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Tropical Escape

Modern Look with Warm Touches
at Franco Residence on Golden Beach

Story by Josie Gulliksen | Photos by Robin Hill

Kitchen by Boffi and
countertops by Corian



Deborah Wecselman worked in concert with the Zebede vision, using warm elements and materials like walnut doors and floors, as well as the wood staircase

The entrance staircase of the Alberto and Rossana Franco residence on Golden Beach, and natural light filtering every room of the 16,500-square-foot, two-story, six-bedroom, seven-bathroom house can be attributed to Rossana's impeccable eye and the handwork of architects Jaya and Michal Zebede of KZ Architecture and interior designer Deborah Wecselman of DWD, Inc.

It helped too that Rossana and Wecselman are childhood friends, growing up in Peru then both moving to New York and finally Miami. There was no one else Rossana would turn to for interior design help.

"Deborah incorporated everything from my former home, as well as my most treasured pieces (purchased in Paris) into this home," said Franco. "The beauty of the house is that Jaya and Deborah worked with me to create the look I wanted (and) really listened to me."

She wanted a modern look with warm touches, which they accomplished throughout the house.

The house is an expression of Modernism in the tropics. It was completed in 2011 in the small beach neighborhood, and is one of the last single-family enclaves along South Florida's coastline. The residence was developed for a family of six on an infill island lot fronting the Intracoastal Waterway," said Jaya Zebede, principal of KZ Architecture.

Given KZ Architecture's context-driven approach, Zebede's design ensures that the house capitalizes on the opportunity which the tropics provide to fuse indoor and outdoor living. The vast glass expanses enable the rich Florida sun to fill the house with natural light, penetrating the office area in the master bedroom and the access area to the four older kid's bedrooms, all with their individual style on the second floor. Overall, horizontal and vertical planes of glass, stone, wood and white stucco are activated by the pervading light to accomplish an indoor-outdoor integration of spaces and form.

Simultaneously, an extensive shade was created for all the glazing walls facing the water. Both the single height outdoor terrace and the double height terrace under the intended metal canopy provide shelter when needed from the strong Florida sun.

The home epitomizes the concept of ebb and flow. "The seamless integration of outdoor and indoor spaces was one of the essential design elements. Visual and material continuity is key," said Zebede.

Featuring adjacent homes to the north and south, the house is designed around a western courtyard and all rooms, including the living room, dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, family room and bedrooms organized around it. Also, a series of outdoor spaces were developed in order to weave continuity of spaces and materials from the street to the water. From the covered entry path the visitor is engaged by the intimate front courtyard which connects through the great room of the house to the rear covered outdoor waterfront spaces.

In the rear outdoor patio, the long and narrow pool serves as the focal element just like the sculptural stair serves this purpose for the great room inside. In both the outdoor and indoor spaces, the two slate walls – one framing the entrance and the rear one cloaking the barbecue – work together to emphasize that continuity.

“The interior architecture very much reflects a modern contemporary space that has a clear link between the exterior and interior.”



Above Karl Springer dining table
Right The outdoor terrace provides shelter when needed from the strong Florida sun



The sequence culminates with the wooden dock, which matches the materials of the entry courtyard. The same LPE wood also frames the geometry of the balconies on the second floor.

Creating this massive, modern marvel of a home was no easy feat given that, "the space was an empty lot with adjacent homes to the north and south," said Michal Zebede. "The western courtyard, which is enveloped by all the rooms and a long focal axis which extends through the narrow linear pool in the back courtyard helps unify the house's inward orientation, thereby maximizing privacy."

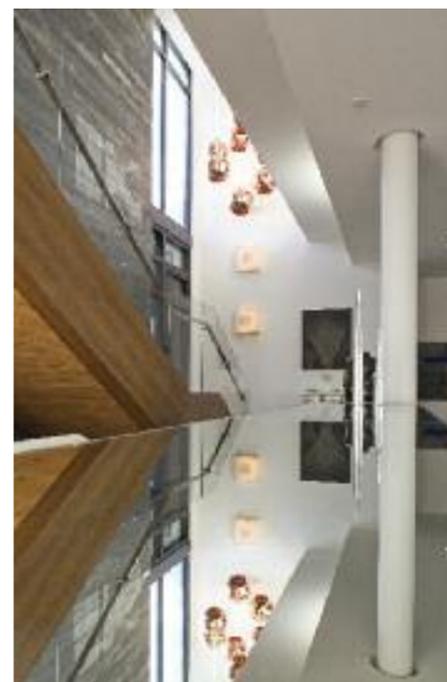
The clients approached KZ Architecture with a wish for a modern home. They chose an option with a focus on a courtyard that would be defined by the two wings of the house. Though their main priority was that the home be modern, the Francos also wanted a large undercover terrace. It was brought to life with a vast front and rear courtyard, which are connected through the openness of the living and dining room.

In addition, natural choices were made through the use of slate and wood to unify the property's outer and inner elements. The intention was to make the inhabitants feel the presence of the tropics – water, sunlight, natural materials – from within the house.

"Being inside and outside at the same time is something I try to explore with most of my projects," said Zebede. "The various elements were carefully oriented and designed to give each special room a water view."



“The seamless integration of outdoor and indoor spaces was one of the essential design elements.”



Top Left The vast glass expanses enable the rich Florida sun to fill the house with natural light
Left Recessed lighting was used throughout the home with decorative lighting incorporated to romance and focus the modern space
Above Grey limestone floor



Above Exterior dining furniture from Roda
Right Teak chaises were incorporated into the patio's look
Opposite Top The Franco residence on Golden Beach is a 16,500-square-foot, two-story, six-bedroom and seven-bath-room house
Opposite Right The house is designed around a Western courtyard and all rooms, including the living room, dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, family room, and bedrooms



Wechselman worked in concert with the Zebede vision, using warm elements and materials like walnut doors and floors as well as the wood staircase and some less contemporary furnishings, to complement the clean space.

"The interior architecture very much reflects a modern contemporary space that has a clear link between the exterior and interior," said Wechselman. "The open spaces clearly have that feel but we wanted to be able to humanize and warm the spaces throughout."

Because the Francos enjoy entertaining and have some knowledge of design and construction (her father was in the construction business), they were very involved in the process of designing each space in the home. "The Francos welcomed all our new and original designs and worked with us in arriving at a mutual, complementary relationship for the benefit of the project," said Wechselman.

Because of her life-long friendship with Rossana, Wechselman wanted to make sure all aspects from design to execution were perfect and flawless, making the process more challenging.

On the ground floor they used a grey limestone floor and the same material in the outdoor exterior space, just with a different finish.

Although there is plenty of natural light, recessed lighting was used throughout the home, with decorative lighting incorporated to romance and focus the modern space.



“The house is an expression of Modernism in the tropics. It was completed in 2011 in the small beach neighborhood, one of the last single-family enclaves along South Florida’s coastline.”

Using the Franco's vintage furniture was a requirement. The Karl Springer dining table complements new pieces, including Leon Rosen bar stools and Arik Levy kitchen stools. The adjacent kitchen is by Boffi and the countertops by Corian.

While their personal accessories were carefully placed and selected, their new items from their favorite Design District stores, including Holly Hunt, Luminaire, Decorator's Plumbing and Niba, are also used throughout the house.

The staircase and bar, which were designed by Wechselman along with the hardware, is the centerpiece of the house. "The walnut stair with underside glass handrail and stainless-steel handle is quite simple in design; its clean lines are what make it so special," Wechselman said.

The second floor master bedroom's bleached oak built-in office and natural and light fabrics give it a relaxed, light and airy feel while the master bathroom has two floating vanities with hanging opposite stainless-steel mirrors. All stone surfaces are white volakos 36 x 18 marble.

The exterior dining furniture is from Roda and the ceiling fans from the Modern Fan Co. The couple's teak chaises were also incorporated in the patio decor.

Working together on the two-year process was a labor of love for both the Francos and the team. "We couldn't have achieved this without their creative vision and exemplary professionalism. Working with them to create this space was a dream come true," said the Francos. ♦

