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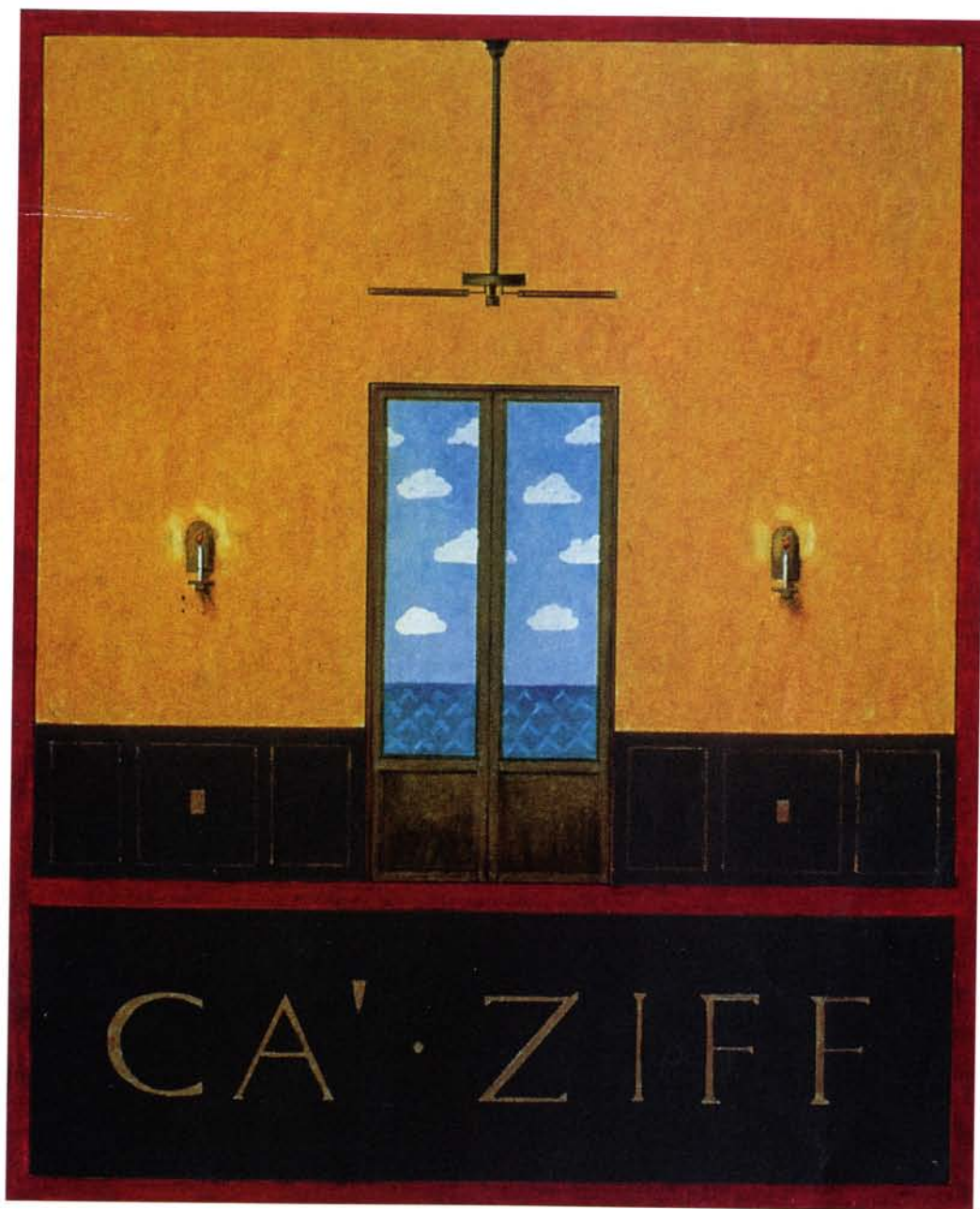
PUTTING STYLE IN  
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SOMETHING **NEW** UNDER THE

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BY VINCENT SCULLY

THE ZIFF HOUSE, or Ca'Ziff as its architects call it, is an artifact of that brilliant Caribbean culture into which the city of Miami has now been drawn, and of which it is rapidly becoming the leader. Far more civilized than the old relationship between the United States and the

Hispanic countries off its shores, this new partnership offers the hope of mutual achievement in all the social arts, particularly in architecture and the building of communities more humane than the old. Of that eventuality, Ca'Ziff may be taken as a portent. [The drawing above is an architect's rendering.]





The Ziff house itself is a union of American cultures: North in the owners; South in the architects, Teofilo Victoria and Maria de la Guardia, of Colombian and Cuban descent. The Ziffs are lovers of the arts, especially music, and support them generously. Their austere, square-built house on the shore of Biscayne Bay was designed to house two generations (soon to be three) within its walls. Its character is therefore much more that of a palazzo block than of a typical suburban dwelling; it has a public quality. This is a house of the Mediterranean, by way of the Caribbean: The solid balconies (the front facade, above) on both the water and the landward sides are perforated with quatrefoils derived from Christopher Columbus' brother's house in Santo Domingo. And like all Caribbean structures it is built of concrete block with concrete lintels, and covered with stucco treated with lime-based paints in a Caribbean palette of buffs, yellows, terra-cottas, pinks, and blues that recall the Italo-Hispanic range of colors as well. Terrazzo floors and Miami's wonderful coral stone are employed throughout the house where appropriate.

In contrast to a loggia'd guesthouse, the main house presents a stern and symmetrical facade (above) to the court. The stairs are monumental, graphically contrasting dark and light concrete planes. Behind them, a range of doors, all alike, admit us to a square entrance hall. Everything floods in with the light off the Bay, and the associations called

up by this building in this place are of Cuba and the seaward islands, La Viglia [Ernest Hemingway's house in Havana], Capri and Naples itself.

MIAMI ARCHITECTS TEOFILO AND MARIA VICTORIA (WITH TASIO) ARE EXTENDED FAMILY TO THE ZIFFS (FROM LEFT): SANFORD, HELENE, DEAN AND JANIA.



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**T**HIS IS THE NEW MIAMI, EMBRACING the Mediterranean and the southern seas. The site itself is a Miami archetype, filled with subtropical vegetation called "Brickell hammock," reaching out in tangled mangroves toward the Bay. A public park adjoins it on one side. On the other, a series of private villas, lost in the jungle, leads to the historic house Vizcaya.

We enter from the coastal road and traverse the hammock to reach the Ziff house, a two-building complex (see plan, right) composed of a square-shaped main house and rectangular guesthouse across a grassy court. Its first manifestation is,

"ALTHOUGH THIS HOUSE LOOKS ITALIAN RENAISSANCE," SAYS DEAN ZIFF, "IT COULD ONLY BE IN MIAMI." THE FACADE (ABOVE, LEFT) IS OF LOCAL CORAL AND

LIMESTONE. DOUBLE DOORS THROUGHOUT, BUT ESPECIALLY IN THE LIVING ROOM (ABOVE), DRAW COOL AIR OFF THE BAY (AT RIGHT IN THE PLAN BELOW).







rather unexpectedly, a tennis court, representing an enthusiasm of the owners.

**T**HE COURT SEEMS A SOMEWHAT soft and suburban feature for so highly charged a setting, but the high, flat wall that terminates it, with its dramatic balcony and small, rather sinister entrance door down below, appropriately suggests far more violent, possibly tragic, uses for the space: a running of bulls, an auto-da-fé. The wall is the rear of a guesthouse that, on the other side, defines an ample courtyard facing the

landward entrance to the main block itself. The facade of the guesthouse (right) is one of the major delights of the group as a whole. Its base is very high in proportion—its door, again, very small.

The architect describes the court as half-European plaza and half-New England green. It is surfaced with that wonderful, thick-bladed saw grass, common in Florida, which can be used for parking lots, so impervious is it to automobile traffic. Indeed, the family normally leaves its cars standing about rakishly right there, rather than bothering to



maneuver them into the enclosed garage on the basement floor of the house.

All this is in the best style of the University of Miami, where Teofilo Victoria is a distinguished teacher. Its new architecture school has been designed by the Italian architect Aldo Rossi, whose haunting buildings and projects, archetypes of the Mediterranean tradition, are directly reflected in the Ziff house. Victoria, like Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, the major architectural influences in the school, acknowledges Rossi as a mentor, along with the

DESPITE ITS GRANDEUR, THE LOGGIA (ABOVE) IS OF SIMPLE DESIGN AND MATERIALS. POROUS CORAL FLOORS AND SIENNA-COLORED CONCRETE WALLS GIVE IT AN AIR OF ANTIQUITY.

MUSIC OFTEN FILLS THE COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE GUESTHOUSE (RIGHT). THE ZIFFS BUILT THIS HARD-WORKING ADDITION WITH TWO APARTMENTS SO THAT VISITING MUSICIANS COULD PRACTICE IN PRIVATE.



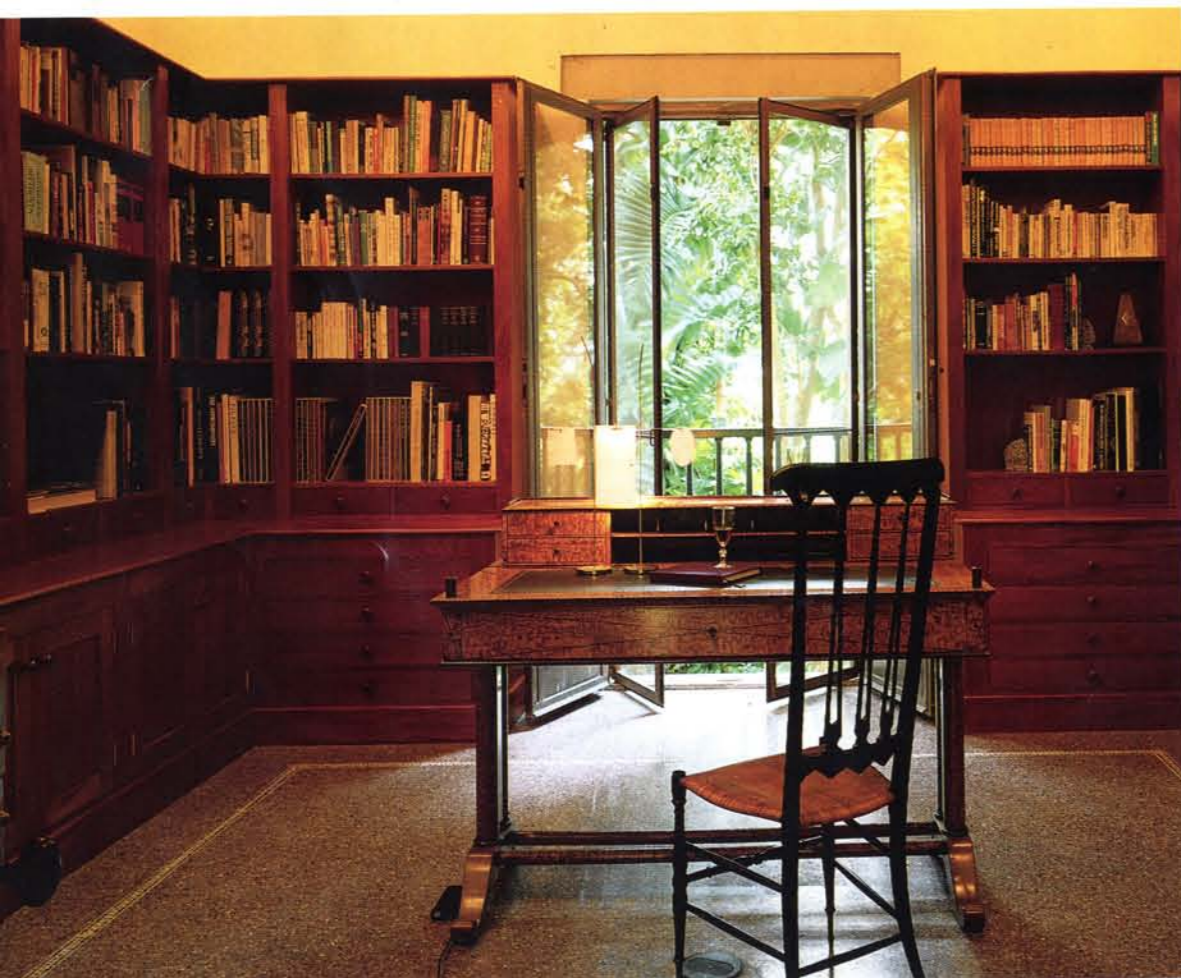




THIS HOUSE IS DEVOTED TO COMMUNITY AND ENTERTAINING, BUT PRIVACY HAS A SPECIAL PLACE. THE UPSTAIRS ROOMS ARE SANCTUARIES: "I ALWAYS CALL MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW FIRST BEFORE CROSSING THE HALL TO VISIT," SAYS HELENE, WHOSE DRESSING ROOM (LEFT) LEADS TO THE BATH.

THE KITCHEN (RIGHT) IS CAPABLE OF FEEDING A COUPLE, OR A CROWD GATHERED FOR A CONCERT. THE COUNTERTOPS ARE POLISHED GRANITE. THE CABINETRY IS MAHOGANY. THROUGH THE DOOR IS THE DINING ROOM.

BEHIND THE LIVING ROOM, THE LIBRARY IS "THE GEM WITHIN A TREASURE OF A HOUSE," SAYS DEAN. MAHOGANY SHELVES ARE BRIGHTENED BY COOL TERRAZZO FLOORS AND CARIBBEAN-STYLE, INWARD-OPENING WINDOWS.



ily, and they have little to do with burgherish comfort or immediate convenience. In these rooms, one feels the generosity, perhaps even the nobility, of the high spaces. Such qualities again recall the work of Rossi and Krier—especially in the hall-like living room and bedroom facing the Bay, where the sea breeze blows the long white curtains back into the room.

Essential in understanding the house is its physical and historical relationship to Vizcaya, which lies just south of it on the shore. That incomparable fantasy, all Mediterranean and Caribbean as well, was built for James Deering by Hoffman, Suarez and Chalfin from 1914 to 1916. It is open to the public, and has

become one of Miami's major symbols and joys. A visitor is struck by the comparison Vizcaya suggests with the great villas of turn-of-the-century Newport. But it more convincingly evokes

European classical traditions than those exotic mansions do. It is after all set in an authentically Mediterranean setting, and its gardens are of an appropriately fantastic luxuriance impossible to achieve in Rhode Island. The loot of Europe that is built into Vizcaya seems much more at home here than in its cousins to the north.

Like Vizcaya, the Ziff house acknowledges America's passionate and often contradictory love affair with Europe, and makes the most of it.



classically inspired British architect Leon Krier. Says Victoria, "These architects have shown us anew the beauty, and the value, of pure forms."

**R**OOMS ARE HIGH AND BEAUTIFULLY proportioned; the clients can use them as they will. Furniture can be there or not, and of any kind. One is reminded of families in the Veneto, camping out in Palladio's villas after World War II with iron camp beds and old officers' chairs. The virtues engaged are aristocratic ones: They involve the extended, not the nuclear fam-



**D**ESPITE ITS RELATIVELY SPARTAN intentions, it is equally certain of its position in the world. The Ziff architects were right to draw the house's seaside perspective as if Vizcaya, not to mention the Biltmore in Coral Gables, could be seen with it; they belong together fairly enough.

The floor plan is very beautiful in itself, regular but intricate, clearly loved by the architect for its own intrinsic order. It is a square, and all its spaces are on a four-foot module, so that the effect is indeed Palladian throughout. Beyond the entrance hall, the atrium (right) opens to the full height of the house. Says Victoria, "The atrium is related to a typical Caribbean porch, but we collapsed it into the house because the lot was so narrow." This square room is lighted from above and has an impluvium in the floor.

It is the heart of the house and, so Victoria tells us, its lung, drawing air up through it and integrally cooling the interior. A small door, surmounted high up by a

*Produced by Newell Turner, Timothy J. Ward with Nisi Berryman; Architecture by Teofilo Victoria and Maria de la Guardia with Tomas Lopez-Gottardi Photographs by Steven Brooke*



SOMETIMES A ROOM THAT'S NOT A ROOM AT ALL SERVES A HOUSE'S INHABITANTS MOST. FOR THE ZIFFS, THE ATRIUM IS THAT MAGICAL SPOT, THE UNDISPUTED "SOUL OF THE HOUSE," ACCORDING TO DEAN. TO HIS MOTHER HELENE, IT HAS "THE PERFECT

SERENITY OF THE MEDICI CHAPEL" SHE ONCE VISITED IN ROME. WHEN STANDING ON THE BALCONY, SHE THINKS OF ROMEO AND JULIET. "SOMETIMES, I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M LIVING IN A HOUSE WITH SO MUCH SPIRIT," SHE SAYS. SEE RESOURCES

