



# On Golden Beach

SDH Studio Designs a Modernist Beauty for a Quarter Acre Lot

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The two-story living and dining rooms allow family and visitors to congregate in a volumetric space anchored by a glass-railed staircase and with live bamboo acting as an extension of the garden beyond.

DRIVING THE ONE-MILE SWATH along A1A that is Golden Beach, it is all but impossible to tell that this is actually a barrier island, surrounded by water, with an abundance of nature. So it's particularly pleasing to come across a home right on Golden Beach Drive that makes such smart use of its surroundings as this residence does. Designed by Stephanie Halfen of SDH Studio in nearby Aventura, this house offers a breath of fresh air in a land chock full of Mediterranean style villas from the past quarter century. We recently had the chance to meet with Halfen and ask her about this new house.

**Tropic:** Tell us about the concept behind SDH Studio.

**Halfen:** I established SDH Studio in 2009, after relocating to Miami from Venezuela. Living in Venezuela, the homes are fully integrated with

the outdoors and this is what influences all my design work. Creating an interesting residence that brings the outdoors in is, in my case, fundamental.

**Polished stone floors keep the entertaining areas a little more formal while the addition of a clerestory window high above the sliders gives the room an ethereal feel with sunlight streaming through tropical foliage.**

**What were the conditions you were confronted with on this particular project?**

The house sits on a lot of almost 13,000 square feet. It's a pie-shaped lot, which presented a bit of a challenge. Also, Golden Beach has very strict setback requirements, so the second floor was designed to have a stricter setback than the first; that way the house didn't look like a box.

**Given those particular challenges, what was your goal in the creation of the 'volumetric' space that is really the heart of this home?**

I wanted to bring the outside in, so that no matter what room you're in, you cannot just see nature outside, but feel it. The key feature that enables this is that double-high space in the center of the house. Everything was designed around this key attribute, which was important for my clients as they are a family. This way, everything is integrated, and the family is drawn in, towards be the center of the house.





**Within that space, you've chosen a glass railed staircase. How does that fit in thematically?**

The general concept behind the interior design was to give the house a very light, very contemporary and young feeling. I wanted it to evoke a spacious loft, but soften that a bit on the staircase by adding a glass railing instead of metal or wire. This also made it safer as the family has small children.

**You've created basically an all-white façade and yet you use some texture and colors for contrast. How did you make these choices?**

I am a minimalist at heart, and I consider the architecture to be a white canvas. Since a family was to be living here, I wanted to play around with color accents to make it fun and more livable, but I didn't want to cover it up. So I pulled from the colors of nature. For instance, I took the blue in the pool and I added a border of mosaic tile. I used a different shade of blue, so it would stand out, but still remain in the same family. I used frosted glass on the upstairs window. This has a slightly greenish tint and actually may appear to look like window shades.

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**The kitchen has plenty of dedicated workspace on three, waterfall-style countertops, one as a center island for cooking, one solely for food prep and one that does double duty as prep space and breakfast bar.**













### How does the use of texture fit in?

I used texture on the exterior for visual interest, mostly through textured stucco on the façade. I used custom textured concrete planks for the outdoor area as well...concrete is really good to use in hot climates.

**You use a lot of features that were used in the MiMo era; mixed materials, corner windows, angled roof and the angled wall by the pool are some examples we can think of — were you intentionally influenced?**

Miami has a very interesting architectural history and I was inspired by the Art Deco and the Bauhaus eras. I wanted this house to capture that history, with its strong and simple building elements, and merge it with more modern architecture and features. In the pool, for instance, I used LED lighting. You see jewel-like reflections because we selected a tile on the bottom that has reflective coloring, so it captures the changing light. On a bright day, the pool is light, and on a dark day, it appears calmer, which blends in with the nature that surrounds it. ■

**LEFT: The guest bath uses polished stone on one wall and rough on another. Light pours evenly down one surface and rakes the other, highlighting the textured stone. ABOVE: The street façade keeps a low profile while that facing the water is wide open.**