

THE AQUARIUM



COBA COCINA

REEF AQUARIA DESIGN'S AMAZING AQUARIUMS ARE LIVING PIECES OF KINETIC ART.

Growing up near the ocean, Jeff Turner got hooked on all things aquatic. But it could be said that seawater runs through his veins since his dad was into aquariums and his whole world revolved around marine life.

"I caught my first aquarium fish in 1969," said Turner proudly, now himself a very big fish when it comes to the aquarium business. As Founder and Director of Reef Aquaria Design (RAD), he has created custom aquariums - both fresh and salt water - for private residences and commercial use spanning the past 30 years.

Right now, his focus is on jellies. Literally - because we were sitting having breakfast slap-bang in front of one of his creations, the huge jellyfish tank at Fort Lauderdale's Steak 954 in the swanky W Hotel.

It's kind of hard to look away. Floodlit in neon blue, the glimmering Moon Jellies, which are local to South Florida, are hypnotic. Certainly a showstopper, they must be a great conversation-starter if the table talk dries up.

Turner tells us that when RAD was contacted by a renowned French designer to bring his fishy vision to life for Steak 954, they set

about creating a whole new system in the aquarium that allows the jellies to grow and thrive well beyond their lifespan in the wild.

"We culture all of our jellyfish," he said. "I have another business called Jellyfish Art, and I am wearing that shirt today. It is a desktop jellyfish aquarium... This jelly business is a whole other art form. It is so captivating," he enthused. And very soothing. (In fact, aquariums have been proven to lower blood pressure.)

Probably his most famous project is the 2,000-gallon reef aquarium they built in the Ocean Hall for the Smithsonian Institute's Natural History Museum in Washington, DC about eight years ago. "It's the second highest viewed exhibit in the entire museum next to the Hope Diamond."

The aquarium features lush coral growth grown from aqua

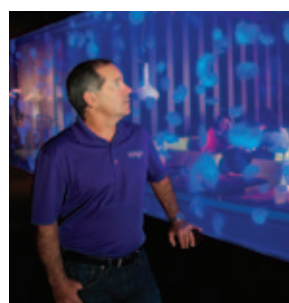
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2,700 GALLON TANK



A SOOTHING ADDITION



JEFF TURNER

cultured specimens to eliminate any negative effects on wild coral populations. "It grows like a weed, it's unbelievable. This is the exciting part of what we do. We start them off with smaller pieces and they grow." So, no fake corals and plastic plants here.

The Moon Jellies he uses are a captive breed, too. "It is the more sustainable way."

If they are managed correctly, he says, fish in an aquarium can live for a long time compared to the ocean. "Some of the clown fish I have had spawning and breeding are over 25 years old. Can a clown fish live in the ocean for 25 years? I don't think so. Fish are food there!"

And back to jellyfish (of course): "You need to understand what the requirements are to keep them, but once it is an

established and well-built system, it can go on and on for years."

RAD naturally gets lots of private commissions. They have just installed an 8,000-gallon aquarium at Center in the Square in Roanoke, Virginia. (Imagine, a soothing eight-foot wall of swirling neon-lit jellies...). He's also about to do one for a penthouse in Miami, which we think will be the epitome of cool.

But Turner won't get involved in a project unless there is full support

from everyone involved, as aquariums are huge investments. "For an aquarium, it's essential you have a well-planned space, as it is a long-term project. I prefer to get involved with projects that have the support from the owner, the builder, the architect, and the designer to look at this as a living piece of kinetic art for years to come."

As for Turner himself, he doesn't own an aquarium. "My boat is my aquarium." Thanks to him, there are plenty more fish in the sea.