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LIVING IN STYLE

A MASTERPIECE BY
THIERRY DESPONT

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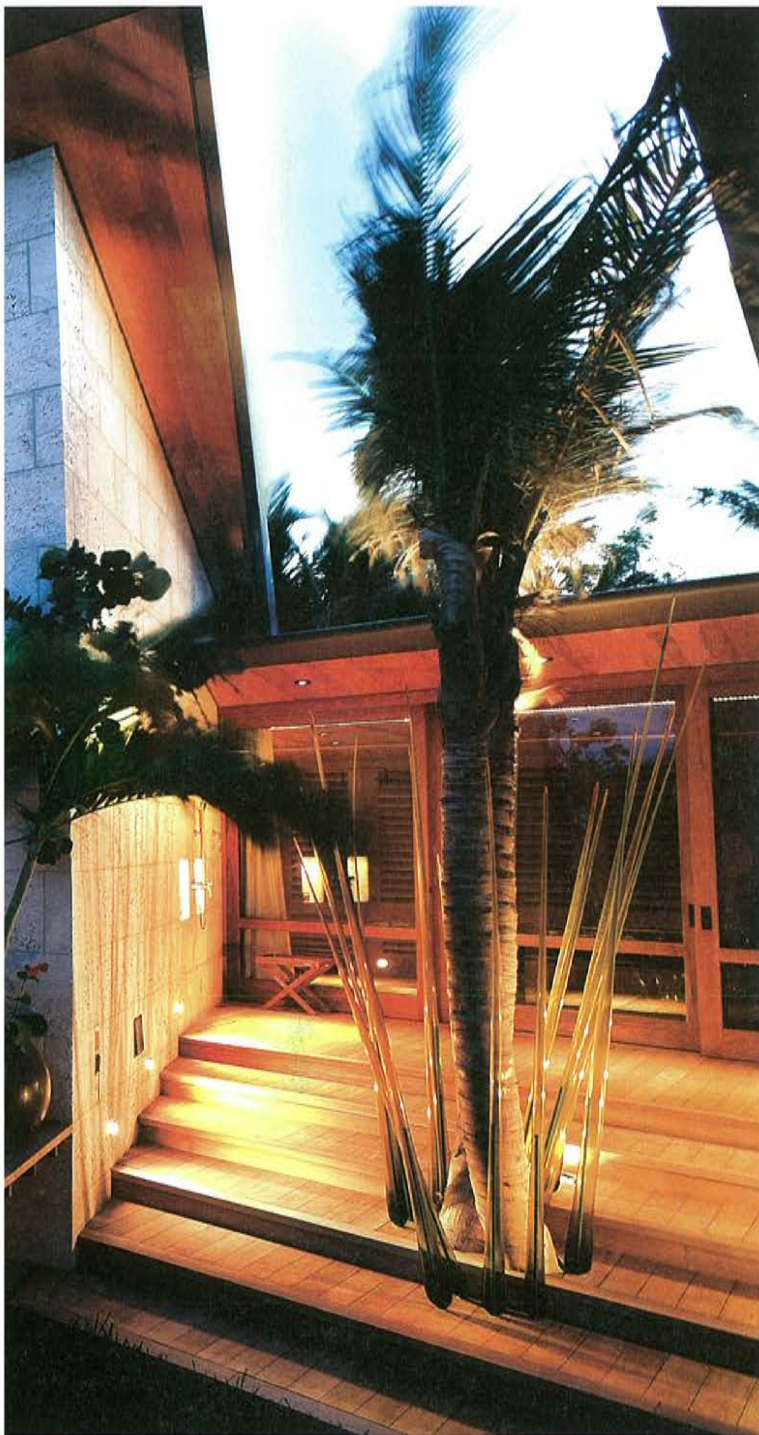
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text: Pauline Prinsen
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Above: the front of the Bahamas house designed by Thierry Despont (photo top right). It is a generously proportioned holiday retreat, with the living areas on the left and the passageway to the bedrooms on the right. The hand-blown glass spears were made by Robert DuGrenier Associates Inc., Vermont. On the terrace OTD custom teak club chairs, tables and tray/ottoman from VCA, Mass. The seat-back cushions are by Sunbrella in Birds Eye canvas. The throw is in antique ticking cloth from Paula Rubenstein, NY, and the Javanese teak day beds are from Teck, St. Barthélemy.

Custom doors and windows are by Michael Reilly Design, NY; joinery by Byrne Millwork, Delaware.

Below left: the bedroom section of the house at daybreak; tucked away in a dune among lush vegetation and palm trees. In the background, the majestic ocean.



A MASTERPIECE BY THIERRY W. DESPONT

He is one of the foremost interior architects of recent decades, of his day in fact. He is a master at fusing classical and modern into a timeless totality. And that is also true for his architecture. Thierry W. Despont, who hails originally from France and has his office in New York, has enriched the world with his striking creations.

Over the years OBJEKT©International has reported on the maestro's creative talents and now features a holiday retreat on the Bahamas: a design in which nature and architecture are miraculously united, and in even the smallest details.



Above: the master bedroom with a glass sculpture by Robert DuGrenier, NY, and the striking partition - designed by Thierry Despont - between bed and boudoir. The Step Tansu cabinet is from Jacques Carcanagues Gallery, NY. The large murals are by Mark Beard, NY. Also, a detail of the solid wooden shutter doors, custom made for the house by Michael Reilly Design, NY, and Byrne Millwork, De.

Below: the house at nightfall, giving a good impression of the two separate sections: left, the living spaces and right, the bedroom part. Right-hand page: the outdoor room adjoining the living area, which can be closed off with a large wooden shutter door.

Overleaf:

The living room in Despont style, with a spacious passageway leading to the equally spacious terraces. The interior was designed with attention to every last detail. The kitchen, with rectangular table, is on the left of the living area.

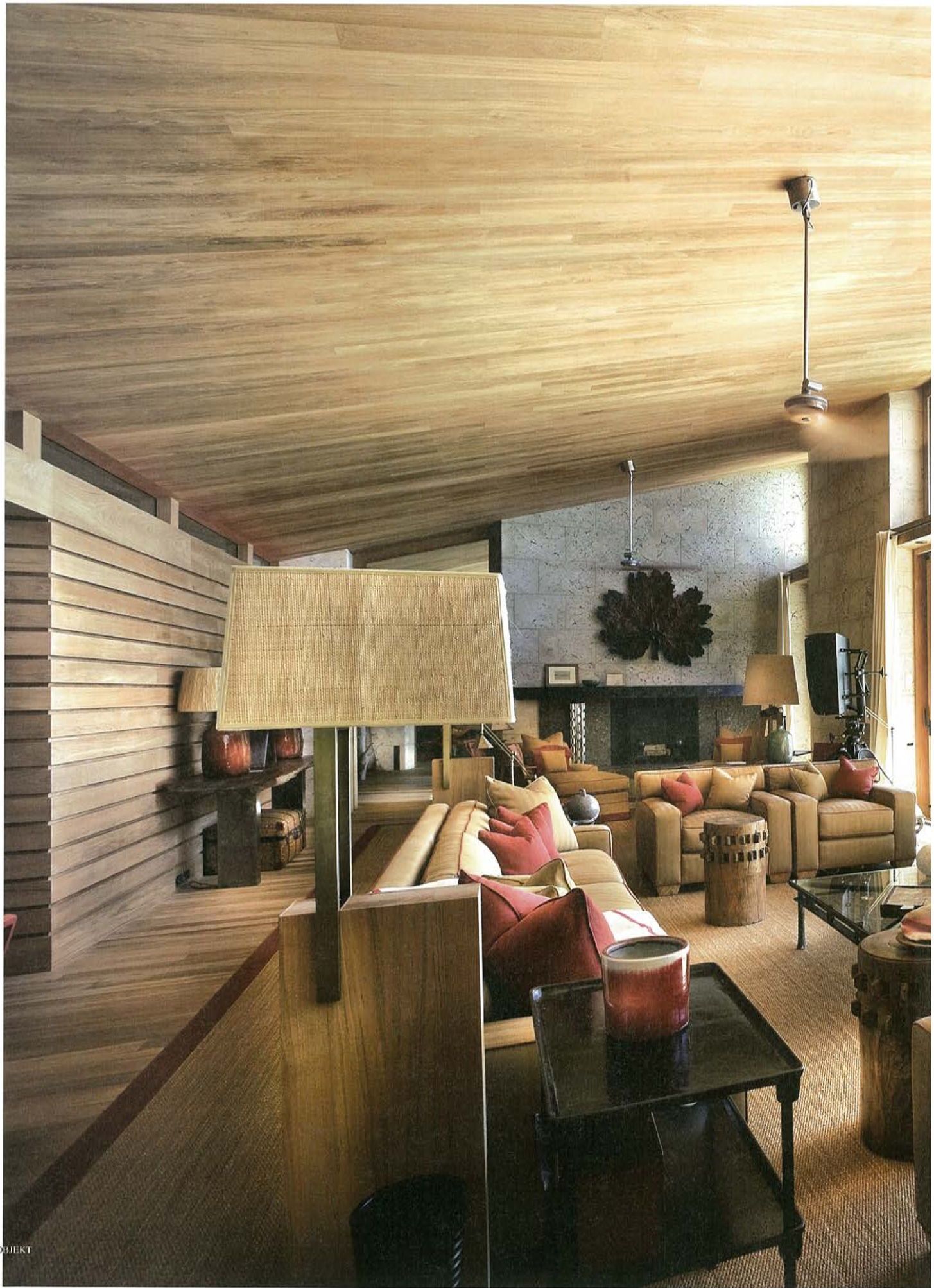
The plane takes off from Fort Lauderdale in an easterly direction. It flies quite low over a totally fascinating scene, in every imaginable shade of blue and turquoise, a picture that seems to have been captured beneath a gigantic glass dome. Occasionally a boat's white wake interrupts the hallucination with reality.

This is the area of the ocean where the islands of the Bahamas are situated - a group of 700 islands and 2,000 cays or keys, of which only around 40 are inhabited. Hardly surprising, therefore, that the sandy beaches and clear waters hold a magical appeal for holidaymakers. In 1973 the islands gained independence from Great Britain and since then have been a member of the British Commonwealth.

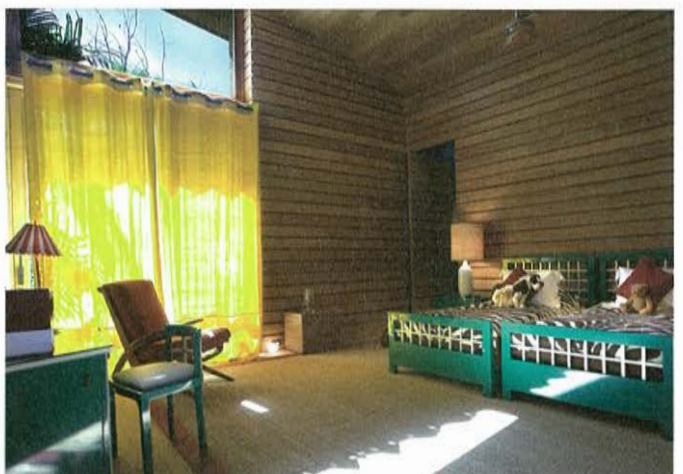
On one of the islands Thierry W. Despont was commissioned to build a holiday residence that proves to merge extraordinarily well into the landscape of sand dunes, palm trees and indigenous vegetation. The house actually comprises two volumes beneath pitched roofs and connected by a passageway. It is a symphony of wood and stone, which is demonstrated from the front door on. "I see myself as a dreamer of houses. I want to make beautiful houses and interiors, but certainly no fancy statements", according to Despont - architect, interior designer and artist - who confirms that adage time and again in his projects in the United States and countries much farther afield.









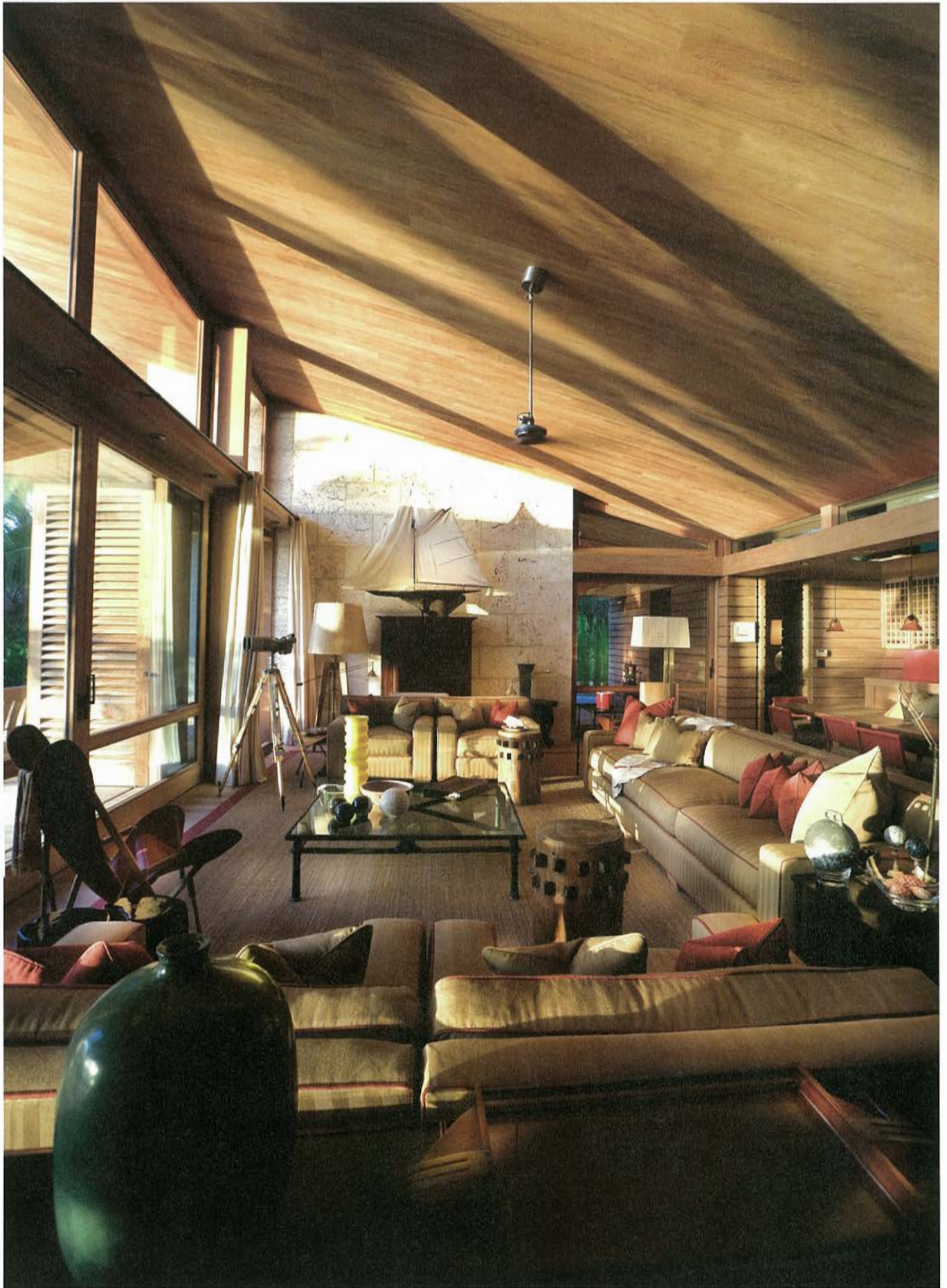


Above: the house created on the Bahamas by Thierry Despont is a celebration of tastefully designed details: the terrace, master bedroom, children's room, dining area in the kitchen and the outdoor areas.

Right: the living room seen at sunset - right, the kitchen-dining area and, in the background, the passage to the main entrance and the outdoor area.

The Bahamas house nestles in the dunes leading to startlingly white beaches. It is not large, certainly not by Despont standards, but beautifully proportioned. In fact, the rooms are spacious, partly thanks to the lofty ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows. The interior is a composition of timeless luxury and comfort, in a deliberate mixture of furniture he designed himself plus local accessories. The rooms flow together logically: from the entrance with garden room and living room/kitchen, via a corridor to the wing with the master bedroom and children's rooms. The appointments and colour palette can to some extent be accounted for by his 'French-ness' - both timeless and titillating, unexpected and responsive to the genius loci.

He trained as an architect in his home country, but his move to the United States provided him with the scope to push the confines of his profession to include interior design, landscaping, plus the design of furniture, light fittings and other interior accessories. Nowadays he has a hard time defining where architecture ends and interior design begins, since the two are inseparable for him. His work revolves around light, volumes and colours - areas in which he achieves the height of perfection. In 2008, to mark his 60th birthday, he published a 600-page book filled with his works, varying from private residences to interiors of art galleries, the building of an entire synagogue in the heart of Manhattan, as well as









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The entrance to the house is an early indication of the spaciousness to be expected inside, something for which Thierry Despont is world famous.

All the details have been thought out carefully and together form a logical whole: from the large pivoting front door and solid wooden up-and-over door accessing the exterior space, to the colour of the Pyrolave lava stone wall of the pantry.

That room contains an OTD custom teak dining table and chairs by VCA. The hanging lamp in by Jeff Taylor for Tama Gallery, NY, and the antique hardwood console is from VCA, Ma. The ceiling fan is by Boffi. Lamps and console came from Ms. Mae's, Bahamas, and the lampshades are from Broome Lampshade, NY. The pivoting shutter frame and mechanism is by Jamestown Bronze Works, NY.

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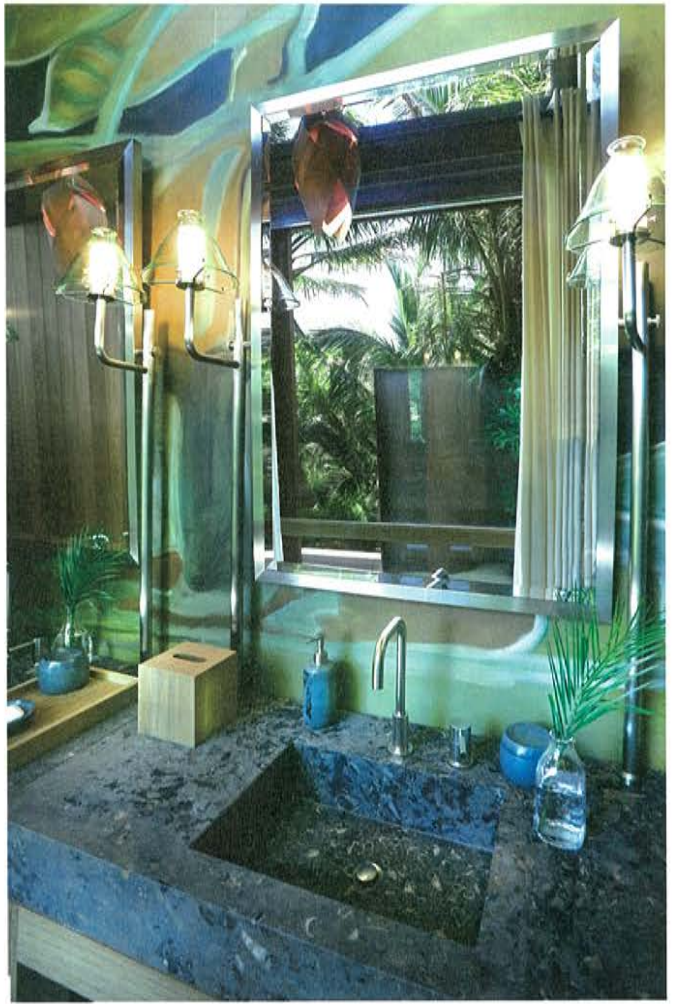
Above: the house at nightfall with, left, the exterior space, and beside that the living and kitchen areas, and right, the volume containing the bedrooms. Adjoining: decorative detail with local shellfish.

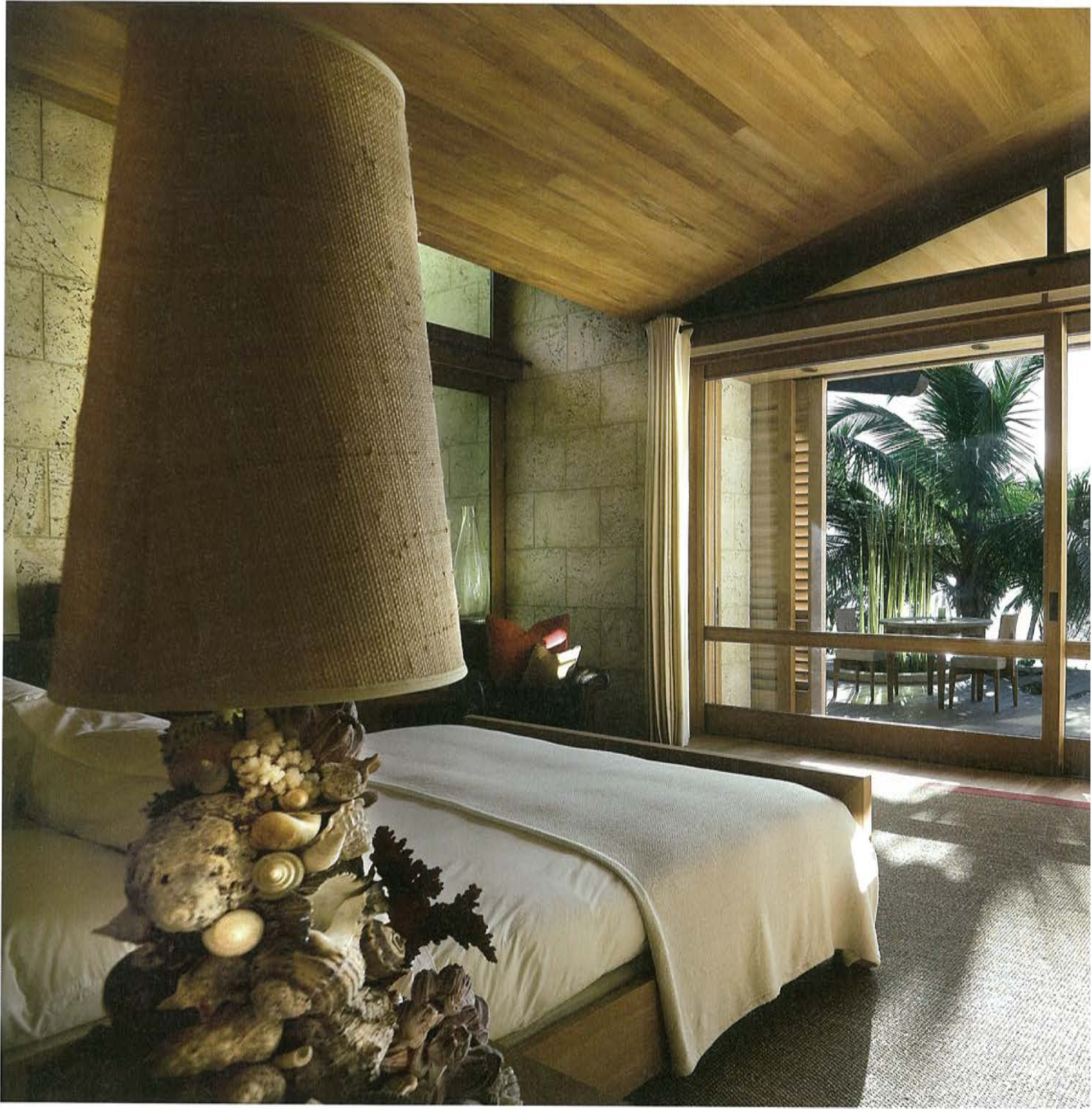
Top right: Boffi's wooden fan resembling an airplane propeller; beside that, part of the master bedroom. The glass objects are by Angel des Montagnes, France, and the hand-made satin nickel vanity mirror and sconces by Metalurges, Ma. The hanging lamp is by Lisa Kim for Tama Gallery, NY.

renovations of famous hotels like the Peninsula and the Crillon in Paris and 45 Park Lane (Dorchester) in London. One of his first commissions after he arrived, almost penniless, in New York in 1980 was a curious one: the restoration, in conjunction with another architect, of one of the New World's most evocative icons: the Statue of Liberty. The statue, which was originally intended to stand at the entrance to the Suez Canal, but was not finished in time, had been installed in New York in 1886, and was in urgent need of restoration. The 46-metre high statue, weighing 225 tons, was presented by France to the United States to commemorate the centennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It was designed by the French sculptor, Frédéric Bartholdi and is entirely clad in copper plate on a supporting frame designed by Gustave Eiffel. The crown has seven spikes or rays which symbolise the seven continents and seven seas. The 47-metre tall pedestal was made from Euville limestone after a design by the American sculptor, Richard Morris Hunt.

Despont: "It was a fascinating project because no-one knew in advance how to tackle it. Perhaps my French origins were what qualified me for the job." At all events, he made a success of it and thus acquired the credentials







that led to his break-through and so make his dreams come true. "I wanted to design houses, and America seemed the place to do it. Here they still build real houses. You have a sense of freedom here, you can implement ideas and do what you like. People here aren't afraid to make mistakes. It's a bit like 17th century France. Then, they were discovering and building new things, and they also made mistakes in architecture - but they learnt from their mistakes and didn't let it stop them."

He commented on his profession: "The nice thing about architecture is that you never stop learning. I know what I want to build and, with the benefit of experience, it's become easier to create attractive things. It's important for me to have a client who knows what he wants. It's very satisfying to work with people like Bill Gates or Calvin Klein: the more forceful the client, the better I can work. There's never been a 'great' house without a 'great' principal - a strong patron. When someone like that has faith in you as an architect or designer, you can achieve splendid things. There is an interaction, in which the one stimulates the other. Yes, I find it fascinating to create homes for very different characters. It generates diversity, attuned to the client's personality."

This is a diversity that is not subject to trends, but is imbued with enduring, intrinsic beauty. That qualification certainly applies to the Bahamas island house, the proportions of which are in perfect harmony with its natural surroundings. They bear witness to Thierry Despont's respect for the human scale - Despont, an artist who is able to create beauty out of nothing.



Above: the master bedroom overlooking the large terrace with the ocean beyond. The coral lamps were purchased at a Sotheby's auction. The perforated metal lamp dates from c. 1940 and came from Johnson & Hicks, NY; the shade was made by Broome Lampshade, NY. The sea grass rug is from AM Collections, NY. The OTD custom teak bed frame was supplied by VCA, Ma. Right: decorative details, including Bubinga wood table from Les Migrateurs, NY, wooden trumpet vases from Crate and Barrel Home and a hand-carved tulip poplar bowl from Tama Gallery, NY.

Overleaf:

The living room by nightfall, with a Butterfly chair from Melet Mercantile, NY, Alvar Aalto dining chairs from Sotheby's auction house, a teak console table from Adrianna Shamaris, NY, and an Edward Wormley party server cart from Wyeth, NY. The custom finish is by VCA, Ma. Tama Gallery, NY, supplied the Oxblood lamps, and the antique Indian waterwheel came from Jacques Caranagues Gallery, NY.



