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# MODERNIST MIAMI

INTERIOR DESIGN / ROBERT RIONDA, PEEPLES RIONDA INTERIORS, INC.  
ARCHITECTURE / BRUNO ELIAS RAMOS, BEA ARCHITECTS, INC.  
HOME BUILDER / BRUNO ELIAS RAMOS, ART, DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION, INC.  
KITCHEN DESIGN / JORGE RODRIGUEZ, INTIRIUM  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / MICHAEL THIEL, PLANTAYSIA, INC.



VIBRANT HUES AND VINTAGE FURNISHINGS CREATE AN ECLECTIC HOUSE IN KEY BISCAIYNE THAT RADIATES HIGH-OCTANE ENERGY INSIDE AND OUT.

WRITTEN BY BRIAN LIBBY / PHOTOGRAPHY BY TROY CAMPBELL





The home's sense of color and style begins at the entry, where a 1970s Pop art piece by Beverly Waltner—purchased at Visiona—greet visitors along with a mosaic-and-bronze table from Dual, found through 1stdibs, and a vintage '70s Danish shag rug from Nihil Novi.

Set against the lush backdrop of Key Biscayne, a sculptural house pops against the tropical surroundings—its interlocking white rectangular forms epitomizing Miami modern architecture. Resplendent with a diverse array of contemporary art and vintage furniture, the house has a sense of festivity that begins as soon as one enters its colorful fusion of indoor and outdoor spaces. “Living here is a dream come true,” says Maria Zambrano, the design-savvy owner who calls this place home along with her husband, Eddy Saade, and their children.

“I was immediately struck by her excitement and passion,” recalls designer Robert Rionda, who worked in close collaboration with Maria to outfit the interiors. “She came to our first dinner together with an inspiration book like I’ve never seen before. It was overflowing with ideas ranging from pictures of pop stars to jewelry, colors and furniture—it was eclectic in the best way.”

To begin, the architect, Bruno Elias Ramos, made the more uncommon decision to place the swimming pool in the front of the house, as opposed to the back, behind a tree-lined garden wall by landscape designer Michael Thiel. This allowed the entire ground floor—be it the living and dining rooms at the home’s entrance or the open kitchen and family room in back—to wrap around the pool, making it a focal point. The family often gathers around its infinity edge and an adjacent barbecue area. “You can see the pool from each of the public rooms through sliding glass doors,” says Ramos, who delineated the floor plan and also served as the home’s builder. Equally striking is a rooftop deck with even more picturesque vistas. “Outside, the downstairs areas are the more active spaces, while the upstairs is more passive,” Ramos says. “On the rooftop terrace, you can watch the sunset with a cocktail and enjoy the views of Key Biscayne’s treetops, Biscayne Bay and the downtown skyline.”

Because the house has wide-open spaces and an abundance of windows looking out onto nature, Rionda wanted to infuse the interiors with a wealth of color.

“RICH, VIBRANT  
COLORS ALLOW  
THE EYE TO FOCUS  
ON THE ART AND  
FURNISHINGS.”

—ROBERT RIONDA

“The use of rich and vibrant tones, as opposed to a neutral palette, allows the eye to focus on the art and furnishings that we curated while still appreciating the architecture and views of the landscape,” Rionda says.

But there was an extra challenge: The homeowners didn’t see eye-to-eye stylistically. Maria liked modern furnishings while her husband preferred a more traditional lean. “My husband likes dark, rustic materials like stone and wood,” Maria says. “But Robert helped to reconcile our tastes.”

In the double-height living room, the focal point is a large 10-by-7-foot photograph the couple had commissioned before the home was completed. It depicts the mountainous Venezuelan capital of Caracas, from which they emigrated. The photo, titled *Blue Caracas* by Vicente Diez, is broken up into a multi-square grid; its pattern is picked up in a Don Harvey *Bones* screen, found at John Salibello, separating the living and dining rooms. The tones of the sky in the photo also inspired the selection of Clarence House’s blue fabric to reupholster the living room’s curved midcentury sofa by Vladimir Kagan.

The nearby dining room was designed to host formal dinner parties without feeling too formal. Thus, it elegantly pairs vintage Venini chandeliers with classic furniture including a long, custom sideboard. Yet the conversation piece among guests invariably becomes a bronze sculpture that Maria covered in colorful balloons. Originally it was in a play area for the kids, but Rionda—appreciating its blend of old-world tradition and Pop art fun—suggested a prominent place beside the dining table. Around the corner is the family room, a more casual area where the entire family can gather, yet the space still seems grown-up because it’s filled with eye-catching art and worldly objects, such as a 1970s chrome coffee table and a vintage English rug in bold reds and blues.

If most of the house boasts colorful furniture and art, then the kitchen exhibits a simpler, more functional elegance with high-gloss white cabinets, white quartz countertops and an island topped in stainless steel. “Not many of my clients ask for stainless steel, but Maria is a serious cook, so for her it was important for the kitchen to be not only beautiful but also functional,” says Jorge Rodriguez, who, along with business partner Juan Carlos Quijano, worked with Maria to bring her dream kitchen to life.

Upstairs, the master bedroom serves as a respite from vivacious family life, with room for a sitting area for watching television, as well as a small floating desk. Mitch McGee’s Pop art piece of a woman’s face overlooks the space, along with art Maria made with her son, titled *My Heart is Yours (Handle with Care)*, using wood, paint and stickers that read “fragile.”

Although the house is full of distinctive furniture and art, it’s the passions of both clients and designers that make the house sing. “For me, creating this house was an amazing experience,” Maria says. “I loved showing my kids that there are so many ways to be creative. But it also comes down to Robert and the rest of the team. They knew what we wanted even better than we did.”





Architect and builder Bruno Elias Ramos conceptually designed the modern house as a cube, carving out spaces to shape the interior rooms as well as the open pool deck and rooftop terrace. Trellis beams create shade from southern exposure.





**Above:** A David Weeks Studio chandelier hangs in the foyer, which features custom millwork and shelving designed by Robert Rionda and crafted by Alfredo Custom Furniture. In the living room, 1950s Peter Hvidt chairs from Gary Rubinstein Antiques hug a stool from John Rosselli & Associates.

**Left:** Turkish prints from Kakar House of Design and Fortuny pillows from Monica James & Co. enliven a gray Zanotta sofa in the living room. Lamps from Kerson 20<sup>th</sup> Century Design perch on Paul McCobb tables from Lobel Modern. A carpet from Niba Rug Collections grounds a shag rug from Nihil Novi and a François Monnet coffee table. Oceanview Shades & Drapery made the Coraggio sheers.





**Above:** In the dining room, a Holly Hunt table joins Flexform side chairs and Blackman Cruz head chairs on a rug from ABC Carpet & Home. Jean-François Rauzier's artwork is from Waterhouse & Dodd via Pulse Miami Beach, and Manu's acrylic dresses are from Ercole Home in New York.

**Right:** The family room is a comfy spot anchored by a Zanotta sofa, a colorful John Freeman rug, and a Karl Springer coffee table from Visiona. A sunburst sculpture from Joseph Antuso 20<sup>th</sup> Century Design and a painting by Santiago Paulos overlook the space.



A glossy white palette and stainless-steel surfaces allow the food to provide color in the kitchen. Intrium furnished the cabinetry, and the countertops—from Fine Surfaces and More. Reissued Alvar Aalto barstools from Hive line up beneath Glo-Ball pendants by Jasper Morrison for Flos, from Luminaire. Appliances are by Gaggenau.







This page: The living and family rooms open onto the pool deck, ideal either for entertaining or as a play area for the kids. The Ann Sacks tiles that clad the pool take their color cues from the blue sky, seen through the sculptural trellis beams.

Opposite: Between B&B Italia's Canasta sofa, Great Lakes chaises by Sutherland, and a bench from Judith Norman—paired with a dining table also by Sutherland—the family has plenty of spots for relaxation.



“THE DESIGN TEAM KNEW WHAT WE WANTED EVEN BETTER THAN WE DID.”

-MARIA ZAMBRANO



The master bedroom balances masculine and feminine aesthetics. A gray bed by Emaf Progetti for Zanotta mixes with a colorful Moroso pouf, a pair of vintage 1960s Murano glass lamps sit atop midcentury tables from Karl Kemp Antiques in New York. The Indian patchwork rug is from Jalan Jalan Collection, and the Milo Baughman bench is from Visiona.



**Above:** The sitting area in the master bedroom has a B&B Italia sofa from Luminaire, tables from Visiona and a rug from One of a Kind. The desk from Mecox has a minimal frame that allows natural light to filter through Dedar sheers from Jerry Pair & Associates. The chair is by Cappellini.



**Left:** The master bathroom keeps a quiet midcentury palette to let the foliage outside shine through Dedar's ikat sheers. This is achieved through custom vanities, ceramic wall tiles by Ann Sacks and a 1960s Mazzega chandelier from Gary Rubinstein Antiques. A Lucite chair from Palm Beach Antique & Design Center and a wooden Grange chair offer seating.