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HOME • HOMES

## This Breezy Jamaican Villa Has Stunning Water Views (That Inspired the Creation of James Bond!)



Photo by Brie Williams; Styling by Liz Strong

**Along the same shores where Ian Fleming dreamed up his iconic James Bond, a London-based painter retreats to an open-air villa to chase her muse.**

By MIMI READ

Two or three months of every year, British artist [Pauline Amos](#) ducks out of the gray London winter and heads for her Jamaican villa tucked into a grove of Moringa and banana trees. It's a nine-hour trip from [Gatwick Airport](#) to Kingston, and then a quick flight to the tiny [Ian Fleming International Airport](#) 10 minutes from her door. But the layover, if you can call it that, is more than a pass-through. Amos has a favorite art shop in Kingston, and it's only after she pops in to stock up on paints and locally made canvases that she is ready for her sojourn along the [Caribbean Sea](#).

“When I get to my house, the scenery, the foliage, the intensity of colors—I just want to capture it all and paint it,” says Amos, whose multimedia work ranges from oil abstracts to performance and audio pieces. “The water is a beautiful turquoise, and it goes right into my paintings. I record the sounds of Jamaica, with its storms, its amazing thunderclaps, and the music of the sea. Everything on this island becomes a part of my art.”



An antique writing desk in the master bedroom came from a dealer in Kingston; the large painting is one of Amos's pieces, which are available at [paulineamos.co.uk](http://paulineamos.co.uk).

Photo by Brie Williams; Styling by Liz Strong

It's little wonder the spirit of Jamaica has seeped under Amos's skin and into her work. The north coast of this colorful island 90 miles south of [Cuba](#) has long been a magnet for artists. Notables like actor/playwright Noël Coward and painter Lucian Freud have traipsed its white-sand beaches and taken in its teal waters. Amos's house itself has a sizable creative pedigree; it's located on the grounds of the legendary [GoldenEye](#) resort, a property pioneered by the late British author Ian Fleming in the 1950s (after he bought a former donkey racetrack in the small banana port town of Oracabessa, Jamaica). It's here that Fleming built a simple, open-air house with enormous windows where he liked to sit and gaze out at the sea. And it's here that he dreamed up the suave and ruthless James Bond character and wrote the series of stylish spy thrillers that made both of them household names.



The petite kitchen conveys simple, elemental beauty with concrete countertops and teak windows.

Photo by Brie Williams; Styling by Liz Strong

Amos's villa was one of several built in the 1990s as extensions of Fleming's former home. Constructed of polished concrete block, ochre-colored stone, and wood, the home sits on a bluff that rises some 20 feet above the water. It's a sublime perch, one she only discovered when a broken arm left her unable to paint. "London was freezing, and I just wanted to find a sunny spot to relax and recuperate," she recalls. A friend recommended GoldenEye, and Amos booked a ticket. She bought the villa just months after that first visit.



The rounded stone terrace is designed to follow the curve of the bluff. Woven cane stools accompany a built-in table and bench seating.

Photo by Brie Williams; Styling by Liz Strong

Inspired by Fleming's home and its generous windows, she bumped out the length of the house by about 10 feet and designed one long, shuttered window that spans the facade. "Now the whole house opens at the front," says Amos. Along the edge of the courtyard below is a large stone terrace that follows the curve of the bluff. Canvas chaises and a half-dozen 18th-century Spanish olive oil jars sit under a canopy of palms and banana trees. Shaded steps lead to a lower sunbathing deck, where she has nurtured coral and rock gardens, and continue into the sea.



The master bedroom is on the second floor of the main house. Amos finds locally made treasures, like the woven rug and straw hats and bags, at crafts markets. The cotton bedding is from Island Hut, and the painting is her own work.

Photo by Brie Williams; Styling by Liz Strong

Amos furnished the rooms mostly with ebony and mahogany antiques from a dealer she discovered in Kingston, and added several of her own paintings, along with patterned African textiles. Upstairs, she kept the furnishings in the master bedroom cool and light. Foldaway mahogany shutters open the room to evening breezes and a view of the rolling sea. “It’s not the Four Seasons—you’re going to have beetles or geckos walking around,” Amos jokes. “But the breeze is constant. At night, I’m under the mosquito nets with the shutters open.”



A pair of outdoor claw-footed tubs allow Amos to bathe among the trees. The mask was hand-carved by a carpenter named Coco in nearby Ocho Rios.

Photo by Brie Williams; Styling by Liz Strong

Two claw-footed tubs are also tucked among the native landscape, each screened with twig lattices and a sprawl of banana fronds and ginger leaves. “There’s nothing like showering or bathing with trees, hummingbirds, and songbirds,” says Amos, who also has two smaller guest cottages—one housing a second bedroom; the other, a dining gazebo—and conjoined everything with gardens and terraces that she lights at night with flaming torches. “If I want, I can walk to the restaurant or the bar, but I’m more inclined to have 12 people to my gazebo for dinner. It has a view of the sea, to the left is a lagoon, and we are covered in trees. Even in torrential rain, we just drop plastic sheeting down and carry on,” she says. And that’s often well into the night. At a recent gathering, singer Grace Jones showed up early, wore a fuchsia bikini all through dinner, did some fabulous dancing, and was the last to leave. “The energy of this island and of its people is immense,” says Amos. “There’s such a mix of cultures: There are church-going, God-fearing souls and the Rastas, there is music coming from gospel singers and pounding out of sound systems.”

And there are artists like Amos, who since her first visit has painted countless landscapes from her perch on the bluff at GoldenEye. She named her mini-compound Strangeways, after the British secret agent in the 1958 Bond thriller *Dr. No*. At the beginning of the tale, John Strangways meets an unfortunate end—but at least he meets it in Jamaica. “I added the E to his name because to me, it’s all about the strangeness of this place,” Amos explains. “The voodoo, the juju, the Obeah. There’s magic in the air and power in the ground here.”



A pair of almond trees crown the sunken garden at the Fleming villa.

Photo by Brie Williams; Styling by Liz Strong

## GoldenEye's Creative Legacy Lives On

More than a half century after Ian Fleming's death, creative genius still wafts through the banana trees at [GoldenEye](#). There's an inherent juju here, a spell that lives in the island's lightning-hot colors and wild landscape. But there's also its current owner, Island Records co-founder Chris Blackwell, who bought Fleming's villa in 1976. The music producer famously credited with discovering Bob Marley continued to welcome many of Fleming's former guests well after the author's death. Blackwell's own guests (Sting and Bono among them) were also becoming frequent visitors, prompting Blackwell to add four huts tucked into the palms around the villa—one for himself and his mother, and three for guests. Today, these breezy island rentals are called "The Originals." In the years since, Blackwell has added 25 acres to the original 15-acre estate, along with a collection of newer guesthouses: classically designed private villas with high ceilings and hardwood floors, shingled cottages directly on the lagoon with a private dock and stairs that lead right into the water, and colorful beach huts that include louvered windows and rounded bedrooms. In December, GoldenEye's newly revamped spa will open two treatment huts—a hammam and a spa cove along the lagoon, making services like pedicures just a swim (or paddleboard) away. Rates for 2019 start at \$450 per night.

—Taylor Eisenhauer