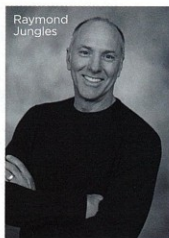


Raymond Jungles's renovation of the Miami Beach Botanical Garden favors organic lines over manicured prettiness.



A sketch for the Miami Beach Botanical Garden



Raymond Jungles

The modernist aesthetic of Brazilian artist Roberto Burle Marx impressed Jungles.

Jungles is on a roll as one of the top landscape architects in the country. His recent projects include designing the rooftop garden of the New

World Symphony's new Miami Beach home (architect Frank Gehry's first Florida commission) and transforming the block-fronting Herzog & de Meuron's celebrated 1111 Lincoln Road parking garage from a double row of palm trees into an Everglades-inspired oasis. (The latter earned him an invitation from the Cultural Landscape Foundation to speak about urban renewal at its conference at the Museum of Modern Art.) He is currently working alongside Danish architect Bjarke Ingels on a residential tower called Grove at Grand Bay, which will replace the luxurious Grand Bay hotel in Coconut Grove.

the art of land

AWARD-WINNING LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
RAYMOND JUNGLES JOINS THE DREAM DESIGN TEAM REVAMPING COCONUT GROVE'S GRAND BAY HOTEL. BY JORDAN MELNICK

Dressed in white linen pants, a light brown shirt—untucked—and suede loafers, Raymond Jungles stops mid-sentence at a muted rumble of thunder. “We should sit over here so we can hear the rain,” he says, sliding open the glass door of his conference room at his office studio. The vista is a small garden at the edge of the Miami River, a profusion of native vegetation with the towers of downtown beyond. At a sudden crack of nearby lightning, Jungles exhales sharply. It’s an expression of his delight at nature’s show of force, and it’s a hint at what fuels his pursuit of the ideal “garden experience.”

The high-profile commissions are a triumph for a man who started his career in the dirt. Born in Omaha, Nebraska, Jungles, 56, moved to Miami after high school and got a job as a landscape laborer, then as a Miami Beach lifeguard, before earning an associate’s degree from Miami Dade College and eventually enrolling in the University of Florida’s landscape architecture program. It was there that he encountered the work of Brazilian artist and landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, whose bold, modernist aesthetic impressed Jungles with the poetic possibilities of landscape design.

After graduation, Jungles, then in his mid-20s, met Burle Marx in Miami and made the first of several visits to the master’s exquisitely landscaped Rio de Janeiro home, now a national monument known as the Sítio and, by Jungles’s estimate, “the most beautiful garden on earth.” Says Jungles, “That was the best of times. It was like a dream. I just got to hang around and watch and converse with him. I was able to ask questions, and he was very generous.”

Burle Marx died in 1994, but Jungles got a chance to repay his mentor’s generosity when he designed an orchid show at the New York Botanical Garden in his honor. Perhaps a more intimate tribute is Jungles’s son’s

continued on page 206

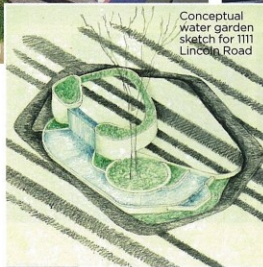
A canopy of native Florida trees shades an Everglades-inspired oasis at 1111 Lincoln Road.

“[Miami] triggered my sense of being closer to nature.”
 —RAYMOND JUNGLES

continued from page 204

Deeply impressed by the Brazilian’s striking colors, organic shapes, and devotion to native plants, Jungles has assimilated those characteristics into his own style—one that, he says, draws heavily on the environment of his adopted hometown.

“Miami hugely influences my work,” Jungles says. “The reason I came down here is that it triggered my sense of being closer to nature, going to the beach, being close to the Everglades, seeing this tremendous sky that we have here.” The influence permeates the Lincoln Road design, with its canopy of native trees—live oak, pond apple, red mangrove, bald cypress, *ligum vitae*—thick grass beds, silver saw palmettos, and teeming ponds. Jungles calls the space, which can accommodate large events and hundreds of people, an “urban glade,” a



Conceptual water garden sketch for 1111 Lincoln Road

A view of the 1111 Lincoln Road parking garage

term that neatly balances two core tenets. “My philosophy is to [let nature] invade the city and take back what was once its own,” he says. “But make no [mistake]; I’m making spaces for people, not with the intent of making pure wildlife habitats.”

That philosophy is now guiding Jungles’s landscape design for the Grove Bay condo tower. He couldn’t provide a firm timetable but says it is a fast-moving project. “In a year,” he predicts, “you’ll see a lot.”

Although we’ve already seen plenty from Jungles, he is still not ready to retire to his own Sítio. Asked about his dream commission, he describes an urban waterfront park that turns into a pedestrian plaza and snakes all the way through the city. “That,” he says, “would be awesome.” **OD**



Casa Morada boutique hotel, in Islamorada in the Florida Keys

LAWS OF THE JUNGLES

In his pursuit of the ideal “garden experience,” Jungles adheres to several core tenets.

- **Honor nature:** In much of Jungles’s work (such as his transformation of Islamorada’s Casa Morada boutique hotel, *left*), intentionally natural shapes overtake hard, man-made lines. Plants are asymmetrically staggered, pathways are shaped as if they’ve evolved over time, and park benches are arced like palm fronds. Subtle layers of plant pavement overtake one another, suggesting nature taking its course.
- **Indigenous plants:** Jungles uses native species, such as the canopy of Florida trees that shades his Everglades-inspired oasis in front of the 1111 Lincoln Road parking garage.
- **Color restraint:** A disciple of Brazilian modernist Roberto Burle Marx, Jungles favors poetry over prettiness, employing color with restraint (see the wisps of purple flowers set sparsely against the green backdrop of his Miami Beach Botanical Garden renovation).
- **Human use interaction:** Jungles emphasizes that his gardens are for human beings, not mere studies in designing nature. His design for the Lincoln Road space can accommodate large events and hundreds of people.