



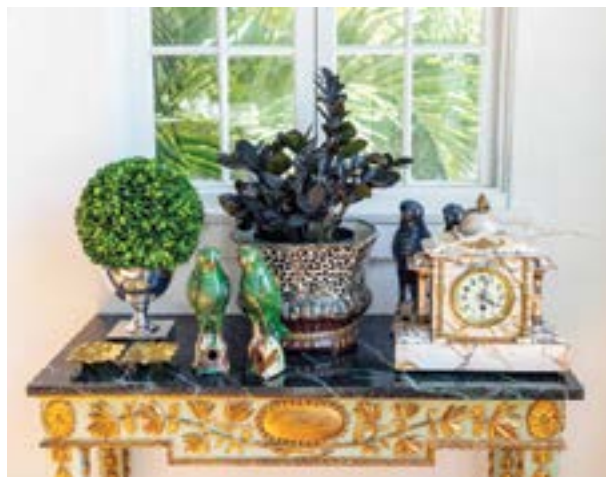
FASHION DESIGNERS MARK BADGLEY (LEFT) AND JAMES MISCHKA RECENTLY MOVED INTO A WEST PALM BEACH HOME, WHICH THEY DUBBED VILLA IGUANA AND HAVE DEDICATED MONTHS TO RENOVATING AND DECORATING.



The Architects of *GLAMOUR*

New West Palm Beach residents MARK BADGLEY and JAMES MISCHKA are putting down local roots and leaving a little sparkle wherever they go

BY MICHELE MEYER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK SARGENT



TOP: THE LIVING ROOM FEATURES A SHELL-SHAPED PLANTER WITH PAPIER-MÂCHÉ LEAVES AS WELL AS LOUIS XVI CHAIRS COVERED IN VELVET. ABOVE: THIS TABLE PURCHASED AT AUCTION BOASTS VINTAGE CHINESE TEMPLE BIRDS AND OTHER FINDS FROM AUCTIONS AND FLEA MARKETS.

When fashion designers Mark Badgley and James Mischka visited their West Palm Beach vacation home in February of 2020, the trip was supposed to be a quick stop-over on the way to a series of international travel destinations.

Then the pandemic hit. Flights were cancelled. Borders closed.

“Boy, did that come to a screeching halt,” says Mischka of their scrubbed plans.

So the couple—a design team since 1988 and married since 2013—hunkered down in the West Palm Beach pad they bought in 2019. But it wasn’t long until they decided to stay put for good, transforming their weekend retreat into their permanent residence.

For more than 30 years, the couple

has spent weekends and partial winters at homes in Palm Beach and Wellington, where Badgley used to show horses on the Winter Equestrian Festival circuit.

“James and I will never forget feeling a warm breeze as we got off the plane,” he recalls of their first visit years ago, to show their Badgley Mischka fashion line to legendary Worth Avenue retailer Martha Phillips. “Coming out of a harsh New York winter, it baffled us. And when we realized people could live like this, we were seduced.”

Haute New Home

The home is a “charming and beautifully dilapidated” Mediterranean-style villa with “tremendous presence,”



Badgley says, which they found on Northwood Shore’s Flagler Drive. They dubbed the 3,000-square-foot, century-old residence Villa Iguana.

“We may get slightly jealous when we walk into friends’ museum-perfect habitats,” Mischka says. “But we gravitate toward homes that need love in every nook and will always be a project.”

From fashion designers to interior designers, the pair says that being home-bound due to the pandemic has let them obsess over details, moving long-owned treasures from room to room.

For their living room, they placed a shell planter from New Orleans above the fireplace and filled it with papier-mâché leaves from Casa Gusto; reupholstered their Louis XVI chairs in powder blue velveteen; and added a 1920s baroque, gilt-trimmed, ivory baby grand piano.

With all the effort they put into their home, “you’d think the rules would be white gloves only,” says O’Hara Fottrell, Badgley’s twin sister. Instead, 18-year-old rescue dachshunds Wally, Whiskey, and Rommel—whom the couple nursed from severe emotional and physical wounds—“are kings and queens of the manor. It doesn’t matter how valuable a sofa is. If they want to jump on it, they can.”

Horn and fur chairs found at auction grace the master bedroom, to which Badgley and Mischka have added another auction find: a 1950s burlwood desk.

The dining room’s chandelier has accompanied them since they were students at Parsons School of Design in 1985. “We barely could afford to eat, but I had to have it,” Badgley says. “We call her Bubbles.”

Passion for Fashion

Suffice it to say, the designers have come a long way since then. They work at least eight hours daily on Zoom, Badgley



WE GRAVITATE TOWARD HOMES THAT NEED LOVE IN EVERY NOOK AND WILL ALWAYS BE A PROJECT.”

—JAMES MISCHKA



dinners, but we felt it was destined for the boutique," he says.

So are seashell napkin holders and hurricane lanterns they hand-bedazzled with vintage beads at night while sitting at their dining room table. "James and I are like magpies. We're attracted to anything that twinkles."

Living Like Locals

Staying put during the pandemic has deepened the couple's love affair with West Palm Beach, where they scour Dixie Highway's Antique Row for new furnishings. They also adore strolling with their dachshunds along the beach.

says. "The other day our model was in the Hamptons, our production manager in Manhattan, our design assistant in Ohio, and our production team in China. To place a button on a jacket—once spontaneous—now takes so much effort."

A pandemic sabbatical is not an option. Badgley, the son of a department store retailer, knows better. "It's a nerve-wracking business, but if you leave, you get run over and left behind." Rather, they've leaned in. Last August they made a bold decision to buy a 1,000-square-foot space at The Royal Poinciana Plaza. They opened a store two months later—seven years after closing a larger one on Worth Avenue.

As a label, Badgley Mischka has expanded beyond formal and bridal wear to more casual caftans and flowing pants. Shoes, handbags, and stationery and glass trays illustrated with Badgley's fashion drawings were made for local shoppers. The designers have found Palm Beach to be up to their challenges—especially now, when snowbirds have become year-round residents.

"Trust me, making the numbers work is no easy thing," says Badgley. "But people will always seek beautiful things. We love how women here dress and put their homes together."

The pair sees their store as an extension of their new home. A long dining table, now painted white, belonged to Badgley's parents since their wedding in 1954. "We'd hosted memorable

"There's a nice breeze from the Intracoastal Waterway, and we know all our neighbors," Badgley says. "It's a fun place to live."

The couple loves to entertain at café tables beneath palm trees on their terraces. Guests feast on elaborate meals that Mischka whips up with recipes from his hundreds of cookbooks. "I read cookbooks like they're novels," he says. "I find it relaxing. It's my zen."

The designers also join friends in the courtyards of their favorite restaurants: Renato's on Worth Avenue and Sant Ambroeus and the Palm Beach Grill at The Royal Poinciana Plaza.

One pastime that's currently off-limits for Badgley is horse riding; major back surgery in mid-2019 has him sidelined from his beloved sport. But he's taking it in stride, channeling his love of horses and fashion into fanciful illustrations in marker and colored pencil, which he posts on Instagram (@Mark.Badgley).



TOP RIGHT: A NINETEENTH-CENTURY MIRROR AND A 1950S CONSOLE (BOTH FROM ITALY) ARE FLANKED BY CLARE FLANDERS' PHOTOGRAPHS OF MADELEINE CASTAING'S HOME IN FRANCE. ABOVE: EQUESTRIAN AND SPORTING ART COMPLEMENTS A SILVERPLATE TROPHY UMBRELLA STAND FROM JOHN DERIAN NYC AND FLEUR-DE-LIS CACHE POTS AVAILABLE AT THE BADGLEY MISCHKA BOUTIQUE. OPPOSITE PAGE: THE "BUBBLES" CHANDELIER HAS BEEN A FIXTURE IN THEIR HOMES SINCE THE MID-1980S.





When fans asked to buy the original art, he and Mischka decided to sell it on eBay last May, with 100 percent of proceeds benefiting Feeding America. A portion of sales from self-published art books *Corona: Love in the Time* and *Glamour...in the Grass* also went to charity.

Close-Knit Couple

Born three weeks apart and in the neighboring states of Wisconsin and Illinois 60 years ago, the two are now so close that they finish each other's sentences.

Badgley has designed clothes since he could hold a crayon. "No way was my brother not going to be successful," Fottrell says. "He had that self-driven, gut-wrenching desire to make his dreams happen."

Mischka first studied biomedical engineering at Houston's Rice University, aspiring to create artificial limbs. He then wound up at Parsons, where the designers fatefully attended the same class in 1985.

"A force brought us together at an extremely exciting point in our lives," Mischka recalls. "We had a lot in common—we're both down-to-earth, not too crazy—and

aesthetically we were on the same wavelength. You couldn't have scripted it better."

Even after 33 years of living and working together, the duo could be mistaken for newlyweds. Badgley commends Mischka for being "calm, consistent, smart—and the most phenomenal cook."

Says Mischka of Badgley, "He's handsome, talented, and kind."

"They complement each other," Fottrell says. "Mark is much more talkative and loud. In a room he has a presence. But James doesn't miss a beat with a witty rejoinder. They're so funny. Mark loves to make up stories and have you fall for them. You'd think as his twin I'd know better, but I still believe him."

The duo also works well together, she says. "They're like a well-oiled machine."



THEIR BEDROOM FEATURES WALLPAPER AND TABLE LINENS FROM SCALAMANDRÉ.

Grounded and Glam

The design industry is replete with divas, yet Badgley and Mischka—who have dressed the likes of Oprah Winfrey, Beyoncé, and Jennifer Lopez—are known for being grounded.

The couple has not forgotten their roots and their early struggles. With \$250,000 in family loans, Badgley and Mischka launched their label in 1988 with a single seamstress. Buzz followed—though retailers had to maneuver through heroin addicts outside and take a freight elevator to their Hell's Kitchen apartment-workroom-stockroom.

"We had to be resilient," Badgley says.

Their big breakthrough came in 1995, when Teri Hatcher wore one of their dazzlers to the Emmys and Winona Ryder to the Oscars. "Through the ups and downs, they're the same Mark and James they were at 20," Fottrell says. "They've never lost sight of who they are."

One can understand why Badgley and Mischka brim with optimism. "We're really lucky," Badgley says. "Fashion has been good to us. We cannot imagine doing anything else. And we're not nearly done. If designers get nine lives, we have two left." <<



BADGLEY AND MISCHKA ENJOY RELAXING OUTDOORS IN NOOKS SUCH AS THEIR WELCOMING GARDEN TERRACE.