



# GILLESPIE & STEEL

FROM THE LUXURIOUS TO THE HISTORIC

By Marisse Downie

I am reminded of this quote I happened upon by American Architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. The quote simply states, “Every great architect is — necessarily — a great poet.” To the casual observer; this may not resonate. Being a poet however, I am quickly reminded of how true this statement is when I visited the offices of Gillespie & Steel Associates.



Call me fortunate, but I was lucky enough to sit with some of the forces behind the company's creations at their quaint office in St. James, Barbados. It is not every day that one gets the chance to discuss the inspiration behind some of the most luxurious properties in the Caribbean and on this day I was certainly in for a treat. I quickly learned that the prominence of Gillespie & Steel is not to be underestimated, with its foundation rooted in Barbados and its 44-year commitment to architectural excellence and interior design. Not only has this commitment been cemented in the island but their touch can be seen throughout the Caribbean and the USA as well.

As their brochure states, their "approach to design places considerable emphasis on problem solving not only in the local context," but regionally as well. Of particular note, is their commitment to the environment and the application of green design principles in their projects. This commitment is capped off with being a proud member of the U.S. Green Building Council and employing LEED accredited design professionals. With studies of traditional island architecture and the wealth of background information from those studies, Gillespie & Steel has been able to add contemporary touches to the traditional designs of each country. This has made them a valid contender in Caribbean architectural style that works well within the climatic, financial and technical constraints of the region. Well known for their tourism and recreational designs, Gillespie & Steel is also not to be outdone when it comes to luxury, residential properties and interior design.

## NOT BY CHANCE; BY DESIGN

There is a sense of awe that comes with viewing an artistic masterpiece and Gillespie & Steel's creations are no exception. This rings true when viewing the villa designs in the prestigious Apes Hill Club such as the luxurious residence property of Arawidi, in Barbados. Apes Hill itself, renowned for its golf course and polo field, adds to the allure with its breathtaking views set 1000 feet above sea level in the centre of the island. Their attention to details, matched with the comfort level, enhances the opulent feel of these private residences. On the tourism front, Barbados' Coral Reef Club stands out. It epitomizes West Indian elegance and has become known for its classic island feel, all at the hands of Gillespie & Steel. Most recently, I was told, they were asked to design their new spa facility and did an outstanding job in complementing the already special ambience of the resort. Also, in Barbados, Gillespie & Steel can add Mantaray Bay to its list of accomplishments as the stunning multi-level ocean front property of luxury apartments is graced with a glorious view of the Caribbean Sea. Speaking of luxury, the company is also responsible for the opulent design of Barbados' first high-end retail mall, the Limegrove Lifestyle Centre. The company also assisted with the interior design of one of the Centre's luxury brand stores.

As we leave the many accomplishments in Barbados, we visually visit St. Lucia's Marina Village and I learn that this picturesque Village is a marriage of St. Lucian architectural heritage and the contemporary flair that Gillespie & Steel is known for. The Village, itself, has become the heart and focal point of Marigot Bay located on St. Lucia's scenic west coast. Outside of the Caribbean, Gillespie & Steel was asked to build one of the pools for the residences in the prominent Rosemary



Above: Arawidi, Moonshine Ridge, photo by MikeToy.  
Left: Coral Reef Spa, photo Compliments of Coral Reef Club, photo by Mike Toy.  
Right: Barbados Pool, Compliments of Rosemary Beach Miami.







Above: Mantaray Bay, photo by Dan Chrystaldi. Centre: George Washington House, photo by Dan Chrystaldi. Below: MarinaVillage; Gillespie & Steel St. Lucia.

Beach located in the Florida Panhandle as part of the original development of the town. As a result, the pool now bears the name of Barbados — in homage to the company's location.

While the luxurious is always a sight to behold, it warms the heart, especially a Bajan's, to see the contribution Gillespie & Steel has made to some of my island's more prominent and historic structures. With properties such as The Barbados Pavillion, Arlington and George Washington House under its belt, the refurbishment of these properties has contributed to maintaining Barbados' World Heritage Site designation. For those who don't know, the plantation-style George Washington House was named after the first President of the United States after his brief stay in Barbados in 1751. Not to be left out of the mix, One of Barbados' main tourist attractions, Harrison's Cave, also saw some major redevelopment at the hands of Gillespie & Steel with the entire reception facility adding to the awe and mystery of what lies below.

It is not only the average observer that recognizes the creativity and professionalism behind Gillespie & Steel but awards from notable bodies such as the Commonwealth Association of Architects, the Barbados National Trust and the Americas Residential Property Awards are a testament to the significant impact that their designs have made. A company of this calibre is impressive to anyone with business acumen and an artistic eye, but it is doubly so to those of Barbadian heritage and can certainly be considered poetry in motion. — Q



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