

GULFSHORE LIFE.

HOME

THE DIARY OF A MEANINGFUL + WELL-DESIGNED LIFE



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EXPERT INSIGHT

One With Our Environment

The indoor-outdoor living concept is not new in Southwest Florida, but it is evolving, experts say.

“This is a trend that is now becoming more prolific in our design industry as well,” Matthew Kragh, founder of MHK Architecture & Planning, says. “We want to make the indoor and outdoor areas of our dwellings flow seamlessly, instead of living in air-conditioned boxes.”

Floor-to-ceiling windows, natural materials and textures, and even live plant walls can help achieve this look. “Pocketing sliding glass doors, so you can conceal them when they are opened,” also add to the effect, Kragh adds. He predicts homes will even start to shrink on the inside to make room for more open-air living space.

“We’re actually seeing people wanting to merge the inside and outside together. It’s almost like an erasure of boundaries between the two,” Lisa Kahn, lead designer and CEO of Lisa Kahn Designs, says.

But the growing trend is more than sprawling lanais and oversized windows. It’s about connecting to the outdoors on a deeper level. Kahn calls the concept “design ecology,” suggesting it’s society’s response to the current status of our environment.

“Human beings are not really living in a way that’s harmonious with the earth, and I think we know that. We’re coming to the place that we are now aware of radical climate change, the exhaustion of resources, mass extinctions—there are really big phrases floating around out there,” she says.

Design ecology merges outdoor aesthetic with conscious design choices, with professionals like Kahn approaching projects with extra environmental care in terms of sustainable products, sourced goods and so on.

“This is really looking at an entire industry of design from an ecological lens. As interior designers, we have an incredible opportunity to step into a role of deeper understanding of the impact we have on our projects and our clients,” Kahn says. “We make really big purchasing decisions, and I think the more we can educate ourselves as designers, the more we can design ecologically friendly.” Kahn predicts large organizations, like the American Society of Interior Designers, “will continue to pick up on educational opportunities.”

“The more we can connect people inside with their spaces outside, the better it is all around,” Kahn says. “Our spaces have a major impact on our mood, health, sense of wellbeing, and relationships.” And if we can balance indoor-outdoor living while keeping the earth in mind? Well, that’s a trend we can get behind. ✘



This MHK Architecture & Planning project seamlessly blends the indoor and out with pocketing doors and a spacious uncovered pool area. Courtesy of MHK Architecture & Planning