

MIAMI

# luxe.

interiors + design®



# Island DREAMS

FORMERLY A SEAFOOD FARM, A  
DESERTED ISLAMORADA PROPERTY  
BECOMES A COASTAL OASIS.

WRITTEN BY ABIGAIL STONE / PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK JOHNSON



ARCHITECTURE / BRUCE CARLSON, BRUCE CARLSON AIA,  
AND STEVE SISKIND, STEVE SISKIND ARCHITECT  
INTERIOR DESIGN / SAM ROBIN, SAM ROBIN, INC.  
HOME BUILDER / DONALD GARRETT,  
D. GARRETT CONSTRUCTION, INC.  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / RAYMOND JUNGLES,  
RAYMOND JUNGLES, INC.



A covered bridge links the main house to the quest wing on an Islamorada property by interior designer Sam Robin. "The louvered Dutch doors can be fully opened," says architect Bruce Carlson, who designed the residence with architect Steve Siskind. Landscape architect Raymond Jungles used blocks of oolitic limestone as planters for a variety of species.

**G**ood design is not born in a vacuum. Rather, when the right factors converge, it's a response to circumstances that can yield something extraordinary. That was certainly the case with this Islamorada residence by interior designer Sam Robin, which unfolds the beauty of its Keys setting into its plan. "We had a vision of height, light and views," she says.

Before Robin even had spaces to consider, the project required a stellar residence by architects Bruce Carlson and Steve Siskind. The owners had envisioned a winter retreat complete with a tennis court, a pool, a summer kitchen, guest cottages, a boat dock and a beach. Yet their request seemed an impossible dream: Deserted except for a dilapidated caretaker's home, the 5-acre property had previously been a commercial seafood farm. "It was basically barren," Carlson recalls. "There was little landscaping on it." This meant the seaside site had to be formed from the ground up, quite literally.

The team began by quarrying the terrain's keystone, which allowed landscape architect Raymond Jungles to forge a luxuriant oasis of native plants such as gumbo limbo, coconut palms and sand cordgrass. "I always try to create ecologically sustainable gardens based on what would normally be growing there," he says. "The more natural and wilder it looks, the less maintenance is required—and the more it attracts local flora and fauna."

Jungles' verdant landscaping resulted in a suspenseful prelude to the main residence. "When you drive up to the house, you are intrigued by what it's bringing you to," Siskind says. The grand reveal is a striking structure with board-and-batten siding, high ceilings, large windows and expansive covered verandas. Clerestory windows, in the living area and along the home's long central spine, flood the space with indirect light, mitigating the harsh midday sun or the need for artificial illumination during the day. "There wasn't a whole lot of room for error," general contractor Don Garrett says. "Everything had to work out with dimensions, measurements and fabrications."

The abode's symmetry inspired its interiors—a departure for Robin, whose Keys portfolio leans more funky than formal. "This is a clean and simple design," she says. "It was definitely a compromise, and I think we accomplished a beautiful mélange of the two concepts." For a pure backdrop, the interior designer chose mostly white walls, white quartz countertops and marble flooring throughout cut into planks, resembling wood. To link the property to its environment, she introduced a natural palette of muted green and blue with sand tones. The dining area's azure chairs and wide-striped rug complement the natural wood of the table and credenza, and seafoam barstools add a note of vitality amid the kitchen's bright white cabinetry.

In the master bedroom, which is reminiscent of a ship's cabin, the deep-khaki bed and wallcovering counter the aqua rug, armchair and ceiling pendant. "I wanted almost a Nantucket kind of feel—but the Keys version," Robin says of the space. A tan runner lines the main hallway, and white wicker furnishings on the veranda complement the home's refreshing mint-green exterior.

This serene palette holds its own against the clients' collection of vibrant glass sculptures by Dale Chihuly. "I kept the background as neutral as possible, because the artwork was so colorful," Robin explains. Her strategy is particularly evident in the living area, where yellow, blue and red pieces by the artist punctuate the room. The works also influenced the interior designer's furniture selection toward sleek, crisp lines—like the living area's rectangular coffee and sofa tables, which offer a welcome contrast to the curvy glass pieces. To further convey a strong sense of geometry, Robin employed oversize light fixtures, including a hexagonal one in the living area, a circular one in the dining area and a square one in the master bedroom.

Chihuly isn't the only artist represented throughout the house. "I used vintage photography as a lot of the art in the project," Robin says. "I think it's really fun, and I was trying to add that kind of element." One such image, in the main hall, depicts bathing beauties walking along a path. Nearby is a triptych portraying a map of the Keys in the same hue as the dining chairs.

Much like the property's dramatic growth from humble beginnings, the home's atmosphere is meant to convey a spirit of inspiration. "The most important thing we create is an energy," Robin says. "I want to create a feeling that's uplifting and healing in a way for people to live and flourish." ■

**“THIS IS A CLEAN AND SIMPLE DESIGN. WE HAD A VISION OF HEIGHT, LIGHT AND VIEWS.”**

—SAM ROBIN

**Opposite:** A Dana Creath chandelier from John Rosselli & Associates and an Ercole mirror sparkle in the dining area, which features a rug by Custom Couture Rugs. The seats and backrests of Artistic Frame's Spats chairs are clad in Lee Jofa's Crescendo suede; a Kravet flannel is on the exterior. Robicara's Ana credenza and Star dining table complete the look.

**Below:** Clerestory windows and The Urban Electric Co.'s Urban Smokebell pendants illuminate the home's central hallway. Merida's Cortina runner in platinum with leather binding lines the floor. The archival photo is from Seth Jason Bellier gallery.



**“I WANT TO CREATE A FEELING THAT’S UPLIFTING AND HEALING IN A WAY FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE AND FLOURISH.”**

—SAM ROBIN



**Above:** The Urban Electric Co.'s Urban Smokebell pendants reappear in the kitchen, where Artistic Frame's Space chairs are covered in a Jerry Pair leather. Pohl Custom Cabinets constructed the table and the cabinetry, which shows off Nanz hardware. Moen's Arbor faucet pours into Kohler's Undertone sink on the island and on the counter by the pass-through window.

**Opposite:** "The pool was designed to feel like a remnant of a reef from where the sea has receded," Carlson says. David B. Duensing & Associates fused keystone to create the rock formations, while Jungles added plantings such as kapuka and buccaneer palms. A Tuuci Ocean Master umbrella shields Tropitone's Elance chaise lounges.



**Left:** The master bathroom was "designed to provide grandeur and a feeling of relaxation," Carlson says. Benches from David Sutherland wear Perennials' Loop De Loop fabric. "Staying in the seaside vernacular, the finishes are simple with white cabinetry, Calacatta Gold marble and nickel hardware," Robin says.

**Opposite:** In the master bedroom, Robin designed the custom leather-upholstered bed through Bespoke Furniture. The clients' artwork hangs above Robicara's Isola dresser, next to Holly Hunt's Mrs. Benny club chair. Crowning the space is a Charles Edwards light. The rug is by Custom Couture Rugs.

Just off the living area, the covered veranda is "meant to be a continuation of that space in the Florida tradition of inside-outside living," Robin says. The wicker furnishings—holding cushions and pillows of Sunbrella fabric—are by Kingsley Bate. The home's exterior is wrapped in board-and-batten siding.

