



A Contemporary Coral Gables Residence with Mediterranean Inspiration

Location: Florida



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With a design and architecture team that's worked together on a handful of other projects, this seven-bedroom residence in Coral Gables saw a high level of trust and collaboration among the professionals involved. In fact, according to architect Jorge L. Hernandez, there was almost an "encouragement of friendly trespassing in terms of each other's boundaries."

Like a family themselves, Hernandez would weigh in on fabric choices by interior designer Nikki Baron; Baron would review Hernandez's floor plans; and even builder Oscar Hidalgo imparted his own training as an architect. Together with landscape designers Jorge A. Sanchez and Phil Maddux, the five worked together with the young husband and wife who asked their "Dream Team," as they called them, to create a spacious yet intimate home that would also be safe and friendly for their little ones.

House Details

Style: Contemporary

Photography: Carlos Domenech

Interior Designer: Nikki Baron, Baron Design Studio

Architect: Jorge L. Hernandez, AIA, Jorge L. Hernandez Architect P.A.

Home Builder: Oscar Hidalgo, Hidalgo Construction Co., Inc.

Landscape Architect: Jorge A. Sanchez and Phil Maddux, ASLA, Sanchez & Maddux, Inc.

The house sits on a large, wooded lake-facing lot. Borrowing elements from the Mediterranean style as well as from English country houses by Edwin Lutyens, the early 20th-century British architect known for landscape connectedness, Hernandez designed a more contemporary house with the kind of layered interplay with nature typical of classic garden design.

From the drive, the house unfolds in stages. Beyond several fruit trees, a pergola breaks at the drive and transitions to a deeper area, a courtyard with four Canary Island date palms, emphasizing movement past distinct areas toward the front door. The exterior is made of striated layers of black lava stone and light coral stone, which Hernandez says is “the native geological substrate. It’s porous, so it catches the light and creates pockets of chiaroscuro.” Lutyens-like touches, such as walking through orchestrated space, can be felt throughout the house. The entry area’s stuccoed living area, for example, is double-height, whereas the dining room features a low-barrel ceiling to create intimacy.

Layout and functionality were especially important factors: “We constructed the house for the family first,” says the husband, who appreciates architecture and minored in art history in college. “We wanted a big kitchen, and rooms where we could relax and play.” Consequently, spaces are laid out “like a string of pearls,” explains Hernandez, so that main rooms have views of the lake.

As for the interiors, “The couple wanted it to be streamlined and contemporary,” says Baron. The sophisticated entry has a small seating area dressed in a serene palette of taupes with a splash of red; a billiards room is tucked away off one end. And following the lead of the two-tone exteriors, the flooring here, and in several rooms, is a light limestone with a 30-inch black lava stone border. That width—the same throughout the house—determined by the exact depth of the two leather-covered chests near the billiards room. “The whole composition of indoors and outdoors works together,” says the designer.

Baron repeated the dark and light themes in the dining room, too, where a black wrought-iron chandelier hangs over a rich mahogany table and walnut chairs; the walls and upholstery are tones of beige; and the floor is, again, black and white. In the spacious family room, a black Greek key-bordered rug hints at classical architecture while playing off the durably upholstered gray-and-neutral striped armchairs in the plush seating area. The family lounges here and in the spacious kitchen, where pretty, polished green granite countertops on the islands warm up the stainless-steel backsplash and dark cabinetry by Hector & Hector.

It’s no surprise that these popular spaces offer views of the lake, as well as the pool. Landscape architect Sanchez surrounded the patio with plantings, including a Podocarpus hedge and Solanum trees. “They give a sense of semi-enclosure, with some openness,” he says, referencing some of the principles of Lutyens’ work.

“My wife and I love the feel of the place,” says the husband. “With the oak trees, the lake, and the varied vegetation, the property doesn’t feel like it’s in Florida, but rather like the suburbs and vacation homes of the Northeast, where we’re originally from.” Says Hernandez, “One doesn’t think of Miami as pastoral, but we like to keep certain secrets.”



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