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'Open House - Aqua Marina'
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It was with mouth open agog and gasps of admiration that I toured the property of Aqua Marina on South Shore in Warwick. At every turn and twist, the house is a marvel of design, aesthetic and technology. As editor of this magazine, I am privileged to see many beautiful homes on this island, but I have never seen anything quite like Aqua Marina. Even as I write this article I struggle for a single descriptor that would sum up the experience that is this house. The only word that comes to mind is simply… extraordinary. Extraordinary in every sense - where words like remarkable and unusual fall short, and beautiful is just banal.

The first impression of the house after coming through the entrance gate is one of shapes and texture. Large expanses of teak, glass and concrete in hard geometric shapes and angles are softened by a sparkling feature pool and waterfall burbling along the front. A solid piece of green Brazilian granite (the largest single piece of granite ever imported to Bermuda) performs as a bridge over the pool and threshold up to the teak front entry door. The door, almost a story high, pivots at its center at a touch and is set in a frame of glass that soars two stories. This same expanse of glass is mirrored on the other side of the foyer so that a clear view of the ocean is available. Despite the foyer's size and grandeur, the illusion is one of hardly existing at all.

Within the house, you begin to understand the concept design of the owner and its execution by the architects. Desiring a minimalist space inspired by principles of Zen design, Aqua Marina was constructed to blur the line between interior and exterior, allowing nature and light in.

As in the foyer, large panels of glass feature in the bedrooms, living room and dining room (currently a gym). To take advantage of the views and morning sunlight, one of the largest single glazed panels in Bermuda was installed in the master bedroom. Along with the kitchen, both bedroom suites feature glass concertina doors that can be fully pulled back to truly open up spaces to the outdoors. In those areas desiring more privacy, smaller windows are pocketed high in the walls and even the ceiling, such as the magnificent dome in the west wing. At 18 feet across and 4 inches thick, it carries diffused sunlight all the way down to the lower level. Combined, the windows and doors ensure that every corner of the house is flooded with light.

Water, along with light, plays a key role at Aqua Marina. In addition to the welcoming feature pool, a rooftop reflecting pool with skylights plays shimmering

light over the walls of the living room, changing in intensity and motif throughout the day and evening. The Olympic length swimming pool sparkles in the sunshine and lights up at night in ever changing colors of blues, greens and purples. And lastly, at almost every point in the house, the ocean is either framed perfectly or providing an unobstructed backdrop to the spaces themselves.

Beyond the foyer, as more of the house comes into view, the space flows into more organic shapes. Curved windowed walls frame the stunning views in the dining and living room, round porthole windows, a steel spiral staircase and the large dome soften clean modern lines for an effect that is more like sculpture than architecture.

The minimalism of the furnishings and décor allow one to focus on the space itself, to notice its design, use of materials, light and the nature around it. The juxtaposition and blend of concrete, glass, wood, stone, greenery, water and steel creates an elemental feel that is energetic yet tranquil.

Each space has its own balance of materials. The kitchen, for example, presents two 22 foot countertops in stainless steel and ash wood, set against a polished concrete floor and high gloss Boffi cabinetry for a look that is professional and very contemporary. This same modern aesthetic is applied to the powder room off the kitchen which is a jaw-dropping mix of steel walls, toilet and fixtures, glass sink, countertop and door, concrete floor and Zebra wood cabinetry.

The same polished concrete of the kitchen forms cantilevered flying stairs from the foyer up to the east wing; in contrast, the west wing has a custom stainless steel spiral staircase rising from white concrete floors.

On the second floor, both staircases meet the pickled oak hardwood floors of the bedroom suites. The master suite has an open plan design with only a short feature wall separating the bathroom, closet and bedroom. The concrete, tile and glass of the bath/wet room and the beautiful wood of the closet are clearly visible from the bedroom area. The bathroom off the second bedroom is another mix of textures and materials. A green marble sunken Jacuzzi is easily stepped into, from a concrete rain-shower with teak wood bench seating.

The elemental effect continues around the exterior of the house and landscaping. The large lush lawn at the front of the house turns into a Zen inspired stone garden in the western end of the property and a beach inspired terrace in the eastern end. Delineating and accenting certain areas are bamboo, pebbled borders, palm trees and a multitude of tropical plants.

It is on the front terrace and pool area, however, where all these elements meet and the inspiration for the house is most clear. Overlooked by a majestic stone Buddha statue, the pool is surrounded by greenery and ocean of the South Shore, glass,

steel and concrete of the living area, teak of the sun bed, trestle table and benches, and not least, the striking mosaic wall, handcrafted from over 10,000 pieces of Portuguese marble. Geometric shapes such as the long cross of the pool, the rectangles of glass in the doors and windows and square of the sun bed are in comparison to the curve of the living room and overlooking terrace as well as the organic shapes of each hand-shaped marble tile and massive terracotta pots. Certainly the climax of the property.

But, as I mentioned in the introduction, Aqua Marina is not simply a spectacle of design and materials, it is a technophile's dream. To start, the whole house can be controlled by a Creston touch pad system - the air conditioning, security system, fans, lighting, window treatments and even entertainment systems are managed by state-of-the-art wall panels or hand held controls. The system can also be accessed via a computer anywhere in the world. There is built-in wireless internet throughout the property so that you can surf in any spot on the premises, including the beach! The security system utilizes floodlights, motorized gate and cameras.

The design technology is no less impressive, such as the dome that has an automated sail, which at a touch of a button retracts for maximum light, as well as an auto wash system. The huge panes of glass throughout the house are low maintenance (only requiring a spray down to clean) and are made to withstand category 5 hurricanes. This also applies to the electronic outdoor louvers that can be closed for weather, privacy or light control. Not a wire or cable intrudes upon the clean lines of the house with all systems managed by two hidden computer rooms.

My favorite part of the tour, perhaps exemplifies the charm of Aqua Marina best. The second bathroom with its funky blend of concrete, marble and wood has a small frosted window next to the Jacuzzi, which, like magic, transforms from opaque to completely transparent at the press of a button. A small detail in a house filled with excellent details, but one that really thrilled me, and made me exclaim…"Extraordinary!"

For more information on this house please contact Kim Webb at Coldwell Banker & JW Bermuda Realty. 441-292-1793 or kwebb@jw.bm.