

# PLACE MAKING

**E**very design project has a culture of its own. This could be defined by the clients' cultural influences, the designer's desire to integrate international trends and styles or from the project's geographic location.

The design of this home in Puerto Rico was for a client who Dawn Causa of Causa Design has worked with for 25 years and who she has collaborated on several homes. The client wanted a modern home on the beach to serve as a getaway property.

The home has a very sleek style, but what made this project unique was the logistics required to design a home on an island outside the U.S. (Of course, we all know that Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory.)

"The goal was to create a home where it functions in a way that is natural and easy but looks beautiful," said Causa. "But this type of project requires me to also serve as the project manager and handle the logistics of not only the shipping of the materials and furnishings but also all the details with insurance, import taxes and making sure that when shipped everything was complete with all that was required for installation."

Causa pointed out that there are some fundamental differences in building a home in Puerto Rico. For instance, unlike in the U.S. where concrete blocks are used, in Puerto Rico most of the concrete is poured.

This requires very detailed planning because plumbing and other elements cannot be easily moved. This required the strategic placement of interior bathrooms and windows.

In the U.S. this type of construction would be cost prohibitive, but in Puerto Rico it is the standard for home construction and makes for much sounder structures.

And Causa tried to find as many local craftsmen as possible to work on the home. She was able to find a general contractor and plumber in Puerto Rico as well as being able to purchase the flooring, ledger stone and countertops from suppliers located on the island.

■ The home is located on a piece of land the clients' purchased on Puerto Rico's Bahia Beach. And although it has a formal living room, the clients didn't want the house to have a feeling of formality.

Causa selected extremely tactile indoor/outdoor fabrics for a more casual lifestyle. All the furnishings also had to be durable to endure the sea air. The flooring throughout the house is a large format porcelain tile. Its color has a soft sheen and light texture to add a little traction.

The bar area is custom designed. The cabinetry was made by a local cabinet shop. The bar's countertop is made from natural granite that was given a soft texture through sandblasting.

One of the challenges with this project is the fact that the rooms are huge – think the size of hotel lobbies.

"We had to think how to keep the furniture to scale but also create a level of intimacy," said Causa. All the furnishings had to be custom-sized and made.

The main room's area rug is massive, 25-feet by 30-feet. It is hand loomed and is one-piece. It took 16-months to manufacture in India.

The staircase designed by the architect is a feat of structural engineering and is made from poured concrete.

The three chandeliers are from Donghia. All the loose furnishings, decorative items and light fixtures had to be shipped to the island.

This required very detailed record keeping and organization.



Architect: Jorge Hernandez,  
JL Architect, Coral Gables





However, when it came to installing the large number and very expensive light fixtures Causa brought over her own lighting expert who would assisted the local electricians.

“Lighting today is very complicated with LEDs and lighting system transformers, as well as the fact this project had very complicated forms of lighting,” said Causa.

“I also had to get a plumbing specialist, because when you are installing \$3,000 faucets with static control and no fog mirrors it takes a very different level of expertise to properly install them.”

For this project, Causa had to make several trips to Puerto Rico just to get to know the local sources, interview workrooms and find the best marble and stone yards as well as for meetings with the architect, tradesmen and site inspections.

“I had to have a lot of conversations with my clients on the front end of this project to get a clear understanding of their expectations. When I started this project, I didn’t think I was going to be creating a 9,000-square-foot beach house that also included a standalone gym, *casita* (guest house) and an outdoor structure with a cabana, bathroom and complete outdoor kitchen” said Causa. 🏠

▮ The kitchen’s focal point is the island with the wood cabinetry and Cambria quartz countertop. The other countertops are made of white quartz.

The cabinet doors are made with mirrored glass and the backsplash is a mosaic of small octangle stainless-steel tiles.

Because these companies had showrooms on the island, Poliform was used for the kitchen cabinets, vanity cabinets and closets while Porcelanosa was used for the kitchen countertops.



▮ For the outdoor space the table looks like it is made from wood, but it is concrete that was embossed with wood to give a natural wood feel. Concrete planks were embossed with a wood texture and then stained a weathered gray color. In Puerto Rico, outdoor areas have to be extremely durable because of the driving wind and rain.