



DOWN TO EARTH

A modern abode offers
an immersive experience
by integrating nature
into everyday living.

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Architecture and Interior Design: Stephanie Halfen,
SDH Studio Architecture + Design
Home Builder: Ricardo Halfen, Kevin Meilan and Eli Abadi,
TREGO Construction



Flanked by metal and coral stone, steps on a water feature lead to the pivot wood front door. “We wanted the house to feel like it floats,” architect Stephanie Halfen says. Beau the goldendoodle eagerly awaits guests.



In South Florida, nature never remains static for long, veering from neon blue skies to sudden silvery showers in the blink of a lightning bolt. Architect Stephanie Halfen knows, at its very best, a contemporary home can harness these mercurial moods into something truly entrancing. One couple wanted nothing more than this when they recruited her and her husband, general contractor Ricardo Halfen, to design a modern residence that embraces the elements. “The challenge was to create an incredible oasis in which no matter where you are in the house, you are surrounded by beautiful views,” she explains.

Cultivating an intimate indoor-outdoor relationship for this project required especially creative thinking, as the narrow lot overlooking a Miami waterway restricted opportunities to incorporate broad vistas. What’s more, the couple required an easily accessible, one-story structure for their young son and playful goldendoodle.

In response, the architect conceived a modular design in an expansive H-shaped layout, with four wings that merge into a central gathering area. This makes room for four courtyards: a pair of small glass-encased side alcoves filled with lush foliage and two vast open-air spaces that flank the front and rear of the residence. These slices of sunlight and greenery infuse nature into the heart of the home, so “the internal views become the focus,” she explains.

Each courtyard also presents distinct environmental experiences. The entrance, for example, centers on a built-in pond. Reaching the front door requires navigating floating concrete steps interspersed with islands of tropical flora, while the courtyard’s surrounding glass walls beckon inside. “Those floating steps make you feel like you’re walking on water,” laughs one of the homeowners.

Past the front door is the core interior gathering space, where the architect elevated the ceilings to include generous clerestory windows. Through the glass, “you can see the tops of palm trees swaying,” she notes. “So whether it’s a blue or gray sky, you feel truly integrated with nature.” Materials further underscore this organic atmosphere, with warm

paneling on the ceiling and limestone floors that echo the exterior coral stone walls. Sliding glass doors lead to the rear loggia, which the architect primed for alfresco entertaining thanks to a cantilever overhang and views of the pool.

The family enjoys more personal moments with nature in the four private wings. Floor-to-ceiling windows flood all the bedrooms with verdant light, as the architect situated each space to face the outdoor scenery. More expansive glass envelops the couple’s main bathroom among a thick tree canopy, which the general contractor’s team—including builders Kevin Meilan and Eli Abadi—carefully preserved, needing to replant only one 70-foot-tall royal palm. “We were able to align that tree with others on the property,” he says. “It was an incredible challenge we had to navigate.”

Even hallways—spaces typical minimized in contemporary design—are more than purely liminal, as the team framed each corridor with glass walls, revealing a water feature or flush of greenery. Solitary strolls between rooms become miniature jaunts in an ever-changing environment. “It’s important that our projects have an element of discovery and intrigue,” the architect says.

As avid design aficionados, the couple curated pieces in harmony with the home’s natural framework. They favored furnishings and decor with clean silhouettes attuned to the streamlined architecture: See the gently curved sofas, rounded tables and area rugs with angular patterns. Soft, neutral browns and creams—paired with wood grain and deeply veined stone—push the overall style “toward a more tropical modern design,” one of the clients notes. Additional saturated hues come courtesy of their art collection, including a painting in the office by iconic Miami artist Purvis Young. Reflecting the abode’s abundant light, metallic accents shimmer throughout, especially in bold chandeliers that take advantage of the high ceilings.

Now the house has taken on a life of its own, breathing in the ebb and flow of light and air. The family can witness and appreciate each facet—from clear midday radiance to amber golden hours—from all angles. “That’s what we were trying to create: a home where you get to enjoy every single corner of it,” the architect reflects. ■



Above: The dining area is defined by Baxter's Lagos table, Meridiani's Sylvie chairs and a Henge light and cabinet. Entertaining easily flows to the loggia, which houses Talenti's Panama loveseat from Clima Home and a coffee table and stools from Jalan Jalan Collection.

Opposite: A Meridiani sectional, armchairs, pouf and console gather in the living area; they join a Gallotti & Radice sofa and tables atop a Henge rug from DDC. A table lamp from Stripe Vintage Modern and a CB2 floor lamp illuminate the space.



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—STEPHANIE HALFEN



Mogg's Metrica bookcase lines an office wall painted Benjamin Moore's Decorator's White. Beneath a Gallotti & Radice chandelier, Meridiani chairs face a desk by Fine Surfaces and More on an Art + Loom rug. A Purvis Young artwork hangs above Emmemobili's Stripes credenza. The Visual Comfort lamp is from Circa Lighting.



Above: Calacatta marble from Opustone Stone and Tile Concepts enlivens the primary bathroom, home to Dadoquartz's Riva bathtub and CBZ's Ballam side table. Tech Lighting's Exo flush mount, a mirror by Fine Surfaces and More, and Phylrich's faucet and tub filler add shine, countering the warm Urbanik Surfaces flooring.

Opposite: Meridiani's Keeton armchairs, Ralf table, Tuyo bed and Dimitri nightstand rest on a Minotti rug from DDC in the primary bedroom. Kelly Wearstler's Alma floor lamp from Circa Lighting stands between draperies from Aventura Home Decor and wood veneer wallpaper.