

an ocean away



Outdoor Living

WHEN A DESIGN JOB LED HIM BACK TO HIS BELOVED BAHAMAS, TOM SCHEERER PLANNED AHEAD, SENDING CONTAINERS OF BEACH-FRIENDLY EVERYTHING TO THE ISLANDS. BUT IT'S THE SERENDIPITOUS LOCAL FINDS THAT BRING THE HEARTFELT AUTHENTICITY.

Interior Design TOM SCHEERER **Architecture** DE LA GUARDIA VICTORIA ARCHITECTS & URBANISTS
Interview CELIA BARBOUR **Photography** FRANCESCO LAGNESE **Producer** DAVID M. MURPHY



White shiplap walls and a tray ceiling clad in pickled pecky cypress give a fresh, seashore feeling to the living room of a Tom Scheerer–designed villa on Harbour Island in the Bahamas. The custom sofa is in a Perennials fabric with pillows in Pindler and Quadrille fabrics. The center table was custom made in India of pickled teak and marble. Folding stools, Serena & Lily. Vintage Franco Albini rattan chairs are topped with cushions in a Quadrille batik. Ceiling fan, Hunter. Table lamps, Wayfair. **OPPOSITE:** The villa's pool faces Harbour Island's Pink Sand Beach.

The veranda is furnished with Kingsley Bate wicker seating “engineered for comfort,” Scheerer says. The cushions are covered—like all of the house’s seating—in indoor/outdoor fabrics in ocean shades like navy, azure, and plum. The teak table has a travertine top that can withstand anything nature brings its way. The foreground chairs are vintage rattan. Stools, Gump’s. Paint, Benjamin Moore White Dove.



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Seems like you're drawn to projects in out-of-the-way idylls.

TOM SCHEERER: I do a lot of vacation houses. I prefer them! With second homes, people are more open to trying out new ideas.

CELIA BARBOUR: Is it hard to have an ocean between you and your sources? You've got to establish your design "story" straight from the get-go. There is no running to Mecox for last-minute accessories! The challenge is to put every last thing in the container before it sails. Make that *containers*.

So what was the story for this Harbour Island project?

It's a traditional Caribbean Colonial house that works for modern life. The clients own the Dunmore beach club; this is their villa on the grounds. For me, it was a homecoming of sorts—I used to have a couple of properties on the island. I got to use my favorite Bahama-isms: pecky-cypress walls, cement tiles, vintage rattan, and batiks.

How do you breathe fresh life into familiar materials?

I try to find a new melody with well-known notes. Many of the rooms open onto one another, so I aimed for cohesion and a sense of calm. The pickled pecky cypress in the foyer is echoed on the living room ceiling. We used pickled teak for both the kitchen island and the center table in the living room.

That table has the visual presence of a fountain in a piazza.

It's tall but open, and it marks a crossroads in the house. The house has no library, so I wanted something that could be loaded up with interesting objects to draw the eye. There's comfortable upholstery around the edges of the room, and then the center is deliberately fluid, with lightweight vintage rattan and wicker, folding stools, and that table.

What inspired the breezy palette?

The house is in shades of blue and purple—there are only so many options in a tropical place, and the clients' previous house was pink. I kept the living room neutral so the view would really pop. The striped rug and throw pillows bring in color and dramatize the sight line into the dining room, which is a really saturated cobalt blue.

Where did you find the artwork?

The art in the dining room is an Isamu Noguchi lantern squashed behind glass. That giant work over the sofa in the living room I commissioned from a wonderful English painter who takes up drawing whenever he's in the Bahamas—a serendipitous way to get great art without shipping it in. It's a somewhat edgy scene of an old basketball court down the road from the house.

And the shells in the family room are blowups of vintage prints.

What are your tricks for marrying beauty with practicality?

All of the upholstery fabrics are indoor/outdoor. Why not? They're so good these days. There's not a sofa or chair here that you can't sit on in a wet bathing suit. The kitchen floor is impermeable porcelain tile. Metal fittings have a pewter finish; in this climate, metals need to come with their own patina so they don't pit or fail. The veranda's table has a travertine top and teak base—it can stay outside forever.

Sounds like the tropics can't faze you.

Knowing the limitations allows me to improvise. The best decorating always has a fillip of spontaneity, but on an island in the Bahamas, you have to plan ahead for it!



A wall clad in handmade cement tiles from Villa Lagoon Tile brings an air of Bahamian nostalgia to the kitchen. The floor is in Fiandre porcelain tiles, and the ceiling is embellished with strapwork moldings. At the center of the room, an open pickled-teak island supports a Caesarstone top. **OPPOSITE:** In the dining room, painted in Benjamin Moore Champion Cobalt, a flattened and framed Isamu Noguchi lantern overlooks a reclaimed-wood table.





A graceful arch, part of the home's original design by de la Guardia Victoria Architects & Urbanists, lends an air of refinement to a foyer clad head to toe in pickled pecky cypress. The mix of materials includes a honeycomb-patterned rattan pendant lamp from Anthropologie. On the back wall, a set of vintage sea-life prints flanks an ultra-tall mirror that offers views up and down.



LEFT: In the master bedroom, a pickled-teak four-poster bed is open to sea breezes. The walls are painted in Benjamin Moore Icing on the Cake. Bench, Jayson Home. **ABOVE:** A giant clamshell serves as a flamboyant sink in a powder room. Faucet, Rohl. Mirror, Lalithamma Barcelona. **BELOW:** The family room's faux-bois walls were hand-painted by artist Frank Reijnen. The custom sofa is upholstered in an indoor/outdoor fabric from Pindler. Rattan table and stool, VivaTerra. Swivel chairs, Anthropologie.





An upholstered headboard links a pair of twin beds so they can be pushed together ("though I've never met a middle-aged couple who didn't secretly relish a few nights in twin beds!" jokes Scheerer); their platforms are upholstered in the same mulberry-hued Claremont ikat. The pillows are in a vintage batik. **OPPOSITE:** Nestled among the shrubs, a boardwalk connects the emerald lawn to the island's famous pink sands. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES



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