



Natural connection

A rural Menorcan house where art on the walls isn't needed, because the views are pure visual poetry

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Images / Julio Feroz

After spending many holidays in Menorca, renting different houses in the village of Es Mercadal, and looking for the right plot for years, the Spanish owner of this home didn't hesitate to trade his urban life in Barcelona for a full-time existence in the island's countryside. "His wish was a house in contact with the territory, which could be enjoyed both inside and outside most of the year," explains architect and designer Marina Senabre Roca.

Senabre Roca worked tirelessly on this project, which included significant changes including extending the house into the garden and letting the panoramic views enter the home through an improved layout. "This type of project requires a very close relationship with the client. In the end, it was about creating a home for a specific person and translating his way of living into the space," she says.

Spread over 200 sqm, the house comprises two volumes, which work independently. The larger (of approximately 140 sqm) is a cuboid shape, and hosts the living spaces including the kitchen, dining area and lounge. All of these spaces not only connect with one another, but also with the exterior, through large openings and interior patios. The smaller volume (of around 60 sqm) has a gabled roof, and so takes on a more traditional appearance. It acts as an

auxiliary pavilion and contains the guest room, a space to work out and a small indoor pool that invites dwellers to relax and contemplate the views. Facing each other, the two buildings create a dialogue through the same language of composition and materials.

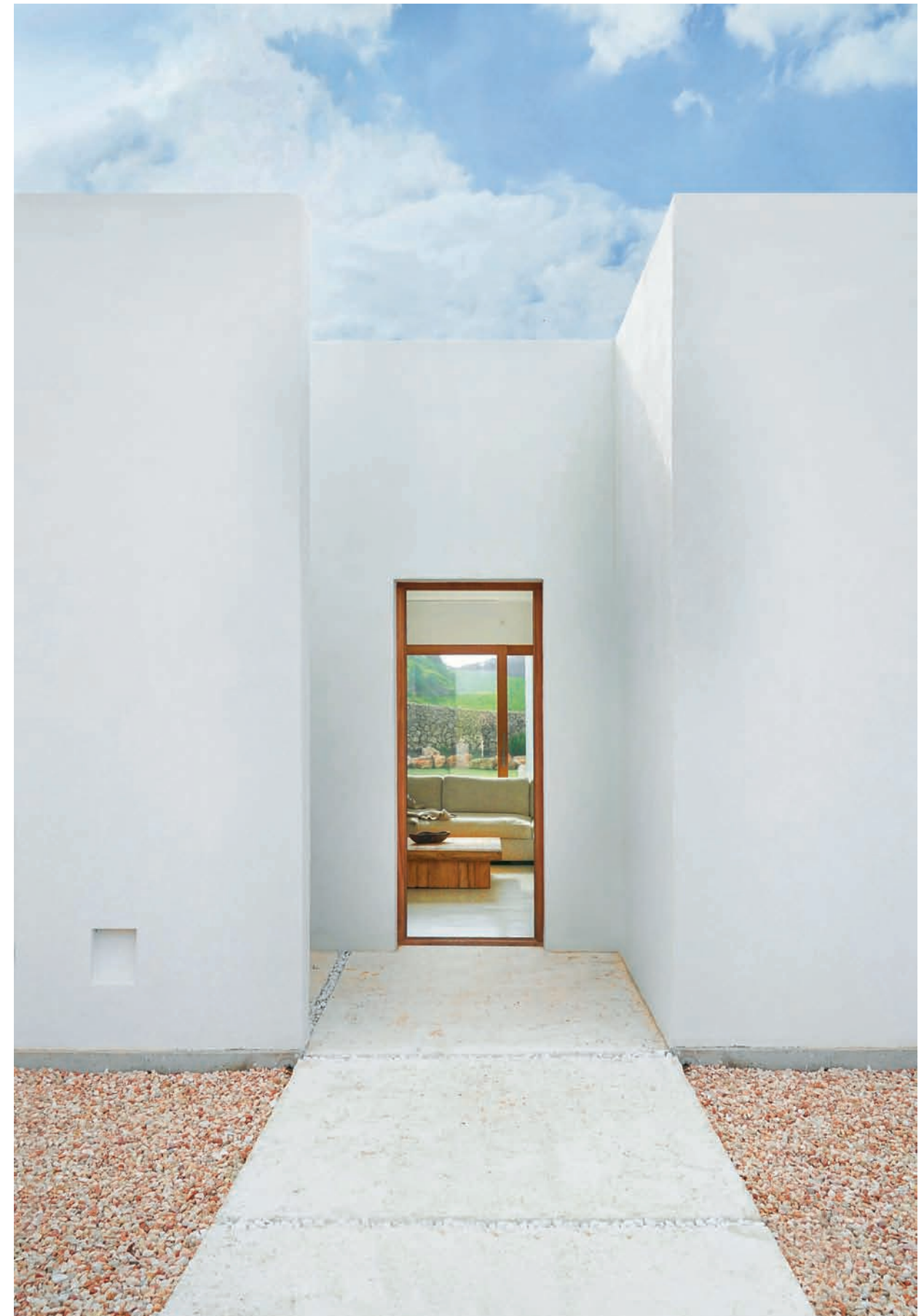
"I designed the house to give the feeling of being part of the countryside," Senabre Roca says. The architect harnessed the contrast between the purity of the building's geometry and the wilder character of the surrounding landscape: "I wanted to represent, on one hand, a typical Balearic island construction, and on the other, contemporary architecture."

The timeless interior spaces reflect the same duality. Minimalism and warmth meet, thanks to the abundant use of micro-cement covering most of the horizontal and vertical surfaces, including the floor, the bathroom walls and the kitchen island. Traditional elements, such as natural woodwork, provide a simple materiality that weaves through each room.

In answer to the owner's love of cooking, the kitchen became the natural spot to create a showstopping view, with a large square window overlooking the roaming cows in the adjoining field. "Without a doubt, they are the best neighbours we can imagine," says the architect.

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A tranquil-looking pool in the guest house invites quiet contemplation of the landscape beyond

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The walkway between the house's two buildings, with views right through and out the other side





Influenced by the modern movement and Mediterranean design, Senabre Roca has been increasingly drawn to Japanese, Scandinavian and Portuguese architecture in recent years. “The colour palette is neutral and there is no place for ornament. This home values concept, proportions and simplicity,” she says. With almost no decorative elements, the windows work in the place of pictures on the walls. “Nature is the true work of art,” she adds.

Several lamps in the house are by design studio and manufacturer Contain, which was founded by Argentinian duo Mauricio Obarrio and Juan Peralta and is based in Mallorca. The Nuvol Double floor lamp in the dining room, for example, is made from brass and opaline glass with a local stone base.

“We tried to create two types of atmosphere,” Peralta says of how they envisaged the lighting for the house. “For the common areas, we selected lamps with dimmers that create a more relaxed ambience, while for the bedrooms we used reading models.” The owner chose the colours of the stone, the sizes of the lamps and the brass finishes as part of Contain’s custom-made design approach. “Our philosophy is to create unique and unrepeatable pieces for every project, in collaboration with customers and architects,” says Peralta.

Although principally known for its lighting, Contain manufactures furniture, too. In the living room, a terrazzo-topped table was specially designed by Senabre Roca and Contain. It was based on existing models but this new piece is now part of the brand’s portfolio of permanent products. A photograph by Julio Feroz, a rustic coffee table and Norr11’s Nomad Chair (from Papillon Menorca, a small store with a thoughtful selection of high-quality pieces) are a few of the other elements that subtly grace the rooms.

“I really like the scale of this project,” Senabre Roca says. “The single family house is a typology that allows design from start to finish, down to the smallest detail.”

The house honours the modesty and purity of the vernacular architecture (Es Mercadal is known for its uniform whitewashed buildings) while adding a contemporary twist, and its two-part approach gives rise to a fascinating geometric conversation. Thanks to its direct relationship with the exterior, it blurs the lines between inside and out so that every corner and detail naturally and seamlessly take on its full meaning. “My intention was to design spaces that help people feel in contact with the island,” says the architect. The goal was ambitious, but the outcome speaks for itself.

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A rustic wood table provides maximum contrast with the crisp white walls and micro-cement floor

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Large timber-framed windows take up most of the wall space, replacing the need for artwork





Above
Norr11's Nomad chair, and a light from
Mallorcan manufacturer Contain

Facing page
With contrasting shapes, the buildings
are in dialogue with each other

