

THE MYSTIQUE OF MUSTIQUE

A STUNNING VILLA ON
THE EXCLUSIVE
ISLAND OF MUSTIQUE
IS A MASTERWORK BY
TOP INTERIOR DESIGNER
DAVID KLEINBERG

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Magical Mustique
This exquisite private villa on
Mustique is a successful collaboration
between the Italian architect Paolo
Piva and top American interior
designer David Kleinberg.

It's hard to predict what might inspire

David Kleinberg. The acclaimed interior designer, who heads up New York City-based David Kleinberg Design Associates, might feel inspiration strike when he admires the works of luminaries such as architect Lee Mindel or French interior designer Jacques Grange, or even during a great opera production, like Robert Lepage's controversial version of Richard Wagner's "The Ring Cycle" at the Metropolitan Opera.

"I was riveted by the imagination that went into reconceiving something that everyone had such a strong opinion about," Kleinberg says of the opera, his voice heavy with awe. "What inspires me are things that visually stick in the mush of my brain that I dredge up."

Drawing inspiration from everything around him is certainly one of the reasons Kleinberg has been such a sought-after designer for more than three decades. A member of the coveted "Architectural Digest" 2014 AD100 list, Kleinberg creates spaces that are as beautiful and elegant as they are livable and functional.

"I always think that houses are essentially big machines for living," he says. "Most of my clients come because they're interested in building the nicest home they can for their family, not a showplace."

And what beautiful machines David Kleinberg-designed

homes are, from seaside retreats in Nassau and East Hampton to more modern, concrete constructions in Malibu.

One stunning example of his masterworks is Hummingbird, an exceptional private villa overlooking the Grenadines in the azure waters of the Caribbean on the ultra-exclusive island of Mustique.

Operating with the belief that "the walls have to be right before you can decorate them," Kleinberg began his work on Hummingbird by collaborating with the Italian architect Paolo Piva. Kleinberg's approach is driven by the imagination. "I start with: Why not? Couldn't we? What if?" he says.

For instance, he suggested details like the varying textures of travertine throughout the villa. The mixtures of rough-hewn and smooth-finish travertine on the exterior, and honed and slightly textured travertine on the terrace floor, created rich depth and patterns using the same material.

The travertine also provided the perfect canvas for the villa's neutral color palate of creams and beiges, resulting in a place that exudes the clean, calm aesthetic of a home in the islands.

Kleinberg also took great care in crafting Hummingbird's furniture and its arrangement. First, he took stock of how the space would actually be used. Like many vacation homes, Hummingbird boasts lots of bedrooms – a master bedroom, five guest bedrooms and a guesthouse – plus several large common spaces where everyone gathers to relax, read and eat.

With rooms as expansive as Hummingbird's, Kleinberg knew he had to strike a balance with the furniture, creating intimacy in a large-scale space. "We were always trying to be mindful of making sure it would feel comfortable, even if you were only two or three people in the space," Kleinberg says.

He achieved this by creating what he calls "smaller moments" within the larger space with additions such as "little funny twig stools" in one of the rooms and a large Indian day bed on the side terrace.

The home's expansive scale, along with its indoor/outdoor nature, is why Kleinberg decided to design much of Hummingbird's furniture himself. In doing so, he looked to a range of aesthetics, such as mid-century and contemporary, and reinterpreted those designs in materials like teak and stone that could withstand Mustique's temperatures and humidity.

"Everything has to be very practical," he says.

"Everything has to hold up to the wear and tear of nature, and the wear and tear of a vacation home, of people being a little more relaxed."

Among the custom-designed pieces that best exemplifies this pleasant marriage of beauty and

Visionary villa
Indoor and outdoor spaces are cleverly designed to make the most of the villa's stunning panoramas.





functionality is Kleinberg's riff on a picnic table for the dining pavilion. Topped with slats of metal with a car-paint finish, the table is actually three separate pieces that can be pulled apart and rearranged for different shapes and functions.

"It was sort of a geometric puzzle," Kleinberg says. "You could put these tables together and form a giant square, or you could form a rectangle, or one long picnic-style table."

The furniture's layout in the house also caters to the stunning views that Hummingbird's residents and guests enjoy, thanks to the villa's enviable perch atop a very high point in Mustique.

Kleinberg says one can see completely through the house and out to the water from the home's entrance path, so the furniture in the windowless, wide-open great room is arranged to the left and right of the entrance, allowing for an unobstructed view.

"You can walk right to the railing, and you have a breathtaking view down over that massive terrace with the big travertine pool, which is an infinity edge pool," Kleinberg says. "It's definitely all oriented to the view."

But the main house isn't the only place with a view. A garden path through Hummingbird's tropical gardens leads to a gum tree-nestled guesthouse with its own infinity edge pool. "It really feels like a tree house where you can see the water," Kleinberg says.

Exquisitely envisioned ocean homes like Hummingbird are, of course, jaw-droppingly beautiful, but aesthetics aren't the only reason clients choose to work with Kleinberg. He also prides himself on having a highly professional team that generates superior results.

Inside out
Kleinberg says one can see completely through the house to the water, the massive terrace and infinity pool.





Sitting pretty
Kleinberg's design and placement of the furniture take their cues from the layout of the villa and how spaces would be used.



"Having great ideas is not worth very much if you can't produce them," Kleinberg says.

That work ethic began long before he founded David Kleinberg Design Associates in 1997. He began working for the firm Denning & Fourcade in New York City as an office assistant while attending Trinity College as a liberal arts and urban studies student, absorbing everything he could and eventually taking on more and larger responsibilities.

"I figured out how to make myself more and more essential," he says. Kleinberg continued to work for Denning & Fourcade after he graduated in 1976, then moved to Mara Palmer, and later Parish-Hadley Associates, both based in New York, before venturing out on his own.

THE DETAILS
For more information on David Kleinberg Design Associates, visit dkda.com.

Kleinberg also hopes that working with him will always be a pleasant, joyful experience for clients, as well as a productive one.

"My approach has always been: What we do is a great privilege," Kleinberg says of his work. "I don't take it for granted that I get to build these rather extraordinary places for people and their families to live." **OIH**



Hummingbird's interior designer David Kleinberg

