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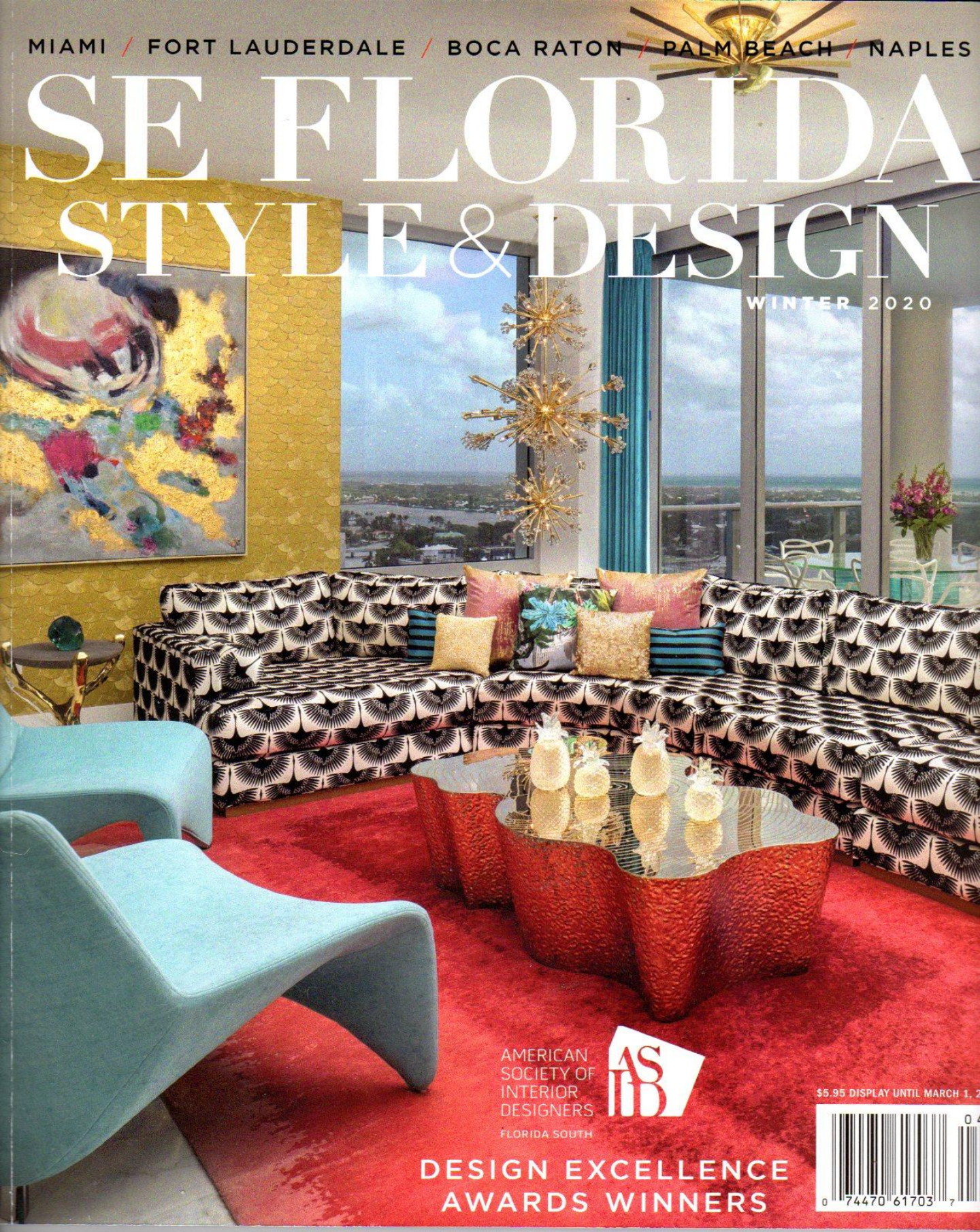

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NUANCED IN NATURE

*Acclaimed artist **Deborah Bigeleisen** sees the floral genre through a contemporary lens*

by STACEY MARCUS

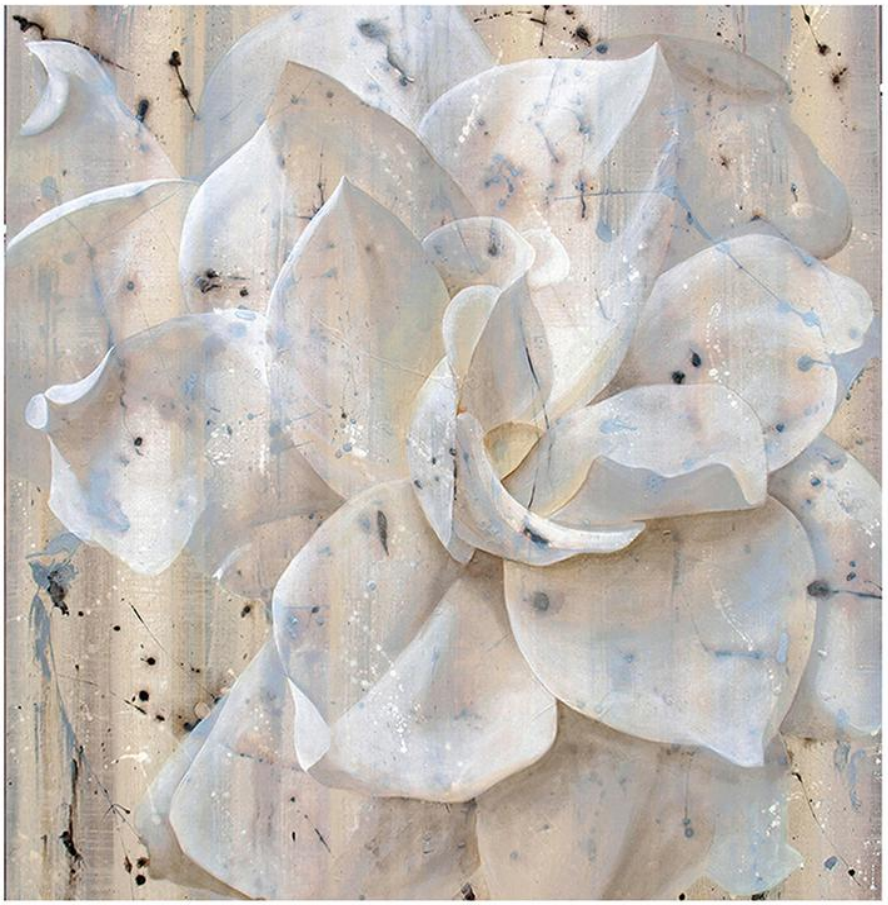
Mardi Gras, Acrylic on canvas, 46" x 52" / Photograph by Deborah Bigeleisen

WHETHER YOU OBSERVE HER artwork or engage in a conversation with internationally renowned artist Deborah Bigeleisen, you are acutely aware of her depth and passion for her craft. She is a true artiste whose body of work illuminates a gift for being in touch with her soul as an artist as well as a knack for keeping her brand fresh and relevant.

"Flowers are my brand," she says, noting that in college she had to take nature studies every semester. "It was drummed into my creative practice from day one. I always gravitated to the floral genre."

Bigeleisen was a pioneer in establishing a global textile print design company, where she served as creative director for almost two decades. The role was the perfect match for her skill set, talent and interest in nature. "Nature was a major theme for prints in both apparel and home furnishings. Flowers and nature are in my

top to bottom:
Snow Leopard, Acrylic on canvas, 36" x 36" / Photograph by Deborah Bigeleisen
Over the Rainbow, Acrylic on canvas, 40" x 40" / Photograph by Holger Obenaus



DNA," says Bigeleisen, who works with designers, architects and private clients to incorporate the perennially popular genre in interiors in a modern way.

She naturally gravitated to the genre when she started her painting career. Although Bigeleisen did not have a formal fine art education, she quickly fine-tuned her innate talent through art classes and master artist workshops. "I discovered a voice inside that I never knew I had," she says.

When a gallery owner asked her to paint white roses, the first three paintings she delivered sold in 10 days. A spark went off in her head and she thought, "Wow, Deb, you are onto something special!"

"My identity was born in the white rose," Bigeleisen says, noting that she has created over 460 paintings with at least half of them stemming from the rose in one form or another, whether her vision is representational or nonobjective. Her technique is rooted in the practices of the Dutch master artists, and her vision in the principles of fractals, where she discovered that nature repeats itself through multiple phenomena. "Looking into the depth of a flower beyond what the naked eye can see, there is an explosion of boundless inspiration," she muses. Her trademarks are her powerful compositions created with her exceptional use of color, precise and fluid brushwork, and the magical way she captures light.

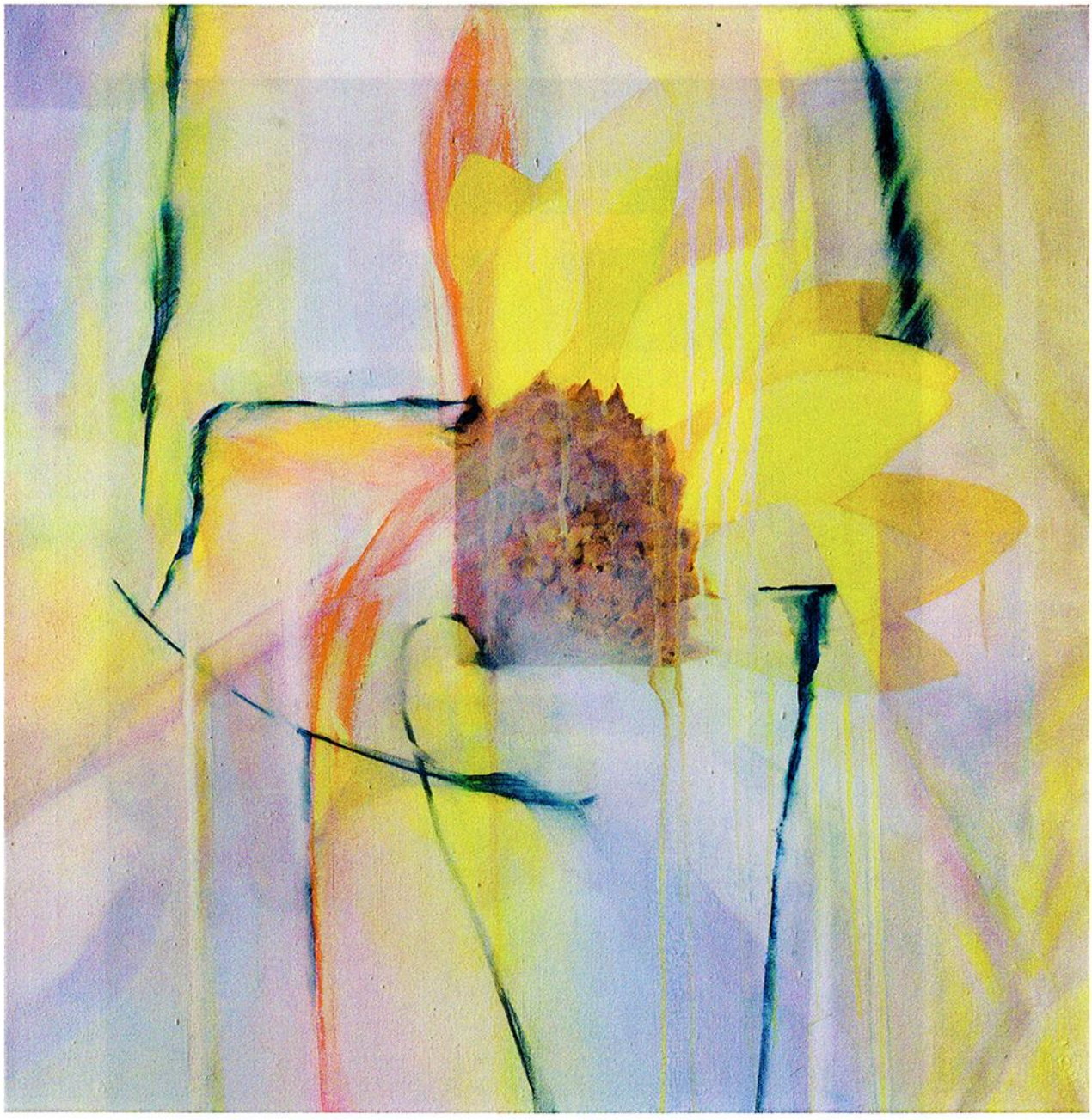
Occasionally mentioned alongside Georgia O'Keeffe, because they are both identified with painting flowers, Bigeleisen's work swirls with originality, bringing her unique vision to the subject. Bigeleisen is no ordinary petal pusher. She creates very large, seductive and almost voyeuristic representational images, as well as abstracted, nonobjective visions that play with the viewer's imagination and emotions. This myriad of complexities adds to the distinctiveness of her work.

"My focus is on the organization of the space, the contrast of light and shadow to sculpt the forms, and the brushwork to capture the energy and spirit. My subject is no longer simply a flower; it is a dynamical system existing in a chaotic universe filled with energy, turbulence, mystery and beauty. My newest work embodies the pure definition of kaleidoscope—a complex, colorful and shifting pattern—where I combine realism, surrealism and abstract expressionism," she notes.

Her exploration into abstract happened in 2016, when she took a year off from painting her signature work. "I spotted a painting by a color-field artist at Art Miami whose work reminded me of American abstract expressionist painter Paul Jenkins. I love the organic movement in his work. It really appeals to my senses," she says. Turning her studio upside down, she switched from painting in oils to acrylics. "I started using bigger brushes and painting on a flat surface, which paved the way to creative freedom and a totally fresh and new vision."

Bigeleisen's paintings grace private and corporate collections worldwide. Her work is represented by

Sundance, Oil on canvas, 24" x 24" / Photograph by Holger Obenaus



fine art dealers in Aspen; Greenwich, Connecticut; Miami; Nantucket, Massachusetts; West Palm Beach; and Vero Beach, Florida. Her paintings have been widely published, included in national museum exhibitions and prominently on view at numerous international contemporary fine art fairs.

"Color is my specialty," notes the artist. Bigeleisen works with trade professionals and homeowners through the creative spectrum. She is also available for custom commission work. *

Stacey Marcus is a Boston-based freelance lifestyle, luxury and travel writer. Her works have appeared in *Art New England, Boston* magazine, *Boston Common Magazine, Coastal Design Magazine, Modern Luxury Chicago,* Playboy.com, RD.com, *Charleston Style & Design* and many others. A lover of big words and little white dogs, Stacey's biggest joys are found in life's simple moments.

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DEBORAH BIGELEISEN

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

DEBORAH Bigeleisen is a risk-taker. After establishing a global textile print design company in Manhattan, she relocated to West Palm Beach in 1998 and began painting as a hobby. Twenty years later, the award-winning artist is represented by fine art galleries across the United States and has exhibited paintings in prestigious museum shows, including the Boca Raton Museum of Art and the Williamsburg Art & Historical Center in Brooklyn, New York. Her paintings are held in corporate and private collections worldwide and have graced the covers and interior pages of international interior design publications, including *Miami Home & Décor* and *Architectural Digest*.

Bigeleisen creates both evocative representational images and boldly deceptive, nonobjective work. She says: "Always working with a single image of a flower, or a component thereof, I have stripped away the mask of the exterior form and magnified the interior thousands of times to depths beyond what is visible to the naked eye."

The artist breaks new boundaries with her *Kaleidoscope* series. "I continually challenge my vision," she says. "Kaleidoscope is defined as a constantly changing pattern of elements. This series has elements of realism, surrealism and abstraction."

Bigeleisen carefully follows art and trade blogs and trade magazines and attends contemporary art fairs to stay current with the evolving global art market.

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Deborah Bigelelsen Studios

Q: *How does art factor in the interior design industry? How important is it?*
A: Art is essential to setting the mood and the energy in a room. It is the finishing touch—the jewel in the crown—whether it is paintings, three-dimensional wall art, sculpture or art glass. It should complement the décor, not necessarily "match" the décor, and it should bring added dimension and interest to the room.

Q: *What do you believe interior designers need to know in order to be successful when working with artists and/or art galleries?*
A: Finding the right art is probably the most difficult and time-consuming part of a designer's project. I have found that many designers are uncomfortable with having to select art for their clients because it is personal. Each of us brings our own experiences to how we react to a work of art. It is particularly difficult when the client has no idea what they like. I believe that this is one factor that has contributed to the inexhaustible use of abstract art in interior design today. My job with the interior designer is to make their life easier by reducing their research time, assisting them in finding that right piece, regardless of my personal taste, my own art, what is trending or will it increase in value.

Trust in the artist or dealer is a big factor. Respected art dealers want to cultivate a relationship with the designer/client because they want repeat business. Price is also a factor, which often compromises the best art for a project, depending upon the amount of discount or professional courtesy the artist or gallery is willing to extend to the designer. Art is a negotiable item; it is not a commodity with a set price, where you have a choice of vendors at different price points. This really clouds and complicates the purchase. There is a subliminal energy that takes place between the client and the artist or the dealer. Clients love to make a personal connection with the artist, feel their energy, feel their passion, hear their story. It makes the purchase even more special. However, it is not always possible to meet the artist, so it falls to the dealer to be the conduit for the artist and the client to create that connection.

Ultimately, it becomes a collaborative effort between the parties. I call it a trifecta when the client, the designer and the source for the artwork all fall in love with the piece!

Q: *What do you look for in an interior designer you are considering working with?*
A: I look for their level of professionalism and how well organized they are. Next is their criteria for the project and their expectations. Then, I evaluate if our personalities fit and can we work together, as there has to be mutual respect.

Q: *What are your suggestions for interior designers who want to work with artists or galleries?*
A: Many designers have existing relationships with a dealer or artist, which makes their job much easier; it's a one-stop shop, it is comfortable, there is a good level of trust, and they use that resource for many of their projects.

Because of how rapidly the art market changes, designers may be narrowing their scope as to what else is out there. It is always good to get another perspective, build additional relationships. Art is a very personal purchase, and one should be open-minded to other resources and genres. You never know where you will find that next jewel in the crown, if you keep going to the same dealers.

Avoid an artist or dealer who is just looking to make a sale without any sense of the project at hand. The value of art is becoming more questionable at every price level, so be wary about being sold on the perception that the work will increase in value. Is the art being purchased for investment or for decoration.

Q: *What is your process for incorporating art into the design process when working with interior designers?*
A: Every project is different, but whether it is for a single painting for a private client or multiple images for a corporate project, I always look to capture the aesthetic sense of what the designer is looking for. It does not necessarily have to be with my work. I follow the art and design markets with multiple blogs, trade blogs, trade magazines and the international fine art fairs to stay current with what is trending throughout the markets so that I can provide a comprehensive, informed creative service to the designer.

Q: *How do you go about promoting your art with interior designers?*
A: I am always looking for new avenues to effectively reach prospective clients. I network. I am social and like talking to people, whether at a gallery reception, a charity event, an art fair, on a plane—you never know whom you'll meet and where. I continually expand my database of designers and architecture and design firms, which I market to through direct email and marketing campaigns. Instagram is great tool for getting your work noticed. I have a strong presence on 1stDibs through two of my galleries; one of them also markets through Artnet and Artsy. I also have a presence on Saatchi Art and Houzz. And, of course, taking a presence in this issue of *SE Florida Style & Design*.