



**Architecture and Interior Design:** Stephanie Halfen, SDH Studio Architecture + Design **Home Builder:** Ricardo Halfen, Treo Construction  
**Landscape Architecture:** Carolina Monteiro, Clad Landscape Architecture and Design

# POWER HOUSE

Natural elements emphasize a deep connection to the outdoors  
in this modern home with a commanding presence.

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER BOLES | PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRIS TAMBURELLO







Mochi, an Australian labradoodle, poses in the breakfast area, grounded by Opustone Stone and Tile Concepts' Cenizo honed marble. In addition to installing floor-to-ceiling windows, the design team created recessed planters in the floor to help blur the line between inside and outside.

Even before hiring architect Stephanie Halfen, her clients—a couple with three children—had a distinct understanding of what they desired for their new house. “Our vision was to create a contemporary design that embraces exposed

materials, particularly concrete,” the wife describes. “We aimed to infuse the interiors with wood, glass, stone and steel. Equally important was the seamless integration of the landscape.” This abstract image isn’t one they conjured without thoughtful consideration; the wife has an architectural background, and the owners’ request for a modern, industrial structure with a tropical sensibility is a language Stephanie speaks fluently. “The idea was to incorporate a lot of natural elements into the home and create a feeling of strength within a timeless design,” the architect says.

She began by using the Golden Beach couple’s preferred material—concrete—in large swaths, devising a two-story residence that plays with depth and angular forms. “People sometimes refer to a contemporary house as a box,” she observes. “But we did the opposite, creating a kind of sculpture with different volumes—pushing some out and some in.” The concrete was cast in place, a process that required a great deal of finesse, explains Ricardo Halfen, the project’s general contractor and Stephanie’s husband. “You have only one chance to do it right,” he points out. A wood-paneled pivot door softens the façade and aluminum louvers filter light through the oversize windows, while bands of white stucco wrap elements like one of the two garages, emphasizing the structure’s contrasting projections.

The mix of materials continues inside. Upon entering, one experiences what Stephanie calls “the wow factor”: a soaring foyer with a concrete-and-glass staircase that appears to be floating against a double-height marble wall. At the base of the stairs, she and landscape architect Carolina Monteiro arranged an indoor garden of potted plants nestled in a bed of stones. “Incorporating greenery is a priority, because it improves the living conditions inside and blurs the line between interior and exterior,” Stephanie explains. “Wherever we can find an opportunity

to bring nature in, we take it.” Other verdant moments appear in the breakfast area, where she constructed recessed planters in the floor and installed a lengthy horizontal window among the generous kitchen cabinetry, creating a glass “backsplash” with a view of the lush grounds. “It becomes a green backdrop,” the architect describes. “You can feel the power of nature—and that energy inside the house is important.”

From the grand, lofty entrance, a more intimate feeling defines the living spaces. There, Stephanie introduced elegant wood finishes. Grooved paneling, for instance, adds interest to a wall of the living area, then extends to the upstairs hallway, even shrouding doors. It’s not the only finish the architect used lavishly: An ocean-blue honed marble encases the primary bathroom, dominating the walls, flooring and countertops. “It feels like you’re walking into a cave of raw stone,” she muses. “It brings strength to the space.”

Just as she advised on the home’s architecture, the wife also played a primary role in the interior design. In particular, she gravitated toward the stylish simplicity of contemporary Italian furnishings and textiles such as leather. Low profiles outfit the living area, allowing for unobstructed views of the outdoors. Save for artwork and small pieces, neutral tones prevail, echoing the earthy palette Stephanie had established through gray marble flooring and natural wood accents. “The idea is that the materials, shapes and colors meld harmoniously with the architecture of the house, giving it a unique personality,” the wife says.

Similarly, the grounds’ structured landscaping is intended to complement the commanding residence. Among the lawn surrounding the backyard’s Olympic-size swimming pool, Monteiro strategically placed select plantings that offer the homeowners privacy. “There are fishtail palms to provide cover and create an enclosure,” she notes. “Then we used podocarpus while layering in other species.” To the wife, the inviting serenity and craftsmanship experienced inside and outside is exactly the feeling she envisioned when it came to bringing her concept to life. “I love how the spaces blend and merge with each other,” she describes. “The house turned out to be welcoming, livable, fresh and aesthetically pleasing all at the same time.” ■



A painting by Alejandro Santiago is a commanding presence in the living area, which is enveloped by rich wood paneling by Design It Studio. Minotti furnishings form a cozy gathering space. Maxicon handled the home's automation.







Connected to the living area and the outdoors, the dining space is the source of frequent entertaining. Tonin Casa chairs from Addison House surround the Artefacto table below a Lindsey Adelman Studio chandelier. The bar niche features an accent wall by Design It Studio.

“THE IDEA WAS TO  
**INCORPORATE A  
LOT OF NATURAL  
ELEMENTS** INTO  
THE HOME AND  
CREATE **A FEELING  
OF STRENGTH.**”

—STEPHANIE HALFEN



Minotti pieces outfit the loggia, where Opustone Stone and Tile Concepts' Harlequin granite flows underfoot. Landscape architect Carolina Monteiro accented the grounds with plantings such as thatch palms, ferns and, at the end of the pool, an autograph tree.

