




divine
Getaway

Notice how there is limited light trespass above the house, thanks to the careful lighting techniques that place emphasis on the entryway steps, foyer, cupola, and welcoming landscape.



In ancient Roman mythology, Salacia (Neptune's wife) was regarded as the goddess of the sea — a fitting name for this newly constructed private residence on Turks & Caicos island featuring lighting design by James Solecki.

BY LINDA LONGO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES SOLECKI



Although the trussed ceiling offers plenty of country charm, it presented a challenge for illuminating the room evenly and unobtrusively.

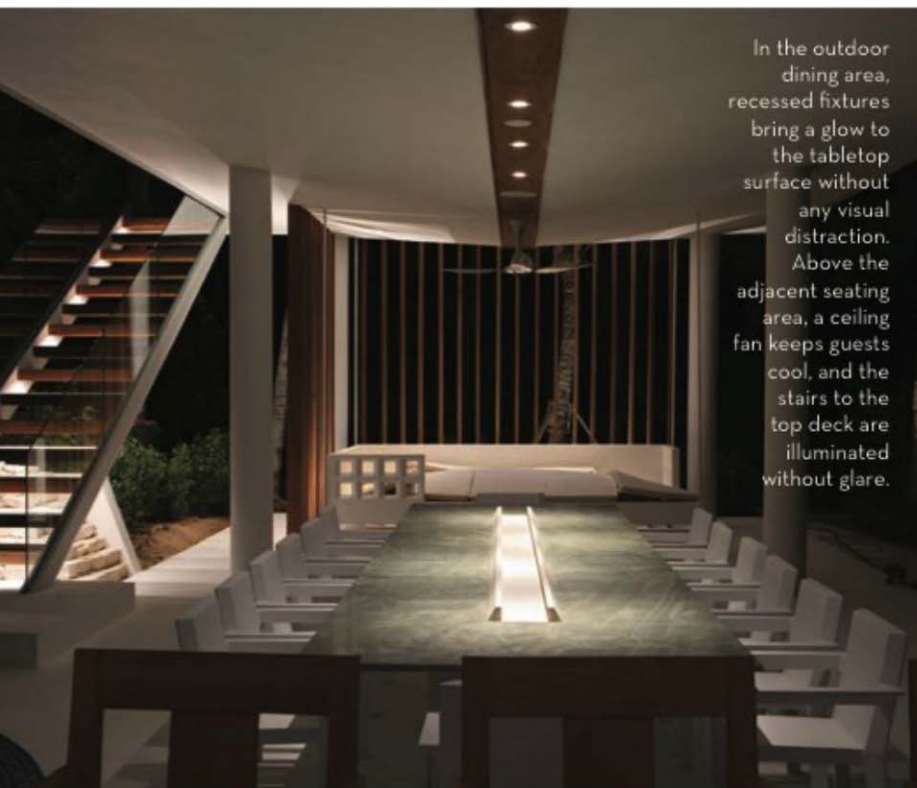
Over the past 20 years as President & Chief Designer at JSLDesign Inc. and President & Designer at INTEGRA - Bespoke Lighting Systems, James Solecki has enjoyed a significant amount of success handling North American projects from his home base in Ontario, Canada.

In 2015, his work brought him to the Caribbean island of Turks & Caicos when he was hired for a condominium's LED relamping project. Impressed with the unlimited possibilities for future work there, Solecki returned home with the notion of starting a lighting design consultancy on the island. Fortunately, his wife, Kate, and their high school-age children were on board with the idea. One year later, Solecki established his business in Turks & Caicos and almost immediately was booking projects with local builders and architects. (The Soleckis commute back and forth to their Ontario home and the kids attend school in Canada).

"When people told me, 'You're in for the

challenge of your life,' they were so right," Solecki notes, adding, "but I was up for it." Turks & Caicos is unique in that there are - deliberately - no big brands on the island. Everything is independently owned, including most of the resort properties. An architect renovating a luxurious vacation property for a wealthy couple sought Solecki's expertise when it came to the lighting. The couple had never hired a lighting designer before and were even more surprised to learn that there was one available on the island.

"During my consultation with the clients, I talked about the quality of light [for each room] and how with so much glass there was a way to make the light between the outside and indoors appear seamless," he explains. Considering those tall windows that emphasize the gorgeous natural views, Solecki proposed an innovative way to achieve balanced illumination in rooms with high ceilings without having the lighting fixtures appear obtrusive.



In the outdoor dining area, recessed fixtures bring a glow to the tabletop surface without any visual distraction. Above the adjacent seating area, a ceiling fan keeps guests cool, and the stairs to the top deck are illuminated without glare.

Impressed, the clients immediately hired Solecki and gave him carte blanche. "I came up with ideas that I had never implemented before," he remarks. "For example, I couldn't use downlights because of the trusses on the structure, so I found a way to nestle monorail in between them. I also did a lot of linear LED strip as uplighting and to get away from having visible light sources."

Solecki's theatrical lighting background came to the forefront when devising his lighting plan. "I did a lot of projected light as well as reflected light sources," he explains, adding, "Everything inside and outside the house is tightly controlled from a lighting beam standpoint."

Since there is much less light pollution on the island than anywhere in North America, Solecki stressed the need to have balanced, proper lighting at nighttime on the property without interfering with the surrounding environment (i.e. sea turtles and dark skies). "For the massive deck, I used downlighting from the trees, but at full cut-off, since I'm really cautious about glare and light trespass," he explains.



The circular dining nook's windows can be simultaneously closed via motorized shades for privacy or to create a different ambiance. The centerpiece is a custom decorative lighting fixture by Jeremy Cole.



ABOVE: The master bedroom is awash in bright white for a clean, crisp setting that can easily be dimmed for a more relaxing aesthetic. While discretely placed fixtures on the trussed ceiling provide ambient illumination, portable lamps add a light level at mid-range for a cozier feeling.

RIGHT: A Modern-style ceiling fan blends in with the trussed ceiling in the kitchen, discretely concealing the monorail lighting, which highlights the work surfaces. Soffit and undercabinet lighting provide even washes of illumination on the backsplashes and walls.



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“What I wanted to do [overall] was redefine lighting design on the island,” Solecki says. He has done just that, utilizing transformers from Q-Tran, downlights from Contrast Lighting; lamps/bulbs from Soraa; outdoor lighting from Auroralight, Excelsior, and Illumicare; Pentair pool and spa lighting, Lutron controls; plus a custom chandelier by New Zealand artist Jeremy Cole that the client commissioned (there are reportedly only 20 such fixtures in the world). “My wife and I spent 17 hours hanging the porcelain leaves on it,” he recounts.

Working as a lighting designer in the Caribbean has its advantages and challenges. One of the pluses is that the clientele is global with property owners hailing from the United States, Great Britain, the Middle East, Russia, and Germany. On the flip side, procurement and delivery can make keeping a project on track complicated. “The expectations are fierce and fast,” he adds.

With a power grid operated by a Canadian company, the Turks & Caicos’ islands are surprisingly stable when it comes to power supply. “I’ve found the power grid in Turks & Caicos to be more stable and robust than in rural Ontario,” Solecki quips. “They’ve done a great job on infrastructure.”

Solecki finds himself far busier than he originally estimated. “The resort business has really picked up, especially with outdoor lighting renewal, and I have roughly 11 projects in the tube. In addition there are a few developments, such as a villa project, that have come on stream.”

The change in environment has creatively energized Solecki as well. “The work is great because the building technology is different. I’m loving the opportunity to bring cool lighting design to the island. [This area] is a blank canvas from a lighting designer’s point of view. Establishing a business here has been the realization of a dream come true.” ♦