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AWARD WINNING

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House style

Sarah Woods talks to Dr Michael Connors, an avid collector of West Indian furniture and author of ultra-glossy coffee-table book *Caribbean Houses*.

I discovered the Caribbean as a graduate at the University of Miami. I joined the crew of an eighty-six foot Baltic trader *The Vestland* and set sail for the region. When we arrived at Christiansted Harbor, I fell in love with a woman who managed a hotel in the harbor. I jumped ship and the *The Vestland* left without me – and my romance with the Caribbean began. That was 40 years ago and I've been living, sailing through and traveling around the Caribbean ever since. I started to collect West Indian furniture in the 1980s and my first books dealt with identifying and describing the beautiful mahogany pieces I'd found. By default, I became interested in the traditional architecture of the Caribbean, learning about the

five different countries that colonized the Caribbean and their distinct architectural styles.

In writing *Caribbean Houses* I had to invest considerable time in meeting the owners, many of who were not always in residence. A great many of the private homes in the Caribbean are hidden and very rarely open to the public so I also had to gain permission to photograph – a really time-consuming aspect of the work. Scouting trips to the islands help in organizing locations and collections. It also helps us decide what time of year and what time of day is best for photography – an important consideration. For me, the most important aspect of the content is setting the scene historically and environmentally. My books are not just about beautiful photography; the text of *Caribbean Houses*



Distinguished by elegant Dutch-influenced curvilinear gables, St. Nicholas Abbey was built on Barbados in the 1650s. The triple-arcaded Georgian portico was added during the 1700s.



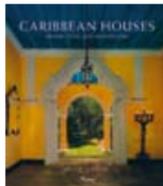
The Caribbean region is a rich source of material for interior designers and architects not only because so many aspects of Caribbean sources have been undiscovered, but because they are outside the norm of our taste patterns



is comprised of more than 30,000 words. Researching the architecture, interiors and lifestyles are all important.

My project team manager, Karolina Stefanski, who is also my stylist, coordinates the trips, photographers' location arrangements and appointments. She has worked for me for over six years and is self-motivated and knows what I require. I rely heavily on the help and generosity of local people who include museum curators, historical society members, island officials, scholars and private owners and collectors. The Caribbean region is a rich source of material for interior designers and architects not only because so many aspects of Caribbean sources have been undiscovered, but because they are outside the norm of our taste patterns, i.e. the bright tropical colors, the vernacular architectural adaptations to the tropical climate (protection from sun and rain), the desire to gather and entertain outdoors on verandas, porches and in gardens. The biggest surprise about this project was discovering an architectural gem like the White House, built in 1820, on the miniscule island of Salt Cay in the Turks and Caicos – a really rewarding hidden gem. **CW**

The central room and salon of the Whim great house on St. Croix, with its three-foot thick walls, interior ever-open windows and doorways, and exterior louvered French doors keep occupants cool on even the hottest tropical days.



Caribbean Houses is published by Rizzoli International Publishing (\$60.00) and is sold worldwide. Visit: www.rizzoliusa.com



The ballroom of Jamaica's Rose Hall intricately carved mahogany door frame leads to the staircase hall and, beyond, the south terrace. It is characteristic of eighteenth-century English Georgian houses