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# BIRD *of* PARADISE

A VACATION VILLA SOARS ON THE ANGUILLA BREEZE



BY JOBETH MCDANIEL > PHOTOS BY MICHAEL WILSON





After 20 years of visiting Anguilla, art collectors Jon and Melody Dill decided they wanted their own home there. The couple asked architect Guy Courtney of Wilson & Associates to build a house that would exist in harmony with the land and temperate climate. The living room, which is accented with primitive art the Dills have gathered on travels to Papua New Guinea, Borneo, Ethiopia and Bali, is cooled naturally by the island breezes. Opposite: A path leads to a sitting area. The beach is a three-minute walk away.

BIRD OF PARADISE



## WHEN MELODY AND JON DILL

first visited the island of Anguilla in the windswept British West Indies, they were instantly smitten. Though they had traveled extensively to islands across the globe, they quickly bought a condo and began planning their perfect vacation home.

Eventually, they found a spot above Sandy Hill Bay, a three-minute walk to a lovely white-sand crescent beach. The property had panoramic views of St. Martin, St. Bart's and St. Eustatius islands. After much searching, the Dills hired architect Guy Courtney of Wilson & Associates in Dallas, who had designed Fregate Island resort in the Seychelles, and other properties with the warm, inviting feel they sought.



"We collect artwork based on our appreciation of the cultures and peoples we meet," says Melody Dill. Opposite: Above the sideboard in the dining room is a painting of an Anguillan flamboyant tree by Roland Richardson. Baskets from Botswana flank the French doors. Above: A crocodile table from Papua New Guinea centers the terrace. "The crocodile is an important figure and god for many people of the South Pacific," notes Melody. "It is used to protect its owner and keep him safe." The teak furniture in the foreground is from Warisan Bali.

## BIRD OF PARADISE

Below: The master bath includes a vanity, a whirlpool tub and a coffee bar, at right. "The travelers palm in the window is lit at dark and acts as a nightlight," notes Courtney, who brought in Wilson & Associates' Tonya Burke to help with the interiors. Above the window is a carved panel from Borneo, the walls are hand-finished plaster and the floor is "a soft-to-the-foot pebble stone," according to Courtney.





The master bedroom, housed in its own freestanding, air-conditioned pavilion, steps out to a private plunge pool overlooking the ocean. The bed, chair and side table were crafted in Indonesia. Courtney installed dimmable cove lighting in the rafter ceiling "to set a romantic tone."



“WE FIND THAT MANY RESORTS we don’t like are too contemporary, with too much cement, which feels very cold,” says Melody Dill. Because Anguillan law required that the house be constructed with cement and rebar—to withstand the high winds and occasional hurricanes that roar over the island—they filled the interiors of the “Bird of Paradise,” as they call their home, with exotic woods, such as mahogany doors and vaulted ceilings of cumaru wood. For the roof, the Dills chose sturdy Wallaba roof shingles, which have lasted up to 100 years in tropical settings such as Anguilla’s.

The rich woods inside set the stage for the Dills’ extensive collection of primitive art, gathered on travels to Papua New Guinea, Borneo and Ethiopia. On visits to Bali, the couple commissioned many works of carved stone, including large wall panels, a base for their dining room table and oversize planters for the garden. “They wanted it to be simple, not overdesigned,” says Courtney, who notes that the main design concept was to create a comfortable space that fit with the casual island lifestyle.

Anguilla boasts 33 beautiful, soft white sand beaches. Below is the undeveloped Sandy Hill Bay beach in front of the Bird of Paradise. The living room and each of the bedroom verandahs offer a panoramic view of the beach and neighboring islands beyond. The gentle waters are perfect for swimming or snorkeling.

Anguilla’s trade winds dictated the home’s placement on the site, as well as much of its design. Only the four bedrooms are air-conditioned: The main living areas stay cool due to the winds, which keep the weather pleasant, even in summer. Door and window panels can be opened or closed to control how much breeze enters. At the Dills’ direction, Courtney placed an outdoor courtyard in a sheltered spot beside the pool, so that guests could enjoy dining and relaxing there, even on the windiest days.



## “MELODY IS A WALKING ENCYCLOPEDIA” about the prevailing winds,”

says Courtney. “They can be a nuisance. Melody and Jon had worked through a lot of that before I met them. They wanted to enjoy that indoor-outdoor feeling without having magazines and plants blowing around.”

To create a seamless transition between the rooms and the terraces, Courtney designed a unique “cornerless” living room. “The idea was to have this full panoramic view, with no columns or corners on three sides,” says Melody. “It was a challenge.” The doors, when open, slide back into walls with hidden supports for an unfettered view. Yet when the doors are closed, hurricane shutters, hidden behind garden trellises, can be quickly tugged over them and locked for protection.

A lagoon-style pool meanders between the master bedroom and the main living area, housed in an open-air living pavilion that merges into a terrace along the ocean side, with outdoor dining for 12. The home and gardens are surrounded by a tall stone wall to keep the island’s goats from straying into the lush foliage. At the edge of a bluff sits a Balinese-style bale, or covered daybed, overlooking the water.

After the house was finished, Courtney and his family vacationed there. He appreciated how, as the sun set, the outdoor lights automatically created new scenery, including a dramatic traveler’s palm lit up just outside the master suite. “The landscape enhances the atmosphere,” he adds.

The house was always intended to be a rental, and it has stayed busy with family retreats, honeymoons and even a recent wedding. Rates range from \$5,200 per night, with a minimum 10-day stay during holidays, to \$1,900 per night for a partial rental during the low season.

“The lagoon-style pool acts as a water feature and provides a dramatic glow at night,” says Courtney. Candles and lush plantings add to the ambience. “The architecture was designed with no roof overhang, to allow rain to be collected from the rooftops and stored in the cistern below the house for domestic and landscape use.”



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