

Interior Designer

# Alene Workman

By Greg Carannante

**O**ne of South Florida's foremost interior designers, Alene Workman has found her inspiration in places as disparate as New York City museums, Copenhagen's furniture shops and Cambodia's ancient temples of Angkor Wat.



With the eye and education of an artist, she has drawn on degrees in both classical fine art and interior design, to, as she says, "create art in interiors."

Her award-winning firm, Alene Workman Interior Design, has been recognized in local and international publications for its portfolio of full-service projects in South Florida and throughout the United States for over 25 years. The Fort Lauderdale firm offers world-class innovative design solutions for both new and renovation projects in both homes and condominiums.

Workman has been actively involved in the South Florida community as well as the national interior design profession. In recognition of her portfolio of work and volunteerism, she was named one of only 200 Fellows of the 32,000-member American Society of Interior Designers. In addition to having served as the organization's national director and media spokesperson, she also has been president of its Florida chapter.

She says she enjoys writing on design issues, a trait evident here in her answers to our standard set of Quote Unquote questions.

**Aside from the weather, what do you enjoy most about South Florida?**

Growing up in NYC, I never thought twice about a long train commute to work, or the snow and cold. When I moved to South Florida with my babies, it was a different world. Besides the greenery and beautiful sea, the fact of not needing to bundle up

little ones along with an easier lifestyle and a simpler auto commute, was initially the most wonderful gift to me.

Seeing South Florida grow these many years in all the arts has been an important factor to my lifestyle enjoyment. My first B.A. in art let me 'live' in N.Y. museums, and draw from so many master artists and sculptors from history. After that, a degree in interior design, begun in N.Y. and completed in South Florida, allowed me to create art in interiors. With the growth of the arts environment in South Florida, including Miami City Ballet, New World Symphony, Art Miami, Art Basel and many public and private museums, I find great joy in supporting and participating in these institutions. It has allowed me to thrive in a culture where I am happiest.

In a parallel view professionally, the ability to create my own business with substantial local and national professional success, has been another joy. I am fortunate to be able to enjoy these passions in my South Florida life.

**Aside from the weather, what do you dislike most about South Florida?**

I dislike the tremendous growth in population without enough infrastructure creating a terrible mess in trying to navigate driving anywhere, especially living on the beach with traffic at a standstill most weekends. The proliferation of new, bigger and taller high-rises in every available space is causing damage to our fragile ecosystem and is very concerning.

**Are you a beach person or a pool person?**

I am a pool person. When my kids were young, we were always at the beach. I grew tired of the heat and sand combination in the car and never felt the urge to be on the beach since. That said, I often walk for miles on the sidewalk next to the beach and love the sea view and ocean breezes. It's amazingly beautiful.

**When in your life are you or have you been the happiest?**

I am clearly most happy and relaxed when I am around my children and their young families, who are living themselves in New York City. That, along with working

with wonderful interior design clients and completing their beautiful residences beyond their expectations, is always one of the most thrilling and high moments in my life.

**What do you do when you're stuck in a traffic jam on I-95?**

I'm always on the move so to settle down, it's usually catching up on calls or listening to great music — anything to help me relax during these frustrating minutes.

**What music are you listening to now?**

I listen to classical music like Rachmaninoff, Chopin, Mozart, even Philip Glass and Edgar Meyer, who is a bit of a crossover mixed with jazz. My alternative music favorites now are Sting, Diana Krall, and of course the Beatles, depending on my mood.

**Are you a fan, and if so, of what?**

I am a big fan of and passionate about all things design: interiors, textiles, textures, architecture, art and nature. To me, design also includes fashion, natural landscapes, classical and modern buildings, where innovation, creativity and style are paramount, now and throughout history. I have been fortunate to visit places that opened my mind and saturated it with so much beauty: traveling throughout the U.S. and Europe; visiting Finland and Copenhagen's Danish modern furniture shops and feeling its city vibe; enjoying Russia and India's uniqueness in colors, patterns and palaces; discovering the ancient city of Cambodia's Angkor Wat, after being overgrown and hidden from view for 800 years; touring Monet's home and gardens in Giverny; or walking classical ruins in Greece. They have all broadened my perspective of art, architecture, and all avenues of design.

The same can be said of unique American sites that have equally influenced my sense of design. For a while, I gravitated to the blue skies and landscapes of the high-desert Southwest that became a passion, expanding my sense of texture and color. I must include that I am a city fan with the often-unexpected cacophony of sights in the city of N.Y. and charm of Charleston and Savannah, S.C. There is so much to absorb and gather from great surroundings where art, architecture, museums, and natural beauty are paramount still to learn from for so many generations to come. I have and will



A family room designed by Alene Workman Interior Design

continue to explore my passions in these interrelated design areas.

To say I am a fan is an understatement.

**If you had to choose: Beatles or Stones?**

Clearly, it's the Beatles for me. Growing up with their music was fun and exciting. I remember as a girl trying to learn to dance to their music with a friend and was totally hooked. I had a crush on Paul and a rush of excitement from their music at the same time. I still have the Beatles channel on my Sirius radio.

**What are your social media user names?**

Awidesgin.com

**Apple or Android?**

Apple is the happy place for me, except for office computers that are linked throughout the office.

**Who is your real-life heroine?**

Growing up, I remember reading the bio of Eleanor Roosevelt that allowed me to think I could do more outside my immediate world. But, looking back, I think my mom was my real heroine who pushed me to focus and go after what I really wanted. I saw her strength to become the first college graduate in her family, taking family and government grants, becoming a teacher,

then starting her own nursery school, and moving on to achieve her master's degree and becoming a beloved middle school English teacher as head of her department. Her goal for me too, was to be a teacher, possibly in art.

However, after my B.A., and knowing I wasn't a great artist, I decided to go back to school for a degree in interior design. I began to see my determination, drive and passion coming alive and, finally, see how to use my art background differently, by creating sophisticated, clean-lined, beautiful, timeless interiors. With great pride, my mom saved every clipping of my published work.

**What car are you driving now?**

I am currently driving an Audi SQ5 SUV. I like the speed it generates quickly when I accelerate.

**If you had to choose: Rocky or Raging Bull?**

*Rocky.* I liked his drive to achieve, yet the softness of his love.

**What do you like most about yourself?**

I like that I am a great mother, and a great friend who has successfully navigated and combined my life's passions with family, friendship and interior design. I also love that I overcame my fear of writing and have been published on design topics in several papers and magazine articles, locally

and nationally, using my knowledge and experience in the interior design industry.

**What places in South Florida do you recommend to guests visiting from out-of-town?**

I always suggest a walk around South Beach for the young-at-heart to feel the vibe and change, with some fabulous new or renovated hotels. The Wynwood Walls area of Miami with art galleries is a must day trip with several private art collections that are open to the public. I think Worth Avenue in Palm Beach is a fun place to walk and visit the Norton Gallery. For nature enthusiasts, the Everglades airboat ride is great in winter.

**If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?**

I would be taller. I attended a Halloween party a few years ago with 4-inch blocks strapped to the soles of my shoes, making me 5'6" tall.

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

That's easy. My greatest achievement has been raising my son and daughter. They are my pride and joy, being thoughtful, successful, giving and honorable people who care about humankind, the environment and their families.