

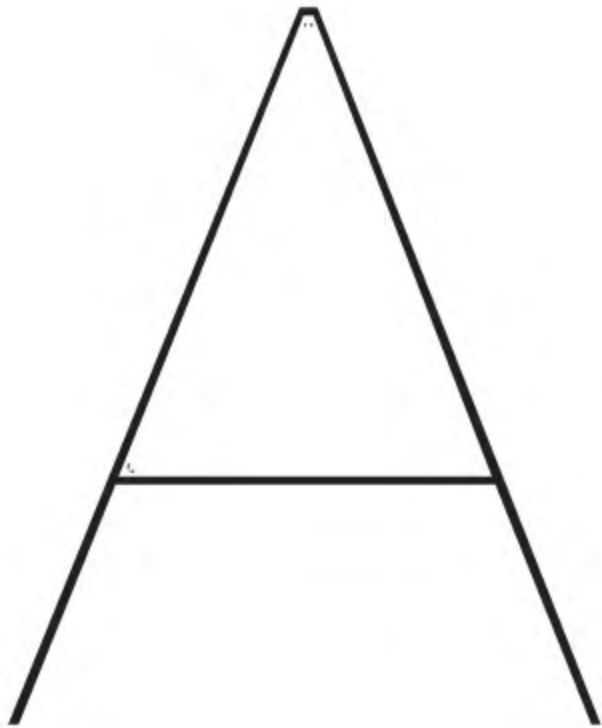


MIAMI MODERN

A MODERNIST ARCHITECT DESIGNS THREE
DISTINCTIVE VOLUMES FOR A LUXE RESIDENCE
ON FLORIDA'S INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY

words by **J. Michael Welton** • photographs by **Robin Hill**

Light Show
This new home
in Miami shines with
modernity and style.



Architect Jaya Kader Zebede's newest project is proof positive that good things come in threes. For her first-ever contemporary home design, she successfully solved the puzzle of a pie-shaped lot in Golden Beach – a well-heeled neighborhood northeast of Miami – with a trio of distinctive forms, each designed for different functions.

It's the result of her trademark discipline of focusing on what the client desires and what the site demands. "First I showed the clients a couple of cardboard models in the Florida vernacular, and they said: 'No, no – we want a modern home,'" she says. "So I started playing with models – and all of a sudden there were these three volumes, articulated in the modern aesthetic."

That was back in 2005, at the beginning of a long, circuitous path from design to construction. Her clients moved away in 2006, selling their land and original plans in 2010. Luckily, the new owners wanted to move forward with her design as their primary home, modified slightly to meet changes in the Dade County building code.

Zebede was both patient and prepared. A veteran of the Harvard Graduate School of Design and the architectural offices of Robert A. M. Stern and Moshe Safdie, she'd set up shop in Florida in 2003. And though she may have started out with designs rooted in local language, the Benenson Residence has positioned her squarely in the modernist camp today.

Clearly, she's good at it, and for all the right reasons. "Architecture is about exploration, not a giant gesture," she says. "We want to bring the client into the process



and find out what their lifestyle calls for. We listen to them, and we pay attention to the site to maximize its potential."

In the case of this home, that meant cracking the code of a lot shaped like a wedge – one that's very narrow on the street side and very wide where it backs up to the Intracoastal Waterway. A small house had been built there in the 1950s, and looked out from the tip of South Parkway to a series of high-rise structures. The first thing Zebede did after its teardown was to site the new home with a northern view – out to the water and away from the tall buildings.

Then she got down to the business of designing the home. "First of all, we try always to give form to what the client wants," she says. "We don't believe in a preconception of what it's going to be."

This particular client is a couple with three children, so there was an obvious need for three bedrooms and a master suite. Zebede designed the southernmost of the three volumes as the tallest, with a family room at ground level and master bedroom above. Next to it, at the center of the trio, is a slightly smaller two-story structure with

Clean Lines
The design of this Miami residence is founded on three distinct volumes for easy living.

children's bedrooms and balcony atop, and a living room, dining room and covered terrace below. A smaller one-story volume beside it houses all service functions, plus a kitchen, breakfast area and outdoor barbecue.

It all fits together neatly on a challenging site. With only 32 feet of frontage to work with along the street, the architect placed the one story volume along the geometry of the northern property line. The rest of the house was oriented along the geometry of the southern property line, to open the major living spaces to the view and 140 feet of waterfront in the back.

The overall design is the result of a program based on client wants and needs, expressed in a way that makes compelling visual sense. "If it's successful, it's a poetic composition that's practical," she says. "It's a modernist aesthetic – it's about liberating the preconceived notion about home."

Inside, Zebede decomposed roof, walls, doors and windows – turning all into three-dimensional planes and compositions. "It's no longer about walls, but about





Inside Out
The exterior's cool and efficient design permeates seamlessly inside the home.

planes of glass and other materials," she says. "It's not about planes and elevations, but about three dimensions."

It's about natural light too – and plenty of it to integrate inside and outside spaces. "That's one of my givens," she says. "I want spaces flooded with natural light, and if a bathroom has no natural light, I'll use a Solatube," she says, referring to the tubular daylighting device.

Formal entry occurs inside a vestibule at the intersection of the two main volumes of the house, framed by a scored stucco wall on the left and a sculptural stairway to the right. Three round structural columns separate the circulation path toward the kitchen from the great space fronting the living and the dining rooms. To the left of the stucco wall is the bar and the family room beyond.

In addition to white stucco, both smooth and scored, she deftly applied materials like concrete, wood and terrazzo

for floors. They serve as architectural planes and volumes that weave through indoor and outdoor spaces alike. "I like to be true to the materials inside and out," she says.

Because she also likes for her buildings to be efficient and sustainable, she collaborated from the outset with experts in structural, mechanical and electrical engineering. The results for this home translate into a cistern to collect rainwater, low-e glass for insulation, and grass planted among driveway pavers, allowing water to percolate down through the soil rather than rush out to storm drains.

The home has picked up its share of admirers, from both land and water. "On weekends, the client says, there's a line of boats coming to see it," she says. "They stop to take pictures."

And why not? It's composed of three very tasty bites of eye candy – each crafted carefully in the modern vernacular. kzarchitecture.com **OIH**