

A photograph of a modern tropical house at dusk. The house features large glass windows and a prominent blue architectural element. The interior is lit up, showing a living area with a sofa and a dining table. The exterior is surrounded by palm trees and a swimming pool. The sky is a deep blue, and the overall atmosphere is serene and luxurious.

THE TROPICAL MODERN HOUSE

RAUL A. BARRENECHE

RIZZOLI
NEW YORK



BOANO- LOWENSTEIN RESIDENCE

BAY HARBOR
ISLANDS
FLORIDA

KZ ARCHITECTURE

Next to the front door, a lily pond abutting the living room creates a focal point for the entry courtyard and draws the eye past a sculptural staircase out toward the bay.

Bay Harbor Islands, a town along the Intracoastal Waterway near Bal Harbour and Miami Beach, was developed in the 1950s predominantly in a modernist style. In the spirit of the community's modern history, Costa Rican-born Miami-based architect Jaya Kader Zebede of KZ Architecture designed a house for contemporary art collectors with a strong appreciation of modern furniture and design. The house also embraces sustainable technology, from harvesting rainwater to environmentally friendly finishes. Zebede says one of the biggest challenges was achieving the sense of lightness and openness she wanted to create given South Florida's stringent hurricane codes, which limit the size of glazed openings and dictate projectile-resistant glass and hefty mullions.

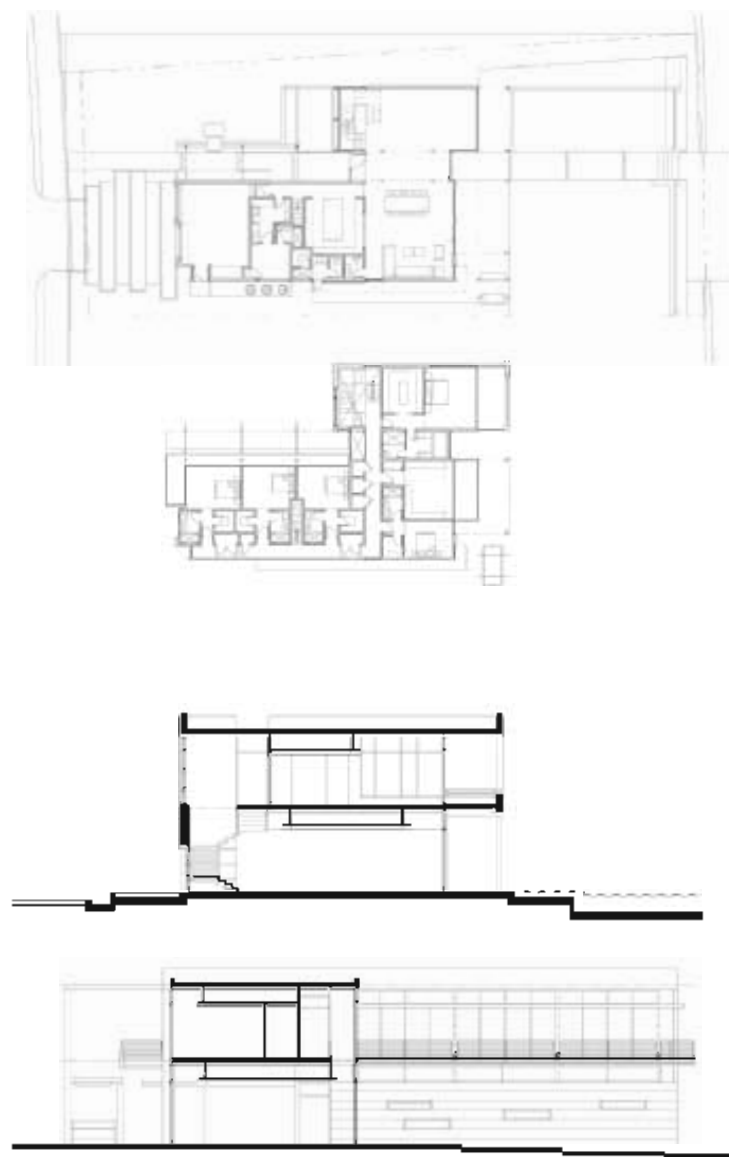
Given a long, narrow plot leading from the road to the bay, with neighbors close on both sides, Zebede designed the house to open up on the shorter front and back ends of the property while maintaining privacy along the sides. The two-story house is in essence a pair of long parallel boxes separated by a circulation spine that begins outside as an entry walkway sheltered by a canopy overhead and continues indoors as a gallery leading to a pool deck and a bayside dock beyond. Zebede kept the more southerly box shorter, allowing her to carve out something of a courtyard to one side of the entry walk. A lily pond placed up against the low-level windows of the living room, just beside the front door, creates a focal element for the entry court, drawing one's view through the living room and out to the water.

Inside, the entry gallery separates the lofty living room to one side from the dining room, family room, and kitchen. A dramatic sculptural concrete staircase wrapped in wood treads winds past the window looking out to the lily pond and up to a gallery separating the spacious master suite atop the living room from a library and four bedroom suites in the adjoining wing. Three of the bedrooms open onto a shady balcony overlooking the entry court.

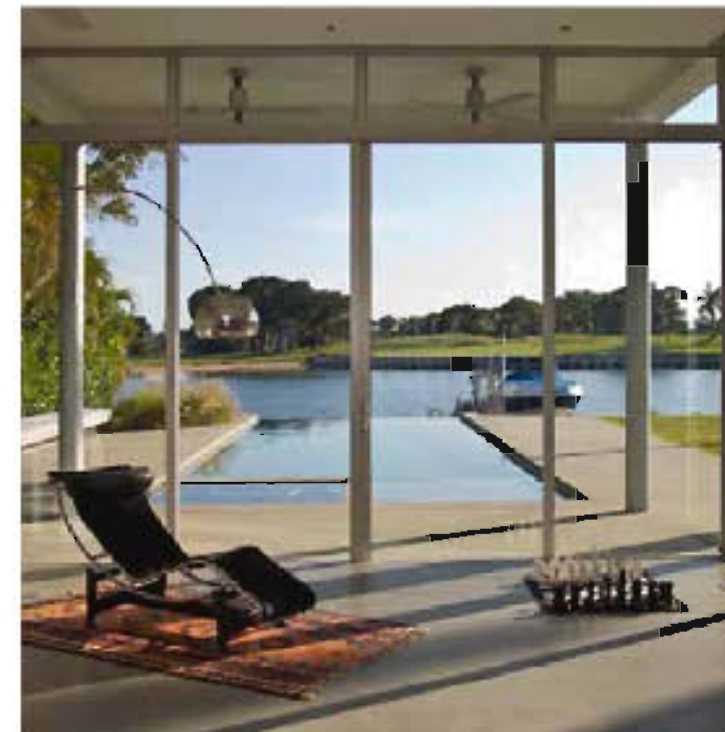
With so much art on view, Zebede kept the interiors neutral: expanses of white walls for displaying large-scale artworks, subtle stone flooring, occasional flourishes of wood on the front door and stairs, and large expanses of (suitably hurricane-resistant) glass to let in the light and lush greenery that become part of the interior. The home's many sustainable features run the gamut from the fly ash added to the concrete structure (it improves performance and recycles coal-refining waste); a 1,500-gallon cistern that harvests rainwater; solar-generated hot water; and low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paints and finishes. For all its environmental earnestness, Zebede's house is ultimately about the more sensual and intangible aspects of living in the tropics: light and space and making the water and greenery part of the indoors.

Seen from the bay, the house is composed of two minimalist boxes with shady terraces off the second-floor bedrooms. The ground floor contains a dining room and kitchen, at left, and a living room, at right.





LEFT: The covered walkway to the front door offers a glimpse of the living room, at left, and the bay in the distance. A trio of second-floor guest rooms above the garage share a wraparound terrace.
ABOVE, TOP TO BOTTOM: Ground-floor plan; second-floor plan; sections.



OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A low credenza defines a dining space in the open-plan living area. Ribbon windows in the stone wall behind the kitchen look onto the entry walk. A soaking tub in the master bath enjoys views of the water. The living room extends visually onto a covered pool terrace.

ABOVE: A sculptural staircase makes a dramatic statement in the airy living room.

OVERLEAF: Sliding glass doors in the art-filled living room open onto an infinity-edge pool and the bay.

