

Exotic Elements Stun in Alys Beach Home

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Sexy and edgy, this Alys Beach home surprises with its own moat, a floating pavilion, an imposing tower, and a rooftop terrace with a star of fire

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The Young residence is on a pedestrian path with a direct view of the Gulf of Mexico.



A firepit on wheels is the star of the fourth-floor rooftop terrace, where furnishings by Link can be grouped into different configurations depending on the size of the party. [aly](#)



A floating pavilion suspends from stainless rods in an entry courtyard.



An ornate ceiling defines the living area from above, while Lillian August's sectional for Hickory White shapes the social space below.



A French mirror, circa 1800s, and turn-of-the-century Italian theatre urns adorn the fireplace. Steps away, glass doors slide open to the floating pavilion on one side and the pool on the other.



The kitchen's back wall appears to float beneath the beams as Sicis marble sparkles with little stars of Murano glass.



Antique brass pendants from Visual Comfort circle above a center island seated with Hickory Chair counter stools. A lustrous, antique Gigas clam shell picks up on all the shimmer.



Architectural detail styles this home with a modern edge inside and out. A twisted chimney makes a sexy statement on the rooftop.



A rope railing lends a hand up the interior twists of a sculpted stairway.



After a casual brunch and lively conversation in the open-air dining alcove, Ledge Lounger's ergonomic chaise invites spa-like relaxation.



A rimless pool beckons as it steps down and wraps around an island palm on its way to the courtyard's floating pavilion.



The master bedroom impresses with a cherished, glass art “headpiece” and the duvet of damask hand-printed on linen by Sabina Fay Braxton — the designer for Dumbledore’s robes in the wildly popular Harry Potter film series.



Nearby, the master bath features a dome ceiling, backlit recessed mirrors and inventive ways to fill the deep-soak tub.

A visually striking, all-white geometric study of architectural beauty overlooking the sparkling shores of the Gulf of Mexico, Alys Beach on Florida's Panhandle is unconventional in a stunningly exotic way. This is why Gary and Sandy Young were drawn to build their 4,000-square-foot home in the luxury enclave. A "New Urbanist" community, its architecture is "inspired by the Bermuda style with a strong Antigua, Guatemala influence, embracing Moorish and Mediterranean flourishes," says Marieanne Khoury-Vogt, who with her husband, Erik Vogt, serve as Alys Beach's town architects.

For their team of choice, the Youngs commissioned Khoury Vogt Architects, along with interior designer Susan Bohlert Smith. "We were looking for chic, very cool, modern and sexy, with a lot of appealing features," the husband says. "Marieanne and Erik wanted to visit our homes in Maui and Louisiana to see how we lived, and I said, 'absolutely not.' I wanted their imaginations to run wild."

Creating a vision for the couple's dream home, the architects conceived both an exterior and interior plan based on some strong, unique concepts. "Your eye is drawn through a series of different design vignettes from the front, all the way to the rear of the house and above to a rooftop terrace," Marieanne says. "At the entry is the moat with water rippling down the walls, as well as zaguán gates that have slender openings between the wood members; you can peak in and get a glimpse of what lies behind ... instantly you're seduced."

In the courtyard, once past the threshold, a wall of gas lanterns in between limestone urns creates a beautiful play of light in the evenings. The eye is drawn to a palm tree that appears to rise from the middle of the pool. Suspended from the terrace above, a pavilion floats over the pool. “When guests walk on the pavilion, they sense that it’s swaying ever so gently, and they are surprised. It’s fun to see their reaction,” Marieanne says.

“Avant-garde” was Gary’s edict to the designer as well. “He clearly stated, ‘I don’t want to have ever seen it before,’” Susan says. “Modern-steeped-in-classicism quickly came to mind. Not too pretty or too glamorous; this is a beach town and people are in flipflops.”

As such, she came up with a mission statement that made sense to her. “What if Coco Chanel had a beach house here? It would have to be a combination of elegance and glamour, and, at the same time, modern and tempered with its beach location.”

The great room sets the stage for entertaining. “To keep the pathways clear, I placed low-profile furnishings in the living area,” the designer says. The Youngs did not want high-back sofas. Sometimes, they’ll have 80 people over, and they want guests to be able to perch on the back ledge of the sofas.” Also, the owners envisioned everything timeless and durable. “While this house deserves natural leather, Sandy wanted high-performance fabrics, so I went with synthetics — not to cut costs, but apropos to what one would find in the lobby of a luxury hotel — cleanable, durable and sustainable,” Susan says. “It was an exercise for me, and I was able to find really great options that look natural.”

A backlit, beamed ceiling and arched niches filled with vintage specimen coral draw the eye up and around all that is the kitchen. Architecturally sculpted, this culinary space is designed to indulge Sandy’s penchant for cooking with Rocky Mountain bronze sinks and hardware, the marble backsplash with mosaic inlay, very practical Caesarstone countertops and “her” La Cornue range.

Outside is for relaxation. Whether enjoying a poolside snack in the casual dining alcove or reclining on a sun shelf, an unusual focal point, of course, is the palm tree ... oasis-like on its own concrete island.

Another oasis, the master suite is set apart in its own wing. The architectural highlight here is a sculptural fireplace that “looks like it’s been carved from plaster,” Marieanne says. It is strategically angled to accommodate views from the bed dressed with a sumptuous duvet.

Intricately detailed, the master bath is complete with first-class design and five-star amenities. “It has an automatic tub filler with water coming down from the ceiling, and a shower that I call my car wash,” Gary says. “There’s marble with mother-of-pearl inlay on the floor and even a refrigerator where we keep champagne.”

So, raise a glass to toast a wife who likes pretty, soft and feminine; the husband's modern, edgier side; and a design team that thinks outside the box.

Story Credits:

Interior Design by Susan Bohlert Smith, Bohlert Massey Domestic Art & Interiors, Inc., Seacrest Beach, FL

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