

reallife

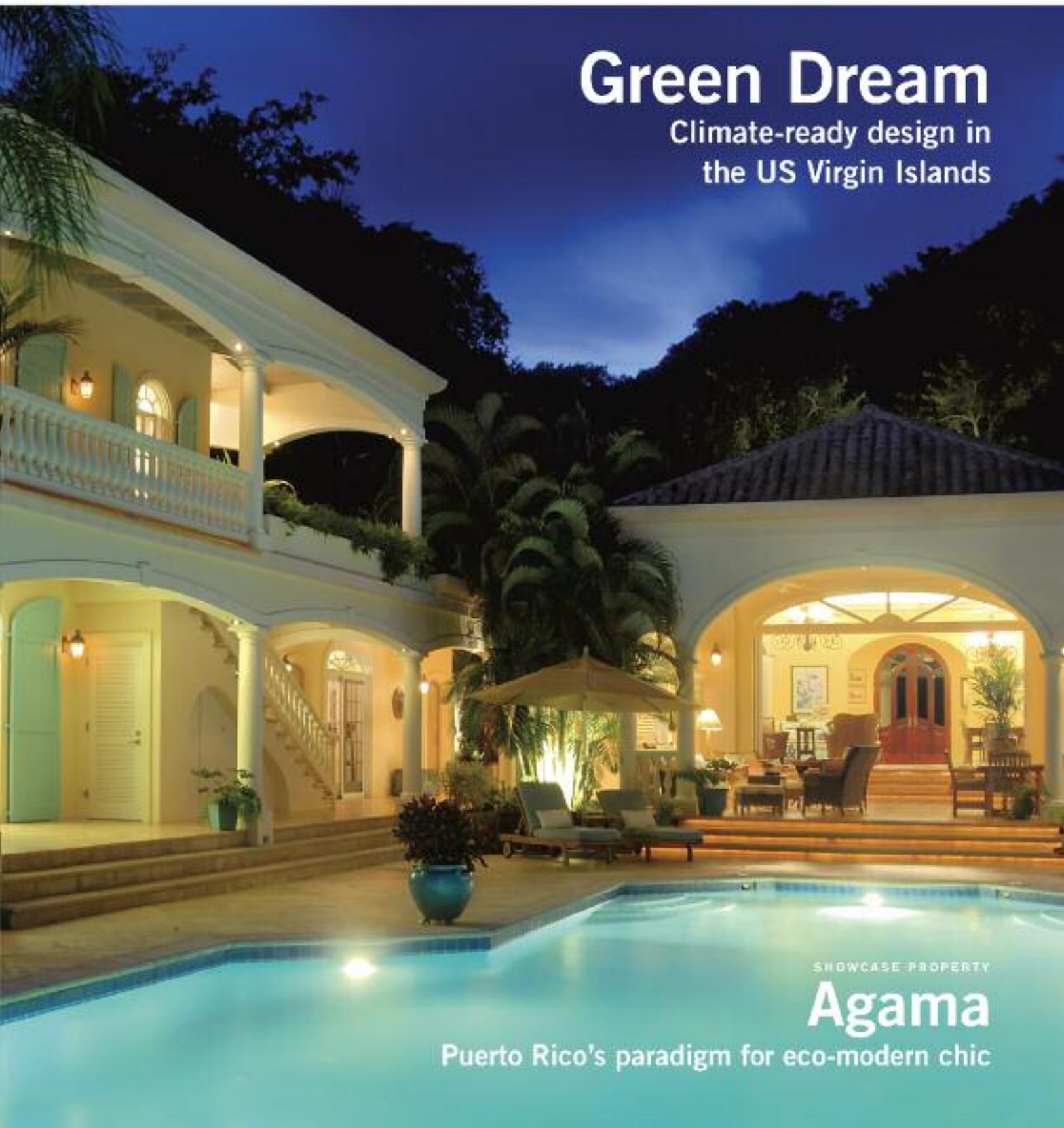
CARIBBEAN LUXURY LIFESTYLE, PROPERTY AND DESIGN MAGAZINE

in this 'green' issue

- Much ado about bamboo
- Living roofs and walls
- Artist Sir Roland Richardson
- Exotic wood veneers
- The economy of green

Green Dream

Climate-ready design in
the US Virgin Islands



SHOWCASE PROPERTY

Agama

Puerto Rico's paradigm for eco-modern chic



Photo courtesy of NEDLAW GROUP

Seeds of Change

The green revolution spawns new botanical architecture in the form of breathtakingly beautiful living roofs and walls. Words by Juliet Austin

No word of a lie: they are bloomin' everywhere. From its roots in Europe and North America, the growing trend in green roofs and living walls is finally spreading its tendrils across the Caribbean, causing homeowners and businesses throughout our region to look anew at the benefits of greening their properties.

Ironically, in turning 'back to nature', the future of green technology has been unleashed. Used for centuries across Europe, most notably in colder climes, 'sky gardens' enjoyed a resurgence in the 1960's. Victory was shouted from the

rooftops as word of their incredible insulating capabilities inevitably reached the shores of the Caribbean, forcing those looking to chill out to consider the power of green. Soon, the flourishing green rooftop industry spawned a new idea: biowalls – stunning vertical gardens that not only provide a visual and psychological breath of fresh air, but that also stand poised to revolutionise the way the Caribbean does cool.

Having garnered international recognition, companies like Canada's ELT Easy Green and The NEDLAW GROUP developed new technologies in response to global demand for →



Photo courtesy of NEDLAW GROUP

Top: A 22m² biowall makes for a striking backdrop at Sassafras restaurant in the historic district of Yorkville, Canada.

Above: Organic, biological methods are used to control pests, ensuring ecological stability and species diversity.



Above: University of Guelph Humber, Ontario, Canada.

“All things share the same breath – the beast, the tree, the man...” Chief Seattle

green products. Offering self-sustaining, pre-grown or planted-in-place interlocking roof tiles and patented vegetation mats – layered sealants, substrates, drainage and growth mediums – green roofs transformed previously ‘dead’ space into harmonious ecosystems,

simultaneously enhancing biodiversity while reducing the cooling load of buildings by between 50-90% in the summer months and significantly reducing and purifying storm water run-off. Credited with outliving traditional roofs by forty or more years, as well as offering insulation, absorption of rainwater, natural filtration for pollutants, and an appealing habitat for wildlife, it is no surprise that the green rooftop revolution is beginning to run rampant across the region.

Bringing the drama down from these lofty heights to create ‘living’ rooms with a mind-blowing wow factor, biowalls, quite literally, enable design spaces to blossom. Imagine for one moment an entranceway greeted by a floor-to-ceiling living wall – a mini-jungle ascending skyward, demanding an immediate shift in perception and giving unexpected sustenance to the soul.

Reminiscent of Seurat’s pointillism, the intricate interplay of flora used to create these quasi oases offer designers the ultimate untamed medium: exotic tropical foliage ranging from subtle grasses, ferns and flowers to robust crotons, purple hearts and rubber figs, set in recyclable and reusable modular panels. Planted and mounted directly onto walls or on stand-alone frames, options include interior and exterior applications, flat or curved surfaces, ornamental plants or even edible varieties like lettuces, herbs, beets and radishes.

Yet walls of beauty conceal the ultimate philanthropists. Poster children for the serious issue of air quality, biowalls are one design choice that keeps on giving. Quietly working behind the scenes to generate ‘virtual outside air’, they provide a vertical hydroponic biofilter, purifying by absorbing harmful indoor contaminants and, in turn, generating oxygen. Inspired, some companies, like NEDLAW, have taken it a step further, using nature’s paradigm as the catalyst for exciting advances in botanical engineering. Their patented active living walls integrate directly into air handling systems, harnessing nature’s self-rejuvenating powers to create customised, LEED-accredited, biowalls

Photo courtesy of NEDLAW GROUP



Photo courtesy of INKA: www.inka.fm



Photo courtesy of NEDLAW GROUP

Below: A four-storey high ‘living wall’ of vines and plants acts as a natural air purifier at the Cambridge City Hall in Ontario.

Bottom: Botanical architecture with a sustainable edge: this Los Angeles residential project uses grey water as an irrigation source.



Photo courtesy of ELY Easy Green: www.elylivingwalls.com

whose innate cleansing power actively filters out volatile organic compounds, providing technological innovation to the world of sustainable design. Supported by recent studies, these active biowalls not only tackle air quality, but do so in an energy efficient, cost effective manner – not too shabby for a natural remedy.

By literally turning buildings ‘green’, these new technologies resonate with an ancient wisdom expressed by the wise Chief Seattle: “All things,” he said, “share the same breath – the beast, the tree, the man....” Blazing their eco-conscious trail, living roofs and walls set customers free to explore their green dreams while protecting their greenbacks. Uncompromising on style, one can only hope that these botanical beauties spreading like wildfire across the region, will succeed in making others green with envy. 🌱