

Le Manoir

St. Barthélemy

Selected Press Excerpts

One of the most contemporary houses in St. Barthélemy is also one of the oldest. A flourishing garden sets the scene for a modern complex that echoes the layout of a former French manor house, or manoir – giving the property its name. Owner Cristina Rodriguez, a Spanish interior designer with major projects in New York, Barcelona, and the Hamptons, did the design work for the transformation of Le Manoir, creating one of the most spectacular private homes on the French Caribbean Island.

The original Normandy manor house dates from 1610 and was shipped from France to St. Barth by its former owner, Jeanne Audy Rowland, in 1984. It later changed owners and took on a new persona as a small hotel. “In 2006 we started looking to buy a house with an ocean view,” says Rodriguez, who lives full-time in the seven-bedroom, 32,000-square-foot property with her two young sons. “We had been on vacation on the island for three months and liked it. We felt safe here.”

When she saw Le Manoir, with its lush tropical gardens and private interior views, Rodriguez was seduced by its charm: “I could create my own universe, it was a dream project, with everything to

renovate.” Nine months later, by the spring of 2007, the transformation was complete. The main building is basically all that is left of the original manor house, other than an old stone cistern that now serves as a guest bathroom with a pebble floor and stone sink set on a stone ledge. The new structures sit on the footprints of the former outbuildings so that the layout of the property has the same basic feel, yet with a seamless transition from interior to exterior spaces. “The luxury here is the space, not the glitz,” says Rodriguez, who has created the perfect escape from the outside world. “There is nothing jarring in the design.”

Rodriguez removed layers of old-world patina and thick underbrush to make both the house and the garden more open and airy. “The garden was overgrown, but we respected the most important plants and trees,” she explains. “We moved some and replaced some.” The resulting tropical oasis mixes rubber trees, palms, sea grapes, and ginger, set around a central swimming pool with a wooden deck. Designed as an infinity pool that sits flat against the ground, with narrow space for the recirculation of water on all four sides, it shimmers like a mirror. Underwater colour-changing lights and

loudspeakers add a modern touch, especially at night when the pool takes on a heavenly shade of blue to reflect the sky.

The main house – which comprises the living room, dining area, kitchen, and mezzanine – has the original wooden shingle roof and same volume as the old house. But the entire wall facing the pool has been removed, and replaced with a series of electric screens that keep out dust, sunlight, wind and rain. “I wanted the house to be open to reveal the garden and pool,” says Rodriguez. The large dining table is a simple yet stylish slab of dark wood, with two wooden benches for seating under the high peaked roof with ceiling fans, a typical look for St. Barth.

The dark wood is reflected in the kitchen cabinets, which have modern lines, while comfortable grey sofas and abaca rugs add hints of colour in the living room. White dishes on an open shelf in the kitchen echo the simplicity found throughout the house. The upper mezzanine area was added by Rodriguez to serve as a bedroom/library as well as structurally help stabilize the open walls.

From the main house, wooden walkways stretch to the other buildings, including a children’s compound, the master bedroom suite,

and an outdoor living area. “Each building has its own outside area for privacy away from the central area,” notes Rodriguez. The boys have bedrooms and a large playroom filled with bikes, tractors, balls, pool toys, and skateboards. The white-floored rooms open to a central courtyard with a large palm tree, and each room has a small outdoor space as well. The boys’ bathrooms have stone sinks, and white square bathtubs, once again accenting natural materials in this youthful paradise. “It’s always full of kids,” Rodriguez notes.

Access to the master bedroom suite is via a stone patio with a square stone jacuzzi and fountain adding a second point of water to the property. The bedroom itself is a large expense of white, with a grey polished concrete floor (easy to maintain, says the owner). Stairs lead to a mezzanine dressing area, where two old-fashioned chandeliers add one of the few old-world touches to Le Manoir. “I like to combine old and new, contemporary and antique, and an Eastern/Western blend,” says Rodriguez, who added two large Asian armoires to complete her bedroom décor. All of the furniture in the house was made on the island, or imported from New York,

Europe, China, and Thailand by Rodriguez who not only has an eye for special pieces but also a sense of feng shui that infuses the house with a sense of Zen tranquility.

A small red building near the entry to the property adds a bold dash of colour. Inside is Rodriguez's office, which differs from the rest of the house: black modern furniture and bright colours everywhere, piles of books and magazines as well as wooden chest for storing documents. But this room is an exception to the minimal yet comfortable style of the overall property. "Most people come to St. Barth to escape," she says. "We are lucky to be able to live in this ambience, with its great energy. You have a great desire to stay in the house once you are there. The boys' school is just five minutes away and we can walk to the beach. " In fact, the property sits pretty close to the centre of the island tucked off the main road for added privacy. With its neutral colours, relaxed atmosphere, and refined style à la Cristina Rodriguez, Le Manoir is St. Barth living at its best, with a touch of Old Europe transformed to a Caribbean setting.

Text by Ellen Lampert-Greaux
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A NORMANDY MANOR HOUSE

is the last thing you expect to find tucked away in a lush corner of St Barts, yet Barcelona-born interior designer Cristina Rodriguez's home is just that. Transported piece by piece to the Caribbean in the early Nineties, it was run as a hotel before Cristina saw it and recognised its potential as a secluded hideaway for her family. 'It's rare that I see a space and know straight away what I'm going to create, but here it was instantaneous,' she says.

With its weathered exterior and airy exposed rafters, this tropical sanctuary barely hints at its European past. The main house has been hollowed out to create a double-height living and dining area and a mezzanine library, while a series of bungalows, strung out around the pool, contain the bedrooms and bathrooms. With sliding doors opening straight onto the greenery and boardwalks running between the buildings, the outdoor space is an integrated part of the layout. 'The garden acts like a corridor between the living areas,' says Cristina.

And while the indoor spaces have a simple clarity, outdoors it's more about hidden corners, from plant-enveloped shower nooks

to the children's sunken sandpit. It's perfectly possible to spend all day in the open air – lounging on a low - slung chaise, cooking in the outdoor kitchen or eating at the rustic table. Cristina has given equal thought to escaping the tropical heat, however: 'When you live here, you're often looking for shade and respite from the sun,' she says. So the main living space, in soft greys and greens, provides relief from the glare, while uniform concrete flooring is cooling underfoot_ 'My aim was to create a relaxed shelter ~ somewhere you'd want to stay,' says Cristina, and after a busy decade splitting her time between Barcelona, Paris and New York, she's hit the mark: 'The moment was right to spend some time in paradise.'

Text by Jeremy Callaghan
Published in Elle Decoration UK
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Cristina Rodriguez maakte in 2004 internationaal naam met het door haar ingerichte Casa Bobo [Bourgeois Bohème] in haar geboortestad Barcelona; een huiselijke showroom waar werk wordt getoond van kunstenaars, architecten, ontwerpers, fotografen en andere creatievelingen. Sindsdien reist de Spaanse op en neer tussen haar werkcentra in New York, Parijs en Barcelona. Een winterse sabbatical in de Cariben bracht haar onverwacht op het eiland Saint-Barthélemy - beter bekend als Saint Barths - dat onder Frans bestuur valt. De nog geen tienduizend inwoners zijn veelal afstammelingen van Franse kolonisten, die op hun beurt weer vooral afkomstig waren uit Normandië en Bretagne. Midden in het tropische groen van dit kleine Caribische paradijs staat een landhuis met opvallend Normandische trekjes. Zo'n twintig jaar geleden liet een Franse ondernemer dit negentiende-eeuwse optrekje uit Normandië per boot vervoeren en van de grond af aan weer bouwen op Saint Barths. Toen Cristina het voor het eerst zag, was het nog een klein hotelletje. Vervolgens ontdekte ze dat het te koop was. Voor de drukke ontwerpster kwam

deze kans als geroepen: sinds haar carrière in stroomversneling was geraakt, had ze ontzettend veel heen en weer gereisd. En met de komst van haar tweelingen was ze naarstig op zoek naar meer rust en meer tijd voor haar jonge gezin. 'Het was het goede moment om wat tijd door te brengen in het paradijs,' zegt Cristina. 'Het komt zelden voor dat ik een ruimte zie en meteen weet wat ik ervan wil maken. Maar hier gebeurde dat zodra ik het zag. En het resultaat is precies zoals ik het had bedacht.'

Het landhuis werd van binnen helemaal opengebroken, en de eerste verdieping werd grotendeels verwijderd, waardoor er een entresol ontstond. Beneden kwamen de keuken, woon- en zitkamer, en in de entresol kwam een bibliotheek. In enkele bungalows, verspreid over zo'n drieduizend vierkante meter grond rond het zwembad, kwamen extra gastenverblijven. Overal zijn schuifdeuren, waardoor de kamers bijna helemaal open zijn en in verbinding staan met al het groen en het terras. Tussen de gebouwen in zijn paden gemaakt van houten planken, net boardwalks op het strand. 'Dat hoort helemaal bij het spel tussen binnen en buiten. De tuin heb ik zo ontworpen dat deze

iets toevoegt aan het interieur en ook dient als een corridor tussen de belangrijkste woonruimtes.' Cristina legt uit dat het beeld van een Caribisch strandleven buiten in de zon vooral voor de toeristen geldt. 'Dat is heel fijn als je een weekje op vakantie bent, maar als je hier woont, ben je juist op zoek naar plekken in de schaduw, weg van de gloeiende zon. Ik wilde een interieur ontwerpen dat uitnodigt om je heerlijk rustig terug te trekken. Een plek waar je wilt blijven.' Grijstinten en zacht junglegroen, het kleurenschema in de woonruimtes, zorgen voor een rustgevend effect, in contrast met het intense zonlicht buiten. Bij de slaapkamers is helder wit gebruikt op wanden en plafonds, waardoor ze een frisse, koele uitstraling hebben. De zon komt het hele jaar door om half zeven op, waarbij het licht als natuurlijke wekker werkt. 'We leven hier heel erg volgens het natuurlijke dagritme,' vertelt Cristina. 'De nabijheid van de natuur gaat goed samen met haar liefde voor eenvoudige vormen en materialen, zoals de enorme houten meubels die ze in de loop der jaren heeft laten maken. Overal zijn pure materialen te vinden - verweerd hout, betonnen vloeren en zeegrass.

De natuur staat cen-

traal, maar ook een ontspannen sfeer en weinig onderhoud. 'Er is hier niets verfijnds te vinden,' benadrukt Cristina. 'De kinderen kunnen overal makkelijk spelen en op onderzoek uitgaan. Ze beleven hele avonturen zonder in onze woonruimte te komen, wat ik wel grappig vind.

Alle ruimtes horen bij elkaar, maar je kunt je ook in je eigen wereldje terugtrekken.' Cristina omschrijft haar mix van oost en west als 'modern Caribisch'. 'Ik houd niet van heel strak en modern. De stijl van het huis moet ook passen bij de locatie en de omgeving. Je kunt wel elementen van mijn andere huizen terugvinden, maar nu ze hier staan, krijgen ze een ander gevoel. Ik zou het "Caribische chic" willen noemen.'

Text by Jeremy Callaghan

Published by Elle Wonen 132



As a global interior designer, Cristina Rodriguez's eye took shape in the urban settings of Barcelona and New York. The epic blue horizon and warm sands of Saint Barthelemy in the Caribbean became her holiday antidote to the vertical crush of these cities. After the arrival of her boys, Ivo, six, and Marco, three, the urge to find a freer way of life took on greater importance. Cristina's search for a family home began on the coastal edge of the famed holiday destination. On this small island, available houses were few - most were either acting as rental properties or had been awkwardly constructed on the edge of hills. "I was looking for something flat with somewhere for the children to play," she says.

A hotel constructed from a 17th-century Normandy manor, shipped across plank by plank in the '80s, offered possibilities - including 3000 square metres of flat beachfront land.

"From the first moment I stood in that hotel I saw a picture in my mind of how it would look," remembers Cristina. This clarity of vision allowed her to move quickly.

Cristina wanted to protect the history and quality of the manor, choosing to reinvent its centuries-old interior as a vast, open living

space more suited to a modern family.

She ripped out the first floor, for instance, replacing it with a mezzanine library. A large pool surrounded by lush gardens was the most convenient anchor for the new site layout, which includes seven pavilions housing a mix of bedrooms, bathrooms, a playroom, pool house, laundry and tool house. "In fact, it's like one big house because the garden acts as a communication between the buildings," says Cristina. When it came to the interiors, Cristina didn't travel far from her signature palette. "Each house I do is different, but you can recognise my style: simplicity, grey colours and a mix of contemporary and oriental," she says. Painting the living areas grey in a sunny Caribbean climate could be seen as odd, but the decision made perfect sense for Cristina. "You actually feel better in the shade," she explains. "I thought it would be more relaxing than white, which can be quite aggressive in the sun. And because it's a big building with high ceilings, white would make you feel like you are in the middle of nowhere. With grey, you feel cozier."

Concrete was selected as a cool, low-maintenance flooring that

can cope with being open in the Caribbean rains. In the children's area Cristina chose to use white concrete, while all the bedrooms are painted white: "It's fresh for when you wake up." Contemporary and oriental pieces sit well in both colour schemes and when Cristina couldn't find the right pieces of furniture for the large-scale proportions, she designed her own. As important as interiors are to Cristina, the garden was also central to her complete vision. "The big trees were already there and I bought all the rest of the plants from Guadeloupe." In the end the renovation project took nine months. "Like a baby," she says.

Early, on any given morning, the children can be found playing on the beach or collecting shells before making the short walk to the local school, or spending the day running between their playroom and the pool. "The house is always open and always full of people," says Cristina. "But you can always find quiet in your own space."

Text by Prue Rushton
Published in Inside Out 77,
January/February 2009



Crème de la crème à la Caribien

De D. Sachin de International
Dusko Erdem bedient 't ook hergeboorde
en nu ook andere inspiratie opbrengt
aan de hand van de architectuur, het
wordt in een ontwerp

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De architectuur van de toekomst is niet meer een kwestie van stijl, maar van functionaliteit. Het gaat om de manier waarop we leven, werken en spelen. De architectuur moet de mens ondersteunen en inspireren. Het gaat om de manier waarop we met elkaar omgaan en de wereld om ons heen. De architectuur moet de mens helpen om zijn of haar bestemming te vinden. Het gaat om de manier waarop we de wereld om ons heen zien en ervaren. De architectuur moet de mens helpen om zijn of haar dromen te verwezenlijken. Het gaat om de manier waarop we de wereld om ons heen maken en verbeteren. De architectuur moet de mens helpen om zijn of haar leven te verbeteren. Het gaat om de manier waarop we de wereld om ons heen zien en ervaren. De architectuur moet de mens helpen om zijn of haar dromen te verwezenlijken. Het gaat om de manier waarop we de wereld om ons heen maken en verbeteren. De architectuur moet de mens helpen om zijn of haar leven te verbeteren.



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