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A family designs a new life in Vero Beach

LIVING THE DREAM





From Never To Forever

MARION DE VOGEL'S SAND CASTLE HELPED MAKE HER HUSBAND, WILLEM, A BELIEVER IN THE VERO BEACH LIFESTYLE

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If ever there was a perfect time of the year for Marion de Vogel to introduce her husband, Willem, to Vero Beach, it was in March, the beginning of “mud season” up North — a time when frost comes out of the ground, snow starts melting and spring rains combine to create a mucky mess.

For Marion, whose great-grandfather, Arthur G. McKee, co-founded McKee Botanical Garden, and whose father, Arthur McKee Latta, managed the grounds, it was like coming home. For Willem, who had made it clear from the beginning that he wanted nothing to do with the Sunshine State, it was grin-and-bear-it time.

However, after experiencing the Vero Beach version of the Florida lifestyle, Willem began to have a change of heart, and last summer the de Vogels moved into their new two-story, four-bedroom home on the barrier island. In contrast to their traditional residence in New York state, their Vero abode has a more contemporary feel that celebrates their new life together.

Avid equestrians, the couple was brought together by mutual friends. It's their shared love of horses that led them to artist, photographer and filmmaker Roberto Dutesco, whose striking images of the wild horses that live on Sable Island off the east coast of Canada set the theme throughout the open great room of their home. A white canvas,

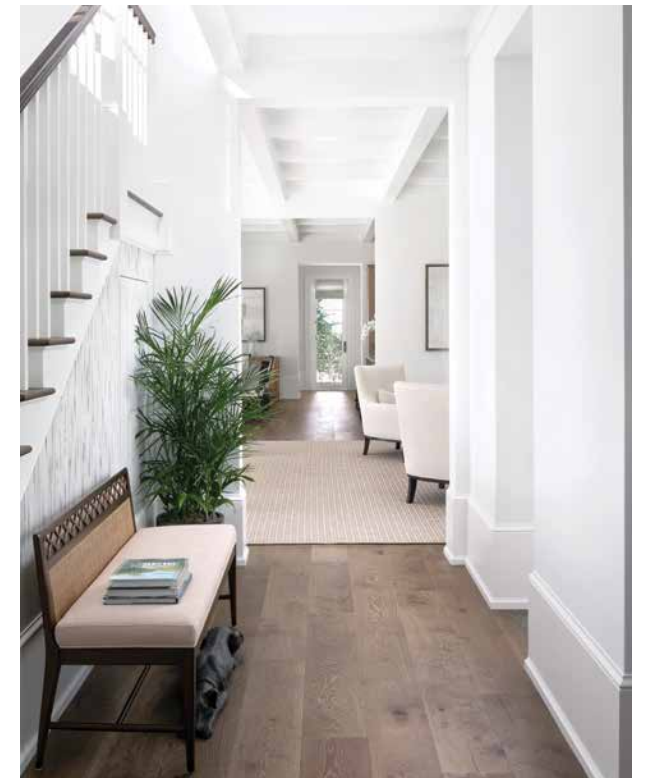
Marion desired a calm, classic interior that highlighted the tall ceilings and windows, and she got it, thanks to Spectrum Interior Design. One of the two light-filled conversation areas in the great room features a white canvas punctuated with soft shades of sand. The kidney-shaped coffee table is a happy surprise.



Sepia-tone images of the Wild Horses of Sable Island taken by photographer Roberto Dutesco are seen throughout the main living area. A formerly plain wall in the great room is now home to "Love," a gift from Marion to her husband, in celebration of their new life together.

“What we achieved with this incredible team of talent is a living dream.”

– MARION DE VOGEL



An entry hallway leads to the great room, where there are no TVs, only opportunities to engage with friends, share ideas or simply curl up with a book and enjoy the calm.



Marion grew up in a house with pecky cypress, and her fondness for the reclaimed lumber prompted an updated version in the entry hall.

brushed with subtle shades of sand and sky blue, provides the perfect background.

While Dutesco’s photographs command the first floor, the second celebrates the beauty seen in the sea and its surroundings, with paintings by nationally recognized artists Reid Christman and Peter Laughton.

But more about the details after Marion, with delight shining in her eyes, goes back to the beginning, to that first March four years ago, when she and an initially reluctant Willem spent the month in Vero Beach.

“I was here doing some archival work at McKee. The garden is in my DNA — it’s where I used to run around and play when I was a young girl,” says Marion, who was serving on the nonprofit’s board of directors at the time.

“What I didn’t know when I rented the house was that the owners were family friends, and that Dolf Kahle, someone I used to babysit for, lived next door. There were all these wonderful unexpected connections.”

Those connections and Willem’s newly discovered comfort level prompted Marion to rent another house the following March. By then, Sandy Lane, a joint venture between Kahle and Vic Lombardi of Waters Edge Estates, was in the initial construction phase. When fully built out, the private



In the kitchen, Marion chose honed granite for the countertops; the island top reminded her of an uneven wave breaking on the sand. Behind glass-front cabinets, blue-and-white pottery and glassware continue the seaside theme.

oceanside enclave, surrounded by a native landscape buffer, would have nine residences, all on the south side of the lane, and all designed by Moulton Layne PL.

While Kahle has his signature on other developments, he considers Sandy Lane, named for his mother, one of his greatest accomplishments. At the core are the long-standing relationships he has with David Moulton and Scott Layne, Lombardi, and Hayslip Landscaping's Sam Comer.

"Dolf had told me about the project, and I was very warm to the idea, but I really wasn't thinking about building a house and spending more time in Vero. I just wanted to get away during the mud season. Willem and I loved the weather and all the light here so we came back a third year and rented the same house," Marion smiles, relishing the telling of what happened next.

"One day I was zipping along A1A and I saw an open house sign on Sandy Lane, so I drove in and Dolf was there. He showed me around and I was impressed with what I saw.

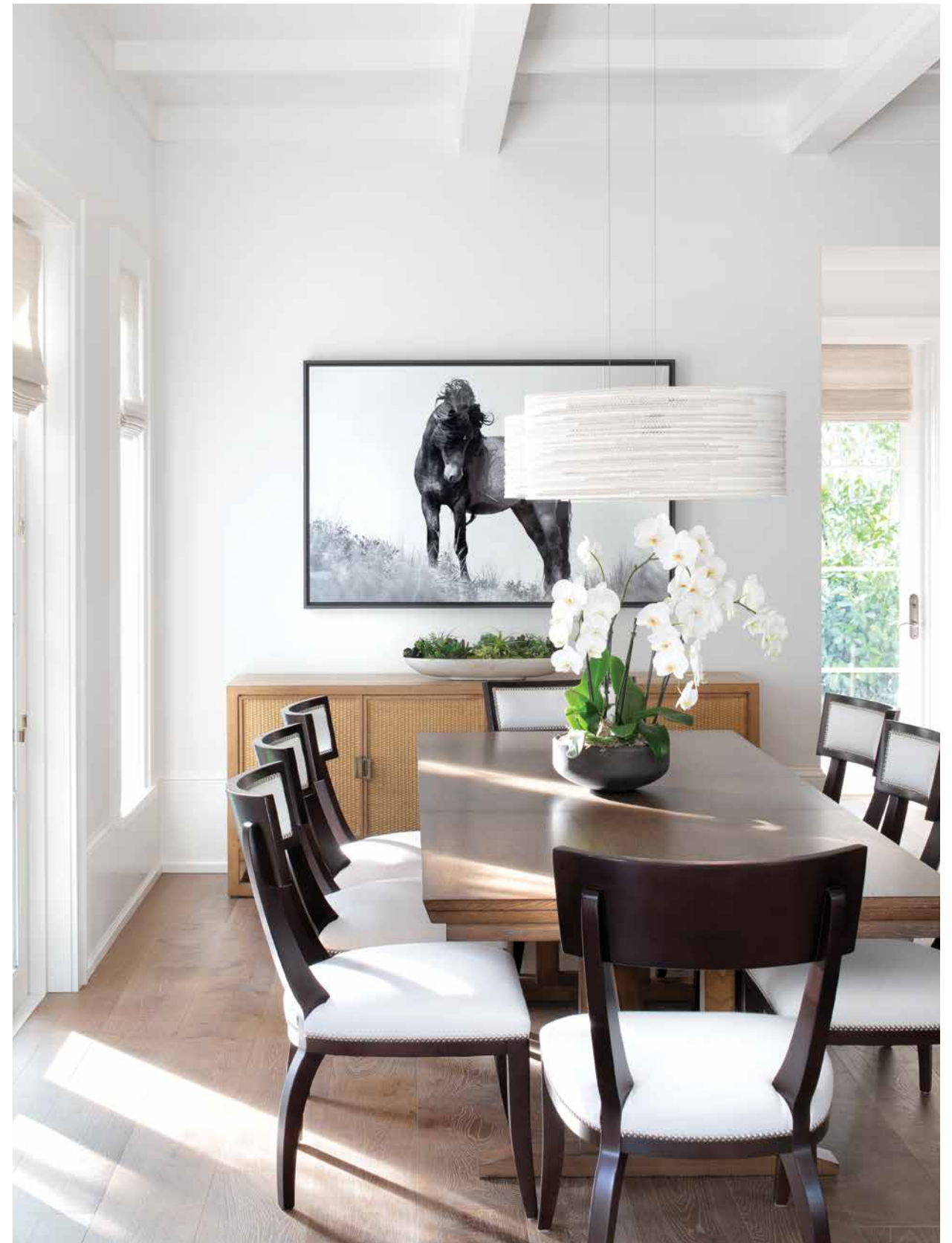
I thought it was a wonderful concept."

After taking a look for himself, Willem agreed. So did his sons, Alexander and Ligon, who happened to be visiting at the time. It was one of those meant-to-be things life gifts you with when you least expect it.

"Before I knew it, there I was sitting across the table from the young man I used to babysit for and give horseback lessons to, preparing to sign a sales contract," Marion laughs.

That contract launched her into the furnishing phase. Before Marion and Willem were married, each owned a house filled with furniture and family heirlooms. Once they came together under one roof, items they no longer had a use for were put in storage. The couple decided that if they weren't needed up north, they certainly weren't going to be needed in Florida.

"Willem and I wanted a new departure. The bones of the house and signature details, the tall baseboards, high



Another of Dutesco's "Wild Horses of Sable Island" pieces takes center stage in the dining room, where there are always orchids on the table. "My grandfather was the orchid man at McKee, and when I was growing up, we had them all over the house," says Marion.



In one of the three guest suites, paintings that celebrate the sea and sky by well-known artists Reid Christman and Peter Laughton invite the visitor to relax and enjoy the Florida lifestyle.

ceilings and windows that let all the light pour in give it a contemporary feel, which we felt presented the opportunity for us to re-imagine a classic interior.”

Marion knew just the person who could help make that happen: Spectrum Interior Design’s Susan Schuyler Smith, ASID. “Susan and I have known each other for years, back to the time when a group of us were working to save McKee from being developed. We also served on the garden’s board of directors together, and I had followed her work through

articles in Vero Beach Magazine. I would tear out things I liked and put them in a file I kept titled ‘one day.’”

That day had finally come. Marion made it clear that television was not welcome in the great room; she wanted it to be welcoming and comfortable, prompting conversation, thought and reading. Having grown up in houses built with pecky cypress, even though the textured, organic wood was not part of the original design concept, she wanted it included. Thanks to Spectrum, the entrance, powder



Spyker, the de Vogel’s English cocker spaniel is catching some sun on the second floor balcony off the master sitting room. Dixon the lab can’t be too far away, as the dogs are inseparable.

“Willem and I loved the weather and all the light here.”

– MARION DE VOGEL

room, staircase and master sitting room walls are pecky cypress-enhanced, with a finish that sparks interest.

While plans for the second floor called for a master suite and three guest bedrooms, the de Vogels opted to convert one into two offices where they could pursue their particular interests. Marion’s office is on the northeast corner, where a tall oak spreads its leafy branches, offering shade and the sense of being in a tree house.

A south-facing balcony off the master suite sitting room



Stylized pecky cypress walls wrap around the master sitting room, where an inviting sitting area facing a wide-screen television beckons. Additional texture is seen in the carpeting and window treatments.

provides a postcard-perfect view of the courtyard, where a pool, patio, fire pit and come-join-in-the-fun chaise lounges beckon. A rubber tree, too magnificent to be believed, and a border of native plantings provide privacy.

Also within view is the two-story unattached garage with a fourth guest bedroom, a favored place to stay when one of Willem's sons comes to visit, and visit often they do.

It was Alexander and Ligon who christened the house "The Sand Castle," and Willem chose the sandpiper as the family crest, which embellishes bath towels and bed linens.

There are many special touches throughout the house that tell of the couple's shared life together, but if Marion were to choose a favorite, it would undoubtedly be Dutesco's photographs of Sable Island's wild horses. Offspring of shipwrecked and abandoned horses, they have managed to survive untouched by human hands, with only grass and rainwater ponds to sustain them.

One image in particular holds a tender spot in Marion's heart. Titled "Love," it captures the devotion shared between a stallion and a mare, their heads nuzzled together, their eyes

longing for each other. Breathtakingly poignant, it was her surprise gift to Willem and is one of the first things you see when entering the living area.

Here, two seating arrangements, designed to accommodate up to eight people, which Marion calls "the magic number," set the scene for her desire to prompt conversation, share interests and explore ideas.

One features a sofa and two armchairs facing a kidney-shaped table that Marion was initially leery about, but has since grown to appreciate for its shape and texture. Directly across, four chairs and a rectangular coffee table offer additional opportunities to settle in and converse, often before sharing a meal in the dining area, where eight chairs surround a long wood table. An eye-catching cluster of white orchids forms the perfect centerpiece.

"My grandfather was the orchid man at McKee, and when I was growing up we always had orchids in the house," notes Marion, who, after college, flew for Pan Am and moved to New York City, where she was so busy spreading her wings that she didn't have time to tend to the small



In the master suite, sandpiper appliques adorn pillows and towels; Willem chose the familiar birds, often seen running on beaches near the water's edge, as the Sand Castle's crest.



Marion continued the blue-and-white theme when selecting outdoor furnishings, both on the covered loggia and by the pool, where sapphire glass tiles sparkle and bath towels of the same shade await.



Spyker and Dixon enjoy a sunny afternoon lounging together by the pool.

things, like orchids — and cooking. Now she does.

“I love my new kitchen,” she exclaims, running her hands over the center island countertop. “When I saw this huge slab of granite I thought oh, my gosh, it looks like the ocean sand after a wave washes over it. I also found this wonderful seascape line of blue-and-white pottery. It’s perfect.”

Marion feels the same way about how everything came together, from contract to completion. “I think it’s fair to say that David and Scott, with Dolf’s encouragement, imagined an extraordinary home. Even though it took a year to build, which seemed painfully slow, we benefitted from the fact that Vic Lombardi and the trades people were already on site working on an oceanside house.

“As for Spectrum, I have never seen such a seamless process, from concept to sampling, ordering to deposits, installation and final billing. That’s not a sexy subject, but in my book it completely enhanced the experience. Additionally, there were no bad ideas from the client, just ways to make them better.”

And better is what Marion and Willem have, from the pecky cypress paneling, to Dutesco’s magnificent images, to the light that streams through windows of their Sand Castle.

“When Willem and I fall into bed every night, we’re so happy. What we achieved with this incredible team of talent is a living dream.” 🌟