

SPRING 2021

DEPARTURES

HOME + DESIGN



by Vicky Lowry. Photographs by Douglas Friedman

From left: Gallinita vines that climb stainless steel trellises frame a staircase that leads from the courtyard to the guest bedrooms; on the pool deck, the tables and chairs are by Richard Schultz from Knoll, and the Mirasol umbrella is by Santa Barbara Designs; on the covered terrace, the armchair at right and the coffee table are both by Patricia Urquiola from B&B Italia, and the outdoor rug is from One Kings Lane.

At a seaside escape in Mexico, an architect known for restraint and an interior designer with a flair for exuberance prove that opposites do attract.



Everything *under* _____ the Sun



For a sybaritic paradise with all the amenities, a private residential community in an exotic locale can't be beat. Access to exclusive beaches, golf courses, spas, and celebrity-chef dining rooms are some of the pleasurable options of gated life. If there's a drawback, it's that the architecture can lack panache.

Five years ago, a West Coast couple with four children purchased two oceanside lots with plans to build their dream vacation house in a new development in the southern part of the Baja peninsula. To ensure an original design, they chose an award-winning architect and a celebrated interior designer who could not be more opposite in style. Greg Warner of the San Francisco firm Walker Warner Architects specializes in impeccable, clean-lined buildings, such as the airy pavilions of Flowers Vineyards & Winery in Sonoma County. He calls the style "modernist but soft." Designer Ken Fulk, meanwhile, can be counted on for fireworks. He's a master at creating colorful, cheeky interiors that brim with life. He recently collaborated with musician Pharrell Williams on the Goodtime Hotel, part of a block-long Miami complex that includes restaurants and shops; for Austin's



Clockwise from far left: In the courtyard, the sofa and chair are both from Restoration Hardware; the stairs and railings in the bunk room are made from salvaged wood; in the kitchen-dining room, the Aires rug is from Merida and the dining chairs are by Casamidy; the so-called Sand Bar was made using a boat once owned by Hollywood screenwriter Ernest Tidyman; in a guest bathroom, the sinks and faucets are by Waterworks.



room. A double-height copper curtain veils the recreation wing, and a four-bedroom annex was completed later.

The walls are crafted from raw concrete mixed with sand for subtle striations and texture, which gives the compound a worn, sun-bleached aesthetic. "We were going back in time for a more rural vernacular, as if that concrete was always there, like the remnant of an existing building," says Warner, who took inspiration from the architecture of Mexican modernists like Luis Barragán and Ricardo Legorreta. "The beauty of Mexico is in those early buildings, which have soul."

"There's a sense of imperfection. You see the hand," says Fulk. "We used things of Mexico, made in Mexico. We wanted it to feel lighthearted and easy."

Working with a team of artisans, Warner and Fulk deployed regional touches throughout, from woven-branch panels for the



on the one-acre property, Warner devised a series of smaller geometric structures, many open to the elements. They spread out from a central courtyard, like unfolding origami. The largest of them is L-shaped and contains the main living areas below the primary bed-

coffered ceilings to Crest-white plaster that was shaped into kitchen counters, bathroom vanities, and a madcap bunk room. Plaster was also the material of choice for another of the decorator's unorthodox elements: an enormous sculpture surrounding the courtyard fireplace. "I wanted it to look like a big sun or a lion," Fulk says. "It's playful without getting kitschy."

An austere pavilion, with vertical openings in the thick concrete walls, serves as a sheltered dining room with blue-sky views. A bright kitchen gets its spark from cement tiles the color of the sea and chairs upholstered in graphic Cowtan & Tout fabrics. The primary suite, when closed off with metal-studded doors, becomes a serene refuge. "While we maximized the space of this property for company, the clients wanted to have a place to sneak away to," says Fulk, "and then join back into the fray when they were ready—for your dressy drink, as we would call them in the South."

The cocktail hour kicks off under the thatched roof of an illuminated beach bar outfitted with a vintage cruiser that looks as if it had washed ashore in a storm. In fact, Fulk found the relic at a nearby marina, had it hoisted into place, and then anchored it into the sand so the boat wouldn't float out to sea with the tides. The spirited creation is pure Ken Fulk, and while probably not what Warner had envisioned when he conjured a rural vernacular for this Mexican oasis, it's as original as the home itself. "It's a happy place," he says.

"I don't know that people would necessarily put our two firms together," Fulk says, "but it made for a lovely result." ☼