

the
good
life
on
the
gulf



A pineapple motif—symbol of hospitality—was blown up 1,000 times from an 18th-century engraving for a Studio Printworks wallpaper, which Kutner chose in Cream/Chocolate for his study. He cut out and glued one above the molding on each wall. OPPOSITE: All-weather Shimmer sheer curtains from Perennials surround the outdoor dining area. Chairs are by Munder-Skiles; the table is from Lars Bolander.





PENELOPE GREEN: This house is in Key West, but don't you also live in London?

MALCOLM JAMES KUTNER: Yes, I do. I like old houses, and taking care of old houses, and I live in an old house in each place. The London house was built in 1725. This house was built in 1898 by a Cuban shipbuilder for a cigar maker. The two countries, that's part of my background: One of my grandmothers was English, and the other was American. They were both very stylish. The English one was sort of old-guard, not decorated but well-considered. The other was very sleek and American in a Billy Baldwin kind of way. I am very, very inspired by both of them.

I know you love the culture of outdoor living. Where does that come from?

My American grandmother had a house in Guatemala, where all the houses are built around a central courtyard, which is used for everything from drying linen to throwing parties. When I was studying anthropology and architecture, I lived in Java and Bali. I was fascinated by the outdoor rooms there, and the transition that was almost seamless between the indoors and the outdoors. With outdoor living in general, it's about being friendly with nature and inviting it inside instead of trying to draw that heavy line in the sand that says, 'This is the outside and this is the inside.' Key West is all about living harmoniously with nature. Because it never freezes, you can

put things outside that you would never think of. People put their televisions outside.

You've put whole rooms outside here: there's an outdoor kitchen and a sitting and a dining room, under a covered porch.

You do it here because you can. And there are so many great fabrics now that are made for the outdoors—stripes, chenilles, sheers. You have all the options you'd have inside—you're not limited anymore to those old stiff "outdoor" fabrics.

What do you do when it rains sideways?

Just mop up.

It all looks like something out of a Somerset Maugham novel, or maybe something by Graham Greene. I can imagine an icy glass sweating in your hand, and a sultry breeze meandering through each room. How many windows do you have?

Thirty-four windows, and 8 French doors, all shuttered. The first thing I did when I bought the house was to have all the shutters removed and stripped. They are the original cypress ones, and they'd been painted so many times the louvers no longer moved. They were done by Liz Devries, who is the shutter restorer down here. She does it all by hand. I love the way you can manipulate light with louvers, the slatted shade that falls across a room. A lot of times I have the windows open and the shutters closed. They're the best hurricane protection,

THIS PAGE: Malcolm Kutner designed the indoor dining room like an entry hall, "a place to stop and read the mail. It's very English." The chandelier is by Archimede Seguso. The 19th-century table and whale vertebrae are from Humphrey Carrasco, London. The Aubusson is from Rahmanan. OPPOSITE: In the sitting room the Axel Vervoordt sofa and chairs are from Holly Hunt, Miami; apple matting is from Stark.





THIS PAGE: In the master bedroom, the walls and floors are painted Silver Lining, from Pratt & Lambert. The ceiling is a pale blue, #44 from Donald Kaufman. Bed is by Christian Liaigre; curtains and bed linens are Tapa with Stripe by Fortuny. Chaise longue and Bridgewater chair

by Axel Vervoordt. Table lamp from McGuire. **OPPOSITE:** In the guest room, bed from Thomas Moser; French bamboo armoire dates from 1900. The curtains are a Rogers & Goffigon Somerset linen. Wall color is Donald Kaufman #11. Accessories are from Key Accents in Key West.



too. They keep the water out, but the wind can move through. This house breathes beautifully.

The wood in your indoor sitting room is a glorious color, like warm honey.

It's Dade County pine, and it doesn't exist anymore; all the insides of the houses here were clad with it. The floors are the original cypress, and that matting is called apple matting. It's made in England, and has been a fixture in country houses there since the 16th century. Prince Charles has it in the drawing room at Highgrove. I like to work with a lot of natural materials: bare wood walls, stone, hemp, linen. It's sort of more about bringing my fascination with outdoor living inside. So I love that what we do when we decorate is to take stone, linen, metal—something from the quarry, the field, the mine—and cultivate it into something that's comfortable and useful. You're surrounded by nature in its most refined forms. This is the stuff I think about all the time. I try not to lose the spirit of nature.

What was the first thing you did here when the house was finally finished last November?

Because I read a lot, and have a lot of friends, it's really important to me that each chair have a table where you can put a drink or a book, and a light to read by. So the first thing I did was to sit in every chair and on every sofa with a book or the newspaper. I made sure I could see, and that there was a place for my feet if I wanted to put them up.

What are you reading right now?

Nancy Lancaster: English Country House Style, by Martin Wood. Nancy Lancaster was a Virginian who moved to England and paired up with John Fowler, who was later part of Colefax and Fowler. There was a certain mellowness that she achieved, a kind of undecoratedness. That's hard to do. I'll just read you a little part that really resonates for me: 'She transformed the way people on both sides of the Atlantic decorated their homes, laid out their gardens, lived their lives.'

I know you're newly settled in here, but have you established any house rituals yet?

There is one that's left over from my childhood, where you wake up the house in the morning and at night you put it to bed. Closure at the end of the day, and opening at the beginning. Every night I turn off all the lights and draw the curtains and close the shutters, even in the guest room when no one is there. And in the morning, I open them all again. My English grandmother was very particular in that way. It's nice to talk about them, my grandmothers. You have to integrate your past into your home. It doesn't have to be actual objects, but maybe just a feeling. Of course, a lot of people don't have happy pasts, but I was lucky to. I'm very connected to my house. I can't wait to go home, and what's wonderful about a little village like Key West is I can go home a lot during the day. It's great to feel that there is no place that's as comfortable, and no food as good. *PRODUCED BY SENGA MORTIMER*

The study has the first piece of furniture Kutner bought for himself—a desk with a red leather top. He found it in London for \$200. The pair of desk lamps are from Pottery Barn; the single lamp behind it is from Baker. The floor lamp is custom-made from

a mangrove branch by Ed Koehler; from Holly Hunt, Miami. The shades are from Conrad; the bookcase from Archeo Gallery in Key West; the antique kilim from Rahmanan in New York. Trim paint is Blackwatch Green from Pratt & Lambert.





“At 18 by 25 feet, the indoor kitchen is the biggest room in the house, and it has no wall cabinets, except for those covering the refrigerator, pantry, and freezer. Everything else is under a huge 12-foot island in the center. The *frutera*, the wooden statue holding those pomegranates, is from Rio; *fruter*as were used in the markets there to sell fruit. She’s an early-20th-century piece. During Mardi Gras in Key West, she wears Mardi Gras beads. I like to cook for people, not dinner for one on a Tuesday night.”



“The outdoor kitchen cabinets and the doors to the outdoor bathroom and shower are made from old cypress shutters, from a stockpile that my shutter restorer, Liz Devries, has. So many people want shiny new shutters, so she rescues lots of old ones. She’s got quite a stash. Should I tell you the truth? I haven’t yet been in the pool. I love to look at it. When it’s still you can see the reflection of the sky, the trees, and the house. This is why I love dark pools.”

“This is a great old house with great bones, and all that clichéd stuff. When I bought it, it had a 150-foot garden out back with a pool, but no real relationship between the house and the garden. Which is why I built the covered porch and the outdoor kitchen and shower. Any design is about the creation of atmosphere. The nice thing about this garden is that I can have a party for 200 or Sunday dinner for six, and it’s just as intimate either way.”



“Food here is all about fresh fish and a lot of tropical fruit. Last Sunday night we had burgers and seafood skewers. For small parties I might play something mellow like lounge music, or Brazilian samba music. It goes well with the flowing curtains and the dim lights. I keep a full bar on hand so people can have whatever they want. I set it all up on a table on the porch and let people help themselves.”



THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE:
From the outdoor sitting
and dining room you can see
the pool through the gaps
in the sheer curtains. All
the fabric—the curtains and
upholstery—is from Peren-
nials. The fabric on the sofa
is Ishi. The accent pillows,
blockprinted by hand in India,
are from John Robshaw. Ceil-
ing is painted in Benjamin
Moore Polar Ice. Poolside
chairs from McGuire in
Perennials' Big Stripe fabric.
Sun loungers are Brown
Jordan, with Peter Fasano
Key Biscayne cushions. FOR
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