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STYLE: PUTTING A CONTEMPORARY MIAMI BUNGALOW

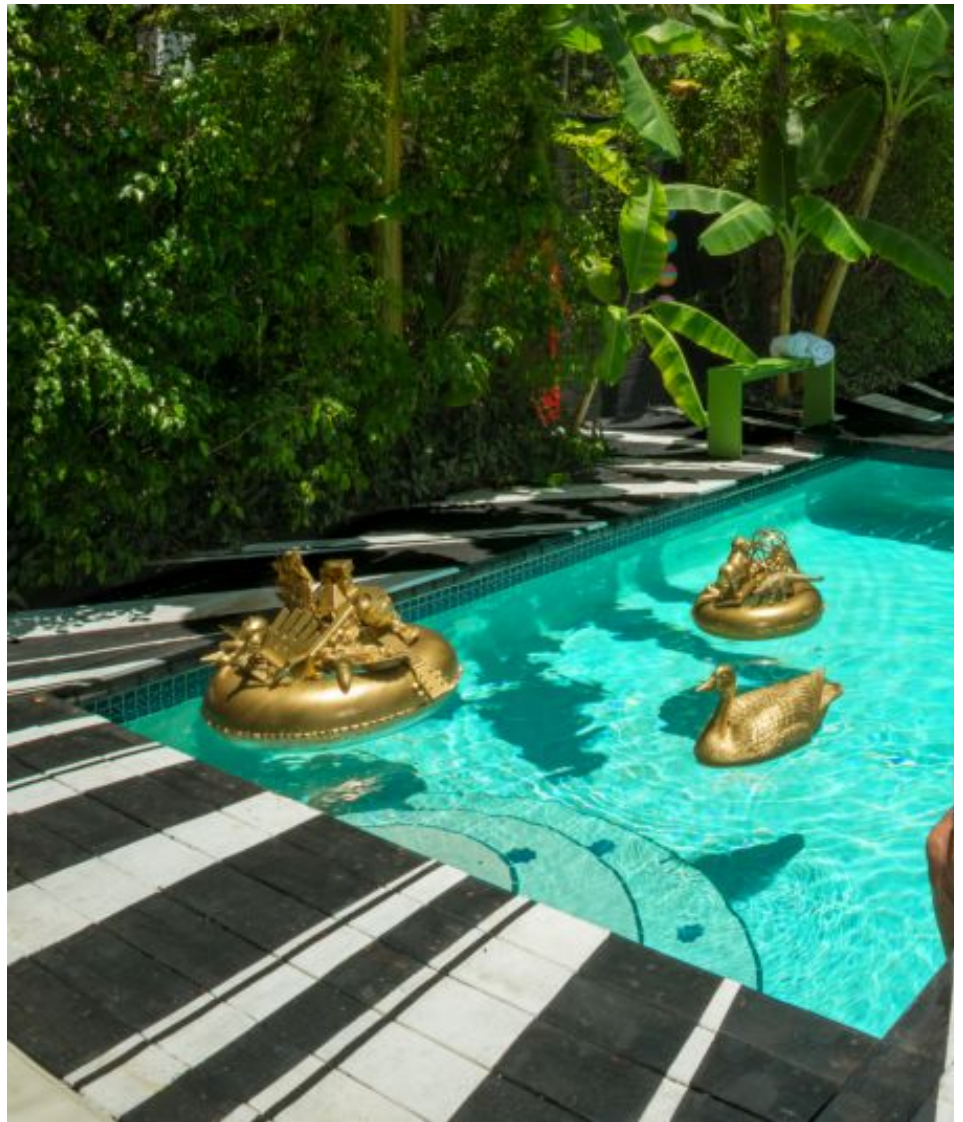
DAISY OLIVERA

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October 25, 2015

STYLE

Alberto Latorre,
Carlos
Betancourt,
Contemporary
Art, El Portal,
Miami artist,
Puerto Rico,
Walter Otero



**PHOTOGRAPHY BY: ZOLTAN PREPSZENT / PRODUCED BY: DAISY OLIVERA IN COL
LATORRE /**

When the need arose to find a space in which to live, work and also be able to create art, their South Beach high-rise on a determined, yet exhaustive hunt that took them to more than one setting in, they arrived at a quaint oasis that seemed preserved in time: The Village of El Por. To dismiss this as a coincidence, Betancourt insists it was meant to be. “About 20 years ago, I visited a house that I thought would be great to live in,” he says, “I remember because the area had a monument that was never able to find the area again, until this house was listed.” Since a newly-constructed stylish, 1930s bungalow instantly appealed to them, explains Betancourt. With the surprise of an outdoor entertaining, it was, says Latorre with a laugh, “*a done deal.*”



The small bridge leading from the house to the backyard pool terrace was painted black like the home's floors, for seamless flow from the interior to the exterior.

Rico, was raised by Cuban parents who emigrated there, then moved to Miami when he was deep connection to the island that shaped his childhood is evident in his artwork, which explores beauty, nature and memory. His inspiration is partially rooted in family photo albums that he created. "At times," he confides, "it was pretty much the only thing we had left as we moved (also intrigued by the memory imbued in objects and the attachment and nostalgia that they n because of this symbiotic relationship." Being a fan of history also influences his work, which Art in New York, the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, the McNay Art Museum, among others. His work has also been included in multiple solo and group exhi



Inside the Art Deco fireplace is *En La Arena Sabrosa* 2003 (elements from a 7000 sand castle artwork installation) and on the TV screen an image of *Appropriations del Mar y Amor* 2014, an installation which was a collaboration between Latorre and Gloria and Emilio Estefan's restaurant, Lario's On The Beach. To the right of the television is *An Art Deco* XII, 2012 by Betancourt. On the shelves are a collection of various artists' work including Kahinde Wiley, Tomaselli, Rene Cox, Naomi Fisher, Jose Bedia, plus vintage toys and artifacts. Custom, shallow cabinets hide the sound

as interior and furniture design. Latorre is Betancourt's studio director and has collaborated with the exceptional contemporary artwork collection of Celebrity Cruises, to Miami International commissions awarded by the Miami-Dade Art in Public Places Trust.

They were introduced 18 years ago by mutual friend Richard Blanco, the fifth presidential inaugural ceremony (marking the formal reopening of the U.S. embassy in Cuba in August). With many longtime friends and a busy creative schedule and the frequent travel for work and inspiration. All the more reason this home is a recharge.

The renovation was a significant collaboration between the two, outlined by Latorre's problem-solving mind. "I had to find storage everywhere I could," he said. "I designed the furniture it was to be a continuation and give the appearance of a



The photograph of Bettie Page is by Bunny Yeager. On the pedestal, Gold Cake Atomic, 2011

room. I tapered them and gave fool the eye.” Both are very han solid knowledge of construction buying the home five years ago add sophisticated elegance anc humble gem, which, in the style a warren of dark, claustrophobic previous owner added a large n and bath to the existing two bec home and demolished some we took it further. He reconfigured t expanding it into the dining area breakfast bar and pushing it out yard, doubling its size to add a | room. The two smaller bedroom studio and office and the former holds library shelves.

An outdoor deck and lounge, and Latorre built themselves in extended the entertainment are cocktails are usually served the under swaying palm trees. “Bec of how we entertain there had to

an easy flow from the moment guests come in,” explains Latorre. The exterior was just as important as the interior. Surrounded by century-old, massive oaks, different layers of vegeta were added, with ferns at ground level, then bushes and tall hedges. “Not manicured, we wa that wild, natural feeling,” he emphasizes. A variety of palms, Kapoks and Gumbo Limbo tree were mixed in along the perimeter of the property, along with Ficus, Papyrus, Bamboo and B trees to border the pool.

The front gate, which was designed and painted by Latorre, foreshadows the radiating strip the pool terrace. It’s flanked by hedges punctuated with flowers chosen for their fragrance, w Latorre describes as “aromatherapy for our guests.” Jasmine and ylang-ylang perfume the ni while gardenias enhance the day. Others flowers were planted not just for their beauty and c but to attract butterflies and humming birds. There’s also an herb garden, which is a must for Latorre. Adds Betancourt, “we celebrate life with food and dancing and Albert is extremely t in the kitchen. We are grateful to have traveled extensively, so we usually serve a fusion of L and world flavors, especially Mediterranean.”



More custom furniture designed by Latorre creates a cozy outdoor lounge at the front of the house. Artwork is *Sho Cart Atomic*, 2011 by Betancourt; oversized photographic print on vinyl is *After September*, 2002 by Betancour

r entertaining is the *pièce de résistance*, which at first glance seems relatively simple. “They multi-purpose,” Latorre explains, pointing out the angled, sleek, white tables in the dining room had to work for three different functions. End-to-end they’re for dinner parties. We use one as everyday dining table and the other drops down to coffee table height. But they’re also our dining tables. The tops can be set at an angle and storage underneath holds supplies.”



Cleverly angled tables designed by Latorre can be positioned end to end for a seated dinner for 18 or pushed together to store supplies. Wooden stools tuck neatly out of the way. The angled buffet cabinet features a built-in champagne Portal I, 2011 by Betancourt; Ohhh Baby is by Dan Cole; the metallic blue sculpture is Of Things Past, How Much I Various artists is displayed on the shelf above the custom-made sofas, designed



Hand painted ceramic skulls from Mexico next to beaded skulls by the Huichol Indians of Mexico; photograph of encrusted skull with diamonds, For the Love of God by Damien Hirst; on the wall, a sketch by Allora and Calzadilla the artist that represented USA in the Venice biennale, 2013; three built-in bud

texture. "It allows for the t strong," he states. The sh program, was the next ph pool. The way the light pe also inspired by the explc also an evolution of what center point of the pool w long pieces of wood, ther there's a studied random

"Carlos and I also built costume party. It was built known for. Says Betanco An event loaded with syn

vases, wine refrigerator underneath; a self-portrait of Betancourt, titled The
Worshipping of our Ancestors, 2003

cultures and playing dres
creating memories and I |

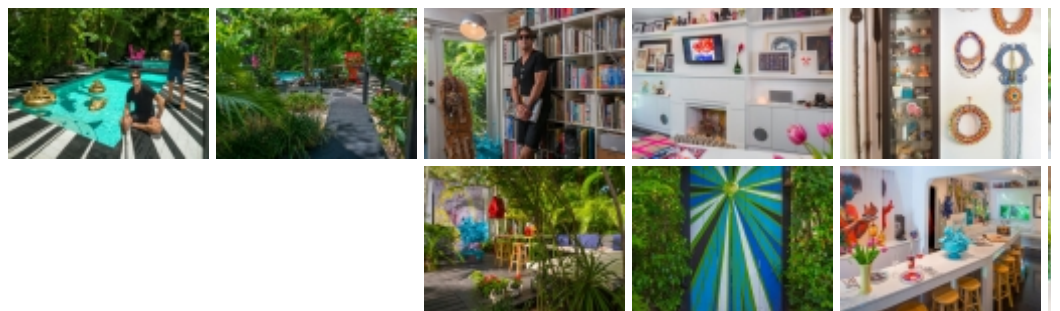


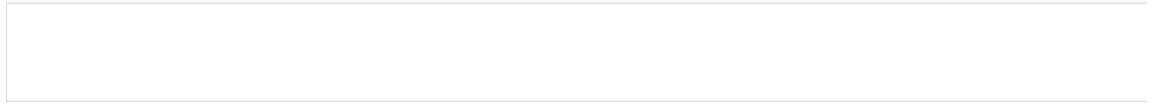
An aerial view of the pool and the lush vegetation that surround

talent and I am extremely fortunate, as it is a relationship full of joy and celebration.”

PHOTOGRAPHY AND AERIAL DRONE PHOTO BY: ZOLTAN PREPSZENT

PRODUCED BY: DAISY OLIVERA IN COLLABORATION WITH CARLOS BETANCOURT





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:: CONTACT DAISY OLIVERA

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