



# A TROPICALIST HOME IN COCONUT GROVE

WITH MOTHER NATURE AS HIS MUSE, A MODERNIST  
ARCHITECT IS ORGANICALLY INSPIRED

ARCHITECTURE BY ALLAN SHULMAN, SHULMAN & ASSOCIATES, MIAMI, FL  
BUILDER CUESTA CONSTRUCTION, DORAL, FL  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE BY SCOTT DAVIDSON,  
DAVIDSON DESIGN STUDIO, CORAL SPRINGS, FL

Using the verdant  
"wallpaper," archi-  
tects made sure nature  
The living room  
over a natural li-  
Coconut Grove's





One could say that Ralph Middleton Monroe, the first Commodore of the Bay Biscayne Yacht Club and 1890s developer of verdant Coconut Grove, Fla., and the very contemporary Allan Shulman, principal architect at Shulman & Associates are kindred spirits. Well, perhaps not in their building aesthetics. In his day, Monroe was interested in quaint cottages while here-and-now Shulman delights in modernist lines. But most definitely they are united when it comes to their respect for nature, its flora, and even the topographical meanderings of the rock upon which Coconut Grove is perched.

"When we designed this 6,600-square-foot 'tropicalist' home, it was the land that dictated just about every aspect," Shulman says. "Coconut Grove, especially Camp Biscayne, is filled with old growth, tropical plant specimens and very unique features called solution holes," the architect says. "They were created as ancient trees dropped their leaves over time and the leeching acids ate into the limestone bedrock, creating 'bowls.'"

With light flooding into the dining room on one side and from the living room on the other, the kitchen gets its glow from polished lacquer cabinetry by Boffi. Here, European panache combines comfortably with traditional American butcher block.



A white oak floated stairway and contemporary aluminum railings fill the space like sculpture. With a dramatic chandelier from Ingo Maurer in the dining





Now filled with lush vegetation, the hole on this property is creatively integrated with the home. "We decided to play with that feature and cantilever part of the house toward it," Shulman says in reference to the living room's position as an entrée into Mother Nature's sanctum.

With an express sensitivity to place, Shulman tied this contemporary home to the local landscape, culture and the immediate lifestyle of its owner. Slightly angled on the half-acre lot, the residence and its guesthouse form a kind of "L" around the solution hole, allowing a sunny aspect to warm the pool, while the living room retains its primeval view.

Light flows through the interiors that are purposefully monochromatic with gray tones to evoke forest shadows, while actual arboreal shadows create artistic striae across the walls and flooring. Mother Nature may be random, but the living room's furnishings lend a sense of stability.

In homage to its forested venue, a custom ribbon of wood wraps the home in warmth as it runs from the exterior facing into the living room, dining room and stairway. The outside is Prodem, a polymerized wood veneer over a plastic base, which Shulman successfully matched with the stained white oak of the interiors. With the home built on a platform base, Shulman scattered elevations and angles throughout the downstairs ... three steps up to the dining room, two steps down to the living room, ever referencing nature by following the contours of the limestone below. Housed in its own







Looking from the guesthouse, the living room is visible. There are in fact piers secreted beneath the limestone bowl holds mysteries that can only be discovered from the comfort of the living room's plush sofa.

The kitchen continues the sultry palette with black granite flooring and an exquisitely grained marble backsplash. Against the chrome, polished stone and sleek, lacquered cabinetry, the thick butcher block's warmth becomes a star attraction. In a nearby family room that looks out onto the pool, an overhang from the wood-clad bedroom wing above creates a sense of intimacy. The greenery beyond makes for a "wall of living" of golds and browns filled with the arabesques of ancient trees. Inside, a classic sofa and loveseat from B&B Italia, a space-defining area rug and even the elongating lighting channels all make for a placid environment that doesn't attempt competition with the splendors of nature.

Shulman didn't shy from drama on the home's exterior. Finished in stucco and a smooth wood veneer

whose module stretches out to shield the barbeque and alfresco dining space by its own walls. To shape the cantilevered module, Shulman hung the walls above negating the need for supports from below.

And, as in any of his designed structures, balance was at play in Shulman's design. The windows of the upstairs guest bedrooms show the designer's ability to balance the same time. "With aluminum 'fins' we created sun shades the way they do in tropicalist Florida architecture," Shulman says. Horizontally positioning the windows of the house and vertical ones overlooking the glass-shaped living room, the