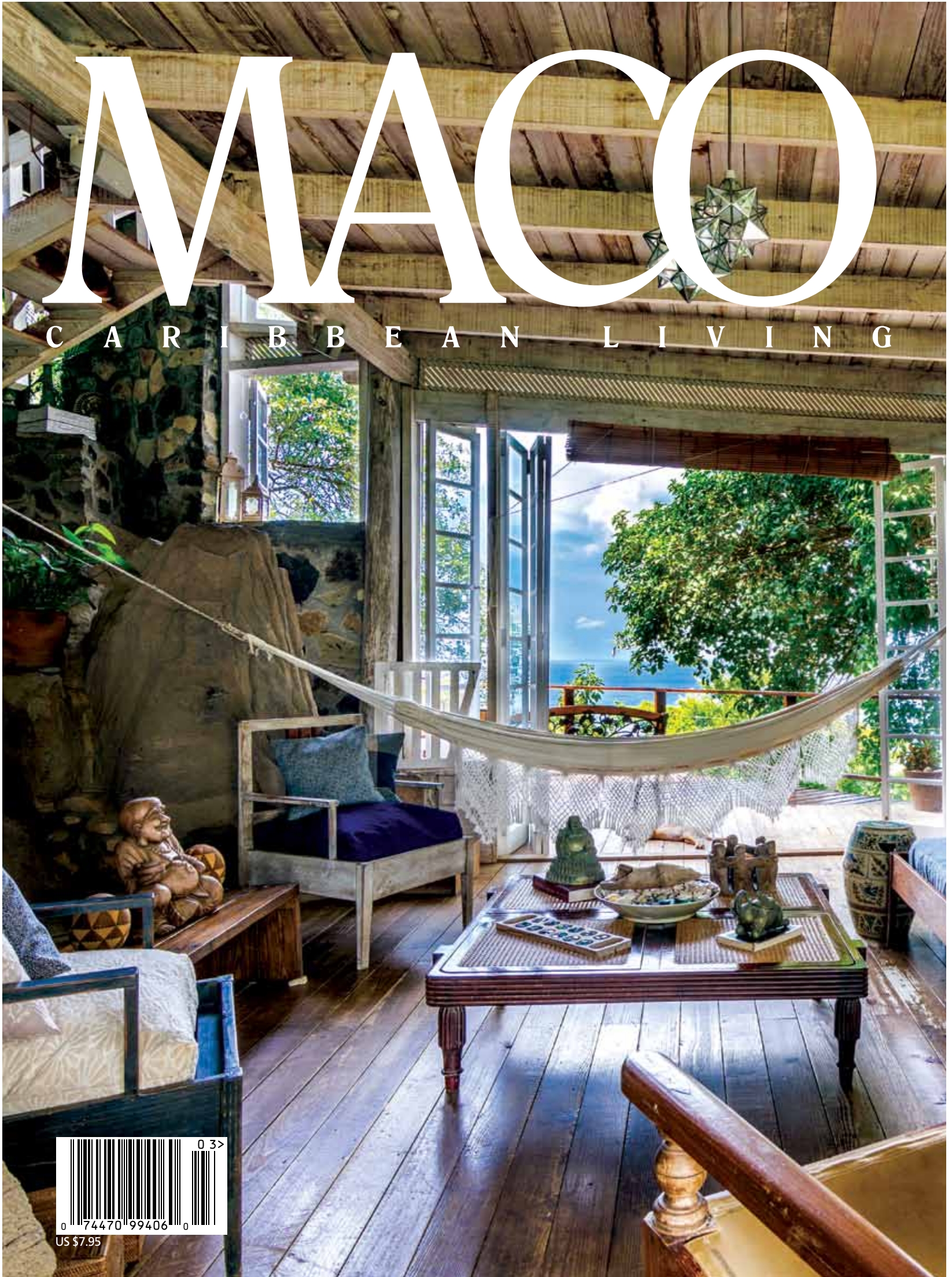


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GARY AND VICKY SCHAFER HAD FIRM IDEAS THAT PROVIDED INSPIRATION DURING THE DESIGN PROCESS OF THEIR CARIBBEAN HOME, BUT THOSE IDEAS WERE SUPERSEDED BY AN EVEN STRONGER GUIDING FORCE—THE LAND. The couple, natives of Michigan, purchased a unique waterfront peninsula in John's Folly on St John's far-flung arid southeastern side in 2001. With views to the south of one of the US Virgin Island's most dramatic peaks, Ram Head, and eastern views of the British Virgin Islands, the Schafers allowed the site's characteristics to guide the home's orientation.

"It's so important to take into consideration the site and its elements," says Vicky. "The one thing that can't ever be changed once a house is built is how it's oriented to the property. This is a rugged site, and I wanted the house to feel strong and like it came out of the earth."

The result is a home with four individual bedroom pods and a great room and kitchen joined by a covered walkway whose every turn opens up to yet another captivating view. As you arrive at Coral Cove, the composition of the home's red corrugated hip roofs nestled among the ferns, striking agave plants, and a conspicuous bismarck palm, reveals little of the property's wondrous views. Enter the gate, taking care to latch it behind you lest the herds of goats that frequent this side of the island wander in to lunch on the home's landscaping, and you're treated to the first glimpse of sea to the south. Follow the path to your left, and the breezeway perfectly frames the eastern view of the British Virgin Islands, a stone's throw from this side of St John. Turn right to enter the kitchen and great room, where the eight-foot Spanish cedar French doors showcase the views in all directions. This is where the home fully opens up to the true beauty of the John's Folly peninsula lot.

rising from the earth

ST JOHN HOME REVEALS ITSELF THROUGH EXCITEMENT AND DRAMA, ESPECIALLY AT NIGHTFALL



LEFT Red roof peeks out from under lush coconut palms

LEFT CENTRE Clean modern lines direct attention to the site's natural beauty

LEFT BELOW Unmistakable curves of Ram Head are framed by the eastern pavilion's southward view

RIGHT Eastern pavilion is framed by planters for unobstructed view of the sea



"As you come into the property, your eye is led from one place to another," says Vicky. "It's not a straight view. You discover it."

This feeling of being guided from one discovery to the next was an important aspect of Coral Cove's layout, says Barefoot Design Group architect Michael Milne, who designed the home.

"In the progression up to the house, it's important to have a little drama," he says. "There's excitement, anticipation, a hint of what's coming."

The home combines classic Caribbean materials with a contemporary design for the perfect eclectic blend that the Schafers were hoping for. The couple prioritized their home's design elements to ensure there was no competition among the varied components. The native stonework that's a common facet of Virgin Islands vernacular architecture took precedence; it's featured prominently in Coral Cove's interior and exterior walls. The Schafers opted to leave the great room's structural ring beam exposed as a design element, but left it in its raw concrete form so as not to overpower the stonework.



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LEFT Great room offers juxtaposition of traditional stonework and mid-century modern furnishings
 BELOW FAR LEFT Stainless appliances are framed by mint green cabinets
 BELOW LEFT Native stonework is featured prominently without being too dominant

The adjacent kitchen is tied into the great room's design with the muted grey porcelain tile floors that span the interior, and the unfinished concrete pillars that frame one of the kitchen's two islands. Though stonework still features prominently in the kitchen, the mid-century modern elements there are unmistakable. Vicky eschewed the typical wood cabinets found in St John villas for a look so specific, she had to create it herself. The cabinet doors are made from shower-door glass the backs of which Vicky painted with a light green.

"Wood would have been too dark for me," she says. "I wanted it to reflect the light. And I didn't want to compete with the stonework; that always came first."

The kitchen's entire back wall is made up of the minty green cabinets, with cut-outs where stainless-steel appliances and other kitchen elements are on display akin to works of art. To complete the fusion of eclectic design styles between the great room and kitchen, the great room's furniture largely consists of pieces from mid-century modern furniture designer Heywood-Wakefield.

Coral Cove's triangular pool, shaped by the peninsula and setback restrictions, points due south toward Nanny Point. Vicky and Gary take a dip daily around 4 p.m. and again just before bed, they enjoy a quick swim under the stars. They also snorkel frequently in the bay, where Vicky has witnessed spotted eagle rays gliding among the marine garden just offshore that teems with brain coral and sea fans.



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TOP Homeowners enjoy morning coffee at this outdoor seating area

ABOVE The drama of Coral Cove's design is revealed little by little as you enter the property

ABOVE RIGHT Each bedroom offers privacy and unobstructed ocean views



In addition to knowing just what they wanted design-wise, the Schafers also had expectations for how each part of the house would relate to the land. They wanted each of the four bedrooms to have an unobstructed ocean view as well as a certain level of privacy, making Coral Cove an ideal vacation rental. Along the waterline, a coral path takes you to a small secret shaded pavilion framed by a sea grape tree and other plants. A small sandy beachfront on the eastern side of the property has hosted bocce ball tournaments and hermit crab races.

Though the Schafers carefully planned their home's orientation, there's one aspect they forgot to consider—with remarkable results, as they discovered the night they welcomed friends to an open house in celebration of the completion of Coral Cove's construction. As guests gathered on the eastern pavilion, where the Schafers opted for planter beds instead of railings so as not to obstruct views, the full moon began to rise in clear view, illuminating the sparkling sea and washing over the Schafers' new home and all their friends.

"Words can't do it justice," Vicky says of the realization that though a view of the moonrise was not considered during her home's design, Coral Cove is perfectly situated to take in the spectacular sight.

With the large interior kitchen and great room and flanking covered pavilions, each with its own distinct ocean views, the Schafers' home lends itself beautifully to entertaining. This became an incredibly important factor as the couple's group of friends grew with the more time they spent on St John.

"We came here for the sun and the weather, but what I really love is the community," Vicky says. "We look after each other. It doesn't matter how much money you have; it's about who you are on the inside. I've never seen a community like this. It's so amazing." M



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