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From a BEACH HOUSE IN MUSTIQUE to Ben Pentreath's COLOURFUL BLOOMSBURY FLAT



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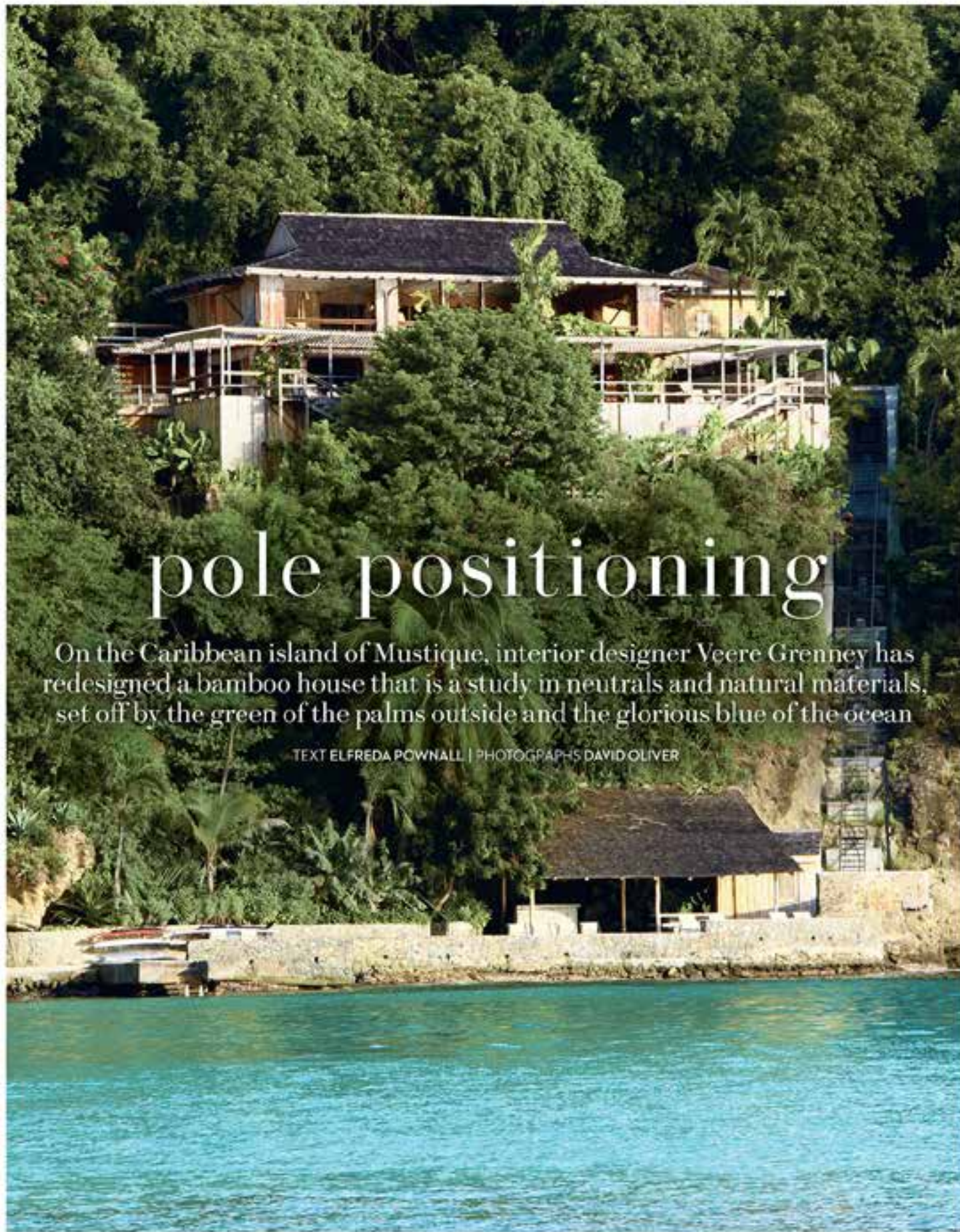
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pole positioning

On the Caribbean island of Mustique, interior designer Veere Grenney has redesigned a bamboo house that is a study in neutrals and natural materials, set off by the green of the palms outside and the glorious blue of the ocean

TEXT ELFREDA POWNALL | PHOTOGRAPHS DAVID OLIVER

THIS PAGE Perched on a hill, the house and garden make the most of the island's lush vegetation, with a stairway that leads down to the outdoor dining area by Gellicaux Bay beach. OPPOSITE In the main building, the 15-metre-long, open-plan sitting and dining room is decorated in similar neutral hues to the bamboo



Mustique, in the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines group of Caribbean islands, is just 2.2 square miles, yet it exerts a fascination far beyond its size. The 3rd Baron Glenconner, Colin Tennant, who bought the island in 1958 for £45,000, had hoped to grow cotton there. When that plan failed, he decided to make it into an exclusive holiday setting for his friends and divided the island into 120 plots. In 1960, in a brilliant PR coup, he gave the first 10-acre site to his friend Princess Margaret. Her home, Les Jolies Eaux, was decorated in a cosy, Home Counties Peter Jones style, but since then, the island has attracted the mega rich, some of whom look on a plot as their chance to build a fantasy home in the shape of a Roman palazzo, a Japanese temple or a high-tech, futuristic box.

Interior designer Veere Grenney knows Mustique well, and had already designed half a dozen homes for this client before he bought one of the island's most unusual houses in 2007. Veere describes it as 'a beach folly, a little Robinson Crusoe bamboo paradise'. The original house had been built in the Seventies by the Swedish architect Arne Hasselqvist for the American advertising dynamo Mary Wells Lawrence and her airline president husband Harding Lawrence. They used the place almost as a bathing hut for their vast home at the top of the island.

When Veere and his team first encountered the house in 2008, a tropical storm had ripped off some of the roofing and caused a cliff fall below the house. They walked into the main building to discover the original Serge Roche standard lamps encrusted with debris and dust, the shell wall lights wrecked and the bamboo wallcovering looking shabby. With the help of architect Alain Bouvier of ABA, Veere stripped everything back to its bones, expanded the living space, installed a new larger kitchen and reconfigured many of the rooms.

The main building - two separate side pavilions house the main bedroom, spare rooms and children's rooms - includes the great room, a magnificent living space at the top of the house. At 15 metres long, it is a combined sitting and dining area, its walls and pitched ceiling completely re-clad in 10cm-diameter cured bamboo stalks. It is open to the elements on four sides, so sea breezes keep it cool, although storm

windows are stored in cupboards for when bad weather threatens. The room faces west and gets beautiful afternoon light and a grandstand view of the daily extravaganza of the Caribbean sunset.

The bamboo, a traditional building material in the Grenadines, came from nearby Saint Vincent, where it is always harvested when the moon is on the wane. The belief is that termites quickly devour any bamboo cut when the sap is rising, even once the wood is cured. The team then went in search of vintage bamboo furniture and bought it in container loads, mostly from Los Angeles and Miami, and often through 1stdibs. The coffee tables and side cabinets in the great room were designed by Veere Grenney Associates and made by Lincoln Cato, and Soane made replicas of one of the original shell sconces for the walls. Rush matting was laid on the sustainable sapele wood floors and Veere asked Raoul Textiles to recolour its huge palm-leaf design 'Exoticus' in bamboo shades for the sofa covers.

The main bedroom suite in a side pavilion continues the bamboo theme. Nothing is allowed to jar with the warm, woody atmosphere - even the bathrooms have vintage copper bathtubs with black and weathered-bronze taps. 'We didn't want that white porcelain glare,' says Veere. The blue of the sky and sea and the vivid green of the lush vegetation are the only colours allowed. Plants surround a new space down at sea level, too, where there is an outdoor covered dining area with a small kitchen and shower, and a perfect spot for sunbathing. From here, you can dive or flop straight into the blue water of Gellicaux Bay beach.

It is a favourite spot for the owner. Although he is the proprietor of the Savile Row tailor Huntsman, he prefers to entertain here in bare feet and shorts. 'You can have 30 people for lunch on the water and they can go straight from the dining table to the sea - it's like your own private gigantic salt-water swimming pool,' he says. Houses with direct access to an empty white-sand beach are rare, even in Mustique. He loves the spare aesthetic of the bamboo, too. 'It is not overwhelming, just a very simple and pure design, not trying to impress, nestled in the leaves, just hanging on the cliff. It's just unique,' he says. The unassuming aspect of Mustique is what first attracted him to the island. 'There are no big shops, no jet skis, no sun loungers on the beach. It's in many ways the most simple place with the most sophisticated people' □

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OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The outdoor dining area has a picnic-style table and benches made from cast concrete. Below the sitting and dining room is the TV room, in which the walls and ceiling are clad in the same cured bamboo from Saint Vincent. A vintage copper free-standing tub from The Water Monopoly sits in a bathroom. The main bedroom, in a pavilion, has a bed from Soane

