



tropical modern

FORM FOLLOWS FLORIDA AT SDH STUDIO

Text John O'Connors **Photos** Robin Hill



Natural stone and wood veneer were selected as a connection to nature, while their minimalist design assures a certain timelessness.

AS SOUTH FLORIDA CONTINUES its transformation, new houses are replacing older homes everywhere you look. This seems especially true in the South Florida's eastern neighborhoods, where new construction commands the highest prices. Whether building new in Fort Lauderdale's Harbor Beach or Miami's Bal Harbour, new construction often includes all the bells and whistles and doesn't feel it represents where we live. Not true with the single-family home designs by SDH Studio. When designing spec housing — single-family homes built for a developer, not a particular homeowner — this Miami-based firm digs deep to establish a dialogue between architectural form and the surrounding environment. Sometimes these connections are direct, sometimes more abstract. We recently spoke to the firm's principal, Stephanie Halfen about a recently completed design for a house in Bal Harbour.

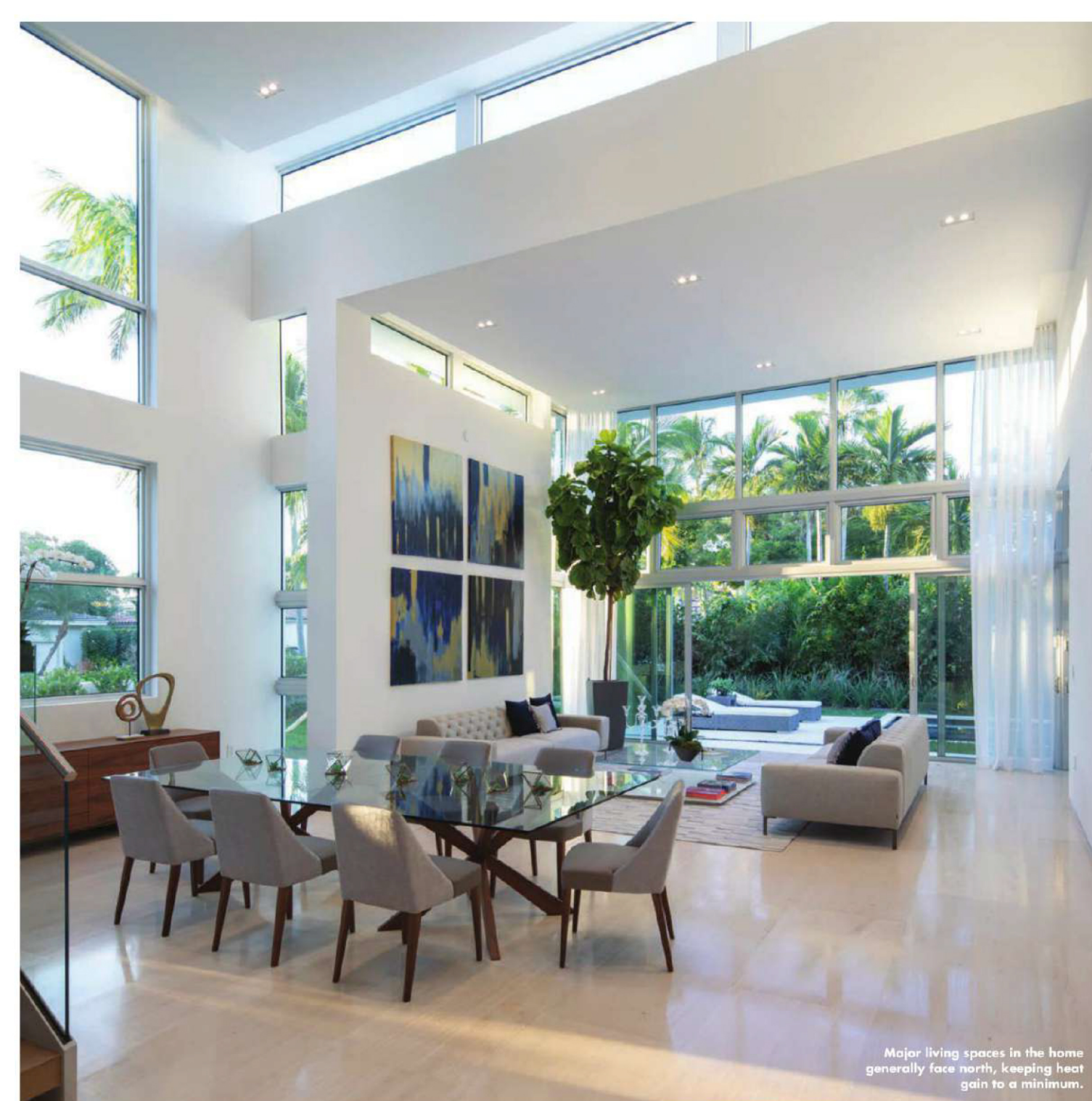
TROPIC: Was this project a spec residence for a certain developer? What did they describe to you that they were looking to achieve?

STEPHANIE HALFEN: Yes this project was designed as a spec residence by SDH Studio Architecture + Design and was built by TREO Construction. The developers were looking for a home designed for a family that enjoys family life, entertaining and outdoor living. Space planning was key. As a main component on all of our designs this home really focuses on how the user will enjoy every corner of the house. Every space is meticulously well thought of.

What existed on the lot previously to the house your firm designed?

It was a double lot that was divided in two lots. We designed two very different homes for the de-





Major living spaces in the home generally face north, keeping heat gain to a minimum.

velopers. The first one was competed and sold last year breaking records on sales price per square foot in the area and this one that we are talking about is the second home just recently completed.

Tell us about the mix of materials on the exterior and how they transition to the interior spaces.

The exteriors are finished with natural stone and smooth stucco. The mix creates a very elegant and subtle mix of textures that accentuate the interesting volumetric composition of the facade.

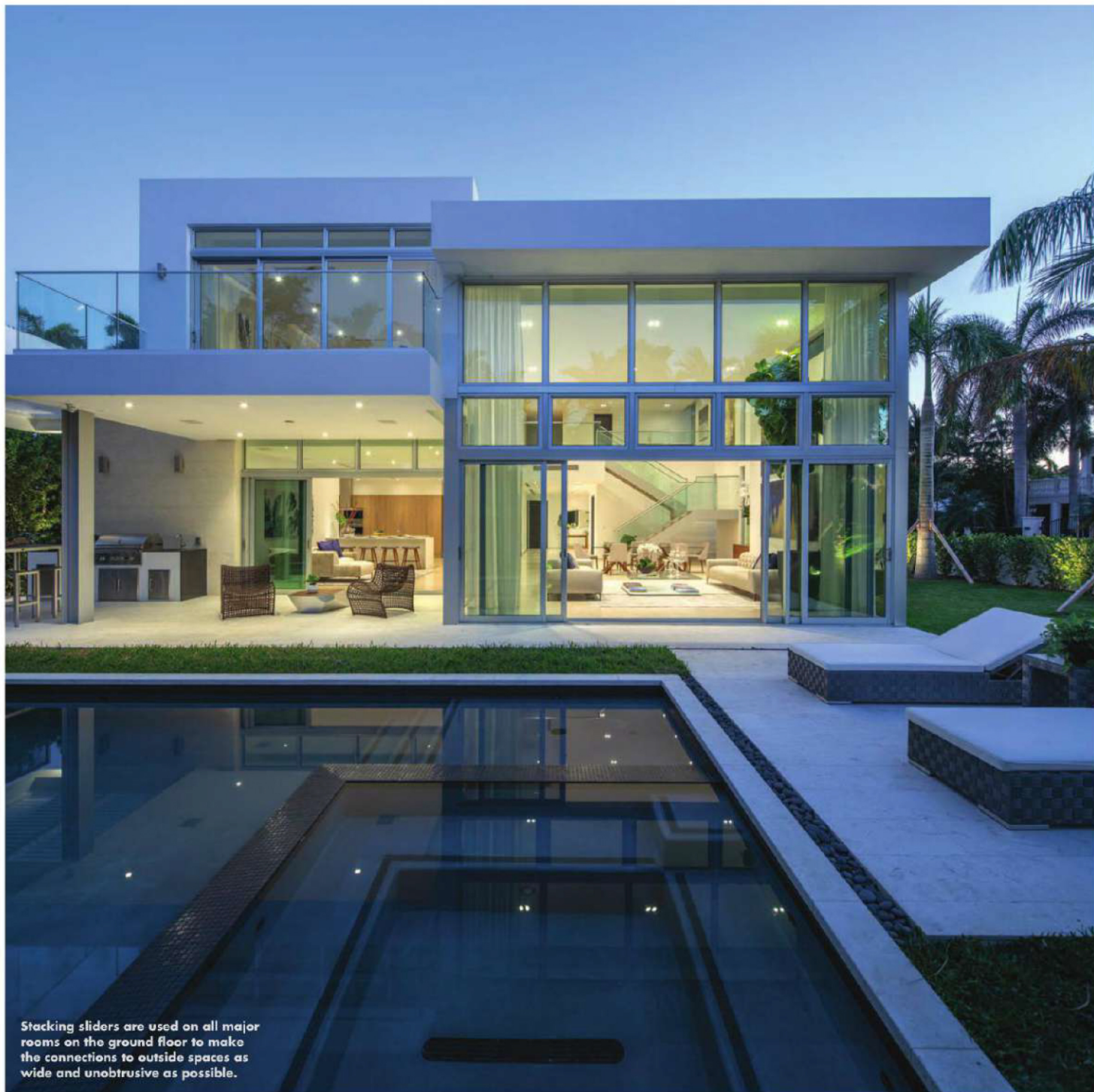
The mix of materials on the interiors reflect the same elegance and subtle mix of textures that exist on the exteriors. The idea is to create a timeless and calm ambiance that would enhance everyday living. With the use of all natural stones finishes, the house reflects a real connection to nature.

Can you talk us through the composition a bit?

The mix of volumes and planes creates a dynamic exterior while helping us accommodate and give movement and privacy to interior spaces. One of the advantages of being sited on a beautiful corner lot is its abundance of natural light, therefore the dynamism of volumes and planes helped us take advantage of that light while maintaining a sense of privacy inside the home.

The dialect of Modernism you use here, and in much of your work, reflects the place we are lucky enough to live. It's not simply Modernism, but Tropical Modernism. Can you give us a few examples in this residence where that language is clear?

The idea is to create a timeless and calm ambiance that would enhance everyday living. With the use of all natural stones finishes, the house reflects a real connection to nature.



Stacking sliders are used on all major rooms on the ground floor to make the connections to outside spaces as wide and unobtrusive as possible.

Having grown up in Venezuela where the weather allows for not having air conditioning inside the homes, windows are constantly open, and the view is filled with the green of the mountains of El Avila. This kind of connection to surroundings is the main focus of all of our designs. This influence translates into having as much natural light inside the home as possible, blurring the lines between the interior and the exterior by creating seamless transitions between the indoor living space and the outdoor living space. In this particular home the backyard wraps around the entire house providing beautiful landscape views from every window. In the living room, family room and kitchen, we selected stacking, sliding glass doors connecting the interiors with the pool and outdoor areas.

The interior is so neat and clean in terms of design and finishes... right down to keeping ceiling intrusions (vents, smoke detectors, etc.) to an absolute minimum. Was this a particular challenge?

“One of the advantages of being sited on a beautiful corner lot is its abundance of natural light, therefore the dynamism of volumes and planes helped us take advantage of that light while maintaining a sense of privacy inside the home.”

Yes. When we design spec homes, the idea is to provide a beautiful and balanced canvas, if you will, for the new owner to make the home their own. This is sometimes much harder than when you have the client design their home from the beginning of the design process. The home is currently on the market... listed with Harding Realty, so we'll see soon enough how potential buyers react to our design. ■

Tropic

MAY, 2019

FLORIDA LIVING & DESIGN

