

MICHELE SAFRA

One of the most versatile designers on the East Coast of the USA, whose interiors are aesthetically eclectic and characterized by a subtle fusion of different cultures, Michele Safra is herself a product of Middle-Eastern roots with a South American dimension and of privileged European upbringing. This allows her to relate to international clients of varied backgrounds and tastes, and has come to define her approach: mixing styles to create a look that is at once individual and cosmopolitan. This, she says, mirrors the way her personal life has evolved over the years.

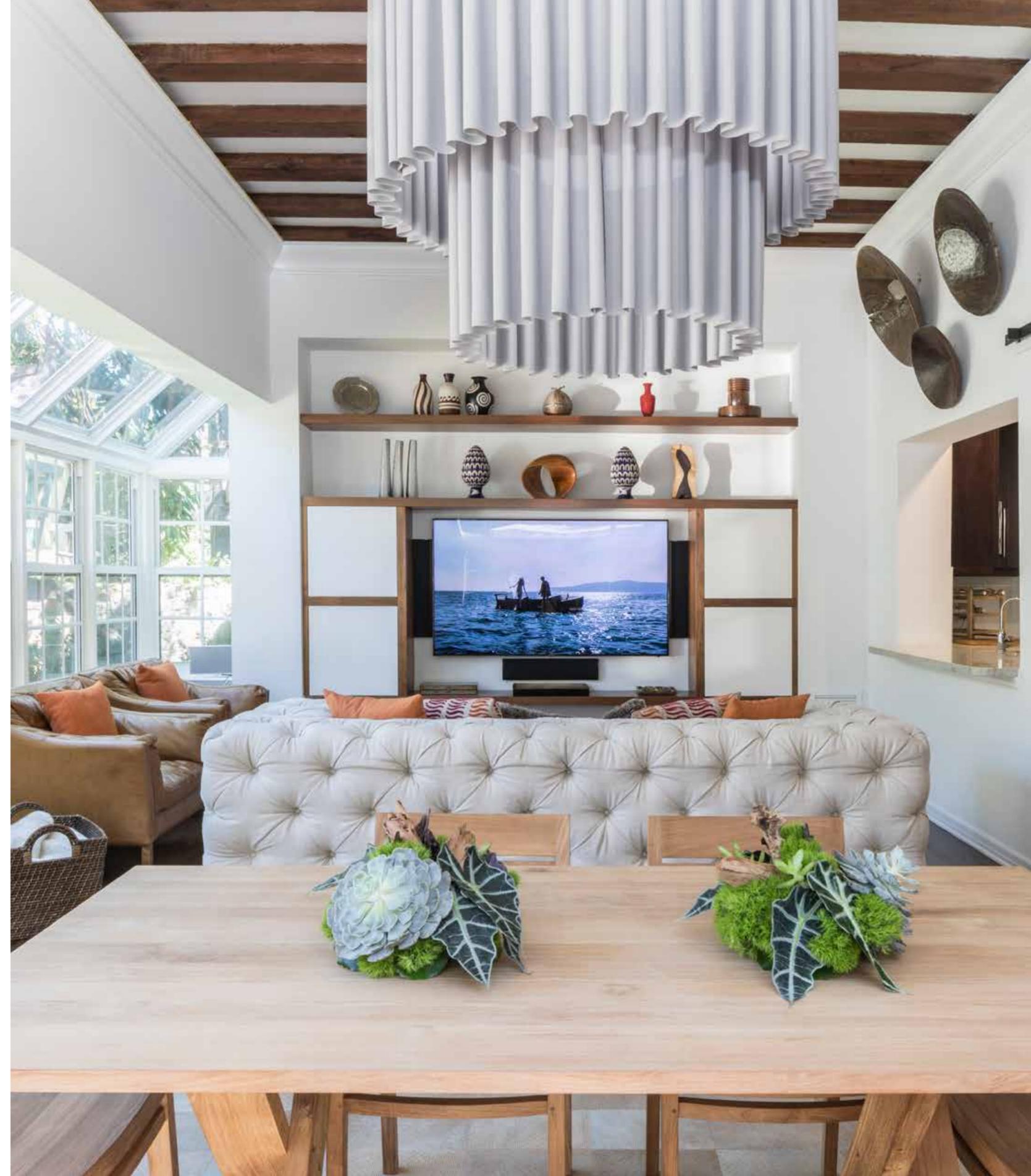
“I believe that it is essential for a designer to have an inherent understanding of their clients’ cultural background and lifestyle in order to create a space that is not only beautiful and functional but that also speaks of them and reflects who they are or want to be. It is what makes a space unique and gives it a soul.

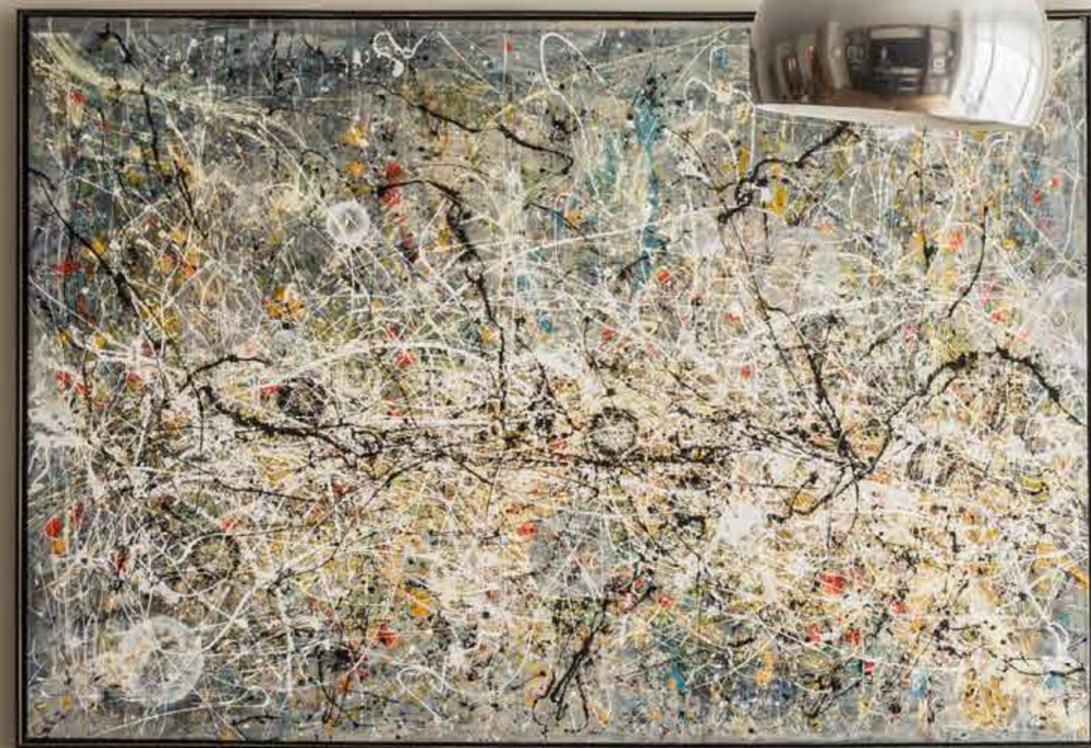
As far back as I can remember I have been exposed to a wealth of cultural references: museums, galleries, art, travel... the type of experience that cannot be acquired through school or college alone or in the space of

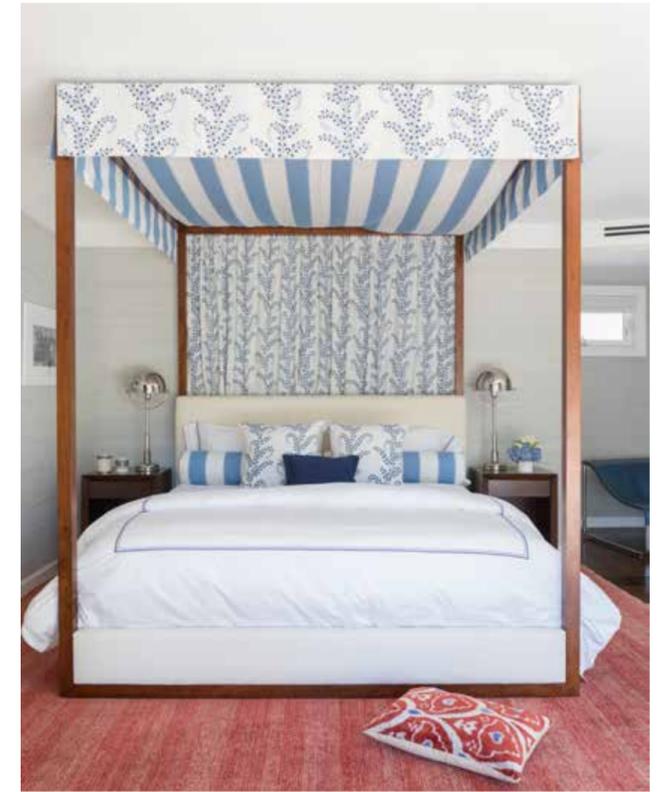
a few years. It is what gives one an innate sense of style and makes it possible to design for the ultra high end market with ease and confidence.”

Her striking interiors are punctuated by rich detailing, ornamentation, and underlying opulence, even in the pared down contemporary style or ocean front homes.

They are a testimony, she says, to the synergy between client and designer, but also to her undeniable talent for infusing the minimal with warmth and ingenuity.







“The shoe has to fit the foot! Contemporary doesn’t need to be sterile or austere.”

Individualizing a home is a skill that requires time and research. She often scours flea markets and showrooms, pre-selecting pieces - an exercise that is only possible by tuning into clients’ personality and tastes.

“It is my job to understand what the essence of a client as an individual is and then use my creativity, expertise, editing skills and my personal sense of aesthetics to design a space that retains that essence.

To be able to “get” a person requires good listening skills, experience, a bit of psychology and an ease with forming a rapport.”

It is difficult to pick a single Safra interior to feature as “most representative of her style” because they are all so unique to the owner.

Her latest project (at the time of publishing), is a house in Coconut Grove, Miami, designed for a young family. The Brazil-born husband wanted a relaxed ambiance with a Brazilian flair to it, while his Californian wife preferred the vintage look combined with contemporary Italian style features.

Safra’s job was to create a cohesive and balanced whole that incorporated both elements. Quite apart from the fact that this a

fairly typical brief for her, Safra’s own overarching aesthetic is to “mix things up” up and add touches of handmade ethnic objects and pieces of furniture from all over the world.

Another ingeniously designed project is an apartment in the prestigious 15 Central Park West in New York City.

Used as a small pied-a-terre by various family members of different generations meant that it had to appeal to all and be fit for the purpose. The result is a comfortable, functional, unpretentious, chic and cozy space – in fact, epitomizing THE Safra interior.

<http://www.michelesafra.net>