

SOUTH FLORIDA CANVAS

REEF INTERIORS BY MILLIE, INTERIORS

MILLIE LARSEN, ALLIED A.S.I.D., INTERIOR DESIGNER

ROBERT BARNES, A.I.A., ARCHITECT

TOM HARPER, PHOTOGRAPHER

"Presence" was one of the reasons *plein air* artist George Rothacker decided to paint this South Florida residence. *Plein air*, literally translated from French means "fresh air" and refers to artists who paint on location, in front of the subject, rather than in a studio. The artist is at the mercy of, say, the sun going in and out of the clouds, or perhaps cars coming and going, or whatever else might be happening at the site. Ultimately, though, there is a living characteristic to the finished piece, something that cannot quite be captured in a studio. In addition to "presence," the artist was drawn to details such as the overhanging cornices which give appealing



Architectural details such as the overhanging cornices lend visual interest to the exterior.



Above, the house as painted by George Rothacker.



to the right, a photograph taken the same day.





There is a prevailing British Colonial style throughout the residence which avoids the traditional heaviness in favor of a light, airy look.

reveal, as well as the columned front entrance, the beautiful front door, and the interesting windows above the door. Not to mention the landscaping, which was left largely undisturbed for a natural, nestled-in-the-woods effect. And these are the very elements architect Robert Barnes, A.I.A., sought to incorporate in the design of this home. The house is located in a protected hammock, so one of the design goals was to have it embrace the property. To this end, the house is in harmony with the woods, and although there is a certain formality to the exterior, the colors and finishes are earthy and inviting. The architect strongly believes there is

an energy flow in architecture, so openness and flow define the essence of the home. Every room is spacious with views of the outdoors. To complement and enhance the architecture, interior designer Millie Larsen, allied A.S.I.D., established a British Colonial style throughout but avoided a heavy look to maintain the airiness. From inside the entryway, one views across the living room to a wall of French doors through which the lush outdoor foliage and the swimming pool expanse can be seen. Because the ceiling is at a 10-foot height and room is so spacious, Millie was able to use large pieces of furniture and still maintain a light ambiance in the space.



From the living room looking back toward the front entry, one sees the free-standing, curving staircase which appears to float in air.

In keeping with a sophisticated island look, dark woods are mixed with raffia and rattan. Two of the oversized conversation chairs were custom made in raffia. So, too, was the back of the custom-made sofa which is in a peach, tweed-like fabric. Another oversized chair carries warm island tones in a silk striate fabric with palm trees. The coffee table, an antique from Indonesia, was the perfect complement to this comfortable, island-flavored seating group. Because privacy was not a factor, the window treatment is a simple

swag in a gold-toned linen. The large size of the room allowed for 3"-diameter drapery poles instead of the standard two-inch. The elegant island look flows from the living room into the dining room with the same raffia in the chairs and sofa carried onto the top of the dining room table. The dining room is an interesting space because of its shape. The shape actually was dictated by the back side of the elevator which protrudes somewhat into the room. To effectively hide it, the interior designer brought in a hand-

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An interesting feature of the dining room is the shadow box effect of the pass-through window through which the floating stairway can be seen.

carved, three-panel, antique Chinese screen. The square shape of the dining table also was dictated by the shape of the room, but it comfortably seats eight. As mentioned previously, the center square of the table top is raffia, and it is bordered in maple with a cappuccino finish. Parsons-style chairs were custom made in a moss green silk. As with all the rooms, there are views to the outdoors. Here, the window treatment is an inverted-pleat valance in a khaki color. A feature which makes this room a favorite is the shadowbox effect of the pass-through window which looks out to the spiral staircase. It lends

visual interest as well as contributing to the airiness of the room. Favorite pieces and collectibles are displayed on the shelves of the window. To the other side of the living room is a den which also serves as the television and game room. Because it is a smaller room, furniture is on a smaller scale. Polo club chairs in hand-rubbed leather and a love-seat-sized sofa provide the seating. The floral pattern of the heavy-textured cotton fabric on the sofa brings a light, garden-like feel to the room. The coffee table is elm with a rattan peel inlay on top. The umber finish has been hand-rubbed in a multi-stepped



Polo club chairs in hand-rubbed leather and a love-seat-sized sofa in a heavy-textured floral pattern provide comfortable seating in the den.

process. A small Oriental rug finishes the look. Views of the outdoors are seen through windows which wrap around in something of a bay effect. Mahogany-finished shutters on the windows lend a breezy, islandy feeling to the room. There is one guest bedroom downstairs. Set against soft tones of sea foam green and white, the room features a palm tree motif. Even the iron headboard of the custom-made, canopy bed incorporates palm trees. The bed is draped with

cotton gauze to lend a lighter look than the usual heavily-paneled canopy beds. Double French doors open to an outdoor patio area which leads to the swimming pool. The treatment on these doors is an inverted-pleat valance of two different fabrics. The solid fabric is the same sea foam green fabric as seen in the dust ruffle while the contrasting fabric is the same palm tree fabric seen in the coverlet on the bed. Upstairs, there is the master bedroom as well as another guest

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Against tones of sea foam green and white, the guest bedroom features a palm tree motif. Even the custom-made iron headboard incorporates palms.

room. There also is a study which easily converts into a bedroom because what appears to be a desk actually houses a pull-out bed. The spacious master bedroom features a four-poster, Abaca-weave, mahogany Havana bed. Bedding is all silk in a floral, goldish-yellow tone. Mahogany nightstands were handmade in a half-moon shape. Seeming to float, they do not have legs; rather, they are attached to the wall. At the foot of the bed is a woven bed bench. Underneath the bench is an area rug in needlepoint with a tropical design. Across from the bed, a custom-made chaise and hand-painted, four-panel screen

make up one of several sitting areas in the room. In another corner, a Java plantation chair provides comfortable seating. An outdoor balcony is accessed through French doors. Dressing the doors is a combination cornice and valance consisting of gathered, scalloped silk sheer fabric attached to a fabric board in the same pattern as the bed coverlet. The other guest bedroom is another statement in sophisticated island design. The bed is a heavy-raffia sleigh bed with bedding in a silk stripe. Bombé-style nightstands with bun feet are mahogany with a distressed finish and brass accents. Here, again,



The four-poster, Abaca-weave, mahogany Havana bed in the master bedroom is covered in a floral, goldish-toned silk. The rug is a tropical needlepoint.

an outdoor balcony provides a setting in which to enjoy morning coffee or a meal. With the profusion of trees and natural hammock, there is a delightful up-in-the-trees feel. The cornice above the doorway provides an accent without blocking the views. The background is solid while the applique on top is a scalloped floral. Artist George Rothacker was so right when he stated the home has "presence." Between the character and flow created by the architect, and the rich but comfortable interior sophistication achieved by the interior designer, this residence captures the appealing essence of South Florida living.



The heavy raffia bed adds to the sophisticated island look of the upstairs guest rooms.