

INTERIOR DESIGN

NUMBER 14

on the edge

\$8.95US \$9.95CAN



0 71486 01016 6

miami rhapsody

A Luis Pons house for Chayanne is as lyrical as a pop ballad by the Latin musical sensation

At once low-slung and high-flying, simple and complex, modest and grand, this house on Miami Beach's Biscayne Bay sings an ode to tropical modernism. Like much modernist architecture, the design is about solids and voids, but the ideas behind it aren't limited to that. It embraces elements and materials—water, air, light, wood, stone—in a direct and substantial way.

The house also marks two career milestones for architect Luis Pons. His first ground-up U.S. residence, it's furthermore his debut celebrity commission: a home for singer Elmer Figueroa Arce, aka Chayanne.

The singer comes from Puerto Rico, his wife, Maronese de Figueroa, and Pons are both Venezuelan. So all three speak Latin America's lyrical, tactile, sensual language of design. Pons was living in Venezuela, at his family's farmland along the Amazon, and commuting to Miami regularly when he began working with Chayanne. The singer hoped to find an existing residence and renovate it, but nothing was suitable. After looking at more than 100 →

The bayfront house's stair tower leads to a rooftop terrace used for sunning and entertaining.

*text: beth dunlop
photography: eric laignet
styling: patricia parinejad*



prospects, Pons eventually found the Biscayne Bay site and moved to Miami full-time. The process took three years. Pons sees the completed house as a "bridge between earth and water," and the connections are intimate. This is truly an indoor-outdoor structure, with 8,000 square feet enclosed and another 3,900 square feet of terraces: at ground level, upstairs, and on the roof, a vast flat expanse for sunning or entertaining. From almost anywhere—inside or out, ground level or rooftop—the bay views are riveting.

A leak fence provides the first hint that this is not going to be your typical Miami Beach stucco palazzo. Step inside, and you're facing a garden of bamboo. Six different kinds of Venezuelan granite make up the driveway. A travertine-paved covered walkway leads from the garage, which is topped by a guest suite, to the house proper, and alongside the walkway runs a long, slender basin filled with rocks and water. The water is a kind of narrative here. One imagines that—instead of stopping at the front door—this stream goes underneath the house like a subterranean spring, emerging again as the source of the infinity pool that appears to run into the bay.

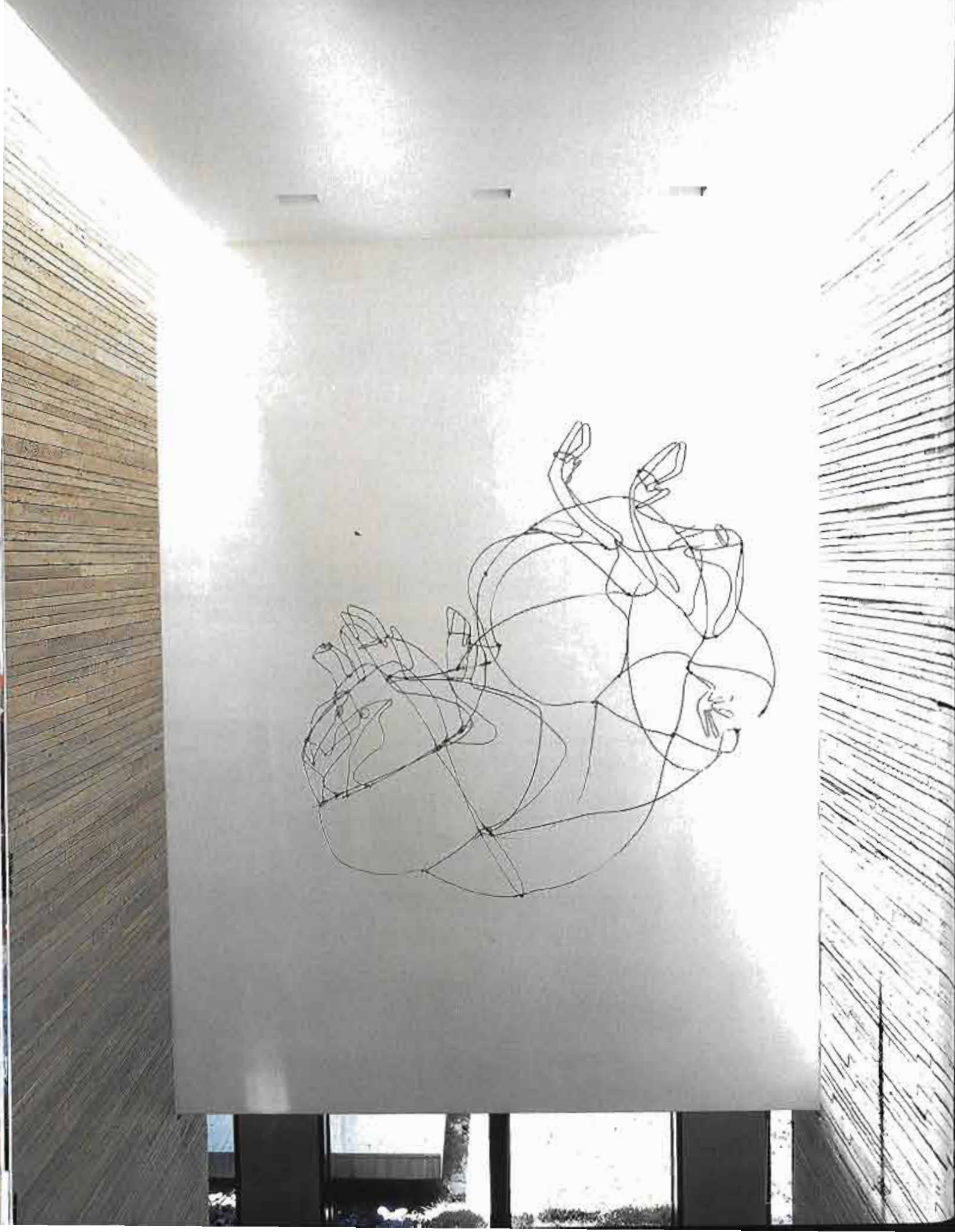
"The house is entirely about materials and the use of water and light, the way sunlight reflects through spaces and becomes shadow," says Pons. In southern Florida, shade is a major issue, and the house's bay-front facade is set back under a deep porch. That's of course the time-honored way of cooling a tropical house, but Pons put his own stamp on the vernacular by adding mahogany support columns detailed with stainless-steel abstractions of a palm-tree motif. A brise-soleil of teak and copper protects the second-floor family room from the morning light. Elsewhere, louvers diffuse the sun's rays.

Teak, mahogany, and Brazilian pine repeat throughout the downstairs public spaces and four →

Above: A Mario Bellini sofa anchors one end of the living room, flanked by a George Nakashima chaise longue and Le Corbusier armchairs. Marcel Wanders's laminated-textile floor lamp stands in the corner. Below: The porch is supported by mahogany columns detailed with stainless-steel abstractions of a palm-tree motif.

Opposite: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's leather-upholstered Brno chairs surround a custom dining table by Ton Luyk Designs. The clipped paper sheets of a Zetta's ceiling fixture by Ingo Maurer hang above.





Opposite: A 4-foot-high wire sculpture by Enrique Enriquez is suspended in the entry.

Above, from left: Biscayne Bay and Miami beyond. A 1950's Italian glass bowl on Tapio Wirkkala's cocktail table in the living room. The mix of marble, cement, and crystalline lining the infinity pool, which seems to flow into the bay. *Right:* The living room's secondary seating area, with chairs by Finn Juhl and Hans Wegner. *Below, from left:* Steps of stainless steel and Brazilian pine, leading to the roof terrace. The stair lower atop the main house. Poul Kjaerholm's leather-covered armchair and sofa in the media room.





upstairs bedrooms. Copper, steel, travertine, granite, and concrete make frequent appearances as well. And Pons used most materials atypically. Along the covered walkway, for example, horizontal strips of travertine clad the walls, like wooden slats; a band of stainless steel marks the joint between a wall and the ceiling. Even the poured concrete of the facade assumes a new identity, with local stones mixed in for texture and connection to place.

The rooms are spacious, simple, and airy. Much of the furniture is classic modern: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Tapio Wirkkala, George Nakashima, Eileen Gray. Other pieces, including the dining table and terrace furniture, are by Dutch-born Miami legend Ton Luyk, who had designed furniture for Chayanne's in-laws 30 years ago.

Pons kept the small formal dining room simple, except for the fanciful Zettel 2 ceiling fixture by Ingo Maurer and a chrome-finished stainless-steel sculpture by Enrique Enriquez. At the opposite end of the ground level is a suite that includes an office for Chayanne and a media room furnished with Poul Kjaerholm seating. Perhaps Chayanne was dreaming of a space just like this when he sang the *Dance With Me* soundtrack's hit, "Refugio de Amor." 🎧

SOFA (LIVING ROOM): B&B ITALIA; **SIDE TABLES:** CLASSICON; **LAMINATED FLOOR LAMP:** CAPPELLINI; **ARMCHAIRS:** CASSINA; **CHAISE LONGUE:** GEORGE NAKASHIMA; **WOODWORKER:** CHAIRS (DINING ROOM): KNOLL; **CEILING FIXTURE:** INGO MAURER; **THROUGH LUMINAIRE:** RUGS (DINING, LIVING ROOMS): POTTERY BARN; **TABLE (ENTRANCE):** WOOD FLOOR LAMP (LIVING ROOM): CHAIR (BEDROOM): THROUGHAPON; **WADDESIGN;** **LUNGE CHAIR (LIVING ROOM):** PP MOBILER; **CHAIR:** SOFA (MEDIA ROOM): FRITZ HANSEN; **TABLE (BEDROOM):** HERMAN MILLER; **WOODWORK:** L. BORGES; **STONEWORK:** DAKOTA STONE; **METALWORK:** SERVIMAK; **STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** DE LOS REYES; **ENGINEERING:** MEP GUERRERO/GONZALEZ ENGINEERS; **LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** MIGUELA PONS; **ARCHITECT OF RECORD:** JOHN B. MEDINA & ARCHITECTS; **PROJECT MANAGER:** MARIAT MORAL; **GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** AGR CONTRACTING.

Above: Luis Pons designed the master suite's bed, then added a Scandinavian mid-century chair and a table by Isamu Noguchi. Light streams in from a capacious curved terrace. *Below:* Stairs ascend to the separate guest quarters. To connect them to the main house, Pons built a travertine-paved walkway, beside which runs a basin filled with rocks and water. *Opposite:* An Italian 1950's brass table stands in the entry.

