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sun salutations
a stunning new home
in Grand Cayman

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Sun Saluts



“ bountiful natural assets including a beach with golden sands and a shallow water shoreline, which some might call a snorkeler’s paradise teeming with reef fish. ”



images :: David Wolfe

Sun Salutations

is a stunning new home situated on the golden shoreline of Grand Cayman in the Cayman Islands.

Designed by renowned Cayman Islands based Architect, John Doak, the owners are naturally delighted with their new home, stating, “John outdid himself. Sun Salutations is a masterpiece of spectacular architecture and smart, functional design.”

We chat to John Doak about the project and take you on a virtual tour of this tropical Island home.

CC: What were the owners’ requirements for the design of Sun Salutations?

JD: The site possesses bountiful natural assets including a beach with golden sands and a shallow water shoreline, which some might call a snorkeler’s paradise teeming with reef fish. Views from the site are spectacular. To the west are commanding panoramic vistas over Grand Cayman’s North Sound, towards Stingray City, with George Town and West Bay in the distance and the sunset views are to die for. To the north is Rum Point >

dock and from the east come the refreshingly cool breezes. A classic beach house setting.

The West Coast owners requested a vacation home that would be comfortably sized for their family and friends, who would visit for short periods during the year. During times of absence the house was to be managed and made available for short term rentals.

Sun Salutations is a two storey beach house, internally organised for vacationing family groups, where the ground floor is a daytime place for communal dining, fun, games, and all-out holidaymaking whilst upstairs there are a series of bedroom suites for privacy, retreat and relaxation.

On the ground floor the glass walls of the 2000 square foot Great Room slide away to almost seamlessly connect the inside with the outside pool terrace, sun lounging areas and the two waterfronting gazebos all leading beyond to the sandy beach and the ocean. The swimming pool has a classic negative edge, and an enclosed Zen garden on the southside has been created as a space for quiet book reading and meditation.

Upstairs, are four spectacular master suites, each with its own unique balcony view of the beach and the North Sound. Inside the house, the bedroom suites are arranged around a gallery that overlooks the Great Room below. A spacious bunkroom is perfectly sized to accommodate the family's children. A separate media room allows the household the ability to handle even more.

CC: All the homes you have designed seem distinctly different - colonial, modern, traditional Caribbean - what is your own personal style?

JD: Stylistically "Sun Salutations" combines the West with the East, the client's desired blend of traditional Balinese, Polynesian and Caribbean inspirations - built to modern standards to resist earthquakes, the harshest tropical storms and brilliant sunshines. All with coastal quality, maintenance free finishes and fixtures.





I design all my buildings to respect their siting and surrounding environment. Every place has its own unique attributes. By respecting these influences and natural assets, I'd like to think that all the houses I design, no matter what exterior stylistic inspiration they possess, are found to be "at home" in the Cayman Islands or whatever part of the Caribbean region they reside in.

CC: How is designing a building for the Caribbean different and what is the biggest challenge you face as an architect here?

JD: The most convenient way to answer this question would be to ask you to kindly await the publication of my book "Cayman Style" later this year. The book describes my thirty year quest in the Caribbean Islands to respond to that very question! Wherever he may be on this planet, the architect is challenged to meet his clients' needs and this is most successfully achieved through an understanding of the culture that prevails locally in the people and construction technologies, stylised /seasoned by the current vogue.

In the Caribbean the successful architect is someone who has the fullest appreciation of these islands. More succinctly expressed, the greatest challenge we face is understanding why someone would hire an Alaskan to design a house in the Caribbean.



CC: Many of the homes you design are on the coast - what special considerations do you allow for storm surge?

JD: Many of the houses we have designed since 2004 Hurricane Ivan, which damaged almost 80% of the Cayman Islands' housing stock with winds and water borne damage, are elevated above the flood plain and storm surge levels on the coastline.

Unlike other Caribbean Islands which have the benefit of natural mountainous topography, Cayman barely rises to 55 feet above sea level >

and most of our coastlines average around 10 feet above sea level. Set in extremely deep waters, Cayman also has a shallow reef protected shoreline and this profiling does help reduce the potential and size of storm surges.

Many of the newer homes we design are completely raised above the ground or have sacrificial accommodations like garages, utility and storage rooms at ground level. In truth, most

traditional homes in Cayman and elsewhere in the tropics have been designed this way for generations. Recent storms have reminded us how appreciative we need to be of traditional values and to respect our cultural legacy.

CC: What special considerations were made for hurricane protection in the design of Sun Salutations?

JD: In this house we set the ground floor accommodations and the pool terrace 8ft above sea level to respect the ocean and potential for storm surge in extreme times. The elevated swimming pool, terrace and water storage cisterns provide “seawall” protection for the house as well.

All the windows and doors in the house are impact rated, meet Miami Dade standards and are tested/labeled to exceed local codes. The house has a further layer of protection provided by roll down and louvered storm shutters

CC: Are ‘green’ design features important to you and, if so, what environmentally friendly innovations do you try to incorporate?

JD: As explained above, we’ve always designed in an environmentally responsible manner - nowadays it’s deemed a trend known as being “green” or eco friendly. In international terms some describe what we do as “original green” - we call our philosophy “terroir”, a terminology that speaks to an appreciation of place and the natural influences that prevail in any locale.

In Cayman we employ local traditions in our design and engineering, we prefer to employ local materials for construction and the skill sets of our local labour forces. We are influenced by this climate, the topography and geology of the siting. Our buildings respect the land upon which they sit, as well as their surroundings. With this appreciation for “terroir” there is less reliance on energy consuming technologies or systems. ■

