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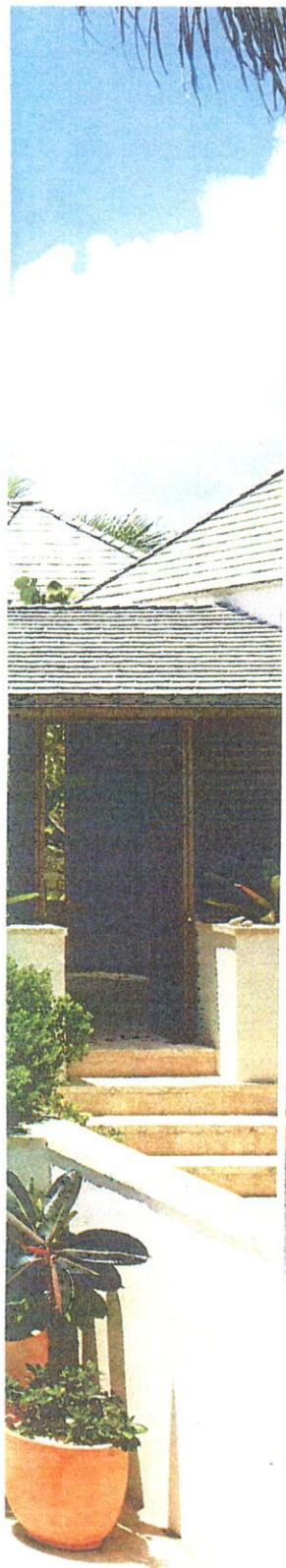


# A SIMPLE PLAN

From an inspired sketch on a napkin, designer Tom Scheerer conjures an effortlessly chic getaway on a secluded Bahamian beach

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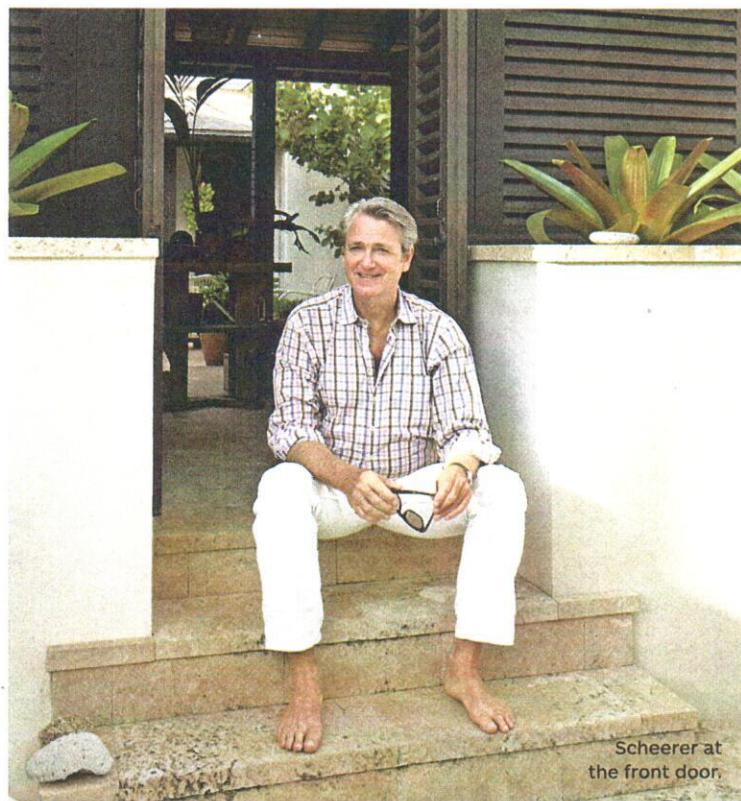




In the entrance hall of decorator Tom Scheerer's Bahamas getaway, an antique garden table from Cove Landing sits under a lantern fashioned from an Indonesian fish trap; the vintage Thonet armchair is from Lars Bolander.

**Left:** Scheerer designed the compound, which comprises six pavilions interspersed with Coralina-stone terraces, gardens, and a swimming pool. For details see Sources.





Scheerer at the front door.

**T**om Scheerer is no stranger to the world of sumptuous houses outfitted with every conceivable frill and comfort. The New York-based decorator, known for his breezily chic yet utterly correct interiors, grew up as part of a well-heeled East Coast set. He's been in and out of its cribs and clubs since the day he was born.

But several years ago, when he began planning his own dwelling on a stunningly deserted beach on Great Abaco Island, Bahamas, he drew a line in the pink sand. "I wanted the place to be radically simple," says the designer, whose most fervent lifestyle aspirations include showering outside, cooking steaks over an open fire, and pinning laundry to a clothesline strung between coconut palms. His last beach house, on nearby Harbour Island, didn't even have glass in the windows. Scheerer loved the delicious openness—and he didn't much mind the bugs. "I've always wanted to live in the tropics like an elegant peasant, with as little technology as possible," he says. "It's the most sensible and also the most romantic thing I can imagine."

For the Abaco home's wilder and quieter setting, he drew a series of small buildings on a napkin. Zip, zip, zip. He's not one to agonize. In ten minutes he'd broken down the conventional house form into six small pavilions with connecting courtyards and gardens. The point was to design something that wouldn't look imposing or monolithic from any angle.

The result is a lovely, stark family of structures set at the edge of undulating dunes, with the glittering turquoise sea just 200 yards away. Made of smooth stucco-covered concrete still gaining in mottled patina, the compound brings to mind a townscape of building blocks. Or as Scheerer puts it, "It looks like a village in Zanzibar;" the faraway isle whose name he adopted for the house. →

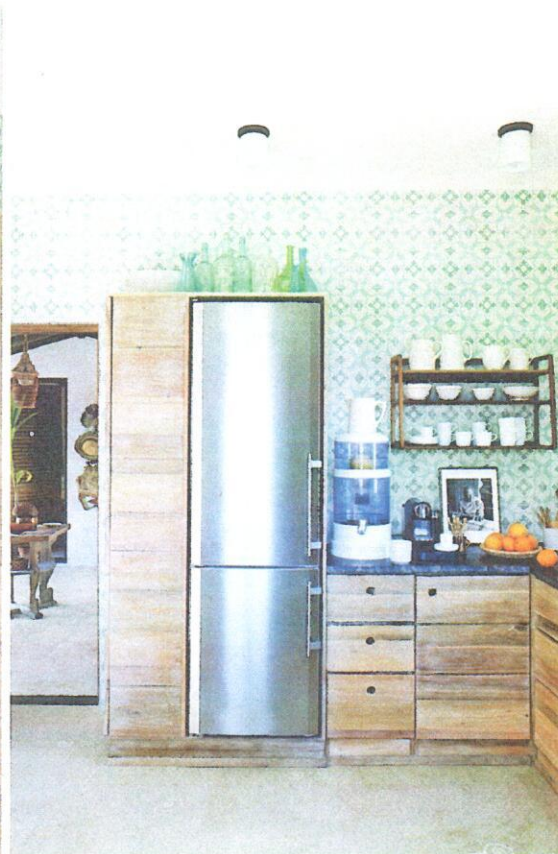




A framed Isamu Noguchi lantern, at right, presides over the living room's two slipcovered Room & Board sofas, a Scheerer-designed cocktail table, and a hand-spun hemp rug from the Company Store. By the windows are a vintage open-weave lounge chair and a rocking chair from Indo Puri; the caned taborets are from VivaTerra.







Hipped roofs, thick walls, low-tech windows and doors, and almost no detailing make it easy to appreciate the residence's sublime proportions and clever spatial relationships. A swimming pool with a tower and coquina-stone staircase looming over one end, for instance, exudes a secret, timeless air. The entire property has only 1,800 square feet of enclosed space, but with so many borrowed views and comfortably furnished outdoor rooms—and so much clean breeze whooshing through—it seems a great deal bigger. “There’s nothing modern about it. It’s really the Bahamian vernacular, the way houses were built by the original settlers,” Scheerer insists. “It’s an agglomeration of all the things I like best about houses, and it stems from my firsthand knowledge of how difficult it is to maintain a high level of finish in the Bahamas.”

As for the decor, Scheerer stayed true to his effortlessly stylish arrangements, marrying classic pieces with modern, but here extreme durability was a top priority. Seating is mostly rattan or linen-slipcovered, cabinets are made of pickled acacia wood, and rugs are woven hemp. The floors are poured concrete with beach sand and spiraling seashells worked into it, a rough but poetic local version of terrazzo that neither careless houseguests nor Category 5 hurricanes could harm. A charming wall of straw hats, a feature

in all his beach houses, greets visitors in the entrance hall. Semi-enclosed by louvered doors and windows, the space serves as a transition from the outdoors, underscored by a teak garden table made in England circa 1900—junky, perhaps, but exactly the *right* kind of junk, which is why it has such a high carbon footprint. Scheerer bought it in New York and used it in his two Harbour Island houses before it wound up in Abaco.

Not surprisingly, many of the enduring designs he often uses are here: curlicued bentwood chairs, caned stools and headboards, and lots of rattan and wicker, all as graceful and snappy as ever. The dining room’s white oval Saarinen table is a perfect modernist ellipse that he’s been loyal to for decades. It proves its mettle again by looking fabulous under a pair of squiggly African-kudu horns and a ceiling fan that might be the kudu’s first cousin.

Scheerer thinks of the horns as found art, much like the spherical Noguchi rice-paper lantern he squashed into a frame and hung above a living room sofa. The piece is a creamy, soulful target that calls to mind a beachy Jasper Johns. “This house didn’t seem to be a place to have real pictures,” the decorator says. “It’s so open to the elements.”

Imaginative flourishes like this are a Scheerer signature, and one of the most delightful here might be the powder room sink dressed in a floor-length grass skirt. Don’t be surprised if, once this story hits the Internet, that playful way to hide plumbing is copied from Coconut Grove to the real Zanzibar. And why not? If a hula-dancing sink doesn’t get you in an island mood and make you crack a huge smile, nothing will. □



Rattan armchairs by Palecek nestle up to a vintage Saarinen table in the dining room; the vintage trophy horns are from Sage Street Antiques, and the hemp rug is from the Company Store.

**Opposite, from left:** Custom-made encaustic cement tile by Villa Lagoon Tile covers the kitchen walls, and a trompe l'oeil beaded curtain hangs in the doorway to the dining room. A slender refrigerator-freezer by Liebherr fits into the room's pickled-white-acacia cabinetry.







**From top:** The pickled-white-acacia four-poster in one guest room was designed by Scheerer. In the powder room, RH sconces are installed above a Duravit sink with Grohe fittings; a grass skirt hides the pipes.

**Right:** Scheerer roofed the pergola with bamboo fencing from Walmart; the stacking armchairs are by Janus et Cie, and the large pillows and the striped Crate and Barrel pillows are all of Sunbrella fabrics.





