

Metropolitan Home

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winners!

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FEATURING
OUR
MIAMI
WINNER

JANUARY/
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USA \$3.00
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February 13, 1995

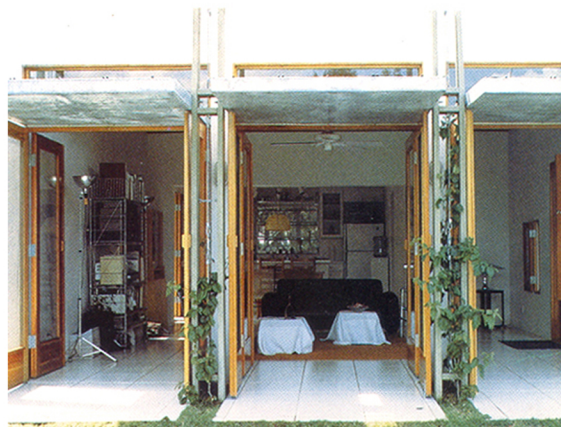


The living room was conceived as a garden pavilion—open to breezes and light and vistas of tropical green. The family (opposite) thinks of the garden as “an extension of the interior,” René Gonzalez says, “and often uses it for entertaining.” See Resources.



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René Gonzalez For a living room addition that proves what's out is definitely in.



Miami, Florida When architect René Gonzalez moved from L.A. back to his native South Florida with his wife, Connie, and their daughters, Katerina, 5, and Nina Enis, 3, they took up residence in a guest cottage on a large property near the Everglades. The house was just too small and uncomfortable, Gonzalez reports, "so we added on the living room, which is basically a box that opens onto the garden." The idea was to do it quickly and cheaply. He built it himself, with the help of his

brother, a contractor. "I relied on exterior spaces to make small rooms seem larger than they are."

Gonzalez, 31, an assistant professor of architecture at Florida International University, had been in Los Angeles to work with Richard Meier on the Getty Center for the Arts. He designs from what he calls "the essence of a place—its climate, its spirit." And he loves Miami. "It's a great place to raise a family. It also offers opportunities to explore the ambiguous relationship between inside and outside."

Through deceptively simple architectural gestures, his own living room seems to dissolve into the garden. "The two solid side walls force movement out through the

wall of glass at the room's end," Gonzalez says. Over the single-paned French doors, aluminum canopies shield the room from sun and rain and reinforce this outward thrust; vertical cables hung between the doors to support the canopies also serve a more poetic purpose: "Vines will eventually grow up these cables, making the wall evaporate as it slowly turns green."

The benefits of the renovation have been manifold. "Even in the humid Florida summer we leave the air conditioner off and the doors open most of the time," he says. "And it is so nice for my daughters to flow in and out, without necessarily *being* in or out. The garden has become a delightful place of discovery for them." Not to mention a source of inspiration for their father. ■

By Anthony Barzilay Freund

