

IT'S A JUNGLES OUT THERE

Landscape architect Raymond Jungles dreams of outdoor paradise.

BY ANDREA RICHARD PORTRAIT BY STEPHAN GOETTLICHER

Conversation flows easily when talking to Raymond Jungles. The tall, chiseled man exudes a tranquil vibe like that found in a Zen garden. Still and mindful. But still a powerhouse of a landscape architect. He wakes up at 4 a.m. every day and heads to his drawing board in his Las Olas Beach Club home. He begins the day brainstorming ideas and designing beautiful gardens and the surrounding hardscapes. Jungles, a landscape architect whose work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Vanity Fair* and *Architectural Digest*, is more than just your average designer. He has traveled the world giving lectures. He's won countless prestigious awards, published two books and has a third one due out in 2015. And yes, ironically, his surname is his real birth name.

A common misconception about his work is that he only deals with plants. In fact, Jungles spends 90 percent of his time designing hardscapes such as stone structures, trellises, pools, pavilions and more. "I sculpt spaces," he says. Installing the plants come last and are the easiest part.

His impressive portfolio includes a gamut of private residences, including Las Olas residences and celebrities' homes, as well as award-winning venues such as Miami Beach Botanical Garden, 11 11 Lincoln Road, New World Symphony and the

Soho Beach House. In addition, he's handled international resorts and spaces as far away as Antigua, China, the Bahamas, Costa Rica, Mexico, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis.

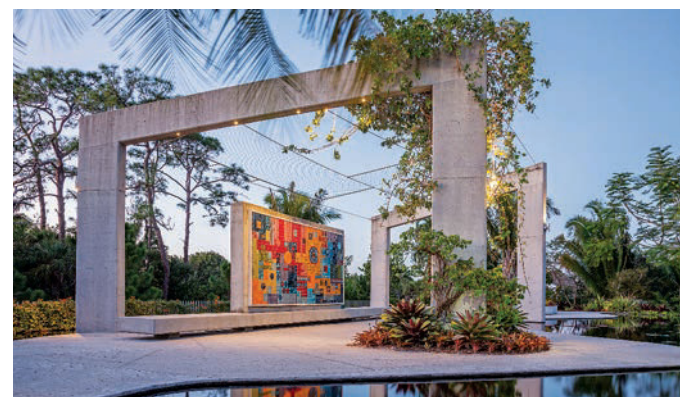
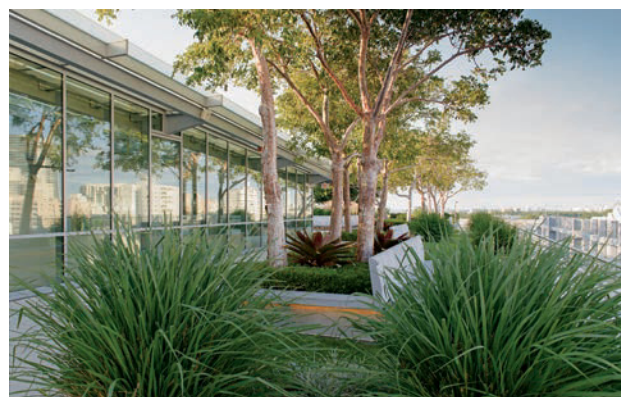
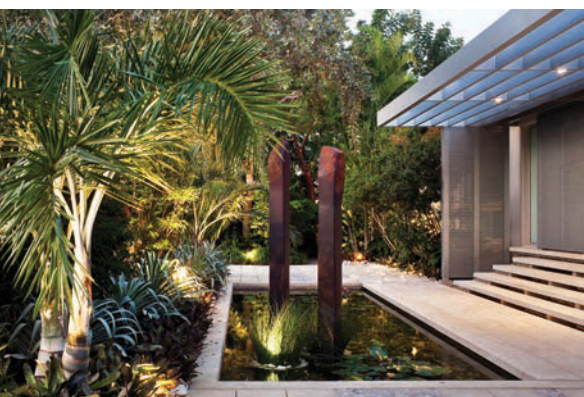
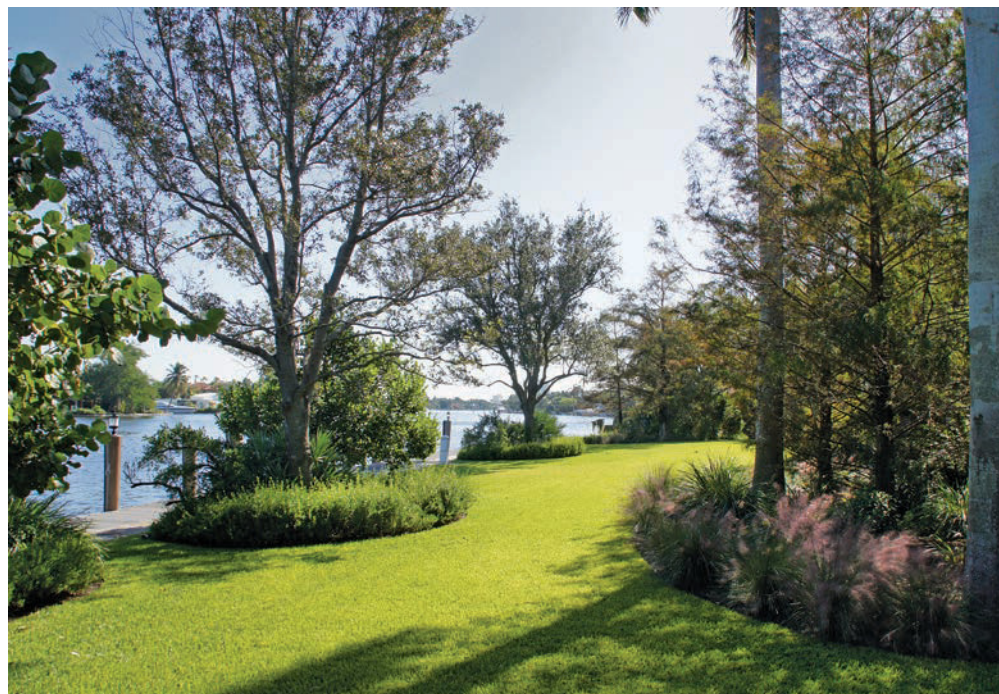
Currently, he is working with top-notch international architecture firm Bjarke Ingels Group, the Danish firm behind the cutting-edge Marina Lofts high-rise residences, on a multi-family residential garden in Coconut Grove. Jungles describes his project with BIG as the ultimate Florida Coconut Grove garden experience. In this case and in all his work, he incorporates characteristics from the site's people, environment and cultural history.

"The garden will flow from the sidewalk of Bayshore Drive, up past a water garden featuring native, aquatic plants and animals, beneath mature native canopy trees, relocated from on-site," he explains. From above, a garden spa will offer private vantage points for viewing the bustling streets. He is designing a pool that offers a tranquil escape under a canopy of trees with vistas that overlook the Grove and will include spots for kids and grandparents to play and lounge.

The Brazilian Garden in Naples, Fla., took him three years to finish. Completed in 2009, it features Brazil's art in landscape. The interplay among people and plants creates a botanical, cultural and educational venue for botanists and garden



LANDSCAPE KING Raymond Jungles's spectacular designs and spaces have earned the landscape architect a legion of followers.



GET OUT Jungles's monuments of landscape achievement include works at a private residence in Rio Vista (top photos), a property on La Gorce Island (bottom left), New World Symphony's rooftop garden (bottom middle) and Brazilian Garden in the Naples Botanical Garden (bottom right).

enthusiasts. It's inspired by the late Roberto Burle Marx, the man dubbed the father of modern landscape design.

In 1981, Jungles founded his modern landscape architecture firm, Raymond Jungles Inc., which his daughter, Amanda, helps oversee. His Miami-based business started buzzing in 2002, and in the past seven years, he's been able to cherry-pick the projects that best fit his vision. For fun, he enjoys playing ice hockey, snowboarding, hiking in Montana and wind surfing.

Each morning, he works in his home studio, standing up while listening to classic rock and reggae. His focus is intense. His Fort Lauderdale home overlooks the Atlantic Ocean with an expansive, inviting terrace. When he loses momentum, he gazes at the ocean and finds the inspiration he needs to press on.

"Look at that! How can that view not create a calmness in your mind to dream big?" he says, peering at the sparkling waters.

Jungles, born in Omaha, Neb., grew up camping and sailing with his family. They would travel to wild and gorgeous places such as Sequoia and Yosemite national parks, Baja and Santa Catalina Island. He visited Florida as a teenager.

"The first time I came to Florida, I came to Daytona when I was a sophomore in high school for spring break. And that was great. Listening to Led Zeppelin and hanging out on the beach and seeing babes in bikinis," he recalls of that '70s era.

After high school, he moved to Miami Beach on a whim in 1974. He studied

at what is now Miami Dade College and worked as a lifeguard at Haulover Beach. He then took a job as a landscape laborer.

Eventually, he headed to Gainesville to attend the University of Florida, where he enrolled in architecture coursework. "I was sort of confused at the time because all I wanted to do was find a job that would allow me to be outside as much as possible," he says. "I was a nature boy."

At a campus library, the nature lover came across a life-changing book, "Tropical Gardens of Roberto Burle Marx." "I started looking through it, and it really hit me like a hammer," Jungles says. The next day, he knew his destiny was to follow in Marx's footsteps.

After a chance meeting, Jungles asked Marx, 70 at the time, to become his mentor. The Brazilian landscape architect said yes, and they spent 14 years working together. Jungles would fly to Brazil every year and work with Marx, collecting plants and learning modern design concepts.

Marx died in 1994, but his words and sage advice may never escape Jungles. "One of the things that was huge to me was when he said, 'Do what you like.' Little things like that stick with me," Jungles says as his eyes light up. Today, his studio is lined with prints of paintings by his beloved mentor.

Jungles has no intention of retiring. He's having too much fun. His biggest challenges are yet to come.