

# SEASIDE *Elegance*

IN VERO BEACH, A MODERN TROPICAL  
RETREAT EPITOMIZES COASTAL CHIC.

WRITTEN BY ROBYN WISE / PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK JOHNSON



ARCHITECTURE / CLEMENS BRUNS SCHAUB, JOHN MICHAEL OHLER AND  
SHAYNA ST. PETER-WELLER, CLEMENS BRUNS SCHAUB ARCHITECT & ASSOCIATES  
INTERIOR DESIGN / CHRISTINE POKORNEY, THE ASSOCIATES STUDIO  
HOME BUILDER / ROY WISSEL, WISSEL CONSTRUCTION  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / NEIL SICKTERMAN, CLEMENS BRUNS SCHAUB ARCHITECT & ASSOCIATES





In the entryway of a Vero Beach home formulated by architect Clemens Bruns Schaub, senior design associate John Michael Ohler and design associate Shayna St. Peter-Weller, the sightline extends through the inner courtyard to the living room pavilion, which opens onto the ocean. A custom "alter table" console of Schaub's design and a vintage Balinese daybed fashioned in Perennials fabric make the open-air foyer feel like a room. Limestone flooring throughout is by Paris Ceramics and the table lamps are the clients' own.

In the family room, artwork by Ricardo Mazal through Odon Wagner Gallery pops against neutral walls in Decorator's White by Benjamin Moore and provides a playful backdrop for a seating arrangement of Poltrona Frau armchairs. The rug, coffee table and accessories are the clients' own, and the fireplace mantel is custom-made in limestone to match the flooring.



Tucked-away lighting in the lofted ceiling of the living room keeps the profile crisp and airy. Sofas and armchairs by Flexform from Luminaire are covered in a Cowtan & Tout linen and surround a coffee table of Schaub's design in acrylic and teak with a boat-finish base. Artwork by Michael Adamson creates a strong focal point, while the planters flanking the living room corners are by Atelier Vierkant.

Sometimes, ultimate luxury is in the intangibles—sunlight, ocean breezes, a certain quality of time. Considerations such as these are what inspired a modern seaside retreat designed by architect Clemens Bruns Schaub located on the oceanfront in the Windsor community of Vero Beach. “It’s about wind through palm trees, how light moves through a courtyard and being drawn to a space because the weather is right for that spot at that time,” says Schaub of the Anglo-Caribbean-style estate, which integrates a thoughtful dialogue of the built and natural environment.

The home was designed for a Toronto-based couple who wanted a sophisticated beach house to enjoy seasonally with their two grown daughters. “We love Vero Beach because it hasn’t been impacted by high-rises and crowds, and still feels a bit like old Florida,” says the husband. Schaub, renowned for his clean-lined modernity rooted in authentic Bahamian vernacular, had already completed some 50 residences in Vero, so he knew exactly how to design for the local conditions and meet Windsor’s strict building codes while constructing something fresh.

The house’s wide “U” shape—sited to buffer strong winds from the north and open up to sun and breezes from the south—creates a sheltered internal courtyard surrounded by pavilion-style spaces. “True Caribbean architecture is about designing for climate and reducing the effects of heat and wind,” notes Schaub, who worked on the project with senior design associate John Michael Ohler and design associate Shayna St. Peter-Weller. Connected by exterior galleries instead of interior hallways, spaces in the main house and wings all open onto the serene garden in classic tropical style.



Since the homeowners typically prefer to eat outdoors, the dining area is casual and oriented to the ocean view. The elegant glass-top Spyder table by Cattelan Italia from Addison House is paired with the clients' own Hans Wegner chairs and a custom two-person banquette adorned with Christopher Farr Cloth fabric is designed by The Associates Studio. The painting is by Gert & Uwe Tobias.



To get the views just right, Schaub, working with general contractor Roy Wissel, raised the elevation of the home, which, from front to back, subtly climbs six-to-eight feet above existing grade. A series of steps spaced evenly and sometimes only two at a time throughout the property makes the rise almost imperceptible. Soft rooflines in graduated height allow for optimal light and ocean views in almost every room and help break down the scale of the 12,000-square-foot structure.

Many aspects of the project are Schaub hallmarks, including the classic material palette of limestone, bronze, integral-colored stucco and white oak—all “bulletproof” against the realities of the environment. Operable wooden jalousies throughout—a Jamaican feature Schaub adapted in unfinished cypress with help from local millworkers—naturally cool the home by shaping airflow. “It works even better than air-conditioning,” Schaub says of the traditional wooden louvers. The homeowners appreciate their visual appeal,

noting “our jalousie budget was bigger than the window budget,” says the husband. “But it was worth it—the Bahamian influence reminds you that you’re in a tropical space.”

The home’s modern interiors, devised by designer Christine Pokorney, continue the nature-inspired scheme with limestone and oak flooring, walls and ceilings painted in various shades of soft white, and furnishings in bronze, marble, textured linens and woven sea grass. “Every inch of this house is custom-tailored to suit its owners and reflects their refined, yet casual style,” says Pokorney. In the living room pavilion, a pair of nautically-inspired coffee tables designed by Schaub define the space with a whimsical note and connect to pieces made for the outdoor living areas.

A number of furnishings and custom artworks add a key layer of color and texture. For example, when something with visual pizzazz was needed for the space above the entryway console that could also be impervious to the

Hidden appliances and a spacious butler’s pantry reduce clutter in the kitchen and let pristine Silstone marble countertops and Schwin hardware shine. The natural bamboo pendants are by Roost, and the clients’ own barstools are covered in the same Christopher Farr Cloth fabric. The painting on the right, by David Drebin, slides away to reveal a hidden TV.

In the master bedroom, the custom drapes and headboard add pattern and color, while an Antonio Citterio armchair for B&B Italia from Luminaire, covered in a fabric from Jerry Pair, lends natural texture to the space. The bedside lamps, ottoman and sea grass rug are the clients' own.



**Above:** A classic Gloster lounge covered in Perennials fabric beckons relaxation in a guest room balcony overlooking the central courtyard—the perfect spot for an afternoon respite.

**Left:** Stepping inside the guest suite from the balcony, custom shutters—a window design Schaub borrowed from Jamaica—in unfinished cypress allow the homeowners to control airflow and will eventually add a nice silvery patina to the home's exterior color palette.



elements, a local artisan was enlisted to hand-texture the wall behind it based on a pattern Schaub had admired on a building in Chicago. Paintings that conceal televisions in the kitchen and master bedroom interject flashes of blue and yellow, and other bright accent pieces—including a pair of vivid yellow lamps in the master bedroom and a red-lacquered credenza in the back entryway—lend vibrancy to the home’s neutral backdrop.

In regards to the surrounding grounds, the first order of business for landscape designer Neil Sickterman was to restore the native trees and understory plantings—including live oak, sago palms, palmetto and sea grape—that were removed during construction. “We basically came back in and recreated the indigenous coastal hammock at the front and sides of the house,” says Sickterman. Informal

canopy trees and palms create dappled light along with privacy around the site’s perimeter, however the approach in the courtyard is more refined. Structural plantings of classic Sylvester date palm match the scale of the home and “organize the garden into different spaces,” says Sickterman. The pool, placed off-center on a secondary axis, features a few extra feet of depth at the deep end, creating a supernatural shade of blue to rival the ocean.

In keeping with the spirit of the project, the homeowners valued the process of working with the architect—another intangible pleasure for those attuned to it—as much as the results of the collaboration. “People always say home projects are exhausting,” says the husband, “but I found the journey energizing and came away from it saying, ‘I want to do this again.’” ■

Natural elements come together sublimely on the private balcony overlooking the ocean off the master bedroom, which features the clients’ own custom-milled daybed and teak furniture by Gloster.



Sheltered from northeastern winds and surrounded by limestone hardscaping, classic Sylvester date palms define the central courtyard. Landscape designer Neil Sickterman notes, “the placement of the palms is almost as important as the location of the home’s columns, and at night, the diamond pattern on the tree trunks looks amazing washed in floodlights from below.” The pool, custom-designed by Clemens Bruns Schaub Architect & Associates, is placed off-center to create more usable lawn space.