

Luxe.

interiors + design®



\$ 9.95 A SANDOW PUBLICATION | LUXE SOURCE®

04 >



0 09281 03352 3

MAR/APR 2019 | DISPLAY UNTIL 05/06/19

INTERIOR DESIGN / JAMES AND MIRIAM DUNCAN, JAMES DUNCAN INC.
HOME BUILDER / FABIO CISTERNINO, FAB INTERIOR & EXTERIOR INC.



BOHO BLISS

A CHARMING RANCH-STYLE HOUSE IN KEY BISCAYNE IS A FRESH TAKE ON AN ECLECTIC LOOK.

WRITTEN BY ROBYN WISE / PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK ROSKAMS

Ali Mejia was ready to downsize. The busy mother of two envisioned a charming home that was cozy but accommodating and included a killer outdoor space to enjoy with her daughters. Yet the midcentury Key Biscayne abode that husband-and-wife designers James and Miriam Duncan recommended was not exactly picture perfect. “It was literally sagging and unlivable, with mold and termites,” Ali recalls, “but the designers convinced me the basic footprint was worth saving. They were right.”

Despite the 1959 structure’s dilapidated state, the Duncans saw potential, partly because it sat on “an unusually large piece of land for Key Biscayne,” Miriam points out about its 13,000 square feet. Strengthening this leap of faith for Ali was the fact the Duncans had designed two of her previous homes as well as retail spaces for her apparel company, Eberjey. “We’ve been friends for 14 years,” she says. “I trust them completely.” Thus began a year-long gut-renovation that would strip the residence to its essence and recreate it from scratch with an airier layout, a spectacular office and an addition to contain her daughters’ bedrooms.

To begin, James recruited general contractor Fabio Cisternino to helm ambitious fixes that included transforming the exterior with stucco siding, installing new plumbing and removing the chimney near the living area. To open up the living spaces, he and his team tore out the low drywall ceilings, then added glossy white tongue-and-groove planks. “It was a time-consuming process,” Cisternino says, “but the volume gained and subtle detailing was worth it.” Walls were painted the same white and treated with a plaster finish and wood trim. And the original terrazzo flooring was replaced by polished concrete—a move essential to the home’s “warm and powerful energy,” Ali says. “It grounds everything.”

Within the refurbished environment, the Duncans created interiors that embody their philosophy of “disciplined eclecticism,” a look James describes as “well-traveled and collected yet thoughtful and composed.” In fact, the couple’s own home in Key Biscayne—where their design ideas are on full display—was one of Ali’s inspirations. “She envisioned bright spaces like ours, with a relaxed beachy feel and a sense of casual luxury, to showcase her love of travel, textiles and art,” Miriam says. A palette of white-on-white with accents of gold, blue and black sets



Designers James and Miriam Duncan introduced a bohemian vibe to a renovated Key Biscayne home. The living area’s custom white cotton ottomans and sofa, topped with Nema Home pillows, gather near a Mr. Brown coffee table and an Oly side table atop an RH rug. A chandelier from Circa Lighting hangs overhead, illuminating the red-and-blue Eduardo Terrazas artwork in the built-in.



an ideal backdrop for thoughtful elements that reflect Ali's personality. For instance, "the custom bookcases in the living area were designed to highlight a favorite tapestry woven in jewel tones," Miriam notes. Sexy surf photography in the master bedroom and a sculptural surfboard the Duncans made for the living area capture Ali's passion for beach culture. The bright blue shade of the campaign-style desk in her office—a room-sized closet, perfect for displaying her latest designs—matches her favorite pair of reading glasses. A fuchsia African headdress also strikes a vibrant note in the master bathroom, while the daughters' new bedrooms were made personal with neon signs displaying affirmative phrases meaningful to them. "This house combines laid-back island style with a bohemian edge and statement art," James says.

A definite dainty streak mixed with bold pieces is also apparent. "Ali asked us to balance her feminine sensibility with a touch of masculinity," Miriam says. So the dining area's industrial concrete-topped table, for example, is surrounded by wicker-back chairs adorned with soft shearling. And angular light fixtures in the living area add a utilitarian note to the subtle glow of cove lighting in the ceiling. "We wanted a really beautiful, soft mood," James says, "and the dimmer allows just the right balance."

Adding to the interior's eclectic mood was the special attention paid to texture. "Being a fashion designer, Ali is very sensitive to the way things feel," Miriam says, noting the soft linens and organic cottons throughout the home. Rugs were purchased during a group trip to Morocco, where Ali fell in love with hand-cut tiles that now decorate the powder room and the master bathroom. Yet her favorite part of the house is the kitchen: Its poppy-seed blue cabinetry, commercial-grade appliances and wide pass-through window that facilitates alfresco dining are not only beautiful but also have sparked her interest in cooking.

Outside, James designed the grounds with native dune grass, tall clusia hedges for privacy and tropical trees, including palm, papaya, banana and coconut. To grant Ali's wish for more outdoor living space, he shrunk the pool, added a homey front porch and, in recognition of her Central American heritage, created a round Salvadoran-style palapa for gatherings.

"A lot of work went into making this home look cool and effortless," James says. It's a fact that's not lost on Ali. "My loungewear brand is all about relaxation at home," she says, "so having a place where I can actually live the lifestyle I design for in my work is essential. Every choice we made in this house has been grounding for my creativity." ■

In the backyard, a Serena & Lily umbrella offers shade to a lounge purchased through 1stdibs and outfitted with vintage pillows. General contractor Fabio Cisternino installed the pool, which is surrounded by checkered cement tiles. James designed low-maintenance landscaping that showcases native plants and fruit trees.

Kenian chairs wearing shearling throws from Anthropologie surround a white concrete-topped dining table with a weathered teak base. A Roll & Hill chandelier is suspended from the tongue-and-groove plank ceiling Cisternino installed. White linen sheers fabricated by RT Decor frame doors to the patio and soften the polished concrete flooring.





A La Cornue range from Monark Premium Appliance Co. and Brizo fixtures embellish the kitchen, where Behr's Poppy Seed paint and Rejuvenation brass knobs accentuate the cabinetry. "We wanted a strong break from all the white," says James, who re-covered the Noir stools to match the color scheme. Jamie Young pendants cast soft light over the island's engineered quartz Opustone countertops.



Opposite: A door with an Emtex knob swings open to reveal a powder room painted in Benjamin Moore's Distant Gray. Vintage pendant lights complement the bone-inlay Wisteria mirror above a Signature Hardware pedestal sink and Rejuvenation fittings.

Below: Distant Gray by Benjamin Moore also colors the master bedroom, where the designers repainted the Liaigre bed covered in Pom Pom at Home linens and striped Pine Cone Hill pillows. A Kate Holstein photograph hangs between lamps sourced through Candelabra. The night tables and rug are custom; RT Decor fabricated the shades and linen draperies.



“THIS HOUSE COMBINES LAID-BACK ISLAND STYLE WITH A BOHEMIAN EDGE AND STATEMENT ART.”

-JAMES DUNCAN



Above: In a nod to the client's Central American roots, the designers conceived the backyard's tiki hut, which has a thatched roof and raised circular deck. "Shade is critical in Miami, and the round shape is reminiscent of Salvadoran palapas," James explains. Beneath a Chinese paper lantern, rattan bistro chairs encircle a custom glass-and-driftwood table.

Left: On the patio, Lee Industries sofas and custom glass-and-driftwood coffee tables top a vintage rug acquired during a shopping trip to Morocco. White Richard Schultz chaise lounges from 1stdibs rest near the pool.