

Tropic

FLORIDA LIVING & DESIGN

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Simple + Clean. Den Architecture designs two entirely different homes, both under 1,600 square feet.

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Interior photos Greg Clark

IN THEIR DESIGN OF TWO TOTALLY different living spaces, one an ocean-front high-rise apartment, the other an older, single family home, DEN Architects found some aspects of crossover. Both of these were city homes of less than 1,600 square feet, both were not living up to their potential. For this firm, founded by the husband and wife team of German Brun and Lizmarie Esparza, environmental sustainability works its way deeply into each design, and these two were no different. Likewise, each project pays close attention to its location, honing in on what makes those particular places special. Finally, DEN Architects seems to stand by the Modernist's motto of simplification in design. In these two spaces, however different, we see that less is indeed more.

For the finishing of what is known in developer parlance as a "designer ready" condominium on the beach, DEN gutted the space to create an airy, open plan out of what had been 1,500 square feet of very compartmentalized space. Using elements found in nature as a guide, the designers created a space grounded by driftwood-inspired plank tile flooring. In the living and dining areas, bits of vibrant color were inspired by vibrant lifeguard stand found on the beach below. The bedrooms, bathed in white, were accented with natural jute and sea grass rugs and accessories. Cut branches of sea grape with its huge round leaves take the place of flower arrangements in this beachy pad. A den was visually connected to the open kitchen using the geometric patterns of coral formations as a jumping off point, and the kitchen was completed with a full



height, mirrored backsplash allowing those in the kitchen to enjoy the ocean view. The overall idea here was, in the words of the designers to “infuse character into an otherwise soul-less concrete void.” The final result is calming and balanced, but with a strong nod to the nature of the place that surrounds it.

For a three-bedroom foreclosure built in 1926 that most sales agents in south Florida would call a “tear down”, DEN proposed a complete gut renovation instead of a demo, salvaging foundation, floors, walls and roof - not to mention saving about 260 cubic yards of construction debris from being dumped in a landfill. Believing that good architecture



The oceanfront condominium was reconfigured and used a palette of driftwood, coral and maple for inspiration.





FEB
2011

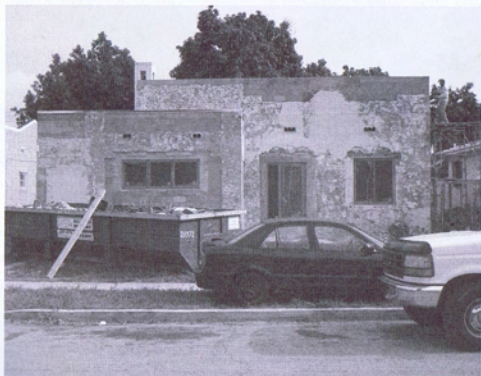
is inherently green, (both Esparza and Brun are LEED accredited and have worked on sustainable design at Oppenheim Architecture + Design and elsewhere) the team created a new home that personifies passive, sustainable design. Parapets were lifted and straightened, the front façade simplified and reconfigured to create a stronger composition and better flow throughout the house.

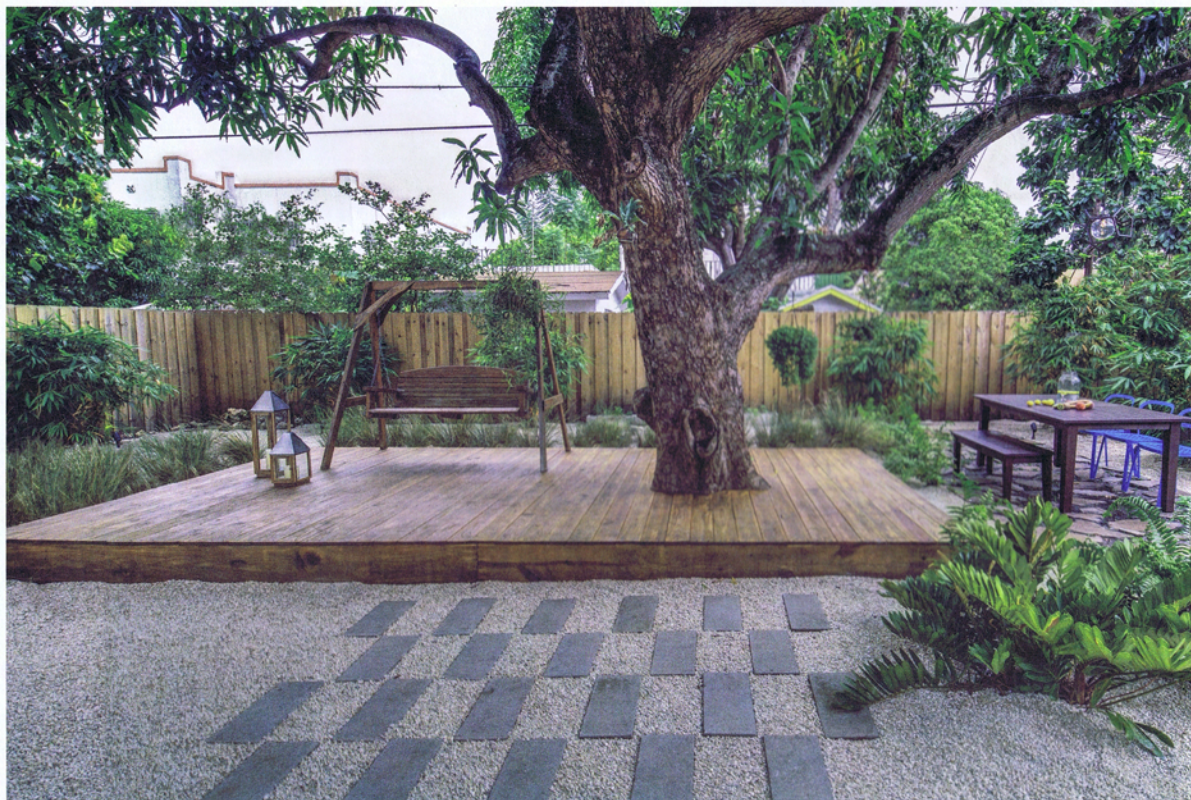
Finishing off the home, which kept characteristic elements like Dade County pine floors and curved ceiling cornices, are native plantings like silver buttonwood and Fakahatchee grass, which help soften the newly angular facade.



This 1,500 sq. ft. urban home was reimagined by DEN, not demolished, with a new design that makes more sense and opens onto an expansive rear yard.

DEC
2011





While the front now sports a more formal entry with redwood trellis, the rear is really one big outdoor room, with deck surrounding a huge mango tree.

FEB
2012



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