



SPANISH
Enfilade

A new Catalonian house occupies
a flat, ground-level site, yet is
positioned to take in views of the
distant sea and surrounding hills

INTERIOR DESIGN BY *Serge Castella*
PRODUCED BY *Patricia Ketelsen*

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Opening page and this page: The living room of a new house near Spain's Catalanian coast features a dramatic flight of stairs, minimal and sculptural in its presence. Room details include a pair of Maison Jansen iron benches, whose cushions are upholstered in Rubelli velvet; a brown leather armchair, designed by Swedish furniture maker Arne Norell around 1960; a Molteni sofa and a pair of circa-1980 Italian floor lamps. Farrow & Ball's Strong White provides an ideal neutral backdrop.





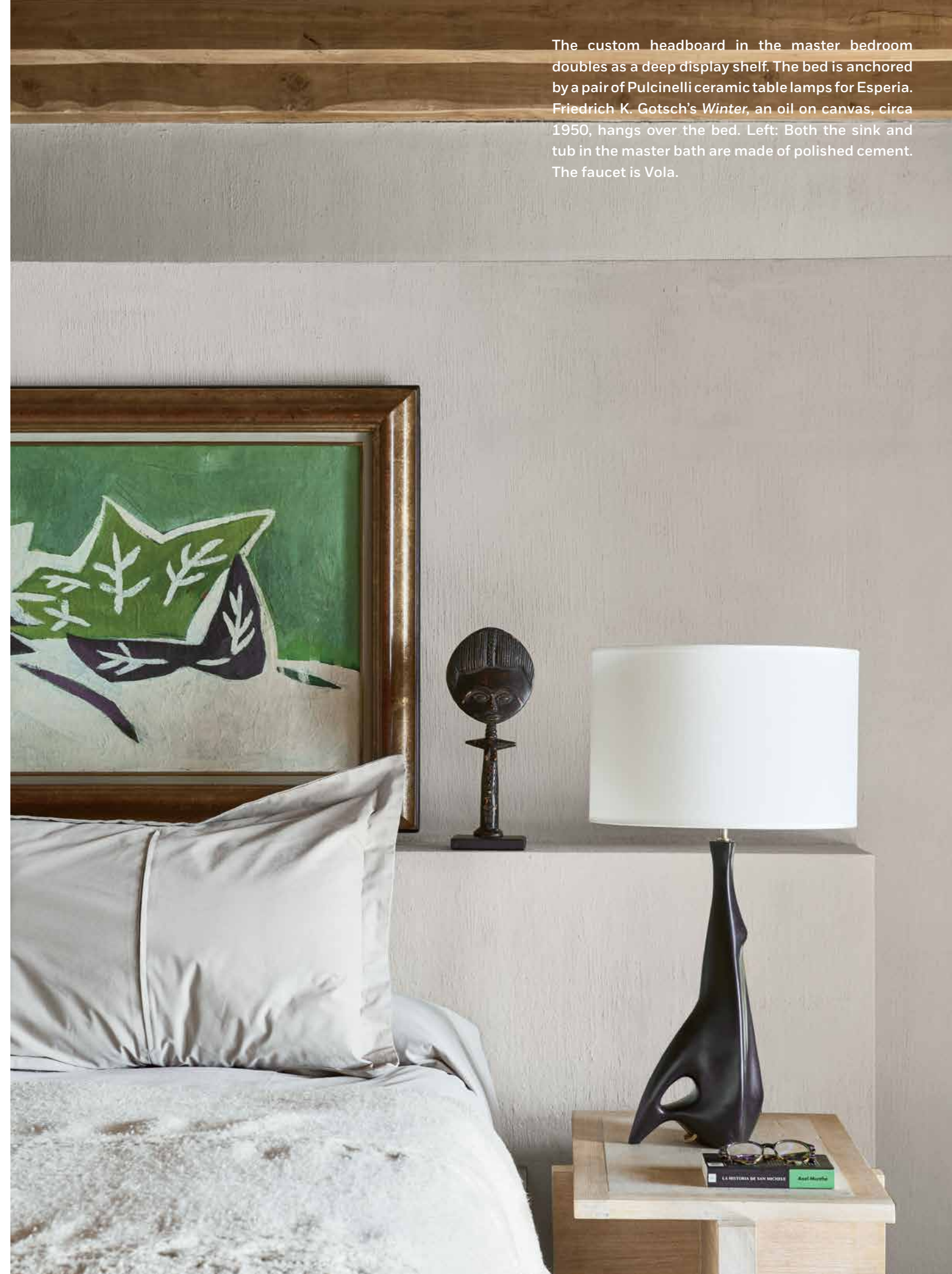
Above: Niche shelving in the dining room is used to store and display local pottery, handmade for the resident family. The goblets are fashioned of olive tree wood. Farrow & Ball's Blue Gray is used on the walls. Opposite: The kitchen island is by Bulthaup. Fixtures by Wever & Ducré are strategically positioned as task lighting.

The dining room might be considered a period room, given the number of antiques used there. A nineteenth-century Murano glass chandelier hangs above a rustic eighteenth-century Swedish country table. The Scottish oak Glastonbury armchairs date from the nineteenth century, though they are copies of the original fifteenth-century versions.





A contemplative area of the master bedroom is defined by contrasts, notably an eighteenth-century Swedish Gustavian bench and a decidedly contemporary, sculptural lounge chair. A still life, rendered in oil on canvas, by Spanish artist Miguel Macaya hangs over the fireplace, whose minimal design is by Castella and Flinn.



The custom headboard in the master bedroom doubles as a deep display shelf. The bed is anchored by a pair of Pulcinelli ceramic table lamps for Esperia. Friedrich K. Gotsch's *Winter*, an oil on canvas, circa 1950, hangs over the bed. Left: Both the sink and tub in the master bath are made of polished cement. The faucet is Vola.

SOME DESIGNERS WANT their work not to be seen. While they are willing and eager to determine the mood and look of a home, they may wish to achieve that without drawing attention to themselves. “When we work with an architect of this caliber, we don’t want to leave our signature or make a statement,” says Serge Castella, the Spanish interior and industrial designer. “We’re happy not to be noticed.”

Castella and his design and life partner, Jason Flinn, who collaborate on every house project for which they are commissioned, are not evincing false modesty. “We want the clients and everyone who comes here to notice the actual design of the house, the artwork on the walls, and take in the views of the sea in the distance,” says Flinn, “but our goal was to please the client, to make a home for him and his wife and three children that feels good. Isn’t that what every interior designer should aim for?”

Castella and Flinn came to this project after the house, situated on fifty acres of the Catalan countryside, was completed. Architecturally, all seemed finished, inside and out. Structurally, the two changed nothing. “What we did do is change some of the uses of the spaces,” Castella says, “and we changed some landscaping to better take advantage of the house’s site on a plain. The house, as it was designed by Josep Juanpere, makes such a strong statement, aesthetically and in terms of its layout, that all felt done.”

The two designers have been likened to minimalist sculptors of interior spaces in their ability to furnish rooms with objects so distinctive, many of which they conceive, that those very furnishings become practical artworks. Although the architect had fashioned a daring steel staircase, with open treads and no railing, Castella and Flinn softened the form with wood details. “Stairs like this, fashioned from steel, are very much in vogue here in Spain now,” says Flinn, “but everything we did in this house was about making it feel like more of a home for a family. Using this much wood in a new house may be something common in the States, but here, not so much. Wood, we both feel, can make a modern space feel much more homey.”

The designers have worked before with the client, notably on a spacious residence of his in Barcelona. They describe the owner as “someone who builds things” as his profession, adding that “everything he

does build makes the world a more beautiful place.” That is quite a claim, but given this seven-bedroom home, one could easily agree with the designers. One of the notable features of the house, too, is the sheer size of the site it occupies. “There are lots of centuries-old houses here with lots of zoning controls in place,” Castella points out. That this house occupies so many acres is a rarity anywhere in Continental Europe. In addition to its size, the house has been sited to both embrace and be protected from the shade and sun and winds that often blow through this part of the Iberian coast. And though it sits on a ground-level site, rooms were positioned to take in views of distant islands.

The house’s public rooms are large, with vaulting, raked ceilings, coursed by massive wooden ceiling beams. “Our intention was to keep the rooms on a human level,” says Flinn, “and to make sure that nobody felt lost in them.” Their solution, in part, was to choose furnishings sufficiently sculptural in presence so that one’s attention stays at eye level. Seating areas are dense and intimate and the furnishings throughout are a blend of contemporary pieces with antiques, the latter in keeping with the designers’ additional role as antiques dealers. Voluminous draperies adorn the large windows, too, as a means of fostering privacy and intimacy when desired.

“The way of life here, though,” adds Castella, “is such that people live inside and outside year round. Yes, you have winds and strong sun, but the landscape and climate are irresistible.” The designers enhanced some of those outdoor areas by planting additional fruit trees and spice plants, and configuring neatly cropped hedges to frame and conceal the swimming pool.

Another feature of the house that keeps it to scale, is that much of it is an organized enfilade, whereby one room leads into another with few, if any, hallways. The arrangement makes for a natural progression of spaces—from the public rooms to the dining spaces on into the bedrooms.

“I would like to say that we’re all done with our work here,” says Flinn, “but like the client, this place is very much alive. Something that is this filled with life and energy and creativity is never really done.” ■

Serge Castella (in the foreground) and Jason Flinn are longtime partners in life and in their design business.

*“In this part of the world,
stones belong outdoors, wood indoors.”*

—Serge Castella

