

far&away

It's hard to get to Gillian and Jack Diamond's house on the island of Mustique ...



TEXT BY JEFF BOOK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEBORAH WHITLAW LLEWELLYN
STYLING BY ELIZABETH RAINES BEELER



... but it's even harder to leave.



Traveling to Mustique, an island in the Grenadines, can prove complicated, as major airlines don't serve its tiny airport. But when Jack and Gillian Diamond arrive at their home overlooking Pasture Bay, life becomes blessedly simple. Time slows, its lazy progress punctuated by a swim in the sea, an engrossing novel, a dish of homemade ice cream, and a rum punch made with the traditional recipe: "one of sour,

two of sweet, three of strong, four of weak" (that would be the fruit juice). Not surprisingly, they named this house Simplicity. It was designed by Jack, an architect whose Toronto firm, Diamond and Schmitt, has won international acclaim for complex, high-profile projects. But "simplicity" suits both the form and the spirit of this house, which blends elegantly into a verdant hillside overlooking Mustique's eastern beaches.

Rejecting gingerbread trim and neo-colonial details, Jack conceived a group of airy, pared-down pavilions separated by gardens, paved courtyards, and a swimming pool. "Each bedroom is in a separate structure, with a veranda, terrace, and outdoor shower," he says. "The design enhances privacy as well as access to the outdoors."

If the house seems ideally placed, credit Jack's emphasis on siting. "The

design has to begin with proper orientation, to control exposure to wind and sun, and frame views," he says. Of course it also has to respond to the surroundings, and this rugged site required a bit of tailoring before that was possible. Jack's team of builders brought in dynamite and jackhammers, then used many of the rocks and boulders they dislodged to create garden terraces. Natural materials also inspired the home's

exterior palette: walls the color of wet sand, and shutters the hue of a Caribbean sky at sunset.

"It doesn't look like traditional island houses, but it draws on the same principles," Jack says. A high, vented roof and ceiling fans keep hot air from building up. Broad openings optimize views and cross-ventilation, adjusted with the aid of louvered doors and shutters. "It's quite comfortable, and without the

The living room (top) occupies its own clean-lined pavilion, with deep, shading eaves and broad portals that open to views and breezes. Durable PVC gutters and downspouts channel rainfall to cisterns, conserving precious water. The only glass in the house is found in the sliding doors that open to the veranda, and the French doors between it and the living room. Outside, near-constant tradewinds shape trees and surf. Jack begins each day with a swim at the beach just below the house.

“A building should fit the location comfortably, the way a great horseman fits the saddle.”

—Jack Diamond

Wide verandas, such as this one overlooking Pasture Bay, extend living spaces outdoors. “Verandas are essential in tropical architecture to deflect rain and heat,” Jack says.





White paint and fabrics give a cool feeling to a bedroom tucked into the hillside. Left: A sturdy pergola contributes shade and structure to the pool terrace.

crutch of air-conditioning,” he observes. “After all, we come here to live with nature.”

Conserving water is a priority on Mustique, especially during the January-to-June dry season. Low-maintenance PVC gutters and pipes channel rainwater to buried cisterns that can hold 65,000 gallons. A drip-irrigation system keeps the landscaping lush without waste. Like many villas here, this one can be rented, and the grounds explode with an array of edibles for guests, from peppers and arugula to oranges and figs. Other plants complement the native bush. “I grew up in subtropical South Africa, and we had all these plants in our back garden,” Jack says, pointing out sago palms, plumbago, and fragrant Natal plum.

The architect speaks with pleasure about creating a well-ordered fragment in an unruly world. “Simplicity” epitomizes the Diamonds’ idea of home and reflects the sentiment behind favorite lines from Derek Walcott’s poem *Omeros*: “When you have seen everything and gone everywhere, cherish our island for its green simplicities.” 🌿

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“We come here to live with nature.”

—Jack Diamond