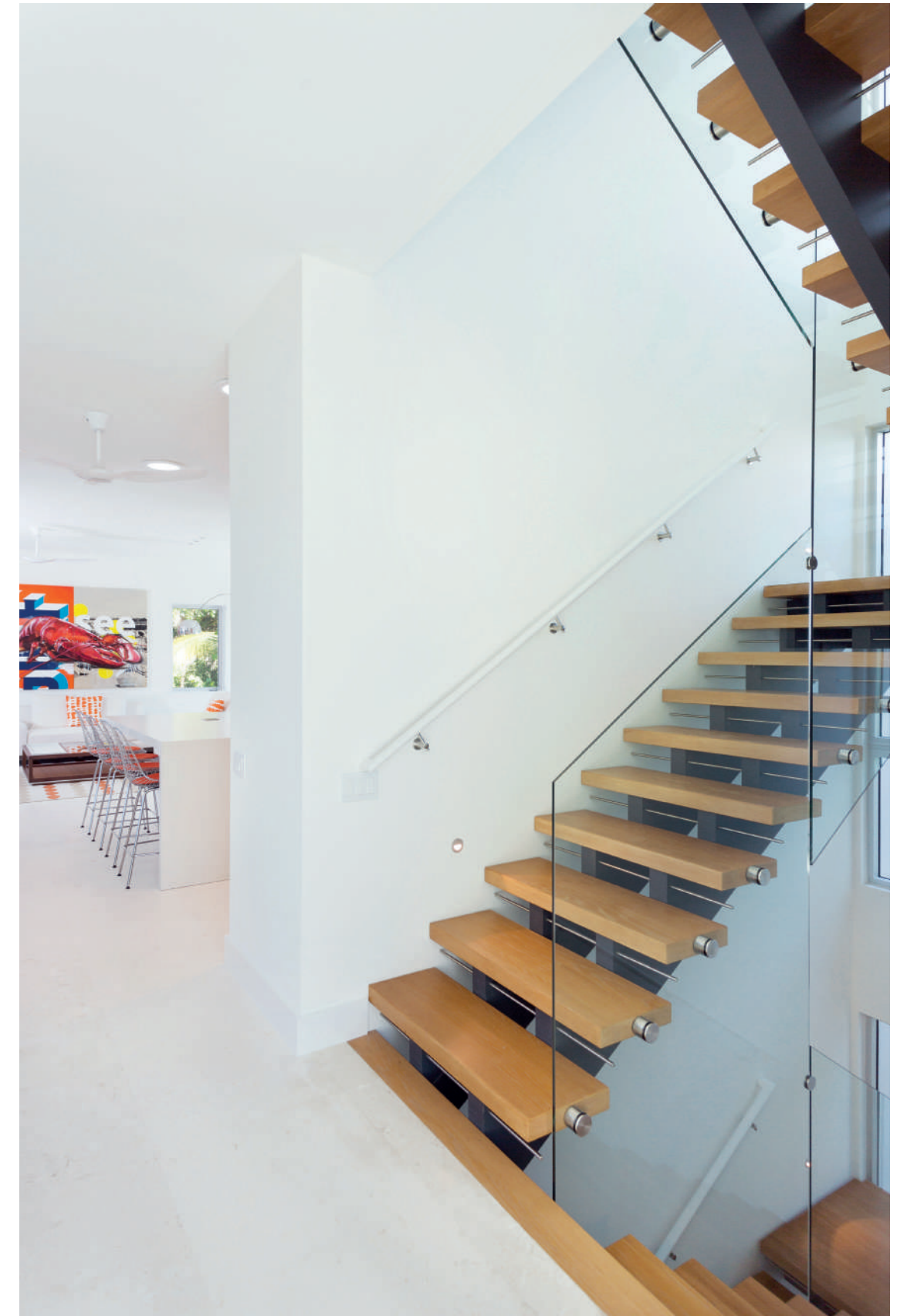
Before opening Studio AJO in 2007, Owens was a co-founding partner at the London-based firm Azman Owens Architects, where she worked with clients like then-London mayor Boris Johnson, fashion notables Alexander McQueen and Isabella Blow, retailer TAGHeuer, and Victoria and Albert Museum and the Barbican Museum.

Owens’ international experience infuses her work with a distinctive and vibrant flair, garnering awards and recognition both in the U.S. and abroad. Her eclectic background has also made her skilled at designing projects that are uniquely suited to their surroundings.

“I have clients in London and Florida, and they’re completely different—like night and day,” Owens said. “I love being able to share my knowledge of how buildings can be tailored to the site and client. Depending on the place, the houses should look and feel different.”

In Florida, that often means designing a house for a tropical environment, with big overhangs and expansive windows. Such elements help create a seamless transition from the inside to the outside, keeping the rain off and providing natural light, but minimizing direct sunlight.

“A successful home must be both aesthetically pleasing and put together correctly,” she said.



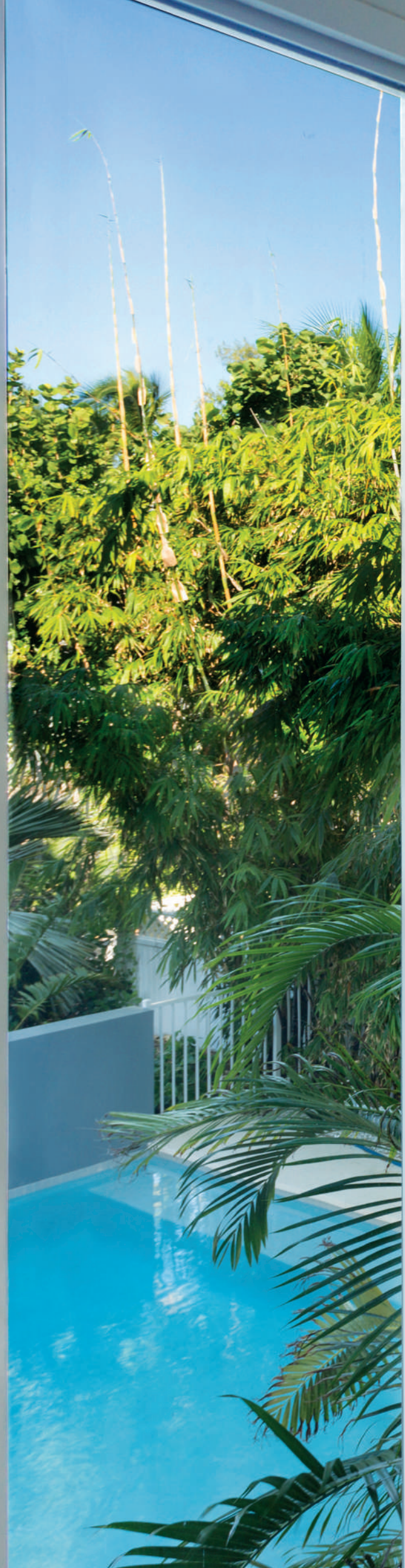




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Achieving this kind of impactful architecture is often reliant on an open and communicative back-and-forth relationship with the client. While planning the architectural details of a project must include basic factors like the budget, timeframe and overall needs, it's also important to glean more subtle aspects of the client's personality.

Owens said that for her, this process evolves over time and involves many conversations and a lot of questions. One strategy she often uses during this time is to ask the client for a wish list of things they want in their house or just things they find appealing and interesting, which range from artwork to a scenic view.

"Some clients will give you a catalog of images, but the best clients are the ones who give you one image and say, 'Make my house feel like this.' It's awesome. That means it's all yours. A good architect listens to what the client wants, but if you interpret it well, you can provide a solution far beyond their expectations and give them what they need. It's a collaborative process that I really enjoy."

Furniture & Art: Constance Davidson
Landscape Architecture: R.S. Walsh
Builder/Contractor: Wolter Group
Photographer: Joshua Colt Fisher