

BUILDING OUT OF THE BOX

While many Space Coast homeowners remain architecturally conservative, others push the envelope, granting architects and home designers an opportunity to let their imaginations soar, and create truly unique gems

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Tucked into nooks and crannies of Brevard are homes with architectural features that serve as mini-vacations for the soul, residences that can transport us from the ubiquitously mundane into the unexpectedly exotic.

Granted, their numbers are small, because when it comes to architecture, the Space Coast and neighboring Treasure Coast prefer the traditional.

"We're extremely conservative in terms of architecture," says Andrew Scott Kirschner of Jackson Kirschner Architects in Melbourne.

Space Coast homeowners figure that if Mediterranean or Key West-styles have worked before, why mess with success, particularly if you're lavishing \$5 million into the creation of your home.

"When people build expensive homes, they fear going out of the norm," Kirschner explains. "They wonder that if they do something out of the ordinary, they will end up with a lame duck. They are afraid that if they

do something that's too radical, they may not be able to sell the house later on."

Kirschner feels it is an architect's duty to reveal the realm of possibilities to his clients.

"I try to push the envelope with my clients," he says. "Some of them push back, but many are open to new ideas."

Homes that defy the norm are hard to come by because it's all too easy to settle for comfortable regional favorites.

"In the North, it's some version of the Colonial, but here, it's Mediterranean," says architect Anthony Mazza of Anthony Mazza Architects in Indialantic.

However, now may be the time to let imaginations soar, for the Space Coast remains one of the most affordable places in the country to make dreams reality.

"If you have the wherewithal, Brevard is the perfect place to build," Kirschner says.

Since you can build two unique houses on the Space Coast for the price of a custom home in Naples, two homes are just what



Above: The rear exterior of this Cocoa home, with architecture by Tony Mazza, offers a screened-in walkway, connecting to an adjacent three-story home with wood paneling and sharp architecture. Previous pages: Fine detailing is prevalent throughout this Jackson Kirschner Architects' French country-inspired Lansing Island residence, which required extensive historical research to design.

Yolanda Serrano and her husband Xavier Mudavachery ordered from Renee White, builder with CCC Holding Company in Palm Bay.

For the Serrano/Mudavachery residence, White worked magic on a 10-year-old, 3,000-square-foot vinyl-sided riverside Colonial in Rockledge. After she was finished, the once ordinary abode had been transformed into a 9,000-square-foot fantasy Mexican hacienda.

"To say we remodeled the house would be a gross understatement," White says.

The couple was so pleased with the results that they bought the adjoining property and have commissioned White to create an Oriental residence that will mimic a 300-year-old Japanese temple.

"In the process of doing the Mexican house, they found a true love for Japanese design," White says.

For White, the projects have been extremely challenging, but equally rewarding.

"Nobody likes to repeat themselves, so we never like to do the same thing twice," White says. "These projects allow



Left: The five-level fountain of this hacienda Rockledge home, transformed by CCC Holding Company, is framed by two blue olive oil jars that continuously spill water onto hand-painted tiles.

us to stretch our imagination.”

While the hacienda looks inward to spacious interiors and a 3,000-square-foot courtyard, the Japanese home will serenely gaze outward to a 9,000-square-foot courtyard that will include a meditation garden and koi ponds.

White was able to adjust plans to save most of the hacienda's original Colonial footprint. For the Japanese home, however, she turned lean and mean, taking the 1930s structure down to just a couple of exterior walls and the slab.

“The couple wants it authentic and real,” White says.

Take, for example, the home's Japanese tiles.

“One of the few places these tiles are used in Central Florida is at the Japanese Pavilion at EPCOT,” says White, who is importing the Serrano/Mudavachery's tiles from Japan.

Notwithstanding the effort required for the right stuff, White is excited about the possibilities of the Serrano/Mudavachery's Asia-inspired home.

“It's going to be amazing,” White says.

Not that the hacienda skimps on curb appeal.

“There are gardens and gardens and gardens,” White says.

The hacienda's outdoor spaces incorporate a cabana wing with sauna, steam and exercise rooms, a kiva fireplace, summer kitchen with ice maker, refrigerator, warming drawer, side burner and main grill and two walls of built-in seating.



Above: At dusk, lighting illuminates this contemporary Merritt Island home, designed by Rennie and Spencer Biest, showcasing sleek lines that radiate a South Beach finesse.

Next to the front entrance and its 10-foot custom mahogany door is a highly original fountain framed by two handsome blue olive oil jars that continuously spill water onto hand-painted tiles.

“There are five different levels in that fountain,” says White, who estimates that working the kinks in the fountain design took more than a year.

For contractors and tradesmen, unique homes like the Serrano/Mudavachery residence can be challenging, but ultimately life changing.

“It elevated everyone to the level you never say it can’t be done,” White says.

Farther south, in three Lansing Island projects, Kirschner, like White, was given free rein with his imagination.

The architect proved with these homes that if you can build outside the envelope and still comply with Lansing Island’s strict standards for roof pitch, materi-

als, overhangs, setbacks and footprint size, then you can build anything anywhere.

Scarlett O’Hara’s fantasies probably included a home like the turbo-charged “Tara” that Kirschner designed for a Lansing Island client. This is plantation-style on steroids, an in-your-face look at Southern living sure to induce the swoons on many a “Gone with the Wind” belle.

Not far from the Southern manse is another Kirschner project that, although termed a Mediterranean, seems to draw its origins not from a sun-dappled villa, but rather from a complex and breath-stopping museum.

This 10,000-square-foot home never stops teasing the eye as seemingly endless roof elevations punctuate the sky with three fireplace lookouts replicating castle turrets.



Left: From the second-story balcony of this Parrott Homes' constructed horseshoe-shaped residence in West Melbourne, a comfy sofa overlooks the screened-in back patio and lake.



Above: This remarkable Southern plantation-style mansion by Jackson Kirschner Architects is set behind a peaceful lake on Lansing Island. Right: Unique pieces of stone seem to tumble down the exterior first floor of this Cocoa home, built by Brandon Development Enterprises, Inc., transitioning to blend with the home's landscaping.

For yet another Lansing Island client, who preferred the comfortable elegance of French country, Kirschner realized a 7,500-square-foot gorgeously Gallic residence with a limestone slate roof imported from Vermont.

Building out of the box can be time-consuming. Both White and Kirschner took years of research and tweaking — which continued throughout the building process — to finalize plans. The Serrano/Mudavachery home, for example, took four years.

“Building these houses requires a lot of historical research,” says Kirschner, who maintains an extensive library of architectural books for reference.

At the Chilberg residence, where Brevard meets Indian River County at Little Hollywood, Anthony Mazza was blessed with spectacular views of the Sebastian River but dogged with the problem of blending a motor home garage into a West Indies-inspired home.

“We spent a year and a half designing this house,” Mazza says.

Mazza decided ultimately to highlight the recreational vehicle garage.



Anthony Mazza Architects and Chilberg Construction teamed to design and build this Sebastian home, blending a motor-car garage with a West Indies-inspired flair.





Above: Covering 10,000 square feet, this Mediterranean-style Lansing Island mansion, designed by Jackson Kirschner Architects, conjures thoughts of a modern-day castle.

A decorative tower, reminiscent of a lighthouse, adorns one side of the building. With the lot's proximity to water, the tower blends right into the landscape.

"It helps give the project some scale," Mazza says.

With the guidance of landscape architect Susan Hall, Mazza incorporated the stand-alone structure into an imposing motor court that leads to the main house.

Owner Barbara Chilberg loves the lighthouse of her "RV Barn."

"Every night the light comes on," she says. "It gives the house a friendly feel."

"The owners originally wanted a Florida Cracker house, but it eventually evolved into a West Indies-style that takes full benefit of the marvelous views," Mazza says. "From the second floor, you can see all the way to the inlet."

The West Indies clapboard look was brought into the 21st century with the use of Hardie plank siding, a

cement product that looks like clapboard.

A breezeway connects to a four-car garage with a studio apartment on the second floor.

Steven and Barbara Chilberg have a unique perspective on the demands of such construction. They are not only the owners, but also builders.

"Everything had to be perfect, so no sub would let the others slack," Barbara Chilberg says. "We wanted a friendly house, a place that when you pull up to it, you smile. And we got it."

Mazza echoes the sentiment of other architects and designers who feel the headaches that are part of creating something unique are well worth the satisfaction of a project well done.

"I actually enjoy it when people come in and want a different style," he says. "While it's fun to do a style you've done before, it's always more fun to experiment." ♦