A VISION OF TIMELESSNESS

AN IMPRESSIVE CLIFFSIDE VILLA
MASTERFULLY DESIGNED AROUND
ARRESTING SEA VIEWS

High up in the hills near San Jose is a gated community called Vista Alegre, which translates to Happy View and the breathtaking panorama across the Mediterranean Sea seen from almost every vantage point does induce feelings of exultation. The entrance to the urbanisation feels like driving into an exclusive nature park – a stone cabin houses the 24-hour security guard who always checks you in with a smile. The roads wind through lush pine forest, from which discreet driveways are the only giveaway to the luxury homes hidden amongst the greenery. Perched on top of one of these driveways is Sa Blanca.

When community president Fernando Corominas first came to Vista Alegre in 2002, it appeared half finished. He immediately saw potential and commenced making changes. The first thing was to create the dedicated, guarded entrance – one that appropriately represented the overall exclusivity of Vista Alegre. From there, he worked to develop the estate into the high-end neighbourhood it is today. Corominas owns a few properties in Vista Alegre, but it is Sa Blanca that is the physical representation of everything he loves about art, design and Ibiza.

The vehicle gate to the high-end villa is reminiscent of a Richard Serra sculpture. Its curved oxidised steel is an announcement of the artistry that is to come. It glides open, revealing a driveway laid haphazardly with weathered railway sleepers between which grows a soft carpet of verdant moss – a pleasant exception to the usual gravel or poured concrete of Ibiza properties – and an indication of the attention to design details the house contains.

“Both the gate and the front door were designed by the architect,” says Corominas. “They were made here on the island from recycled woods.” The front door is a perfect example of design genius. As it opens it appears to create an aperture expanding across the whole entrance way. It echoes the shape of the vehicle gate and its warm wood tenors complement the overall colour scheme: natural, tonal and sensitive.

Architect Fernando de Castro, with whom Corominas has collaborated on several projects in Madrid, was called upon to renovate the existing 350 square metre house. The building now stretches over 1100 square metres but despite its expanse, it retains an intimacy often lacking in modern villas. “We wanted to integrate with the natural surroundings as much as possible so we built it on three levels, but into the landscape,” says Corominas.

Integration is the theme that runs through Sa Blanca and the language Corominas uses to describe the villa. It also translates directly into the interiors and garden design. On first glance there are no interior doors – they are seamlessly built into the walls without outside handles. Running from floor to ceiling, they subtly open with a slight push. The garden is lush with natives and kept in a state of graceful disarray, with just the right amount of manicured care but not so much as to be stuffy.

There are no distractions from the external beauty – the view is the master of the design and everything is organised around it. The slatted shapes that provide shade and texture are made from reclaimed wood and are a pattern repeated throughout, providing continuity as well as practicality. The simplified design choices – sea grass mats, natural fibre lighting and a neutral colour scheme – belie a modesty. There is no need for ostentatiousness when nature does all the work.

The driveway curves slightly downwards towards the first level. Here, the front door opens onto a wooded entranceway. Directly in front is a set of wood floating stairs that echo the slats of the entrance and terraces. They lead to the three bedrooms on the upper level. Below is the living space, dining area and kitchen. Beneath this level are two guest apartments containing four bedrooms – a design choice that conceals the built space from the environment and also provides practicality. “It means we can come here as a family without having to open the whole house,” Corominas explains.

Double height ceilings in the living area produce spaciousness and much natural light but a clever layout creates an intimacy not often felt in open spaces. The living room feels more like an atrium and the kitchen can be closed or opened via a wall of swivelling wood panels. What is perhaps the most incredible fireplace ever constructed demarcates the dining area.

Also designed by de Castro, the enormous fireplace is made of steel and features a circle in the centre. “We wanted to see the sea from the dining area, so that it was separated but still part of the space,” says Corominas. The smoke goes up either side of the circle, providing a vortex of warmth and a clever solution to a design conundrum allowing the exterior beauty to dominate.

From the living spaces, a wood deck stretches out via glass panels that open with embedded rails. The rectangular swimming pool is, of course, an infinity pool but where it ends and the sea begins is not always easy to determine. Large wood beams provide shade overhead for the various chill out and dining areas, while one end of the pool is fitted with spa-grade massage jets.

In addition to the enticing pool, Sa Blanca also offers private access to the beach below the house. A tender service runs in the summer months directly to the community jetty or the ever-popular Es Torrent restaurant, and it is the only villa in the area with direct access to the sea.

The most recent addition to the property is a luxurious private gym, hidden under a terrace cantilevered over the cliff. The view fills the floor-to-ceiling window, in front of which sits the latest, high-spec fitness machinery.

Throughout the house, walls are adorned with energising paintings full of colour and shape reminiscent of urban artists of the late 1980s – think Basquiat meets Braque with just a dash of Chagall. It’s a delight to discover that the majority of the art is by Coromina’s wife and design collaborator Maribel. It’s even more delightful to learn that after a break from painting she has recently picked up the brush again and plans to show this year.

Architectural superstar Frank Gehry said: “Architecture should speak of its time and place, but yearn for timelessness.” Sa Blanca achieves this goal via a sensitivity to the landscape and a desire to almost disappear into it. The villa speaks directly to its time and place by making the sea the core architectural feature, allowing the nature of the landscape to inform all the design choices. When Mother Nature is chief designer, no mistakes can ever be made.

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