

# WATER WORLD

DESIGN-SAVVY NEW YORKERS GIVE IN TO THE LURE OF PALM BEACH AND  
PLANT THEIR TROPICAL ROOTS FIRMLY ON THE SHORES OF THE INTRACOASTAL.

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Establishing the overall mood of the house, the entry offers the first glimpse of the water. The landscaping was installed by Efflorescence— bougainvillea vines on the walls grow with the rhythm of the jalousie doors, and canary date palms create a strong statement of arrival and provide shade for the intimate courtyard. The entry lights, custom-designed by architect Clem Schaub, were crafted by Shadetree Studio.

Swaying palms, glistening waters and gleaming sunshine sound like a vacation. For Tami and Bruce Watkins, it's become their everyday, as their affection for Palm Beach has grown so much so over the years that they sold their home in New York City and moved south full time. "We increased our footprint little by little," shares Tami. "We rented seasonally at first, then bought a condo, and then a house on Ibis Isle." Eventually, a lot across the street called to them, offering a prime location to build anew on the waterfront. A search for an architect on the AIA website led them to Clem Schaub, whose firm is known for designing tropically influenced homes with an emphasis on indoor-outdoor living. "My interest in design began in my teens and continued with my degree in architecture from the University of Virginia," Tami says. "Bruce and I share a similar aesthetic and we both had a very positive reaction to Clem's design philosophy and his calm manner. We met and hired him on the spot."

Looking into the local building guidelines, Schaub found that the neighborhood's codes allowed for building closer to the water than in other areas, which meshed with everyone's plans. "The owners didn't own a boat, but they wanted to create a sense of being on one, of seeing water from every room and not being aware of the land," says Schaub, who collaborated with associates Cindi Bournique and Tatiana Sanchez on the architecture. "Our idea was to use the orientation and view to direct how the plan would evolve." Utilizing allowable dock space enabled the design of a very large cantilevered deck over the water—a feat that builder Tim Givens recalls as a welcome challenge. "It was interesting to create a deck/dock as an extension of the living room and meld it into the same elevation as the house," says Givens, enlisting the help of project superintendent Saul Irving. "Building close to the seawall from a construction standpoint meant considering site drainage and dealing with the logistics of being pinned up against the wall and not having a backyard to work around." This also meant doing more work by hand.

Material-wise, what Schaub refers to as a modern version of a British West Indies cottage translated very simply to the locale. "When you're doing tropical houses, outdoor materials become indoor materials and vice versa," he explains. With that in mind, the exterior palette was set to include neutral, integral-color stucco walls

accented with painted-wood trim and punctuated with operable wooden jalousie doors, a Jamaican detail Schaub "reinvented" with the help of a local millworker to function as a cooling system and control the amount of breeze flowing through the house. Woven, no-hip-ridge roofs, also borrowed from Jamaican design, topped off the home's series of interconnected pavilion-style spaces, which are paved with limestone. The same, or similar, materials are repeated in the interior lime-washed Western red cedar ceilings, window trim and flooring, as well as the extensive decking and courtyard swimming pool surround.

With strong ideas of bringing along certain favorite pieces from their previous house, Tami called on close friend and New York-based designer Rose Aiello for the furnishings plan. "Tami and I have very similar tastes and had worked together on many previous projects," says Aiello, who worked with associate Dianne Garda on the interiors. "I weighed in on items that were in the shell of the home—helped with the placement of existing pieces such as the large round dining table, and aided in the selection of fabric to reupholster others. I also shopped for new pieces in New York." To best capture the omnipresent views, Aiello oriented the living room furniture outward, including a pair of new white sofas and cocktail tables. There, as well as in the connected guesthouse and outdoor living pavilion, accent colors were inspired by Tami's love of blue. "It started with an iridescent pillow on the sofa and ranged from turquoise to deep midnight blues, like all the different shades of water," Aiello explains. The bedrooms depart from the blue theme, with artwork and soft goods such as throws giving splashes of yellow and green.

Anchoring the home, so to speak, is the ample kitchen. "It's acting as a hinge pin," says Schaub, "opening onto the entry courtyard, an outdoor breakfast area and the dining room." Tami, a hands-on cook, loves to entertain and takes full advantage of the cabinetry and island system, designed by Schaub, to which Aiello added mirrored backsplashes and teak counter stools that mimic the outdoor dining chairs. An upper level houses an office and art studio that can potentially be used as bedrooms.

Further settling the house into its surroundings is the subtle yet striking landscaping, organized by landscape designer Neil Sickterman. "The sensibility of the project was modern and minimal," he says. "We also aimed to create impactful experiences as you enter various spaces throughout the site. For example, the entry courtyard features tall site walls, a simple green island ficus groundcover and substantial canary date palms." Keeping in mind both the summer-like setting and the harsh planting conditions the waterfront creates, he specified a simple, unfussy groundcover, intermingling the waterside deck with beds of natal plum boxwood beauty.

Reflecting on the finished product, Schaub is pleased with how well the initial concept of connecting with the water worked, literally and experientially. "When the tide is up and moving, it feels like the house is moving, like you're in a boat in the living room," he says. And Tami wouldn't want it any other way. "No matter where you are," she says, "there is privacy and a feeling of tranquility." ■

## "THE SENSIBILITY OF THE PROJECT WAS MODERN AND MINIMAL."

—NEIL SICKTERMAN





A Chaddock console separates the living area from the dining area, which features a round McGuire Furniture Company table and Artistic Frame chairs in Dedar fabric beneath a Flos Skygarden light fixture. The wood flooring is by Bois Chamois. WinDoor sliders and Weather Shield French doors are from H.B.S.



**Above:** Just outside the outdoor living pavilion, a vintage table and chairs provide a place to gather poolside. The roof's wallaba shingles were installed by Roofing Unlimited & Sheet Metal. The architect custom-designed wooden jalousie-style doors, which were fabricated by Coastal Millworks and allow for cross breezes.

**Opposite:** The pavilion opens to the pool courtyard and connects to the water. Lime-washed Western red cedar from Hamlin Woodworks crowns the space thanks to Yonder Woodworks, and Jerusalem St. Croix flooring from Haifa Limestone runs underfoot, installed by Accent Floor Design. White sofas and chairs from RH keep the room breezy.



Schaub custom-designed the kitchen cabinetry from Downview Kitchens, incorporating neutral colors into the island paneling and Caesarstone countertops, which were installed by Accent Floor Design. Appliances are by Wolf, Miele, Sub-Zero and Scotsman. Summit stools pull up to the island.

The master bathroom features white-on-white cabinetry from Downsvie Kitchens accented by a signature pop of color. Kohler sinks and Dornbracht faucets nestle into Caesarstone countertops, installed by Accent Floor Design.



The guest bedroom depicts a serene sense of symmetry. A patterned coverlet and pale green pillows enliven the light and airy room, along with a photograph by Christopher Burkett titled *Aspen Grove*. The color palette here is a departure from the rest of the house.



“WHEN YOU’RE DOING TROPICAL HOUSES, OUTDOOR MATERIALS BECOME INDOOR MATERIALS AND VICE VERSA.”

-CLEM SCHAUB

Cantilevered over the water, the vast deck stretches from one end of the house to the other. Outdoor furniture by Summit provides a front-row seat to the view. Skinny solitaire palms add an element of scale, while tightly textured, resilient groundcover stands up to the elements.



**Above:** The railed-in deck resembles that of a boat and furthers the home's feeling of floating on the water; the metalwork is by Custom Metal Creations.

**Left:** The view from the entry pavilion looks over the courtyard hot tub and adjoining pool, by Florida Pool Company, and then through the living room to the water. The stucco work was done by Griffin & Son Stucco.