





north island interior design



PHILOSOPHY

The spirit of understated elegance and quiet authenticity that is characteristic of North Island was created by South African-based interior design firm LIFE under the guidance of Maira and John Koutsoudakis. They have created an interior design experience which is simple and sophisticated, comfortable yet stylish, and compatible with Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens' architectural philosophy.

TEXTURE & SCENT

On North Island, senses are taken to new heights, a pleasant sensory journey that encompasses the textures, temperatures, sounds and scents of the Island. Textures play a significant part in this sensorial journey, replacing gaudy pattern and hard colour with the tactile quality of rope, cork, sandstone, silk, cadiz shell, velvet, cotton and copper. Focus on the enjoyment of raw nature, weathered wood, smoothed rock, granite walls softened by the fringes of ylang-ylang roofs and chiming mother-of-pearl chandeliers made either of mother-of-pearl or a mixture of glass and copper leaves.

TONE & COLOUR

Texture is coupled with nuances of colour and non-colour, elusive, evocative and emotive colours, from the subtle sage, beige, stone, chalk, coral, sand, turquoise and aqua. White and sand colours play an important role in the visual language of the interiors.

Nature's manner of manipulating materials, stripping colour down to a fainter, calmer version of the original, suggest the use of only natural materials which age well with the sun, humidity and sea spray.

AUTHENTICITY

On North Island you experience a calm removed from the toxicity of technology, urban life and time. The naturalisation of the architecture by acclaimed site architects Silvio Rech (principal) and Lesley Carstens is the fuse for an organic interior design dictated by nature, location and locally available materials.

A feeling of health and harmony is created by using natural, non-toxic materials while synthetic fibres seldom find their way into the interiors – except where essential.

SCALE & PROPORTION

The essence of luxury is captured in the sheer indulgence of abundant volume – space is the greatest luxury. A play on scale exists in the comfort of countless oversized loungers and hand-dyed cushions, as well as in the sheer scale of the Villas and public areas. There is an abundance of space and a celebration of the panoramic views.



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ISLAND PIAZZA

Welcoming the traveller, the main guest lounge is a shell that disappears between sand and sky, providing a celebration of views while at the same time stepping down to embrace the beach.

Vast white beach beds and cushions beckon the guest to enjoy the lounge with feet up – this is no formal hotel lobby, there is no reception in sight. A granite boulder, such a visual icon of the Seychelles, supports a slated stone countertop, welcoming guests for a cocktail or a game of Bao.

The rim-flow pond and hanging coral screen divides the space and creates a reflective surface full of light and movement, bringing the sea close again, while demarcating the space with an almost floating bench of stone and wood.

Interior space planning allows for a variety of seating options and clusters, creating pockets of privacy. A long-stretch mahogany server echoes the clean lines of the building as does the Tatajuba sofa enclosure, nestling net-like linen cushions in its embrace, while the rock sculpture softens the edges of the lounge.

The ancient and modern aesthetic is evident in the marriage of the old sage Bali door-come-coffee table with the contemporary glass vessels and driftwood sculptures resting on it.

Contemporary white chairs create a welcoming flow-off arrangement off the bar, with a woven rope carpet alluding to maritime life and stimulating one to sit a little longer.

BEACH BAR

The twin beach bars are dressed in stone with multiple tones of mother-of-pearl and beige riven walling.

Riven stone adds weight and a sense of permanence to the bars. There is an honest simplicity to the bar and its swivelling takamaka barstools.

Located in front of the bar, the 'big bulge' armchairs curved on site from giant dead takamaka roots, beach barazza and bean beds beckon the guest onto the beach.

MAIN DINING

The discovery of tastes and textures that complement one another in the culinary world is akin to the successful marriage of materials and finishes in interior design. Restraint and the appropriate use of dramatic scale all serve to create a dining room that is monastic, voluminous and intimate.

Two, two-metre-long chandeliers embrace the vast volume of the dining room, creating an air of intimacy whether there is a single honeymoon couple or a celebrating party of forty (this would be facilitated by flexible modular-sized tables).



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The use of mother-of-pearl, crafted horn, silver plated cutlery, table linen, and designer crystal all speak of luxury and refinement; when placed on the simple solid teak tables they acquire an air of restraint and elegance.

CELLAR

A short walk over the pond, off the main dining room, lies the cellar, a building of rough-hewn rock and almost stalagmatic ceiling created by bamboo shuttering, a technique found on the main island of Mahé.

There is a rustic simplicity to the cave-like interior where a lone boulder supports a solid Banua beamed top, two stools and a hand-turned flatcrown wood bowl resting imposingly on one side.

LIBRARY

Sensitively restored, the architectural structure of this existing listed building is simply appointed. Visual focus is drawn to the suspended anchor and coconut copra, their history and mystery riveting the guest.

The library houses numerous books, exotic and unusual games and a mini museum of items of interest, including a giant tortoise shell, a dated map of the Indian Ocean islands and treasured photographs of life on North Island in the past 70 years.

A functional and intimate wet weather lounge, the library has sharp contrasts in its design. The eclecticism is clearly inspired by the new contrasted with the old.

DIVE CENTRE

Another modern reinterpretation of an existing building, this space speaks of simplicity and maritime adventure. Antique Marseilles rope knots, glass buoys, rusted fishing traps and patinated pulleys lend an air of aged authenticity to the space. Dominated by a long bleached bar with rope stools, the diving den invites the diver, fisherman or adventurer to linger on white barazzas and capture the stories of North Island's maritime excursions told in the old framed photographs.

BOUTIQUE

In the central Piazza, the North Island Boutique captures the spirit of the island and its barefoot luxury experience; it is a veritable treasure trove allowing guests the opportunity to take the unique quality of the island home with them.

Located in a voluminous domed building off the dive area, the Gallery is made of rough-hewn rock sourced on the Island and glass doors which invite the natural vista inside.



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Described as 'part souk, part shipwreck' the store has a relaxed gallery-market feel selling branded North Island clothing, one-off exotic finds from remote regions of the world, including the Seychelles, and bespoke products ranging from jewellery, adults' and children's apparel, beachwear, Thalgo marine beauty products, unique homeware, art and craft, as well as books on local legends and customs and giftware that reminds guests of their unforgettable experience on this unique island.

SPA

The interiors of the Spa display a very light-handed approach; the view and the sensual experience are the protagonists. An exotic suspended oil-burning lantern welcomes you into the airy space, where a single, server with a stone basin sits adjacent to the twin massage beds, with their billowing linen and sage covers. Tall sculptures frame the endless view. A solid African mahogany bench rests languidly in front of the double showers and a solid carved brass hanging rail supports the linen kimonos for guests to change into, as they enter a new, sensual world of scents and textures.

GYM

The gym is situated above the main pool next to the spa. It is a simple glass structure with an alanga alanga roof and has one of the most spectacular views on the island. It looks down onto the bay in front of Anse d'est Beach, or East Beach, and enjoys the spectacular sight of the diverse blue colours of the ocean, so typical of Seychelles.

Again, the singularity of purpose, stated by the gleaming exercise machines and weights, lends the space an uncomplicated air of vitality and vigour.

VILLAS

Aimed at uniting human with nature, the Villas have the feeling of being a home away from home. Humanly proportioned, the spaces are fluid through the admission of nature and by virtue of their openness they invite the urban visitor to reconnect with the wind, the tide, the darkness of the night and rays of sun in the early morning.

Luxurious yet not ostentatious, the interiors are framed by Banwas wood, granite coves and ylangylangroofs. They have a modest simplicity and textural sophistication that produces true richness. The master bedroom suite is comfortable, while the custom over-sized bed and its linen provide textures that are reminiscent of fishermen's nets, cascading in a pool over the edge of the hand-carved Banuas bed.

Netlike turn-down mats sit messily on polished teakwood floors. The solid headboard, handcrafted on site, hosts an asymmetrical lighting story: on the right a pair of coral shell-crusted 'rock' lights, on the left a pair of hanging 'pod' lights.



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The organic shape of the woven wicker sage-beige armchair and the deep lounge covered in bleached linen and a chunky mahogany table, invite the guest to read, or simply enjoy the view, whilst the nearby alcove bed is populated by an array of sage-green scatters in a tactile treat of textures.

The dressing room, behind the main bed but open to it, is flanked by a cave-like loveseat on one side and glass pivot doors on the other. There is also a dressing table with bevelled mirror and decorative smalls.

More a spa experience than bathroom, just off the main bedroom, the large rectangular white bath is echoed in the shape of the dreamy daybed, calling for an after-bath siesta.

The twin rock-like resin wash-hand basins rest on a solid Teakwood top, hand-worked and burnished brown, in an asymmetrical symphony of shapes: an upright boulder has a cluster of carved vine-like casuarina branches as a supportive counterpoint. Two large side-lit mirrors reflect the height of the breezy spa-like bathroom.

The massage bed and outdoor shower with waterfall spout encourage night- and daytime celebration of the elements and a feeling of freedom.

In the Villa lounge, wooden furniture is honestly constructed, organic in form and simple in design. There is a certain quality to the custom- designed solid African mahogany dining table, bench and stools. A deep curving lounge sofa, slip-covered and soft, frames a bed-come-coffee- table.

Hand-chiselled edges to the sandstone buffet and drinks server speak of the attention to detail and a time-honoured craft.

No holiday is complete without the convivial enjoyment of a simple snack or home prepared meal. The Villa kitchen allows for this. Granite, sandstone and stainless steel combine in a marriage of rusticity and modernity; a mobile chef's station was designed to allow for deck-side dining. A small fridge is available and stocked with delicious snack items that can be made into a homemade picnic, light snack or even a delicious meal.



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The sizeable lounge-come-second bedroom with study, adjoining the pool area with its flexible arrangement, invites the guest for a breakaway experience to send an email, watch a movie or simply to relax. This space is set up as a luxurious, air-conditioned living area with deep, slouchy sofa beds in crushed velvets, linens, chenilles and complemented by a trio of hand-woven coffee tables where you can take your afternoon tea or an island snack; it's a great space to lounge, read a book, catch up on the news of the world, an old movie or just to send a quick email in the study area.

Most enjoyable of all, is the outdoor sala, all deep mattresses and striped cushions in waterproof ecru fabric. The private plunge pool and over-sized Teak loungers nearby complete the refreshing tropical island experience – your own private paradise.

VILLA NORTH ISLAND (VILLA 11) OUTDOOR LIVING

A resort within a resort, Villa 11 is truly the best beach villa in the world. (Condé Nast Traveller UK February 2010, Tatler Travel Guide 2010).

The sheer volume, scale and luxury of this villa are unimaginably decadent and simply chic. The abundance of space is staggering in Villa 11: totalling a massive 750 square metres, a large portion of that space has been added in multiple, tiered levels cascading down the granitic boulders onto a private beach entry to the ocean.

In a subtle layering of the vertical volumes, the different levels intimate the space and provide pockets of privacy; a number of intimate areas invite repose.

The deep lounge barazzas in the Chill Out sunken sala, filled with an abundance of über-comfortable cushions in mottled sages, duck-egg blues and marine tones, reflect the turquoise waters below and surround a stone fire-pit for night-time enjoyment of the wide-open world.

Just above, the Outdoor Sala is flanked by a dramatic chandelier made from recycled glass, aged beaten brass and white shell strands, breezily chiming above ... the perfect place for a post-swim siesta.



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A clustered group of high-gloss ceramic stools, embellished with objets trouvés, talismans and shells hints at the exoticism of this location, under a myriad of recycled-glass hanging lanterns and verdigris turquoise standing lanterns, twinkling in the star-lit night.

On the mid-deck, twin sun-lounger beds with marshmallowy lounger mattresses and cushions await serious sun-worship next to the circular rimflow pool. A high gloss Henry Dean glass side table holds the two together.

With an unobstructed view to the ocean horizon, the Tête à Tête Dining in Villa 11 is dramatic and incredibly simple at the same time. Two Milanese loungers sit at a three-metre-long table, with the protagonist being the view and the gently crashing waves below. Humble recycled bottle lanterns dress up sheer luxury Ivano Redaelli table linen and ocean turquoise table art.

Just off the decadent master bathroom, and beyond the dramatic outdoor shower, secretively ensconced behind the bulge of a boulder, lies the Reverie Lounge; a private place to dream.

Resting in the form of a converted river boat, teal and chartreuse cushions rest under a canopy of swooping shell rope, flanked on either side by firelighters and a grouping of woven and hand-carved tables; a space to dream accompanied by tapas and good company.

INDOOR LIVING

In the Main Living Area of the villa, the embracing arms of the over-scaled dramatic new curved sofa, is the epitome of comfort and simple, graceful design. Regular and extra depth proportions allow for casual lounging, a number of washed linen cushions with fringing reminiscent of the seaweed and coral endemic to the islands, add a new level of ultracomfort and relaxation, and echo, in their detailing of brass talismans, shells, beads and rare objets trouvés, the exoticism of this Spice Island. Stacked, hand-carved timber coffee tables are clustered together with hand-beaten brass coffee tables and accented with the sharp chartreuse and spring-green freshness of recycled glass photophores and objets.

In the Cinema Lounge, a high definition TV on hideaway open sesame system allows for TV viewing or, as with the many customised options available on North Island, the projector and over-scaled stretched 'sail screen' and surround sound invite the guest to large-scale movie-night viewing reminiscent of another era, replete with popcorn and sweets.

Driftwoody frames document the island's history, transporting the guest into a world of the treasures and travels of the Spice Route pirates, the origins of North Island's namesake, Marianne North, and the recent eco-history of this magical place.



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In the study, a sturdy hand-carved timber desk of abundant proportions and gamine features is attended by a contemporary Ron Arad chair; a perfect spot for letter writing or emailing. The Library and comfortable reading chair invite the guest for a relaxing read and exploration of tribal rarities and exotic objets trouvés.

In the Master Bedroom Suite, the organic quality of the dressing table is eclectically joined by an antique Venetian mirror and flanked by billowing parasilk curtains adorned with simple shells and glinting beads to the abundant his and hers change-room cupboards. A deep velvet sofa and Ethiopian antique table are supported by a mahogany server, glossy glassware and plus, silk carpet. The textures – so profound and enticing – are so tactile and tempting that they create an awareness of the senses, yet all in a palette that is serene and suitable to this tropical locale.

New speakers in what must surely be the bathroom with the best view in the tropics, gently play above the view of the expansive outdoor living areas. The amenities are the all-natural and eco-friendly Africology range of shampoos, conditioners, and body and bath products, resting in an amoebic amenity tray in the liquid colours of the tropics and the granitic boulders.

The eclectic mix of organic, contemporary and heritage bespoke pieces found in the abundant scale and immeasurable natural beauty of Villa 11 create a new, appropriate aesthetic. The precious few who experience its pleasures are invited to rest, repose, and regenerate in this tropical eco-paradise and leave, longingly with the promise, always, of return.