

MIAMI EDITION

# FLORIDA DESIGN

*Architecture 2024*

Pros & Projects You Need to Know!



**DESIGN CONNECTION**

**Home & Nature Become One in Coral Gables**



# ORGANIC AMBITIONS

NATURE INFORMS ARCHITECT STEPHANIE HALFEN'S ELEGANT AND THOROUGHLY MODERN STRUCTURES

TEXT: RIKI ALTMAN-YEE

"Our biggest goal is always to bring our clients' vision to life," says Halfen. "With this residence in Colombia, which we call Teusaca, the dream was for a greenhouse. This project stands as one of our finest examples of seamlessly blending the interior with the exterior landscape, creating a truly harmonious and immersive experience."



ABOVE: "We are dedicated to crafting exceptional designs that offer breathtaking spatial experiences, seamlessly integrating beauty and nature," says architect Stephanie Halfen. "Architecture has the power to significantly enhance our daily lives."

*The natural world has always* taken precedence in Stephanie Halfen's work—much to her clients' benefit. Take, for example, the 8,000-square-foot Oaks Residence in Pinecrest designed around eight mature oak trees: "Once you're inside, you're literally walking around the trees constantly," says the architect and interior designer. "They become part of the experience of living in the house. The structure hovers above the ground so the trees' roots can continue to grow."

As many of Halfen's projects—both residential and commercial—lean tropical and modern, they tend to feature organic materials. And when skylights and living greenery are introduced, walls—and convention—seem to disappear. "I try to bring nature in as much as possible," she says. "It's about incorporating elements that really warm a space."

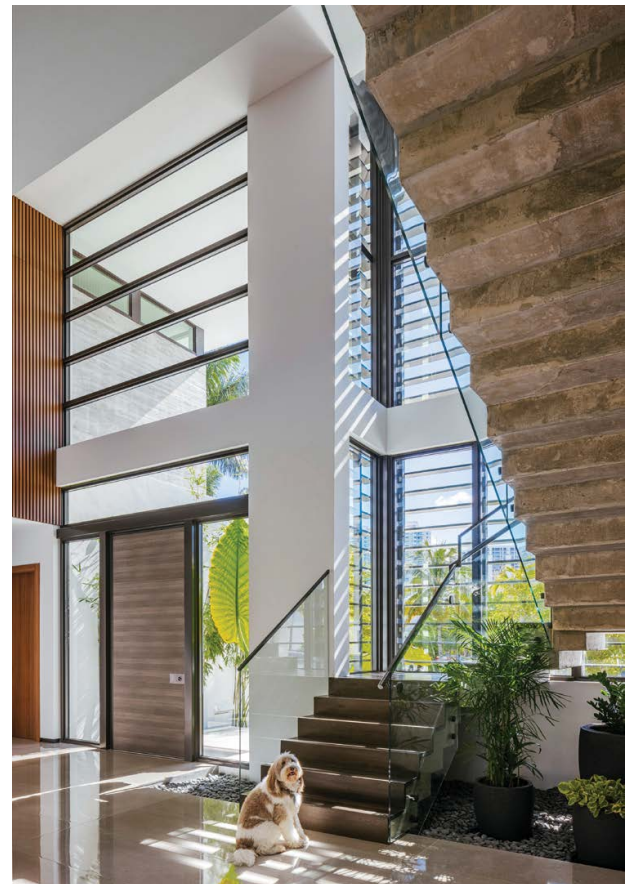
Giving the environment top billing has been a cornerstone of Halfen's impressive career. Her award-winning work has appeared in more than 70 high-end architecture and design publications domestically and internationally, and her testimonial-laden website proves she has an extensive fan base. Halfen, whose father is a retired architect, was pursuing an architecture degree near her hometown of Caracas, Venezuela, when she scored her first job: designing a home in a national park 3,000 feet above the city. By the time that project was completed, she had taken over the general contractor's duties and begun a teaching stint, all while pregnant with her second child. As Venezuela's political and socioeconomic troubles worsened, Halfen and her family emigrated to Miami in 2009.

While designing her own home here, many of her friends began to seek her professional help, so, in 2012, she decided to launch SDH Studio Architecture + Design. Today, the firm's client list includes a gold-medal-winning Olympian, the owners of oceanfront projects in Belize and Barbuda,



and a handful of Miami's top developers. Alongside her partner, Cristina Magdaleno, Halfen has assembled a team of nearly two dozen passionate professionals who are skilled at seamlessly coordinating all facets of a project's architecture, design, engineering, and construction. And when humans or Mother Nature throw curve balls, Halfen says her firm transcends: "We are constantly evolving." [sdhstudio.com](http://sdhstudio.com)

BELOW: "The arrival experience at each of our homes is crucial, as it sets the tone for what lies within," says Halfen. "In this Bay Harbor Islands house, the entry steps hover above a beautiful water feature framed by double-height stone-clad walls and a state-of-the-art pivot entry door that appears to float effortlessly."



ABOVE: "In all of our homes, staircases are transformed into art pieces and become sculptural elements," says Halfen. "Walking up and down the stairs multiple times a day becomes a beautiful and enriching experience, and that's certainly the case in this Golden Beach residence."



"What we call the Oaks Residence in Pinecrest was erected among a number of adult oak trees," says Halfen. "This project exemplifies how elegance and nature can harmoniously coexist."