

Robb Report
Home & Style

LUXURY RESIDENCES AND FINE DESIGN

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Orlando Diaz-Azcuy

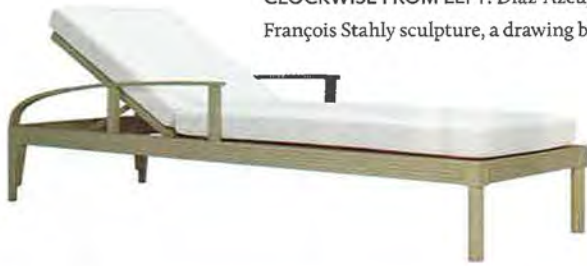


IN 1962, Orlando Diaz-Azcuy fled Cuba for the States. By 1976 he was the youngest vice president at the architectural giant Gensler, and in a short time he was its design principal. Emboldened by a furniture collection he had designed for Hickory Business Furniture (now HBF), he opened his own company in San Francisco in 1987. Interior design commissions flowed in. “I didn’t want them because I thought I’d be designing furniture,” he recalls. “But I’m not a person who says no.” Today, he and four associates, David Todd Oldroyd, Greg Stewart, Ian Bevilacqua, and Tamara Dinsmore, run an intentionally small firm known for exquisitely curated, minimalist luxury. “My philosophy is simplicity,” Diaz-Azcuy says. “I want everything to be understated.” The 76-year-old architect just completed the interior of a private jet, and he is working on two apartments in New York. Furniture projects, including a line of seating he recently created for Janus et Cie, also still dot his crowded to-do list. Despite his hectic schedule, he graciously said yes to *Robb Report Home & Style* when we asked him to discuss design and share his process. [JORGE S. ARANGO]

Boutique Mystique

When Diaz-Azcuy realized in the 1990s that he was beginning to re-create his lightning-paced Gensler experience at his own firm, he pared down his staff from 35 people to about 12. Having a smaller company has enabled him to give projects more exclusive, personalized service. “It allows me to design, to push my pencil at my desk,” he says.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Diaz-Azcuy’s Quadratl chaise for Janus et Cie’s new Masters Aluminum series; a striking vignette—a François Stahly sculpture, a drawing by Andy Warhol, and a Vistosi glass curtain—that he composed for a private residence in New York; the designer’s Aria chairs for McGuire, at a table in Ram’s Gate Winery’s barrel room, in Sonoma, Calif.; his Manon chandelier for Boyd; a Diaz-Azcuy–designed bar in a San Francisco tower being built by Heller Manus Architects; the designer’s San Francisco dining room, with a Deborah Oropallo painting and slipcovered McGuire Miami chairs in Fortuny fabric; a beach house of his design that pairs a Damien Hirst butterfly painting with an Axel Salto vase, a modern chaise, and a petrified wood table.



“I’m very impatient. I can’t be doing the same thing over and over. A variety of work and a variety of clients excite me.”

—ORLANDO DIAZ-AZCUY

THIS PAGE, BOTTOM: DAVID DUNCAN LIVINGSTON. OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: JOHN W. HALL; TOP RIGHT: ADRIAN GREGORUCCI; MIDDLE LEFT: STEELBLUE; BOTTOM: NATHAN KIRKMAN

Present Perfect

"I am a modernist, not a traditionalist or avant-gardist," says Diaz-Azcuy. "I'm practicing in 2015 and designing for people who are living *now*. My interiors need to satisfy the client at the time they are using them."

THIS PAGE: Orlando Diaz-Azcuy Design Associates' San Francisco headquarters (a "laboratory" for design, says Diaz-Azcuy) exemplifies the firm's contemporary philosophy. In addition to reference books, the library (near right) displays architectural models and Verner Panton chairs. The focal point in the reception area (far right) is the hide rug, which shares space with the designer's white-lacquered Kenya table for HBF. A presentation room (below) showcases custom tufted chairs in mohair, a Chinese altar table, and a painting of two Korean sisters by the San Francisco painter Lordan Bunch.



DAVID QUINLAN LIVINGSTON



Suite Surrender

At the southern end of the 1.3-acre property, which features abundant cove-facing garden areas (above) by landscape designer Neil Sickterman of the Associates Studio, guest suites (middle) connect via an outdoor hallway—a classic element of tropical design, says Schaub. “Having to get to different rooms through outdoor hallways is something that is very much a part of that tradition,” he says. In this home’s layout, each of the four guest suites has its own outdoor sitting area (bottom). Keeping each area’s Sunbrella curtains closed affords privacy, while opening them links the suites and allows for uninterrupted passage between them.

“The home can accommodate lots of people,” says the wife. “When we have all of our children and grandchildren here, everyone can find their own place. Then at other times, we can all gather together without it ever feeling crowded. Most of all, we didn’t want a huge, concrete house. This home manages to feel very spacious while keeping a warm and inviting feeling.”

