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EVERY ASPECT OF THIS HACIENDA-STYLE HOLIDAY HOME ON THE MEXICAN COAST HAS BEEN CUSTOM DESIGNED TO CREATE THE ULTIMATE LUXURY GETAWAY

WORDS BY CAROLINE ALLEN. PHOTOGRAPHY BY HECTOR VELASCO FACIO.

In a world where so many of us are 'always on', the notion of decamping to a holiday home is a wonderfully appealing one. Having a retreat that is removed yet familiar and that allows us take a step back from the outside world is a real luxury. When those surroundings are as sublime as Villa Espíritu 67 near the California coast in Mexico, holiday time simply cannot come around quickly enough.

"Originally the clients wanted just a revamp of a spec home in the Cabo neighbourhood,"

recalls interior designer Sandra Espinet. "However, after viewing the available property lots, they decided to buy a beachfront view and develop the home from the ground up," she outlines. "My design team and I worked closely with the architects and contractors to create a home filled with details and personality. Our concept was to create the ultimate Mexican-style beach house and that is exactly what we developed." The project came to life two years ago when the clients saw the lot and instantly envisioned a family



THE FLOW OF THE HOUSE IS RELAXED AND TRADITIONAL. ENTRY IS THROUGH THE MAIN COURTYARD TO A GARDEN WITH A LARGE MEXICAN FOUNTAIN WHERE TRADITIONAL TALAVERA TILE WAS USED.



vacation home in Cabo. After a few months of architectural revisions, my team and I started working with the clients to tweak and add in our interior detail and conceptualise the interiors," Sandra says. "There were many challenges because we were dealing with a fast track timeframe and everything was custom. Like most projects there are communication and timeline conflicts."

The owners sought to combine traditional Mexican with transitional comfortable, beach

style. "There were many ideas thrown out and many requests from many involved parties were suggested. As the interior design expert, it was our job was to hone in all of the décor ideas in order to make a well designed home," says Sandra.

The original wish list included a music room; large outdoor covered patio; multiple pool terraces; children's areas; guest rooms; a large master bathroom with indoor and outdoor showers; and luxurious living spaces. "The

psychology of design comes into play at this junction of the project. You have to listen to the client, and reevaluate what it is they really need and want; what clients typically say is not what they really want," remarks Sandra.

The key design architectural elements are the traditional hacienda Mexican-style architecture mixed in with a more updated open floor plan concept of super-sized rooms and expansive views. Against this beautiful backdrop, Sandra and her team introduced

Moroccan lighting; Mexican art, textiles and accessories; and opulent upholstered seating. It was about an eclectic mix but with a Mexican focus.

"Our specified materials also reflected these design choices. We used traditional wood tones and mixed in brighter tiles and transitional hardware to create unique bathrooms that feel traditional but have all modern amenities like in a five star hotel," Sandra outlines. "Since this is a vacation home,



SANDRA REVELS IN THE USE OF CUSTOM TILES AND UNIQUELY MADE PIECES TO CREATE COMPLETELY BESPOKE BATHROOMS AND KITCHENS.

the owners wanted to arrive and feel like they were at a luxury hotel. A key element was to have a large open family kitchen and then have a chefs' kitchen behind so that the family could enjoy the space yet still have staff and a chef work without intruding on their family time," she says.

The flow of the house is relaxed and traditional. Entry is through the main courtyard to a garden with a large Mexican fountain where traditional talavera tile was used. Approaching the front entrance, you are met by an enormous wooden door reflective of the hacienda style.

The foyer contains antique console cabinets and iron Moroccan chandeliers that continue to the large hallway and into the vast room that houses the living and dining rooms as well as opening to the kitchen. A big open space offers beguiling views of the terrace, pool and, most of all, the sea of Cortez. The entire area is all oriented to the ocean, providing

magnificent vistas. Large-scale pocket doors that slide into the walls and completely disappear allow the rooms to feel open and fresh, blurring the boundaries between indoors and out. There is nothing, Sandra observes, as beautiful as sleeping with all windows open and enjoying the ocean breezes.

"The best part about the design process is that it is flexible and can change as better ideas are implemented. This project was no different. We started out with a simpler idea and as the design meetings progressed, we got bigger and better ideas that we added," she says.

"Our kitchen ideas grew and the kitchen became one of the more complex rooms because of all of the details. But it was worth it because the kitchen is open to the outdoors and living room and really needed to be special. It is just one of many rooms that blossomed over time. I think all designs, be they commercial or residential, start at point A



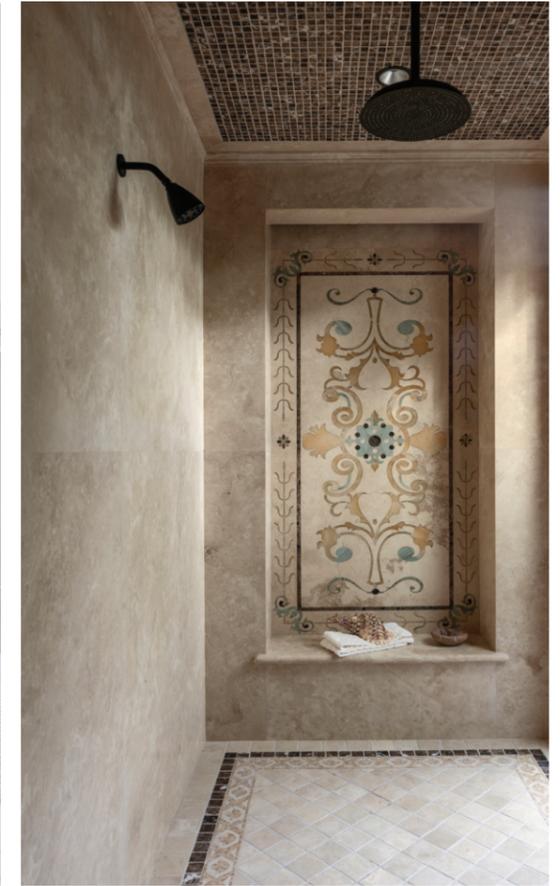
THE DESIGNER AND HER TEAM WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE ARCHITECTS AND CONTRACTORS TO CREATE A HOME FILLED WITH DETAILS AND PERSONALITY.

and end up at point Z which is usually better because it has been thought out and detailed more," Sandra says.

Her favourite parts of the house are the covered terraces and the outdoor patios that epitomise a beach home. A covered dining room close to a full barbecue serving area; a bar and seating area; a giant infinity edge pool overlooking the ocean; a fire pit by which to enjoy drinks at night; and a pavilion with huge hanging daybeds are all part of the spectacular setting.

The outdoor areas took a lot of time to devise because of their size and the amount of activities they encompassed, Sandra says. "The outdoor experience was designed to be unique to the family and the sunset from the terrace is just breathtaking," remarks Sandra. "The outdoor areas are dynamic and extremely user friendly. From the pool areas, if you look back towards the house, you truly can see the entire architecture of the home and the gracefulness of the entire design. Everything from the architecture to the outdoor furniture to the large iron candle holders marries well and feels unified," she enthuses.





IN THE BATHROOMS, MOST OF THE TILES ARE CUSTOM COLOURED AND HAVE THE SPECIFIC COLOURS THAT THE CLIENT LIKED FOR EACH ROOM.

In this convivial household, the escapist nature of the master bedroom and bathroom as private spaces specially designed for the homeowners is key. "Because the family usually travels with friends and children, having a personal unique getaway space was important for this couple. The master bedroom is truly a private space within their vacation home," says Sandra. "We were determined to meet every detail they requested from a custom dressing room and indoor and outdoor shower to a bedroom terrace replete with large stone fireplace."

Sandra revels in the use of custom tiles and uniquely made pieces to create completely bespoke bathrooms and kitchens. "In this kitchen and prep kitchen, I used a custom mosaic pattern that I had made at a factory outside of Mexico City. Laser cut stone designed in traditional coloured marbles give the kitchen an old school feel that is very luxurious," she says.

"In the bathrooms, most of the tiles are custom

coloured and have the specific colours that the client liked for each room. These are details that most designers bring to the table and I love working on. It's one of the more creative areas in our job. With fabrics, I use so many different fabric houses and I am always shopping for the perfect colour and style. I love Robert Allen; Manuel Canovas; and Pierre Frey. I also use a lot of Perennials and Summit outdoor fabrics."

While this inviting and indulgent house was designed very much with its enviable location in mind, there are plenty of elements from artisan tiles to vivid fabrics and solid wood pieces that Irish homeowners could use to inject character and warmth into their own living spaces. Sandra's design advice is to look close to home and work with a concept that reflects your lifestyle and your location. "Finding your unique look is part of what we do and every client's happy space is different. That's the beauty of what we interior designers do - working with clients to find their taste and lifestyle needs." Sounds just the ticket.

IN THIS CONVIVIAL HOUSEHOLD, THE ESCAPIST NATURE OF THE MASTER BEDROOM AND BATHROOM AS PRIVATE SPACES SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR THE HOMEOWNERS IS KEY.

The Designer

Stepping into a home devised by Sandra Espinet is a design experience combining comfort and personalised style. Sandra's creativity and multicultural heritage gives indoor and outdoor living spaces both the individuality of far-reaching travels and as an appreciation of classic luxury. She finds imaginative ideas in the natural world when selecting her palette and materials. This can lead, for example, to combinations of exotic ocean blues and sunset yellows with natural silk, cottons and other fabrics. Inspiration is drawn from her sojourns in South America; Northern Africa; Europe and Asia, as well as her experiences living around the globe. Since 2000, Sandra has been living in the coastal town of San Jose Del Cabo, Mexico, where she owns and operates S.E. Design Services. The award-winning designer's work has been celebrated in interior design books such as Houses by the Sea and magazines like Architectural Digest and China Décor. The American Society of Interior Designers awarded Sandra first place in excellence of design for homes over 3,000 sq ft. She is author of The Well Travelled Home. See SandraEspinet.com

