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Chicago Invasion



By
Blake Miller

Courtesy Suzanne Lovell/Eric Plasecki,
Summer Thornton Design/Thomas Loof,
Frank Porterio



THREE WINDY CITY DESIGNERS MAKE THEIR MARK ON SOUTHWEST FLORIDA.



The Traditionalist: Frank Ponterio

When pressed on his earliest design inspirations, Frank Ponterio returns to his summers as a young child in rural southern Italy—from where his parents hail—and Rome. “I grew up seeing this artisanal, handmade stonework and ironwork, and seeing very refined elements and textiles and fixtures and glass, and realizing how those things can come together,” he says. “My style has been shaped by marrying the rustic and the refined.” By 23, Ponterio launched his firm, which has transformed into a design powerhouse specializing in luxe spaces from Chicago penthouses to Naples homes to private jets.

When starting any project, “first, you have to build the right team,” he says. The team always includes a roster of first-rate artisans, who, guided by Ponterio’s team, create bespoke pieces based upon the project’s design intention and the clients’ aesthetic. Ponterio likes to call on local talent. “We have this great artisan in Naples who is from Germany doing upholstered walls in our family room with window treatments in one of our Clarence House fabrics—it’s just going to be beautiful,” Ponterio says, referring to the circa-1950s

Frank Ponterio recently moved his showroom from Third Street South to The Collective in Naples Design District. The space includes a library with fabrics, furnishings and accessories he’s designed.



Courtesy Frank Ponterio/Karina Whitcamp (1), Frank Ponterio (2)



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Architectural details often inspire Ponterio's work. He also draws from his childhood years living in his parents' native Italy, where he was exposed to artisanal stone and metalwork.



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Courtesy Frank Ponterio (2)





beach cottage on Anna Maria Island, where he lives part-time with his wife.

The designer—who serves on the Leadership Board of the Design Leadership Network—recently moved his namesake design studio to Naples’ The Collective.

Before enrolling in design school, Ponterio dreamed of being an architect—architectural details often inspire his interior work. “The architecture helps guide the design, and that’s where I tend to start,” he says. “I don’t start with a palette of color; I sketch out elevations and furniture designs and layouts and a lot of different floor plans that reflect our clients’ desired lifestyle and everyday living.”

His in-house team includes an interior architect; this allows him the freedom to work with the architects, landscape architects and builders on projects from start to finish, taking a more holistic approach to design. “It’s really exciting because you’re not just responsible for your piece of this project; you’re collaborating across all the professional disciplines,” Ponterio says.



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Ponterio's portfolio speaks for itself. The designer has worked on everything from Chicago penthouses to private jet interiors to his own circa-1950 masonry ranch on Anna Maria Island.

