

APRIL 2014

# House Beautiful

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IN THE BAHAMAS, ALL  
YOU NEED IS WHITE FURNITURE,  
PRETTY PRINTS, PLENTY  
OF SEA GRASS AND RATTAN—  
AND A GOOD BAR

# Island Spirit





Inspired by 18th-century Caribbean plantations, the great room in designer Amanda Lindroth's Lyford Cay, Bahamas, house exudes a gracious ease. Coral stone walls are a striking counterpoint to the floor, stained to look like mahogany. All seating is vintage. The sofa's white fabric is P. Kaufmann's Slubby Basket, and the chairs are a cotton duck from Norbar; blue-and-white fabrics are Palampore Stripe by Quadrille and Bali Hai by China Seas. Custom coffee and side tables, the Raj Company. Pagoda mirror, Circa Who.







On the opposite side of the great room, 19th-century Venetian dining chairs and a reproduction Venetian table join a small seating group. A mirror from Z Gallerie—originally black but painted chalk white—is flanked by Bahamian artworks cleverly hung on brass chains hooked to brass rods. An antique Dutch armoire was modernized with mirror and set up as a bar. Ottoman, Oscar de la Renta for Century Furniture. Lamps, Alan J Alan. Sea grass rugs, Bamboo & Rattan.









**BARBARA KING:** You've lived in a lot of houses in the Bahamas.

**AMANDA LINDROTH:** I know. I have house wanderlust! I've owned about 15 homes in the 25 years I've been here. But this one, I promise, is a keeper. It's the ideal island house, and my daughter says she'll superglue herself to her room if I get the urge to move again.

**What makes it ideal?**

It has open-air rooms, and it's surrounded by greenery and built into a cliff with a view of the sea. Because we're high on a hill we get constant sea breezes, so we can keep our doors open summer and winter. Wonderful scents waft through the rooms—jasmine, gardenia, fresh-cut grass, the salty ocean air. The house is nestled in a grove of palms, dozens of them reaching 90 feet high, and when you're sitting in the living room it's like being in the trees, a magical experience. You actually feel like you're outdoors.

**And is this the ideal island interior?**

If you've got white walls, nice white upholstery, pretty printed pillows, sea grass mats, some palm fronds, a few pieces of art, and a good bar, you're in great shape here. I am, at least. Add to that vintage rattan, to which I'm addicted, and a healthy dose of blue and white, which just feels so appropriate in an island environment. That's the formula that works for me and makes me comfortable. I always revert to a blue-and-white scheme wherever I live because it makes me happy 365 days of the year. Most of my clients want more color in their interiors, but there's enough color for me outside, especially at this house.

**What is it about all-white walls that so appeals to you?**

A white shirt always looks crisp and cool in the tropics, and so does a white house. I think if you have a bright coral dining room there must be days when you don't want to go in there. In the tropics, with so much sunlight coming in, the windows appear much brighter when they're surrounded by dark walls. That



produces what's called 'discomfort glare,' an effect I find almost intolerable. Painting the walls as bright as the windows creates a balance and relieves the glare.

**The living-dining room evokes the graceful spirit of an old island plantation.**

I took my inspiration from images of 18th-century great rooms in Suzanne Slesin's book *Caribbean Style*. I'm really drawn to the Colonial architecture of houses on the English islands. They were beautifully proportioned, and beautifully proportioned rooms tell you where to put the furniture—you don't have to do that much guessing. Then I moved straight into the 20th century, to the nostalgic era of resort life when the English designer Oliver Messel was doing houses in the Caribbean. We 'Messelized' the great room with the use of coral stone on the walls, extending it to the veranda floors. The most obvious thing we stole from him was the addition of shutters and railings on the veranda, painted in

**ABOVE:** The outdoor dining room is an octagonal perch overlooking the Lyford Cay golf course. Rattan chairs from Willow Group surround a table from the Raj Company. Chandelier, Circa Who. **OPPOSITE:** Lindroth keeps the bifold French doors of the great room open to the luxuriant greenery and a view of the sea. Coral stone was also used for the floor of the veranda, establishing a harmonious link between indoors and out.

the green color he was known for—or our version of it. We tried to get the original paint color, but it was too complicated, so we pulled out the fan deck and got as close as we could with a Benjamin Moore color, Southfield Green.

**Has English design had a big influence on you?**

Huge, and in so many ways. I grew up in modern houses that were stylish but decorated with a certain strictness and restraint. In my early 30s I was the PR director for Gucci in the U.K., and going into great English houses forever changed me. They were immensely comfortable and practical and lived-in—nothing strict or overly precise about them. England is where I got permission to put a sofa in front of a window if that's what I needed to do. I didn't have to stress out about the defects of a room—I could do what was necessary to make it work. Here, the dining table is completely off-center, but I think it looks great that way.

**What made that necessary?**

We had to have a clear path to the bar! **You also don't appear to care whether the rugs are perfectly aligned.**

Not a bit—I do try, but rugs tend to stretch. I also had two in the living room until a dog atrocity happened on one of them, to use a euphemism. I'll probably replace it eventually, but in the meantime I'm fine with having half the floor bare. I love sea grass mats. They're charming, unbelievably inexpensive, and very useful. Individual squares are sewn together, so you can cut them to size or reshape them to fit odd spaces and corners. Plus, they look just right—they were in every house in the Caribbean in the '60s. Our dining table and chairs are a bit fancy, and without a mat underneath they might have gotten a bit too serious.

**Is there anything at all you would change about your house?**

Absolutely nothing. I mean, in a perfect world we would probably have an air-conditioned dining room for the summer. But that's just whining.

PRODUCED BY DAVID M. MURPHY









1. The family tool around in their snappy Fiat Jollies. 2. An 1860 portrait of a Caribbean islander gives the house a sense of history. 3. A ceiling-high canopy of white eyelet is a grand gesture in a guest room. Bed linens, Matouk. 4. Rattan furniture creates a relaxed living room on the veranda. Shutters and railings are painted Southfield Green by Benjamin Moore in Aura Exterior. Lamps, Circa Who. 5. High and low meet for lunch: Ginori china, heirloom sterling flatware, and plastic Crate & Barrel glasses. 6. A hallway serves as an art gallery and library. 7. Twin beds in the daughter's room are copies of beds at Oscar de la Renta's house in the Dominican Republic. 8. "Island houses need clean white kitchens," says Lindroth. She painted walls and cabinets White Dove in Aura and the ceiling Decorators White in Waterborne Ceiling, both by Benjamin Moore. Pendant fixtures, Visual Comfort. 9. A view of the three-story house. **OPPOSITE:** Painted metal palms add whimsy to the foyer. Chippendale fan chairs, Circa Who. Mirrors, the Raj Company. Ginger jars, Two's Company. Jute rug, Serena & Lily.











The focal point of the master bedroom is the sumptuous bed, designed by Alberto Pinto and purchased at Christie's: "It's serious enough to carry the room, yet crisp and breezy," says Lindroth. When the doors are open, "we fall asleep to the sea breeze blowing through the palms." **OPPOSITE:** Old World Weavers fabrics on the canopy and headboard unite with the crisp white bed linens. West Elm throw. Antique lamps, the Island Store. Sconces, Ikea. FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES