

KZ ARCHITECTURE

Florida-based company puts a modern twist to subtropical residential design

STORY BY ZACH BALIVA PHOTOS BY ROBIN HILL

ART MEETS ARCHITECTURE

The Boano-Lowenstein Residence is a new home developed on an infill lot in Bay Harbor, a modern town developed in the 1950s in two islands off of the South Florida Intracoastal Waterway. The home's aesthetic reflects the clients' enthusiasm for modern art and architecture, and pays tribute to the town, which has maintained its historic character.



FREE-FLOWING SPACES

Spacious and distinct exterior living spaces on porches and balconies flow from within and reach out onto the landscape, providing environmentally sensitive solutions for the LEED Silver Boano-Lowenstein Residence.





Jaya Kader Zebede fell in love with architecture during her freshman year in college while enrolled in an architectural-history class. Now the founding principal of KZ Architecture in Bay Harbor Islands, Florida, Zebede was a freshman at Brandeis University at the time, and considered transferring to a school where she could pursue an architectural undergraduate career path. Her advisor and mentor, Professor Gerald Bernstein, advised his young student to first pursue a liberal-arts education instead. “He told me that some of the best architecture schools in the United States offer graduate programs only to ensure that their students are well-rounded individuals,” Zebede recalls. She stayed at Brandeis, became an art major, and studied Renaissance art in Florence, Italy before earning a master’s degree in architecture at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

At Harvard, Zebede discovered that her classmates shared a similar educational philosophy. “My peers had majored in philosophy, art, history, and the sciences. The fact that many architects have different undergraduate backgrounds adds a lot of depth to our profession,” she says.

Mentors would continue to play an important role in developing Zebede’s style and philosophy. She interned with Moshe Safdie (of Habitat 67 fame), and developed professionally with Graham Gund Architects, a prominent architectural firm in Boston. Upon moving to South Florida, she was project architect for the Miami Beach Library, designed by the world-renowned architect Robert A. M. Stern of New York. Throughout her career development, she learned from her mentors that architecture is not necessarily about grand or heroic gestures. “Some architects develop a ‘signature

A CONCRETE CREATION

In order to tap into local resources and to address regional requirements of durability, concrete (with fly ash) became the choice material for the Boano-Lowenstein Residence’s simplified structural shell. The greatest challenge was to achieve the desired sense of lightness and void, and at the same time conform to the very stringent South Florida hurricane impact code requirements. Large expanses of glass had to be broken into a series of panels divided by less-than-slender mullions.



Boano-Lowenstein Residence

Bay Harbor Islands, FL

Respectful of its context, landscape, and resources, the Boano-Lowenstein Residence is defined by two volumes connected on a long axis from the street to the dock. The home's large volume holds many program elements, while the other provides a ceremonial envelope for the living room, the sculptural stair, and the master bedroom. As the home creates "a dialogue between the building and the landscape," Zebede used elements that permeate both spaces. Some examples are the limestone wall along the entry path that continues inside of the home, and the exposed-concrete staircase punctuating the spatial expansiveness from the front courtyard to the rear landscape. Open and distinct living spaces abound, with porches and balconies blending the division between the indoors and the outdoors. A negative-edge pool in the backyard serves to connect a front-side pond with a rear canal so the house is completely surrounded by water. Two levels of floor-to-ceiling windows provide magnificent views of Indian Creek Bay. The 5,300-square-foot residence won a Florida Chapter of the American Institute of Architects Design Award in 2008.

style' that they like to export wherever a project takes them," she says. "Instead, I embrace an architecture of context and purpose." Elaborating on this point, Zebede notes that she doesn't believe there is one "right" style for every building, so she bases her designs on the structure's context and her client's wishes. The elements of LEED construction and sustainable architecture complement her philosophy of design because the efficient use of resources creates an optimized product.

In 2003, Zebede officially launched KZ Architecture. Her boutique practice serves clients whose projects typically range in value from \$350 to \$500 per square foot and are between 3,000 and 12,000 square feet. When dealing with high-end clients on luxury properties, Zebede, who handles all communication, design work, and production oversight, can afford to be selective. "I handpick my clients and projects because I don't want to work with people who simply want square foot-

AWARDS

- LEED for Homes Silver certification
- Florida Green Building Coalition, Gold Certification
- Energy Star for Home Certification: HERS 72
- Florida Yard & Neighborhoods Certification

The sustainable features of the residence are numerous and include:

- 30% increased energy optimization
- 45% reduction in use of potable water
- Rainwater harvesting with the use of a 1,500-gallon cistern
- Solar hot water
- Highly efficient irrigation
- Use of local and EPP materials
- Use of low-VOC paints, finishes, stains, and adhesives
- Daylight harvesting with tubular sky lighting (Solatube skylights)

“SOME ARCHITECTS DEVELOP A ‘SIGNATURE STYLE’ THAT THEY LIKE TO EXPORT WHEREVER A PROJECT TAKES THEM. INSTEAD, I EMBRACE AN ARCHITECTURE OF CONTEXT AND PURPOSE.”

JAYA KADER ZEBEDE, FOUNDING PRINCIPAL



INDOOR/OUTDOOR

In the Boano-Lowenstein Residence, the outside permeates the interior, and the home is enveloped with natural light and views. In the living room, the spatial expansiveness from the front courtyard to the water is punctuated by the presence of the staircase, with its solid sculptural structure set against the lightness around it.





ARTFUL SURROUNDINGS

While providing a harmonious backdrop for the family's art collection and vintage modern furnishings, the resulting built form embraces and enhances the lives of its dwellers.



The Pieces

When creating the Boano-Lowenstein Residence, founding principal Jaya Kader Zebede catered to the homeowners' modern tastes, which are exemplified by the following products:



ARCO LAMP, this iconic lamp was designed by industrial designers Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni in 1962, and is a permanent part of MoMA's collection. momastore.org



POUL KJAERHOLM DAYBED—also purchased in 1969, but recently re-upholstered. fritzhansen.com



THREE-SEATER SOFA by Danish designer Paul Kjaerholm (PK31/3), purchased in 1969, upholstered in smoky-blue alcantara. fritzhansen.com



SYNUA PIVOT, an armored 10' x 4' stainless-steel door with an FSC-certified teak veneer, utilized for security and contemporary design. oikos.it



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age,” she says. “I want to work with clients who are interested in the design process and want to create architecture that embodies excellence of design.”

Although Zebede has several clients in her native Costa Rica, most of her work is in South Florida. The subtropical climate provides Zebede with the opportunity to create designs that feature expansive outdoor living areas and natural ventilation. “Being inside and outside at the same time is something I really try to explore with most of my projects,” she says. Another common trend of Zebede’s projects is the infusion of modern elements into Florida-regional designs.

Many of Zebede’s ideas are clearly expressed in the design of the Boano-Lowenstein Residence in Bay Harbor Islands. The home, which was completed last year, is one of Miami-Dade County’s first sustainable residences and was awarded LEED Silver certification from the USGBC and a Gold certification from the Florida Green Building Coalition. An underground cistern collects rainwater, and low-flow fixtures have helped reduce potable-water consumption by 45 percent. In addition, the house is 30-percent more efficient than requirements set forth by the 2007 building codes. A rooftop solar array now heats water and is ready for future expansion.

Throughout her education and work history, Zebede has been able to combine a love of architecture with a passion for art. The Boano-Lowenstein Residence, like the other projects in her portfolio, stands as an example of both. ■

A MESSAGE FROM SOPHIE COHEN
Elements + Design, a contemporary interior-design company established in 2001, develops timeless, minimalist designs with completed projects in numerous cities including New York, Miami, Venezuela and Costa Rica.

With more than 30 years of experience, principal Sophie Cohen, architect and designer, believes that interior design extends the architectural flow of outdoor spaces. Sophie’s choice of design and materials answers to the basic principle of connecting spaces in a unifying design that integrates without compromising the individual character of each space. Elements + Design create warmth & drama in a pure contemporary-minimalist space with a choice of natural and innovative surface materials complemented with accent lighting.

Recent Elements + Design projects in conjunction with KZ Architecture successfully integrated Elements + Design’s vision with the architectural design in a fluid and timely manner.

Elements + Design provides personal attention for any size project and offers handmade scaled models, 3-D perspectives, and material samples as visual design presentation.