

THE  TIMES

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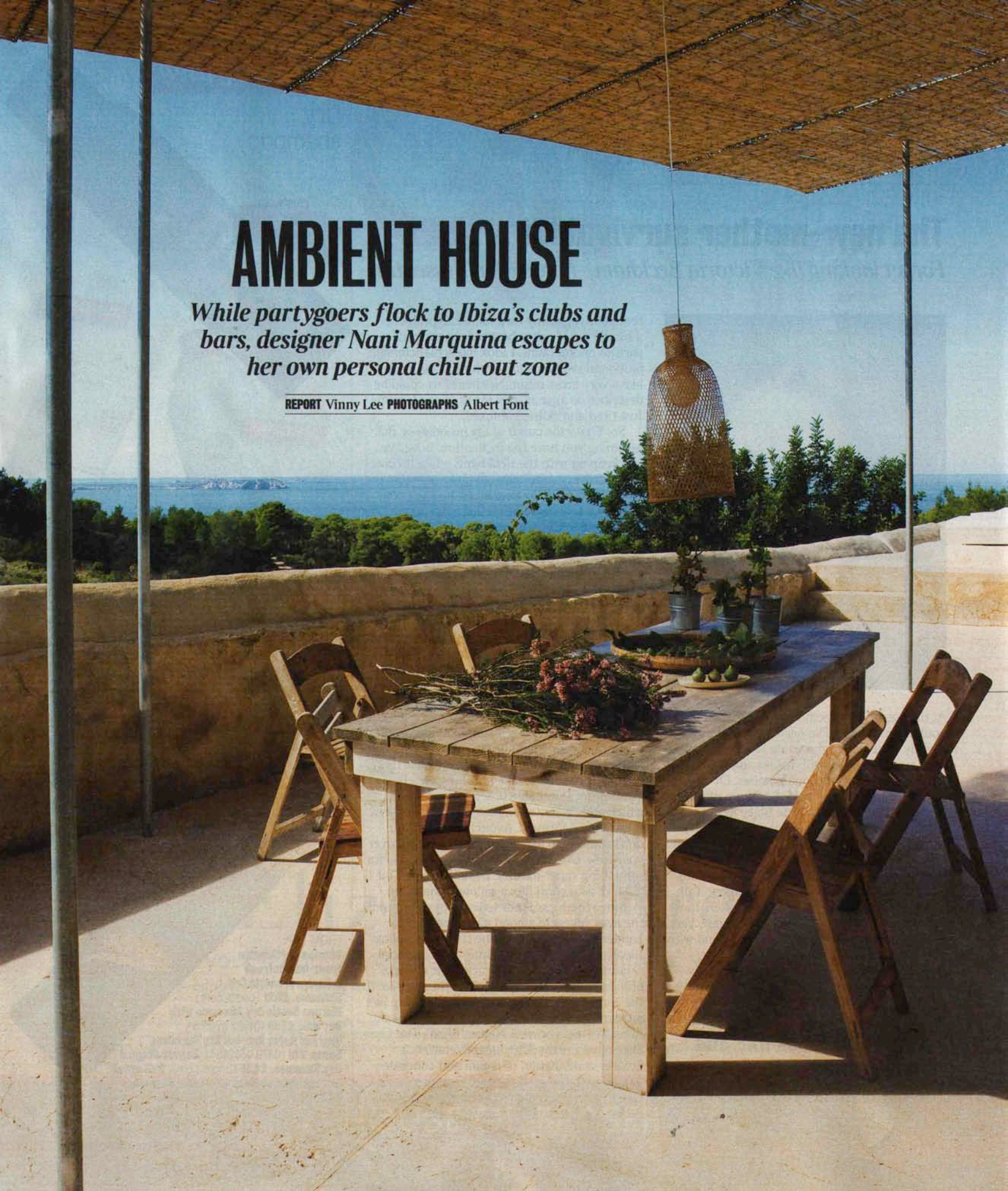
ONE
YEAR
TO GO...

AND
DREAMING
OF GOLD

AMBIENT HOUSE

While partygoers flock to Ibiza's clubs and bars, designer Nani Marquina escapes to her own personal chill-out zone

REPORT Vinny Lee PHOTOGRAPHS Albert Font





Opposite: shaded dining on the terrace.
This page: Marquina's fabrics and rugs adorn the interiors



Ibiza is often dubbed the “party island” of the Med, a favourite spot for the likes of Kylie Minogue, P.Diddy and Jade Jagger, but Spanish textile and rug designer Nani Marquina has a different take on it. For her, it is a place of peace and relaxation.

“Ibiza is an island of three parts,” she says. “There’s the area where people go to drink and enjoy all-night discos; then there are the small rural towns and villages with their churches; and lastly there’s the countryside, where our house is located.” It is almost lost in an isolated wooded

valley on the northwest coast of the island, overlooking the sea.

Marquina came across the old peasant’s house and animal shed five years ago, and worked with a Barcelona-based architect who’d been born on the island to bring it slowly back to life over a period of two years. “It was in ruins when we found it. The derelict core of the building was more than a century old, with earth floors and no roof.”

Although Marquina is known for her colourful floor coverings and collaborations with leading contemporary designers such as Ron Arad, Tord Boontje and the Bouroullec ➤

‘The house was in ruins when we found it. The core of the building had earth floors and no roof’



Clockwise from far left: one of the small original windows above the bed; the sitting room; colourful storage

brothers, her island home is a skilful blend of old and new.

“For the building works we followed the traditional shapes and used materials such as stone and sand-based plaster mixed with earth so that it blends in with the landscape,” she says. “The roof and sunshades are made from a type of reed native to this area, and every two years we paint the walls inside with a white calcium wash, which was used in olden times to avoid infections.”

One unusual feature of the exterior is the windows. “We felt that the original openings were too small, but rather than knock them

out we joined them to new, larger ones and framed the outside of the original windows with thick bands of white paint,” says Marquina. This creates an optical illusion that the old windows are larger than they are.

The furnishings are simple and rustic. The sitting room’s iron fireplace and chimney were created by the Catalan industrial designer Miguel Milá and are positioned in the corner, away from the walls, to give a feeling of space. The long dining table in the kitchen came from a local antiques shop and was carefully stripped and restored. The rattan lamps, on the other hand, are from Ikea. “The straw

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'We often sleep outdoors. In fact, it is such a peaceful place that it's easy to sleep all day'

shades give a mellow light that warms up the whiteness of the room," says Marquina.

As you would expect, there are also plenty of rugs, throws and mats. "Some of the fabrics and blankets were designed by me, but the house is full of objects that I have collected on my travels. I love to buy rugs from other countries and cultures," says Marquina, who inherited her passion for design from her father, Rafael, who, in the Sixties, created an iconic nondrip conical glass oil and vinegar container that is still in production today.

"I studied product design in the Eighties and found there was a gap in the market in Spain for weaving and rugs, so decided to focus on that. I also like carpets as objects, because they transmit the history and culture of a place through their materials and manufacturing techniques. Plus they have great significance as a meeting place and reveal a lot about the personality of the person they belong to."

Marquina and her husband, photographer Albert Font, spend a month in the house at



The swimming pool and terrace, with view of the Mediterranean

Easter and several weeks during the summer. Their main home is in Barcelona. As well as her studio, Marquina oversees her shop, in a converted garage in the city centre, and the global distribution of her rugs, which can be found in the Conran Shop and Geoffrey Drayton in London. So downtime in Ibiza is something she looks forward to.

"When we're on the island, I go to the

beach and sail, collect sea urchins and swim and snorkel. Friends and family come to stay from time to time and we often sleep outdoors. In fact, it is such a peaceful place that it's easy to sleep all day," she says. Which is probably the only thing she has in common with the party set on the other side of the island. ■

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