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The Architecture Issue

Five Design Pros Shaping Miami—and the World





Tropical Splendor

A HIDDEN—YET MASSIVE—GEM OF A MODERN HOME SHINES BRIGHT IN BAL HARBOUR

ARCHITECTURE STEPHANIE HALFEN,
SDH STUDIO ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN,
NORTH MIAMI BEACH, FL

INTERIOR DESIGN GABRIEL ASKENAZI & JACK SULKIN,
SULKIN ASKENAZI DESIGN STUDIO,
MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

TEXT JEANNE DE LATHOUDER
PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID HERNANDEZ, MIAMI, FL

A HOUSE DUBBED The Opal of Bal Harbour by a seasoned architecture team well-acquainted with top-tier real estate must be something special. The 11,000-square-foot property sits in prestigious proximity to the Intracoastal in a private community that boasts several preeminent features, including a marina, splendid water views from nearly every vantage point, and lush lots thriving with tropical greenery. As if that wasn't enough, the residence itself is surrounded by full-grown trees and native foliage, and boasts plenty of space where the owners' kids can roam freely and safely. Special may be an understatement.

"These homeowners came to us because of our reputable dedication to creating amazing tropical, modern architectural design styles and floor plans that truly capture the essence

LEFT: A dramatic double-height terrace seamlessly integrates the lush landscape, flourishing trees, and dense tropical greenery that define this extraordinary Bal Harbour property. "Sitting there is extremely inviting and at the same time very grand," says architect Stephanie Halfen. "You really get to appreciate all the fantastic views of the backyard."



The dining room connects to an outdoor terrace via sliding glass doors, generating the sensation of being outside. Wooden ceiling beams heighten the effect, creating a garden pergola vibe. Clad in rough volcanic stone, an accent wall features swing-like hanging steel shelves complemented by a wall hanging made from recycled raw cotton from Caralarga, a textile studio based in Hércules, Querétaro, Mexico.



ABOVE: The architecture team applied bronze metal trim to the home's pitched roof and incorporated design elements on the border of the garage. Steel columns painted in a bronze hue bring a visual rhythm to the grand entrance.

LEFT: Conceptualized as a black ribbon connecting both levels, the steel staircase flaunts impeccable detailing, including a recessed handrail with interior lighting. Its structural complexity enables it to float above the second floor, allowing it to be perceived as an independent element.

of specific wants and lifestyles,” says architect Stephanie Halfen, the head of SDH Studio Architecture + Design in North Miami Beach. “As a firm, we listen to our clients and understand what drives them, and we love bringing their visions to life.”

When Halfen sat down with the homeowners, they expressed their desire for warm design inspired by the tropics in a modern Balinese style. In turn, she incorporated a variety of woods paired with bronze-colored steel columns and relied on dark travertine stone to soften the facade. Unique embellishments include bronze metal trim along with the home’s pitched roof and bespoke design elements down to the last detail, even for the border of the garage. “The

whole idea was to create a seamless flow that runs inside and out with an inviting palette and natural materials,” she notes.

To capture the tone of the exterior architecture, the clients enlisted the innovative Mexico City-based design team of Gabriel Askenazi and Jack Sulkin to establish a symbiotic relationship between indoors and out.

“When conceptualizing this project, we wanted to create a multi-sensory experience,” says Askenazi. “We designed the home with a modern Mediterranean style that seeks to showcase the beauty of the materials in their natural state.”



A Nanimarquina area rug, a beige Ditre Italia sofa grouping, a pair of Blu Dot side chairs, and an undulating art bench from Pirwi shape the living room's conversation area. A circular wooden artwork by Covadonga Hernandez lends organic texture to a black storage cabinet that separates the living and dining spaces.



ABOVE: Fabricated by Mia Cucina, the spacious kitchen features two massive islands that connect visually to the family breakfast area. Design duo Jack Sulkin and Gabriel Askenazi opted to cover the ceiling in black wood with indirect lighting to frame the kitchen and visually divide the spaces effectively.

BELOW: Framed in a travertine marble box, the second-level family room emits a cozy ambiance with its plush blue velvet sofa grouping from RH. A wooden box frames the window, creating a cocoon-like reading nook with enchanting garden views. The design team's deliberate selection of smooth and textured surfaces and materials generates a sense of tranquility.



Distributed in two levels for a large family, the home includes 10 bedrooms and a series of study and rest areas for the owners' children. Sulkin and Askenazi also considered the importance of natural materials to achieve an atmosphere that visually connects every space to nature. "Upon entering the home, the first focal point that captures the eye is the living and dining rooms, separated by a black wood storage cabinet that visually divides the spaces," notes Sulkin. "The dining and living areas feature oak ceiling beams, emitting a feeling of being outdoors beneath a garden pergola."

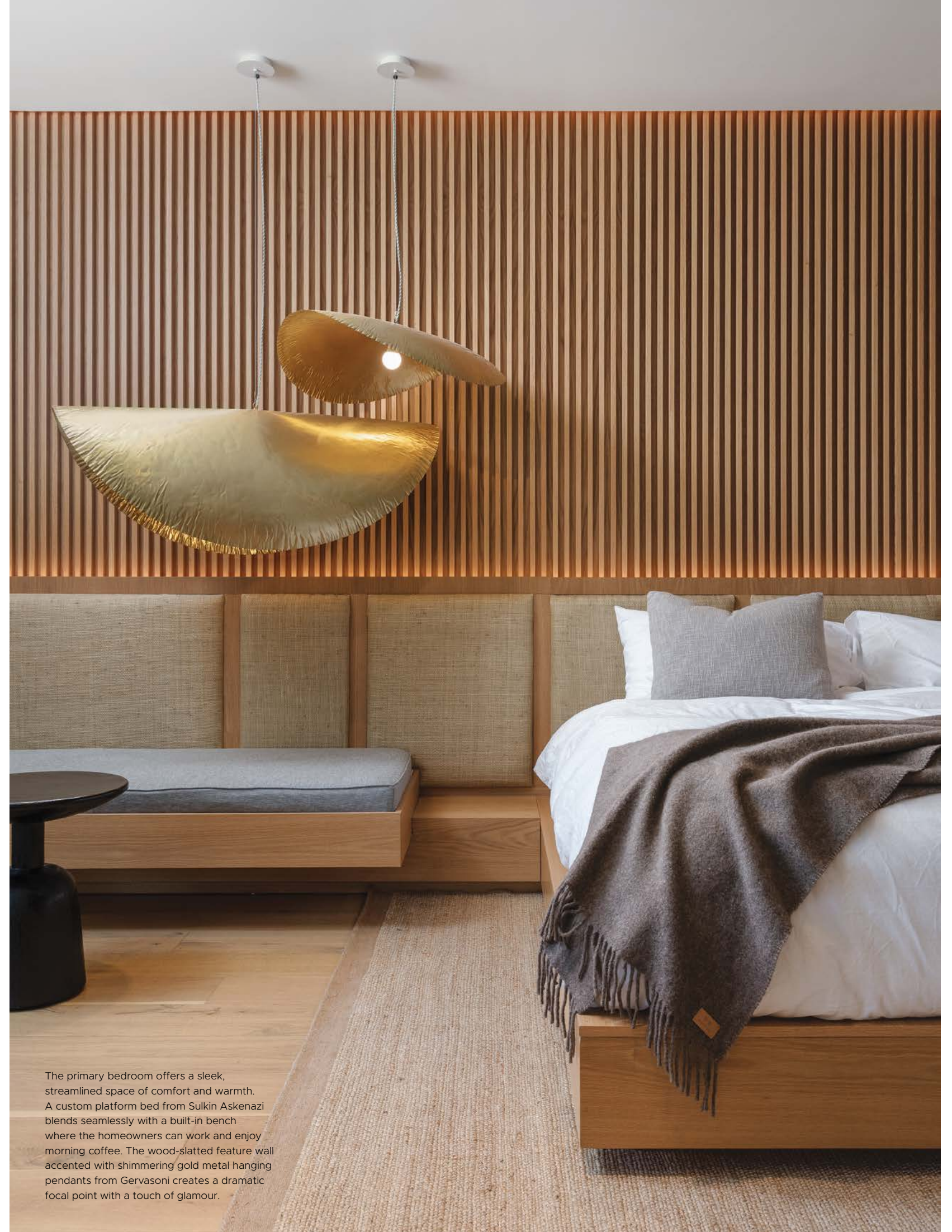
Notable bespoke elements that speak to the home's streamlined aesthetic include a custom carbonized-wood dining table the designers fabricated in Mexico, glass-front wine storage incorporated into the black cabinet on the dining room side, and the second-level family room's



wooden box-like reading nook framing spectacular garden vistas. “We always learn new things about the project site and visualize spaces in a way we have never done before,” says Askenazi. “For us, each project begins with a blank canvas as we study the clients’ lifestyles, needs, and location before designing a project with a unique essence just for them. The owners love to entertain, so we designed their massive dining table to seat up to 16 people.”

Despite never meeting one another until the end of the project, the architecture and design teams collaborated with a natural flow, flawlessly complementing each other’s work in an exciting, innovative way. “They captured the warmth of the exterior and used gorgeous materials to enhance the architecture,” says Halfen. “When I asked the homeowners how they felt in this house, they said they were completely in love, and every time they woke up, they couldn’t believe where they were. They also told me the kids don’t want to go on vacation because they are so happy enjoying the house, which is truly priceless. That’s the best part of my job—enriching people’s everyday lives and experiences.”

ABOVE AND LEFT: Clad in travertine marble and oak custom cabinetry, the primary bathroom embodies elegant sophistication. Horizontal windows stretch across the top, allowing natural light to filter through while still providing privacy. A round mirror lends counterbalance to the linear design features. A matte black soaking tub and Stone Forest vessel sinks ground the neutral palette.



The primary bedroom offers a sleek, streamlined space of comfort and warmth. A custom platform bed from Sulkin Askenazi blends seamlessly with a built-in bench where the homeowners can work and enjoy morning coffee. The wood-slatted feature wall accented with shimmering gold metal hanging pendants from Gervasoni creates a dramatic focal point with a touch of glamour.



ABOVE: The family dog finds a blissfully sunny spot to lounge on the terrace steps that descend to the pool area. Bronze steel beams scaling two stories frame a massive outdoor ceiling fan. Stained wood accents and dark travertine stone were strategically selected to soften the home's exterior façade.

SOURCES

DINING AREA

Table – Sulkin Askenazi Design Studio, Mexico City, Mexico
Chairs – CB2, [cb2.com](#)
Chandelier – Henge, [henge07.com](#)
Floating wall cabinetry designed by Sulkin Askenazi Design Studio, Mexico City, Mexico, and fabricated by Emuna Construction, Miami, FL
Wall art – Caralarga Showroom, Mexico City, Mexico
Ceiling designed by Sulkin Askenazi Design Studio, Mexico City, Mexico, and fabricated by Emuna Construction, Miami, FL
LIVING AREA
Sofa grouping – Ditre Italia, [ditreitalia.com](#)
Side chairs – Blu Dot, Miami, FL
Cocktail table – Sulkin Askenazi Design Studio, Mexico City, Mexico
Drink table – Casa Quieta Furniture, Mexico City, Mexico
Floor lamp – CB2, [cb2.com](#)

Art bench – Pirwi, Mexico City, Mexico
Wall art – Covadonga Hernandez, Marqco Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico
Area rug – Nanimarquina, New York, NY
KITCHEN & BREAKFAST AREA
Cabinetry and island designed and fabricated by Mia Cucina, Miami, FL
Island stools – RH, [rh.com](#)
Table – RH, [rh.com](#)
Chairs – Sovet, [sovet.com](#)
Lighting – Gervasoni, [gervasoni1882.com](#)
FAMILY ROOM
Sofa grouping – RH, [rh.com](#)
Cocktail table – Blu Dot, Miami, FL
Area rug – Blu Dot, Miami, FL
PRIMARY BATHROOM
Cabinetry – Sulkin Askenazi Design Studio, Mexico City, Mexico
Mirror – Sulkin Askenazi Design Studio, Mexico City, Mexico

Stool – Blu Dot, Miami, FL
PRIMARY BEDROOM
Platform bed, headboard, and bench designed by Sulkin Askenazi Design Studio, Mexico City, Mexico, and fabricated by Emuna Construction, Miami, FL
Wall designed by Sulkin Askenazi Design Studio, Mexico City, Mexico, and fabricated by Emuna Construction, Miami, FL
Lighting – Gervasoni, [gervasoni1882.com](#)
Drink table – CB2, [cb2.com](#)
EXTERIOR
Sofa grouping – RH, [rh.com](#)
Drum tables – CB2, [cb2.com](#)
Decorative side tables – Peca, Guadalajara, Mexico
Ceiling fan – Big Ass Fan, [bigassfan.com](#)
THROUGHOUT
Builder – Emuna Construction, Miami, FL
Landscape architecture – Ecopacheo, Miami, FL
Millwork designed by Sulkin Askenazi Design Studio, Mexico City, Mexico



The spacious outdoor seating area encourages alfresco leisure. A pair of deep-seated L-shaped sofas from RH complement two giant white drum tables from CB2. A single-height trellis creates an intimate semi-shaded area, generating a variety of architectural moments for the family.