

NATURE *VS.* NURTURE

WARM WOODS AND COOL STEEL MIX TO GIVE
A VENEZUELAN COUPLE A HOME IN GOLDEN
BEACH THAT BRINGS THE OUTDOORS IN.

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Ipe planks, slate installed by Mountain Stone, white stucco and planes of glass lend visual depth to the façade. A 3-foot-tall grouping of clusias hugs the foundation to the left of the sheltered entry. Fishtail palms fringe the garage, with more green foliage spilling over a planter box in the balcony above it. Bougainvillea (bottom) cascades over a built-in slate-clad planter box that wraps around the garage, positioned beneath a scupper.



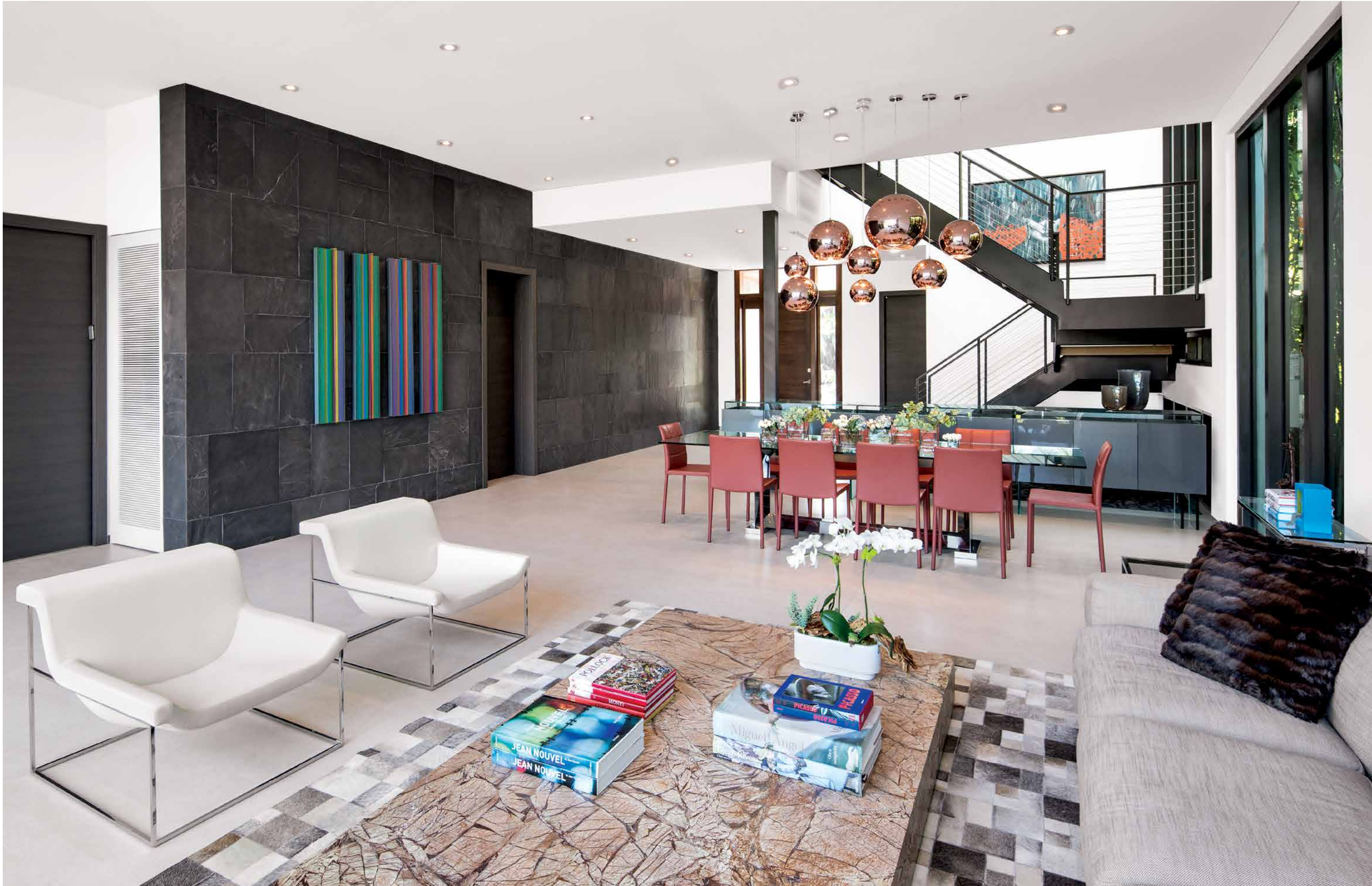
Overlooking a canal in Golden Beach, a lush landscape dotted with neighboring mahogany and palm trees, and groves of bamboo symbolized the dream. A Venezuelan couple who love the outdoors imagined living in a custom home that blurred lines between indoors and outside on the picturesque tropical lot. “We wanted a house that allowed us to feel like we were living in nature,” says the wife, who turned to residential designer Stephanie Halfen to draw up a holistic plan for the architecture and interior architectural details, as well as the landscaping. The two were childhood friends since the fourth grade, when they were living in Caracas, so the collaboration was a natural fit.

Although the owners favored modern style, they each had reservations. The husband was leery of stark white, desiring instead a warm balance as well as a tempering of light and dark elements. So for the front façade of the rectilinear building, Halfen teamed white stucco with ipe and slate, underscoring the volumetric planes. That mix aesthetically played into siting issues, as well. “We wanted to maximize the outdoor space,” says Halfen. “In order to do that, we sited the house right next to the property line in front to make the most of the area behind the home. To give the front façade depth and interest, materials were very important.”



The stairway in the foyer centers on an imposing window that seems to bring a grove of bamboo plants into the house. A built-in console incorporates the steel support column as one leg; it's anchored at the other side by the wall. Topping it is a 4-inch-high glass shadow box that allows for future display. An acrylic painting by Venezuelan artist Victor Asuaje injects bold color.

Tom Dixon's copper globes float above leather dining chairs, all from Anima Domus. A quadriptych by Venezuelan kinetic artist Dario Perez-Flores adds a colorful dynamic to a slate wall. In the living area, leather Désirée armchairs team with a custom cocktail table atop an area rug from Addison House. The Jane sofa is by Camerich; Dalio Tile installed the flooring.



Right: Designing without upper cabinets keeps the MiaCucina kitchen visually clean. A Carrara-like quartz countertop houses a Blanco sink with a Hansgrohe faucet. White-lacquer cabinetry and driftwood-hued veneers provide a neutral but sleek backdrop for GE Monogram appliances from Ferguson. Sliding glass doors can close off the family room when desired.

Below: The family room features built-in storage with touch-latch doors, floating shelves and a niche for decorative objects; the custom-designed wall by BBH Design Studio features textured Interlam panels. The leather Focus sofa is by Gyform, and the ottomans are Fatboy. A Quarry table from West Elm joins midcentury-inspired Eiffel chairs by Control Brand beneath Marset's Tam Tam suspension lights.



The other notion to which the clients were sensitive was having a two-story space. For him, it was perhaps more a question of aesthetic—he didn't want anything that took away intimacy. For her, it was an acoustic matter, not wanting noise to bleed between floors. Halfen handled that by carving out a dramatic two-story volume at the rear of the house, bringing greenery inside, and then lowering the ceiling height to 11 ½ feet in the spacious living area. Builder James R. "Rusty" Witt helmed construction with project manager Steve DelPonte, and professional engineer Daniel Lopez handled permitting. The six-bedroom home lives large yet comfortably. But what's most alluring, and something the owners insisted upon, is that ever-present connection between indoors and outside.

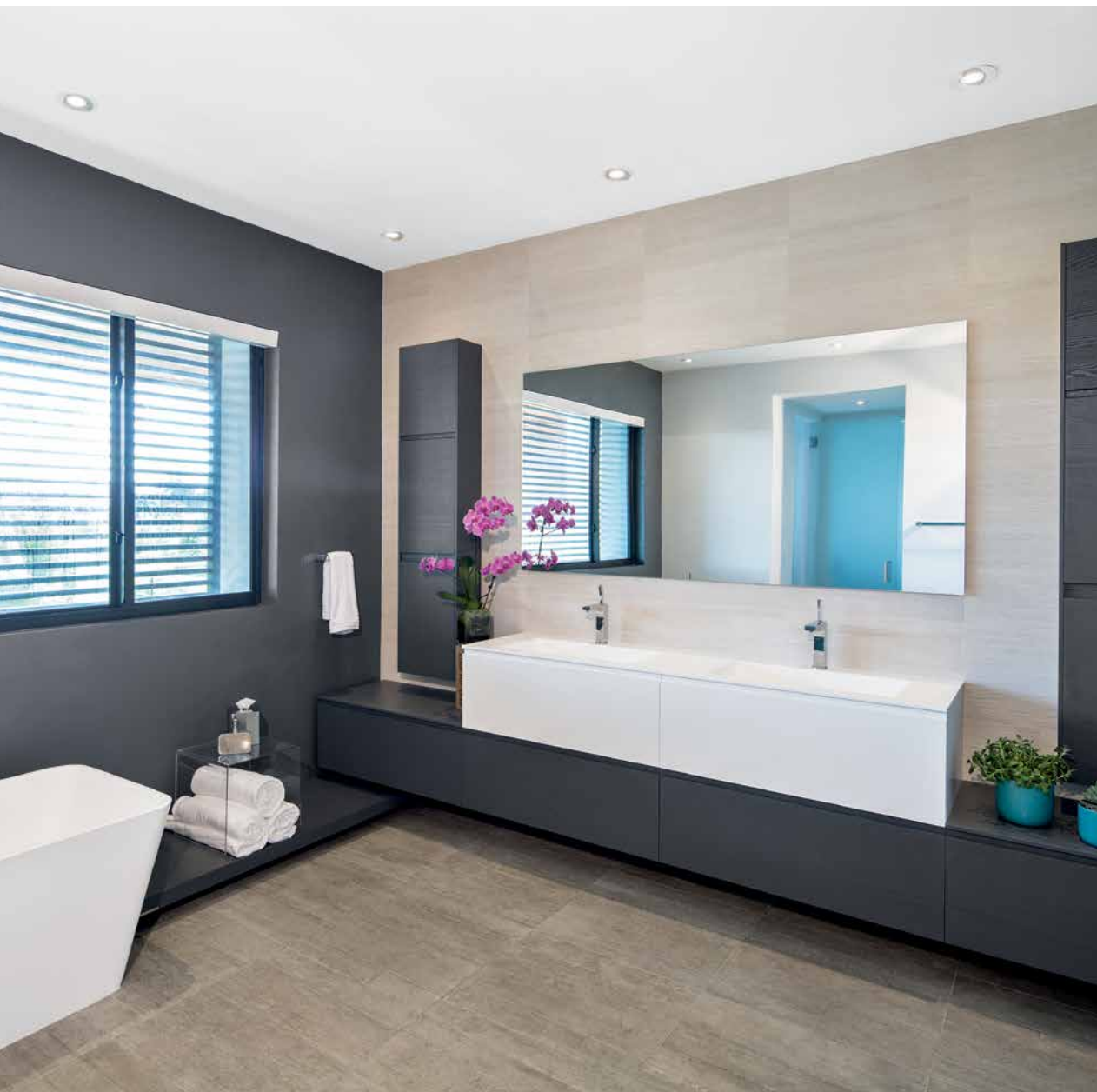
"Every room has some sort of quality that gives you the sense that nature is here," says Halfen. "And the use of noble materials emphasizes that relationship between structure and surroundings." Ten-foot-tall sliding glass doors stack to completely open to terraces; they also afford some privacy from the family room to the kitchen when needed. Laminated glass railings on extra-deep balconies allow unimpeded,

expansive vistas. "Outdoor areas are critical," says Halfen. "The family loves to entertain, so a welcoming and comfortable space outside was one of our main priorities." And the family has been taking advantage of it. "If I want to make a huge dinner for guests, I can open up the doors of the family room (adjacent to the barbecue area) and have a table there," the wife says. "Guests never feel excluded inside or outside. It feels like one huge living room."

Enter Debbie Flicki, Hani Flicki and Sete Bassan, who also turned to the couple's entertaining lifestyle when it came to furnishings and lighting. "They wanted to use any space at any time," says Debbie Flicki, "not just have a formal living room for when guests come over." Contemporary furnishings mix leather with textural fabrics such as chenille and warm woods with metal and stone. A palette of whites and grays is invigorated with pops of tangerine and art that introduces color.

But nature often creates the best canvas, especially in the inviting foyer. "With the orientation of the house, how to play with different movements of the sun was very important," says Halfen. "Natural light is crucial in all of my designs."





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Left: The master bath features a large walk-in shower, tub and double trough-style sink sitting on a floating vanity that spans about 12 feet. The vanity, along with a pair of wall-hung cabinets, provides ample storage; the countertop was fabricated by Dalio Tile.

Below: A Palazzo wallcovering by Innovations creates a shimmering backdrop in the master bedroom. An Italian Jesse bed and low-profile bedside tables maintain a modern, uncluttered look. But the main focus is the view, made all the more commanding with a glass rail that reveals the greenery beyond. The Huron lounge chairs and Pebble table are from West Elm.



In the 22-foot-tall stairwell, massive window panels frame a view of bamboo foliage just outside. The glass in the ceiling is tilted, facing north, letting natural light flood the space. In addition, there's a ribbon window with a larger pane just above the floor, which is paved with river rock. White-oak treads have open risers, and powder-coated-steel handrails are fitted with stainless-steel cables. Throughout, a large-scale porcelain flooring material was chosen for its beauty and practicality. "The owners like the look of limestone without the maintenance," says Halfen. "They wanted something that would go with their everyday activities and lifestyle." The wife applauds her friend for such decisions. "A lot of people can have beautiful houses," she says, "but Stephanie is also so functional in her design." Bridging the foyer and dining area, Debbie Flicki, Hani Flicki and Bassan designed a 14-foot-long console that is bookended by a steel support post and the wall. It defines the space as well as answers storage needs. Suspended above the glass-and-chrome dining table is a grouping of copper pendants, slightly higher than the customary height. "It makes the space feel even grander," says Hani Flicki.

The designers also added a wall of built-in storage in the nearby family room using textured wood panels with metal reveals; toys and games are tucked away behind touch-latch doors. "There's a big comfy sofa, where all the seats extend, and the kids stretch out and watch TV," Debbie Flicki says. "The cabinet makes the space clean and practical." The most minimal design is in the kitchen, which pairs sleek touch-latch cabinetry finished in white lacquer and driftwood-hued veneers with horizontal grain. The plan is unencumbered by upper cabinets, except for floating shelves on the quartz sink wall. A similar aesthetic is carried out in the master bathroom, with its floating vanity and trough-style sink. Back outside, Halfen credits the surrounding landscape and water as the catalyst for success. "The architecture and landscape are integrated through the mix of materials: ipe wood, grass, water, the porcelain tiles. It's so rare to find so much green space in this area, especially with new homes. It's contemporary but very warm and intimate," she says, pointing to the structural support on the terrace, for instance, which is grand in scale but at the same time very casual and relaxed. "That's one of the home's best assets."

Terraces were paved with porcelain tiles thanks to Dalio Tile. The entertaining area comes equipped with a built-in Coyote grill, Konkord barstools by Karim Rashid for Slide, and a dining table from Scan Design with Kartell chairs from Addison House. The pool was built by Poolscares.



A structural support clad in ipe warms outdoor seating, and the overhang to which it connects provides shade. A Chill-out coffee table designed by Strand + Hvass, featuring a dual-height mechanism, pairs with Breeze chairs and Diamond sofas, all by Cane-line. Furnishings were acquired through Anima Domus.