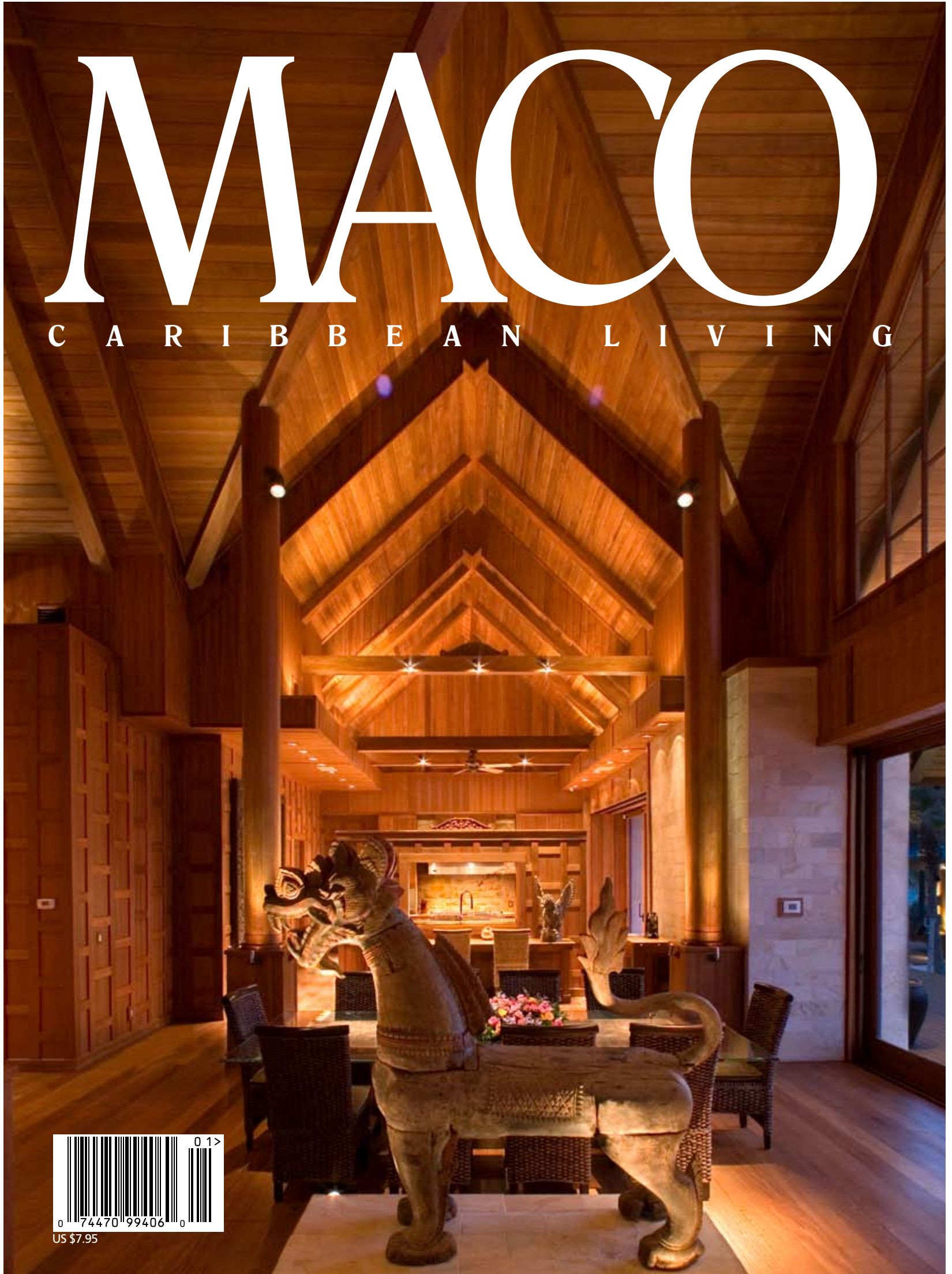
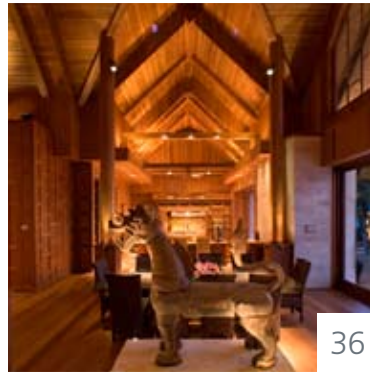


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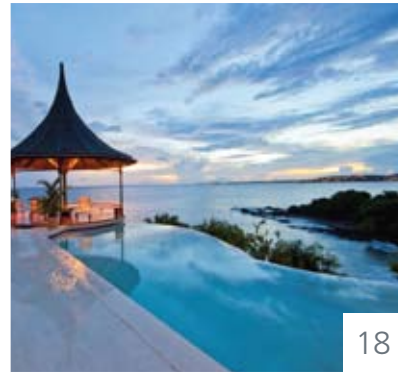
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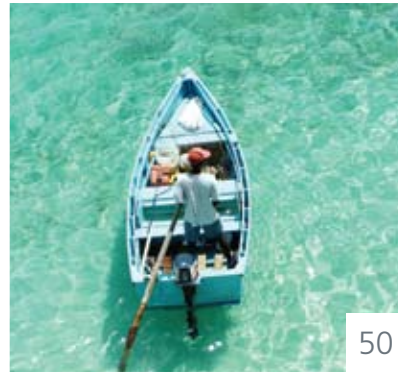
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36



18



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74



88

THE COVER

Smooth and warm, Burmese teak is the focus of this Bahamian retreat
PHOTOGRAPHER PAUL STOPPI

live

- 18 | **family ties**
Tobago villa embraces family
WRITER KERRI TUCKER
PHOTOGRAPHER YAISA TANGWELL
- 28 | **back to the beach**
Cayman home revives childhood joy
WRITER CATHERINE MACGILLIVRAY
PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID WOLFE
- 36 | **the teak of things**
Burmese wood is central to Bahamian home
WRITER GILLIAN WATSON
PHOTOGRAPHER PAUL STOPPI

create

- 48 | **indigo does it right**
Antigua wedding guru sets gold standard
WRITER KAMSHA MAHARAJ
PHOTOGRAPHER JASON PICKERING
- 50 | **great scotts**
Different art strokes for Barbadian sisters
WRITER SARAH VENABLE
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY CORRIE SCOTT & HEATHER-DAWN SCOTT
- 58 | **the wedding planner**
Barbados expert is dream maker
WRITER KAMSHA MAHARAJ
PHOTOGRAPHER JASON PICKERING

grow

- 60 | **gardens at golden rock**
Couple rescues 100 acres in Nevis
WRITER NANCY BECKHAM
PHOTOGRAPHER COOKIE KINKEAD

play

- 74 | **easy riders**
Jamaicans ride camels and dolphins
WRITER CATHERINE MACGILLIVRAY
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY DOLPHIN COVE
- 70 | **something blue**
Tobago in woos wedding couples
WRITER LEIGH LEWIS
PHOTOGRAPHER YAISA TANGWELL
- 78 | **top ten**
Best love nests for honeymooners
WRITER SAVANNAH WEST
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY ALL RESORTS

eat

- 82 | **that takes the cake**
Sweet start to ever after
WRITER BEKIM BETONI RAUSEO
PHOTOGRAPHER BEKIM BETONI RAUSEO
- 86 | **wine scoring 101**
Champagne of celebrities wins praises
WRITER RAMESES BROWN
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY MT GAY DISTILLERIES LTD
- 88 | **so cin-ful**
Home is best to Barbados chef
WRITER CELINE BARNARD
PHOTOGRAPHER JULIE WEBSTER CHALBAUD
- 98 | **sweet notes**
Appleton rum flavours cakes
WRITER BEKIM RAUSEO
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY APPLETON ESTATE JAMAICA RUM
- 102 | **in a pickle!**
Meats to beets go in the brine
WRITER ROSEMARY PARKINSON
PHOTOGRAPHER ROSEMARY PARKINSON
- 107 | **fancy that**
Going nuts for dessert
WRITER KAMSHA MAHARAJ
PHOTOGRAPHER CHRISTOPHER DANIEL



DESIGNED BY CAYMAN-BASED ARCHITECT JOHN DOAK, THE SOUTHSOUND RESIDENCE IS BUILT IN A MODULAR WAY, WITH LIVING AND SLEEPING PAVILIONS THAT ARE ASIAN INFLUENCED WITH OPEN-AIR PAGODAS ALLOWING HOT AIR TO RISE. FEATURED HERE IN MACO VOLUME 14 ISSUE 1. TO SUBSCRIBE, CLICK THE COVER ABOVE.

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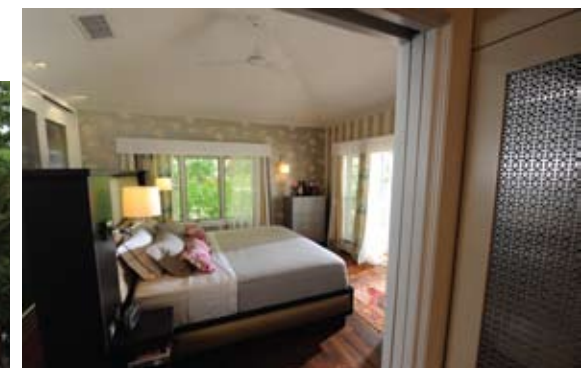
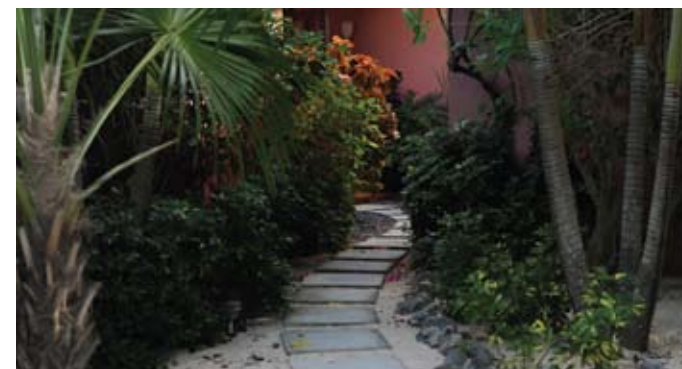
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ARCHITECTURE

WHEN JEN WOODFORD RETURNED TO THE CAYMAN ISLANDS AFTER LIVING IN SCOTLAND FOR 15 YEARS, SHE AND HER HUSBAND RALPH WANTED A CASUAL AND COMFORTABLE BEACH HOME.

Brought up on the idyllic shores of South Sound on Grand Cayman before the development boom that came along with the island's success as an international financial centre, Jen was accustomed to a relaxed, barefoot-on-the-beach lifestyle.

The daughter of the late William Walker who founded Walkers international finance law firm, Jen studied in Edinburgh where she met her Scottish husband.

In 2001, while expecting their second baby, the couple left Scotland to make their home in Cayman, building their dream house on the beachfront where Jen grew up.

Her mother, Janet Walker (a well-known watercolourist in Cayman), lives next door, while Jen's brother Robert Walker and his wife and daughter have made their home on the other side of the Woodfords' house.

"When we designed our house we were influenced by older West Indian traditional architecture and homes," says Jen, who also paints as a hobby. "We love the interplay of light and shadows in Caribbean homes. We wanted to design with the environment, working with it, having the house open to the sea breezes and nestled onto the natural storm ridge."

When they cleared the lot, they kept many mature local trees, such as sea grape, birch, almond and seaside mahoe, to benefit from the shade and cooler air as well as the privacy of mature gardens. "To us, the house is a true beach house with open doors and is readily accessible to the sand and sea."

Designed by Cayman-based architect John Doak, the residence is built in a modular way, with living and sleeping pavilions that are Asian influenced with open-air pagodas allowing hot air to rise. "We took into account our local environment of nor'westers (strong winds) and a long hurricane season," says Jen. "The house is designed to be open, but also to close up quickly and easily for hurricanes and the frequent squalls that blow in off the sea."

There are also lots of bay windows, which is a style trait influenced by the classical Georgian architecture of Edinburgh. "These add interest to the shape of a room as well as increasing the available light," Jen explains.



RIGHT The great room reflects the colours of the sea
BELOW Jen Woodford and her youngest daughter Jazzy



back to the beach

CAYMAN FAMILY RETURNS TO TRADITIONAL WEST INDIAN ARCHITECTURE FOR HOME ON THE BEACH

WRITER CATHERINE MACGILLIVRAY
PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID WOLFE

REFLECTING THE COLOURS OF THE SEA OUTSIDE,
THE GREAT ROOM IS PAINTED A DEEP EGGHELL BLUE IN THE
LIVING AREA AND A SHADE DARKER IN THE KITCHEN,
GIVING IT A STORMY GREEN HUE



LEFT The dining area
RIGHT The sitting area is centred around an
Indonesian weaver's desk

Jen likes antique furnishings and, when she can, tries to buy from local stores, with a couple of ornate Oriental pieces taking pride of place in the great room.

Other items of antique furniture in the house were shipped from Scotland, having been handed down through Ralph's family.

Reflecting the colours of the sea outside, the great room is painted a deep eggshell blue in the living area and a shade darker in the kitchen, giving it a stormy green hue.

Other parts of the room are decorated with bold flower-print wallpaper sourced from Designers Guild in Kings Road, London, which works well with the blend of traditional and ethnic furnishings.

Artwork takes pride of place on the walls, including paintings by Cayman artist David Bridgeman and Scotland's foremost contemporary impressionist John Lowrie Morrison.

A picture by well-known Canadian artist Pat Fairhead was a 40th birthday present to Jen from her mother who is a friend of the celebrated watercolourist.

A guest bathroom and television room are tucked away at the back of the great room.

Jen and Ralph now have three children, Ben, Tilley and Jazzy, whose bedrooms, along with the master suite, are located in the "sleeping pavilion," all of which open onto the beachfront where a delightful playhouse is situated underneath a sea grape tree.

Air conditioning in the house is switched on only during the very hottest of days and most of the time the french doors are open to the deck and beach.

The guesthouse was added in 2008 and is built in a style influenced by modern Australian beach houses, with an exterior that is a mixture of wooden slatting and traditional coral stone tiles Jen obtained from the Dominican Republic.

The great room, which Jen prefers to refer to simply as the living room, opens up onto the beachside deck. A casual kitchen with breakfast bar at the back of the great room is separated from the main living area by a small sitting section where Jen enjoys having a drink with Ralph when he gets home from work in the evenings.

Below this, the main sitting area is focused around a huge, solid Indonesian weaver's desk which Jen found online. A formal, solid dining table takes up the other half of the room, while a small round table is used at breakfast time.





ABOVE The patio at night may be best room of all

RIGHT The pool is for exercise and family play

Inspired by one of the main buildings on the Good Hope estate in Jamaica, the entrance to the guesthouse is a traditional West Indian double staircase. “The guesthouse was also built with hurricanes in mind so it has its own electricity supply,” says Jen. “It has the capacity to run off its own generator and we have a large cistern to provide water.”

Inside, the guesthouse is an open-plan concept, with a mix of hardwoods and polished concrete. Two large walls of folding glass doors open up the interior living space to the balcony and the wonderful views of the Caribbean Sea, while a floating staircase leads to a mezzanine floor where Ralph has an office. “The guesthouse is so much fun that sometimes we come over here and have family ‘staycations.’ ”

Below the living quarters, Jen, who is a homeopathic practitioner, has a private office where she meets clients and there is also a spacious pool shower room.

Most of the yard is a traditional Caymanian sand garden, featuring walkways lined with coral stone and filled with local salt and drought-tolerant plants. “Ralph is the gardener, he has a real passion for it and I help him with the design,” says Jen. She has recently been learning to grow vegetables and is delighted with her success with callaloo and lettuce.

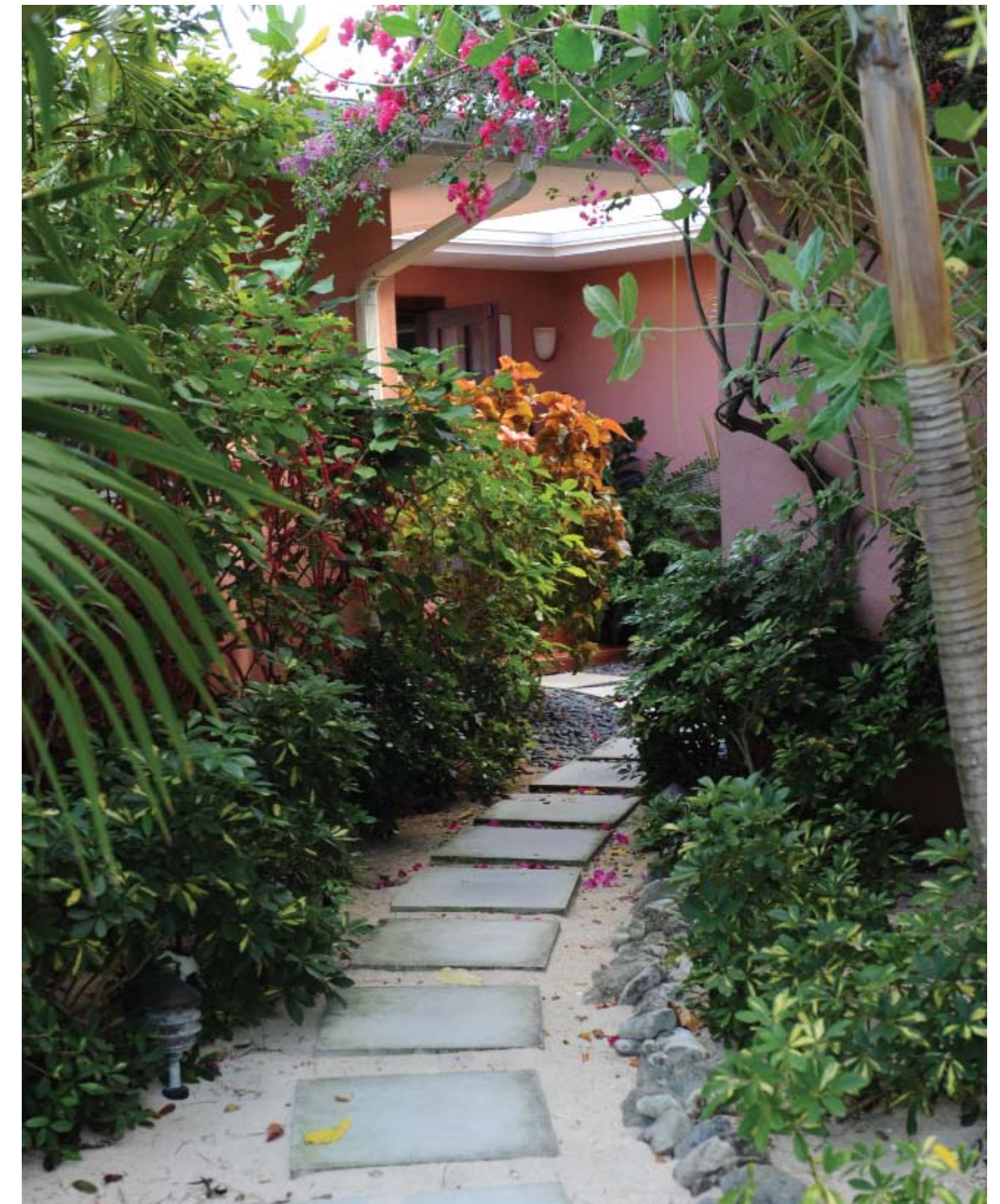
The stylish pool, located at the side of the house and designed for exercise and family play, is a work of art in itself with a mosaic in the pattern of hibiscus flowers inlaid in the floor, which is illuminated by LED lighting at night.

A gazebo is perched in the corner of the pool area and is constructed from basic concrete with mahogany-slatted trellis affording shade but still allowing panoramic views along the beach and out to sea. This home is discreetly positioned so that from the main road you would hardly know it exists.



THE STYLISH POOL, LOCATED AT THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE AND DESIGNED FOR EXERCISE AND FAMILY PLAY, IS A WORK OF ART IN ITSELF WITH A MOSAIC IN THE PATTERN OF HIBISCUS FLOWERS INLAID IN THE FLOOR, WHICH IS ILLUMINATED BY LED LIGHTING AT NIGHT

THE GUESTHOUSE WAS ADDED IN 2008 AND IS BUILT IN A STYLE INFLUENCED BY MODERN AUSTRALIAN BEACH HOUSES, WITH AN EXTERIOR THAT IS A MIXTURE OF WOODEN SLATTING AND TRADITIONAL CORAL STONE TILES JEN OBTAINED FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



LEFT The guesthouse, influenced by modern Australian beach houses
ABOVE The yard features a traditional Caymanian sand garden

The entrance courtyard, inspired by the concept of a Japanese tea garden, is concealed around the corner from the driveway and has smooth stepping stones as well as a lion-head fountain lined with pretty Mexican tiles hand-painted by Jen.

The courtyard provides a buffer from the roadside but its value is also emotional and psychological.

The element of water neutralizes energy as the family enters the dwelling. The idea is that they slow down as they return each day—to the beachside house which is their home and refuge.M