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Treasure Island

Rare antiques, vibrant art, and eclectic flourishes lend stylish irreverence to the Ibiza retreat of painter Olivier Mourao

TEXT BY ANDREW FERREN PHOTOGRAPHED AND PRODUCED BY TIM BEDDOW STYLED BY CARLOS MOTA

Painter Olivier Mourao fashioned an exuberant getaway on the island of Ibiza. The gardens were designed by Mourao's friend and fellow artist Prince Tomasz Lubomirski. For details see Sources.

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livier Mourao, a Brazilian-born, London-based painter, collector, and creative spirit at large, first discovered the freewheeling Mediterranean island of Ibiza at the height of its bohemian heyday in the mid-1970s. He was so smitten with its easygoing lifestyle that, with Prince Tomasz Lubomirski, a friend and fellow artist, he bought a penthouse in the middle of its namesake city. For more than two decades, the apartment served as Mourao's escape during increasingly extended sojourns, which now typically last from April through October.

Then in the summer of 2005, Mourao found a nearly finished house for sale in a nondescript neighborhood on the outskirts of town. Since Mourao doesn't drive and prefers to be near the action, the property appealed to him much more than a remote beach bungalow or a hilltop villa (of which there are many dotting the island's winding lanes and secluded coves). The fact that the eight-bedroom, 14,500-square-foot residence was considerably bigger than his penthouse certainly didn't hurt. The painter immediately saw in the Mediterranean-style



structure, designed by Spanish architect Juan Carlos Larios Martínez, a blank canvas where he could conjure his dream retreat.

Upon purchasing the house with Lubomirski, Mourao set about completing it in his own artistic style. He worked closely with architect Perla Stefani, a fellow Brazilian expat, to translate his individualistic concepts into reality, adding details such as fluted columns on the ground floor and circular windows to the front façade. A steady stream of craftsmen became schooled in Mourao's exacting standards along the way. "Friends joked that I had opened an atelier teaching fine arts to the local artisans," he says, recalling that he often had to start a job himself to show them precisely how he wanted things done.

The stunning kitchen reveals Mourao's skills writ large. He lined the walls and floor with Iranian embossed tiles salvaged from a palatial villa on the

island, then had them finished in a high-gloss varnish. The results look like a riff on the traditional tooled-leather wall coverings of Renaissance Spain—"but much more hygienic," the aesthete says with a laugh. In a number of other rooms, he created graphic floors using various marbles. "Stone provides such a cool, fresh feeling in a climate like this," he explains. "In some rooms we even carried it up onto the walls."

Back in London, Mourao's maximalist antiques-and-art-filled Notting Hill duplex has earned the nickname Aladdin's Cave. In Ibiza, the furnishings are fewer and farther between, but no less exotic. "I like to take things that have an ancient feel and give them a contemporary edge," he says, gesturing toward a prized 18th-century Francis of Assisi santo as a case in point. Only its face and hands are finished, as the figure was meant to be clothed, but Mourao left the rough-hewn torso exposed, because to him it seems modern and

Above, clockwise from left: An 18th-century Spanish door in the entry. One of several outdoor seating areas conceived by Lubomirski. A prized santo is displayed in the dining space. **Opposite, clockwise from top:** Travertine lines the drawing room, forming a neutral backdrop for vibrant paintings. The library's carpet is by the Rug Company. Columns divide the double-height room Mourao calls the "hunting lodge."



casual. "Nothing is treated too seriously here," he adds. "This is a beach house, after all."

Make that a beach house with pedigreed pieces culled from international auction houses and dealers. Likening himself to a gentleman on a Grand Tour, Mourao says he loves buying objects abroad to display for his delight back home. In any one of the Ibiza rooms, you might find intricate 19th-century Indian furniture inlaid with mother-of-pearl, rustic Ibiçencan ceramics, Kashmiri silks, or Egyptian armchairs—not to mention some of his many paintings. "It's a challenge to make it all fit and work," he says, "but I like challenges."

Perhaps the house's most surprising feature is the "hunting lodge," a double-height room that forms a vast backdrop for what Mourao calls his "installations" of objects and furniture. An ancient Roman statue hobnobs with French gargoyles, 18th-century Aubusson

fragments, and an antique Dutch table. The space also makes for a prime hangout. "At parties we'll find as many as a dozen people lounging and chatting on the canopy bed," he says.

The garden, meanwhile, can easily accommodate 700 guests. Lubomirski took on its design, devising cozy nooks as well as expansive seating areas amid lush citrus trees, climbing bougainvillea, and fragrant jasmine. In addition to two pools, there are a grotto and waterfall that the owners created in collaboration with local sculptor Wagner Santos.

But the house is not all play. Mourao paints often and has a show every summer at the nearby Km5 gallery, which, true to this famously hedonistic island, stays open until four in the morning. For him, those late hours, much like his eclectic home, epitomize Ibiza's unique energy. "You just have to understand the rhythm of life here," he says. □

Above, clockwise from left: A 19th-century French mirror in a guest bath. In his bedroom, Mourao set the headboard and an 18th-century Spanish canopy against a mosaic of broken marble. The living area features antique Indian side chairs and suzani pillows. **Opposite:** A 17th-century wood carving in the sleeping niche of Lubomirski's bedroom.

