

Clean and crisp

Laverne Designs breathes new life into a dated Marco Island model home

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It's safe to say that the bones were good in this lovely single-family canal home on Marco Island. But the salmon and green colored walls and West Indian hodgepodge décor had come to the end of their useful lives. The residence felt dark, confused and uninviting, trying to get by on its fading looks as a model home for a builder back in the day.

"There were a lot of different colors going on that were OK at the time," says interior designer Laverne Gehman of Laverne Designs. "It was a bit tropical, but the colors had now become passé and the owner wanted to make changes."

To say it looks and feels like a totally different house would be an understatement. A one-color neutral paint scheme gave a backdrop for updated, stylish furnishings and classic, yet up-to-the-minute fabrics with subtle pops of color.

"One of my first line of questions is, 'Can you tell me colors that you don't like and colors that you do like?'" says Mr. Gehman, who has been in the business for 30 years. "That gives me some ground rules." From there, he adds, with this particular client he was pretty much left to his own devices.

"She was really tired of the candy store look of different colors throughout the house. So we kept a neutral wall palette that really cleaned it up and made the house look much larger. It also allowed us to go in with some splashes of color with the furniture and draperies. It's very fresh."

The owner chose to keep the original floor tiles throughout the main living areas and the kitchen cabinets, but Mr. Gehman added new countertops and a new backsplash, as well as new carpeting in the four bedrooms. He also changed the lighting and fixtures (even on the home's exterior) and installed custom drapes and window treatments. Even the plants, accessories and artwork are all new.

Perhaps no space has more greatly benefited from the change than the sitting room.

"It was a very heavy room before. They had a massive cabinet on one wall and a sectional that prevented even getting to the outdoor sliders," he says. "But we came up with this arrangement that makes it great for conversation and opens the room up."

Now the entire home flows together and makes a contemporary, cohesive statement.

"What we did dramatically enlarges the feeling when you walk in," Mr. Gehman says. "It really feels spacious." ■

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JULIE RENNER / COURTESY PHOTOS



Before



Before



Laverne Gehman



Designer Laverne Gehman took this Marco Island single-family home from gloomy to glam with changes to everything from the fixtures to the furniture. A dated West Indies vibe was brightened, making the home seem larger and opening rooms both visually and physically. The rug, above, was custom-designed for the sitting room. "It's a piece of artwork on the floor," says Gehman.



Above: Branches are always a winning theme and this sand-tone sapling chest with silver branch accents is the perfect stage for elegant accoutrements, while a nickel-plated twig mirror shines from above.



Before



Left: With the cool aqua waters of the Marco Island area just steps from the master bedroom, it made sense to bring its subtle hues into the room, taking it from a drab salmon with oversized accessories to a clean, personal oasis.