

MIAMI EDITION

FLORIDA DESIGN

The Art Issue

EAST MEETS WEST

A CORAL GABLES COTTAGE
GOES HIGH-END ZEN

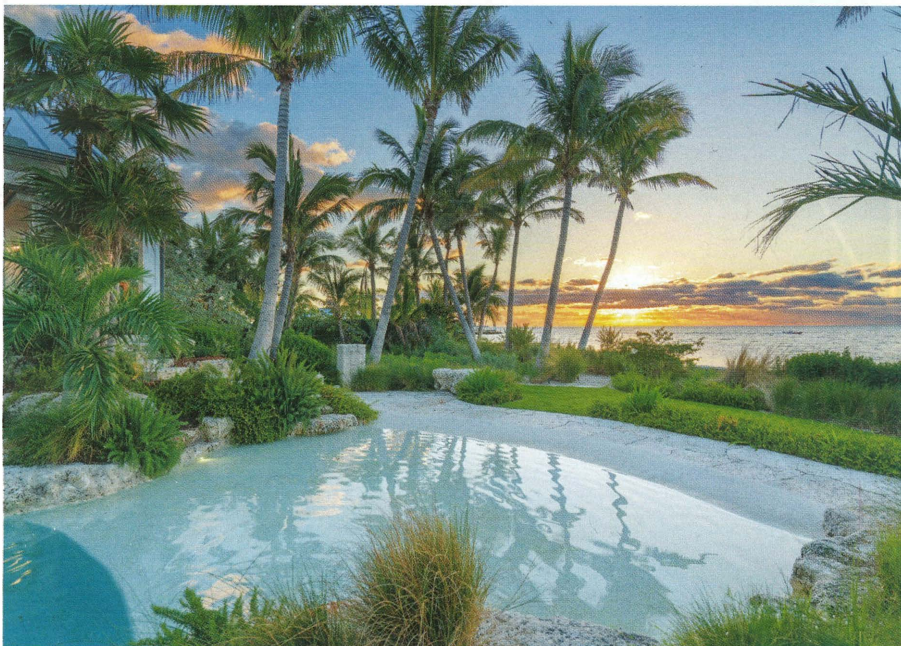
GO-TO GALLERIES

CHECKING THE PULSE OF
MIAMI'S ART SCENE

GOING NATIVE

CALL IT CHIC CONSERVATION: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT RAYMOND JUNGLES DISHES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF USING INDIGENOUS MATERIALS IN HIS DESIGN OF COCOLOBA GARDENS

TEXT KRISTEN DESMOND LEFEVRE



You'd never know it, but this stately home surrounded by seven acres of lush gardens, pools, and lagoons was once an Islamorada commercial shrimp farm. Together with architects Steve Siskind and Bruce Carlson, storied landscape architect Raymond Jungles transformed the property—which is located 78 miles from Miami—into a timeless retreat that celebrates local flora and fauna.

Jungles says the site came with challenges—and valuable natural resources. Situated atop of a coral reef more than 125 million years old, the land is a veritable quarry of fossilized limestone—which Jungles says is commonly called Keystone—that can only be found in Monroe County. Jungles used the Keystone throughout the property in his designs. “I think we doubled the size of the lagoon to harvest that Keystone,” he says. “In the end, it also created more habitat for the homeowner’s fish.”

But Jungles wasn’t just committed to using local stone. His entire design philosophy—which is also a conservation and stewardship philosophy—centers on using native plants in each of



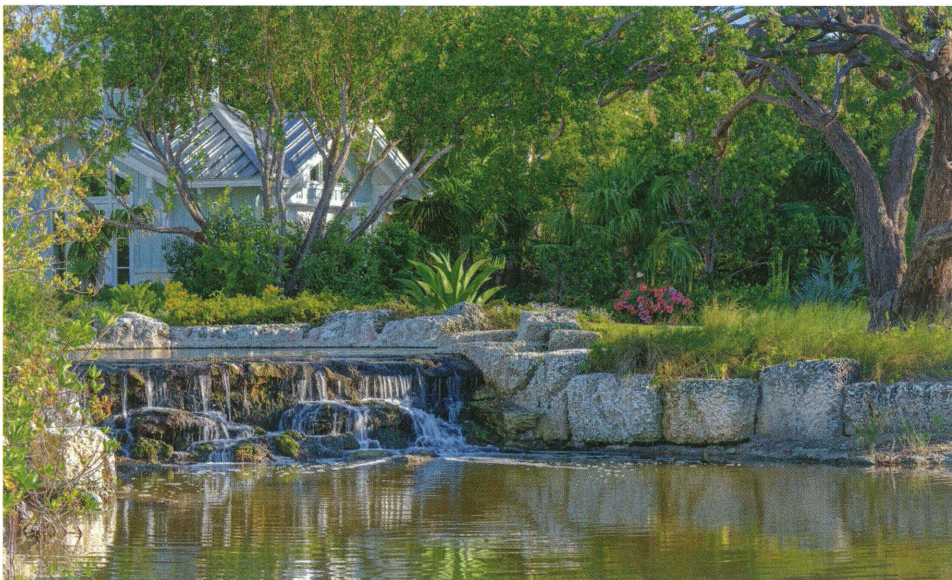
his projects. Jungles says habitat is always at the forefront of his thinking. “Using plants that belong in the environment creates places for all the butterflies and the birds and the creatures that should be here in Florida,” Jungles says. “A lot of that got replaced by a very sterile type of landscape and construction. So whenever I get a chance, I try to reverse that.”

Still, he admits it’s not always easy to get even native plants to grow in harsh conditions like Cocoloba Gardens’ site in the Florida Keys. “You’re throwing things on rocks with very a minimal amount of soil. You’ve got salt in the air. You’ve got long periods of dry season. So you want plants that

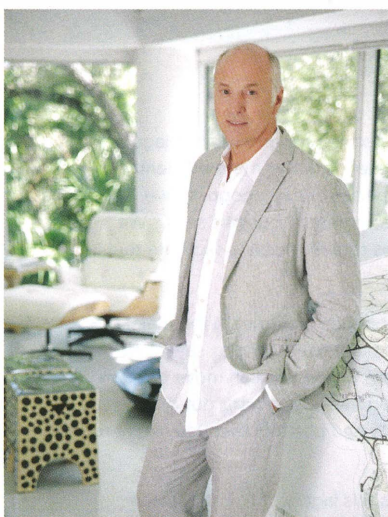


ABOVE: Along the entrance drive to the property lies this lagoon that Jungles enhanced to circulate the water more efficiently. “The client has as a lot of fish species in this lagoon, so we needed a way to keep the water aerated,” Jungles says. “We used the Keystone to create this retaining wall to facilitate that.”

CENTER: “The architects created bridges underneath the main structure that connect parts of the house,” Jungles says. “We then designed areas like this path where you can move through the garden. And then we created these landforms out of Keystone and carved it into the walls and planters that you see here.”



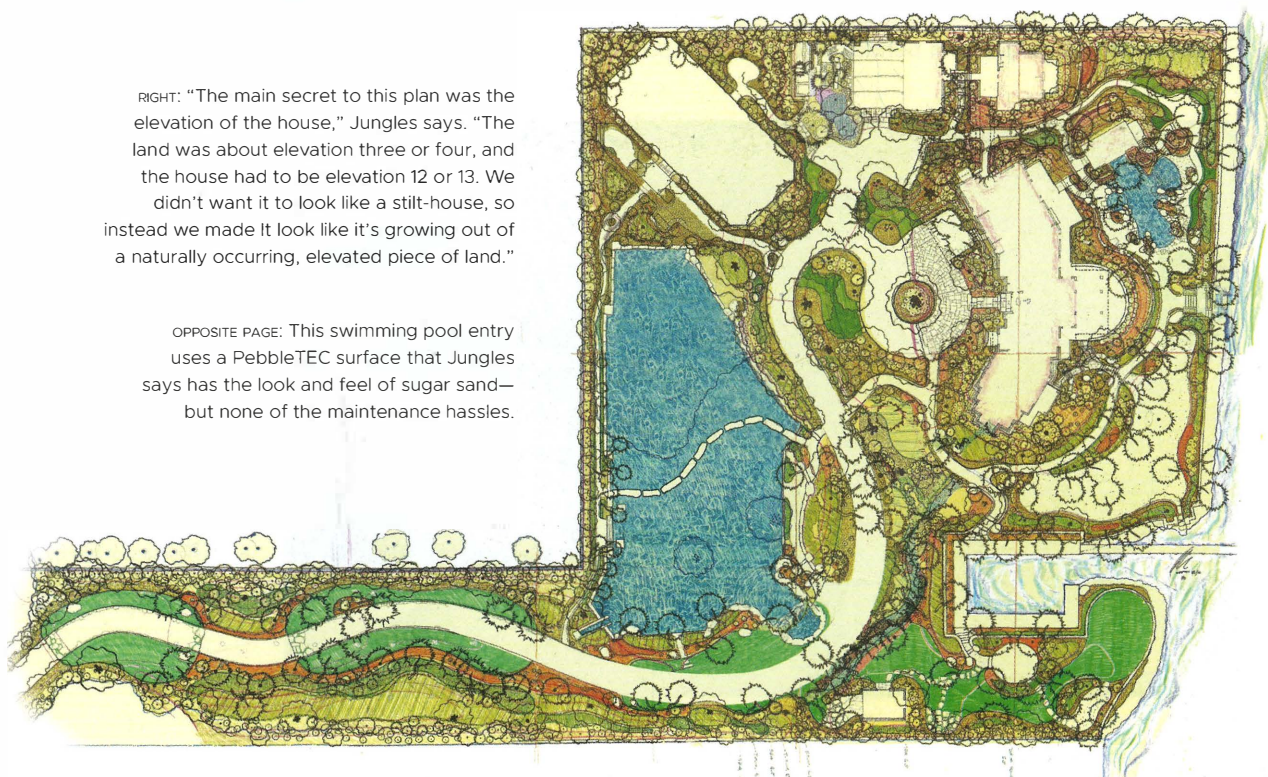
LEFT: Part of the original site was this lagoon. “The salt water lagoon was carved into the coral bedrock as part of a former shrimp farming operation,” Jungles says.

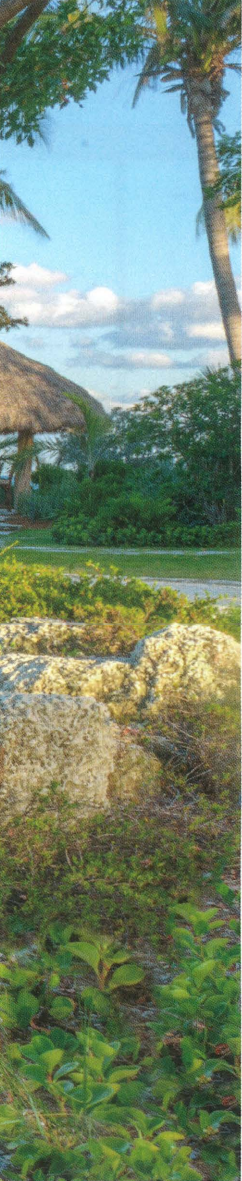


ABOVE: Raymond Jungles, founding principal of Coral Gables-based Raymond Jungles Studio says that living in harmony with nature "is our hope for humanity."

RIGHT: "The main secret to this plan was the elevation of the house," Jungles says. "The land was about elevation three or four, and the house had to be elevation 12 or 13. We didn't want it to look like a stilt-house, so instead we made it look like it's growing out of a naturally occurring, elevated piece of land."

OPPOSITE PAGE: This swimming pool entry uses a PebbleTEC surface that Jungles says has the look and feel of sugar sand—but none of the maintenance hassles.

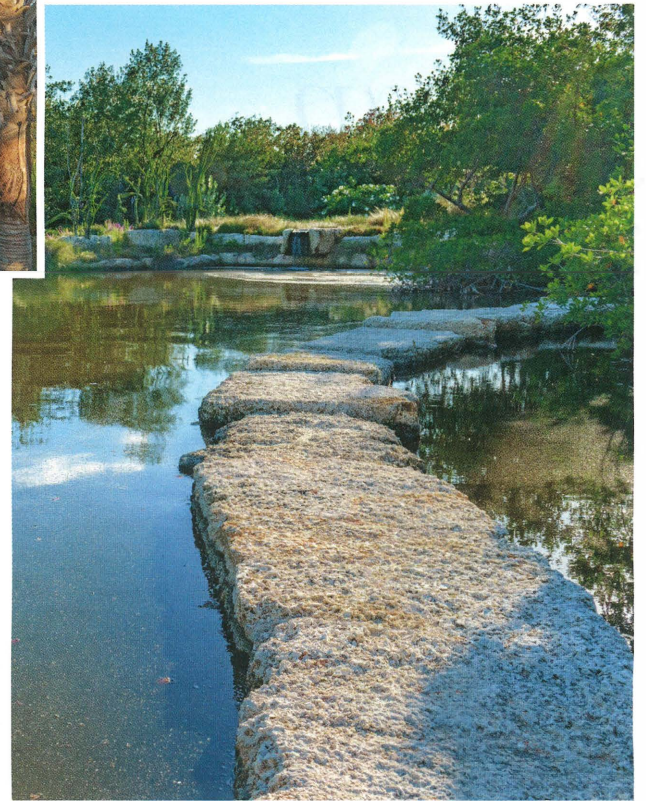




LEFT: A leisurely sandy path leads to the beach. "I like to create an organized look that's wild, but not totally wild," Jungles says. "Like if the wind kind of carved these paths through the dunes and the coconut palms."

nature has made to be tough," Jungles says. "Their DNA is designed to be able to thrive in those kinds of situations—or at least to survive in a good way."

Jungles calls this process "restorative landscaping." But it's also the kind of work that is forward-looking to the challenges that the planet may face in the future. "We know sea levels are going to rise," Jungles says. "But there's also an immediate threat in places like Florida or the Carribean. Every time we have a hurricane all our plants get drowned in salt water for a short period of time, at least. So, I always want to design for the environment my project is in," he says. "Not only is it the right thing to do, It gives the client a sort of climate insurance." raymondjungles.com



Jungles used aloe and agave plants in this sunny area above the lagoon. "These are flowering plants that can grow without irrigation," he says. "When we can, we use zeroscaping techniques where we plant things that won't need any irrigation whatsoever."