

*The sitting room, lit up with sunny yellows, from the custom-made sofas to the artwork by Javier Chapa. Opposite: Emma Roig Askari*



# HOUSE OF THE SETTING SUN



Built on a west-facing hillside in Ibiza, Emma Roig Askari's holiday home is as vibrant and colourful as she is. By LISA GRAINGER

**EMMA ROIG ASKARI** didn't particularly want a summer house. When the Spanish journalist and Christie's partner wasn't living in her own homes in London, New York and Madrid, she was more than happy, she tells me, to rent holiday houses "and hand back the keys".

But her financier husband really wanted their three children to spend their summers exploring nature and the sea. For about a decade the family flitted around the world looking at potential homes, scouring the Hamptons and Greece, then Mallorca and Italy. Finally, in 2014, when their teenage son refused to look at another property, the couple bought a steep, 4,400 sq m plot in the rocky west of Ibiza, enlisted the help of the local architect Rolf Blakstad and moved into what Askari delightedly refers to as "our couture house".

What makes it "couture" is that within the terraced, west-facing rooms, Blakstad has inserted architectural detailing inspired by buildings beloved by Askari. In the living room the ceiling is punctured with a giant circular skylight as a tribute to the Arab bath-houses in her childhood home of Valencia. There's a cupola to remind her of her favourite building, the Pantheon in Rome, and a spiral staircase inspired by one in the US designed by the Valencian architect Rafael Guastavino.

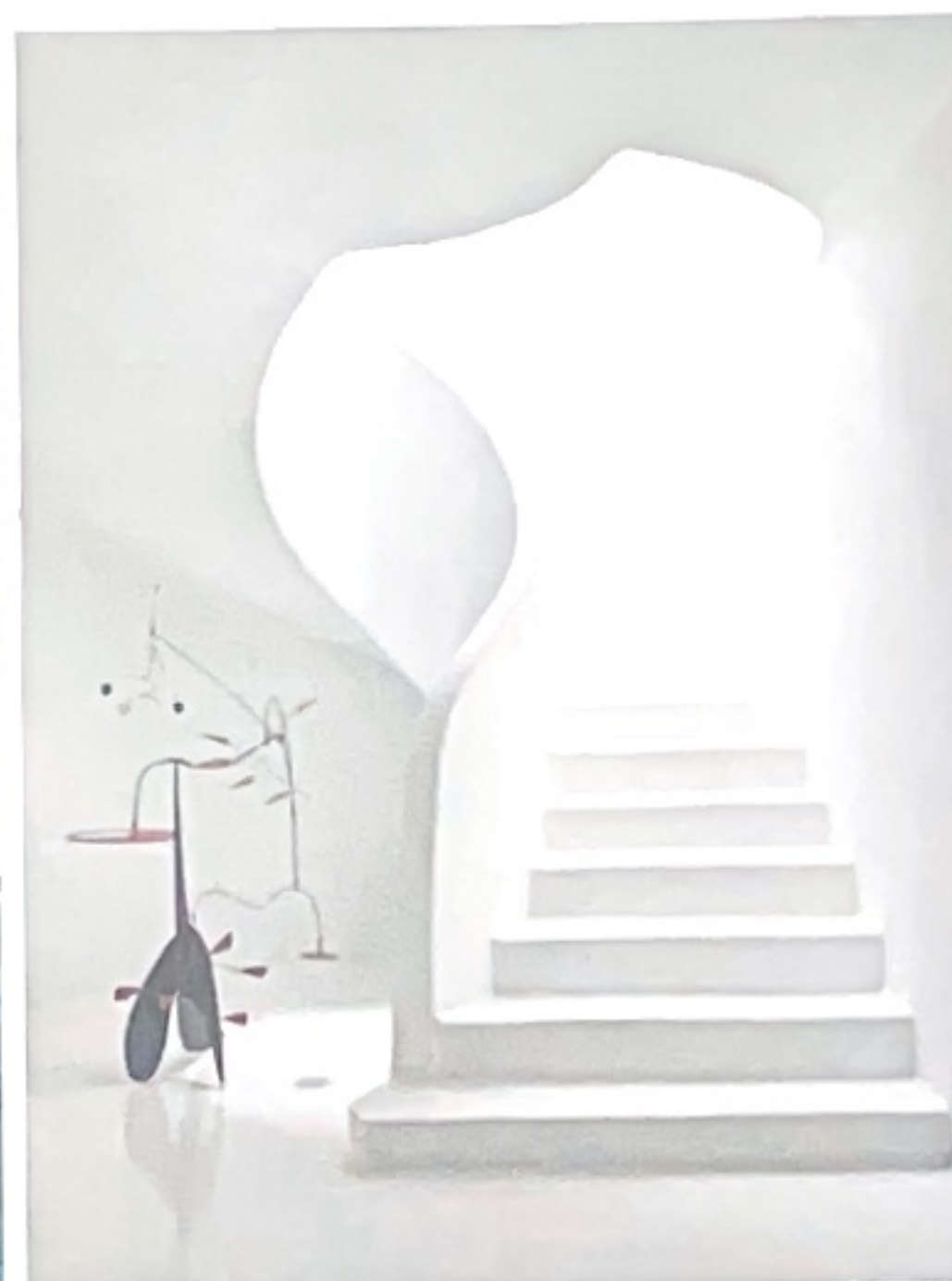
Once Blakstad had created the bones of the home, Askari added her own aesthetic with strong shapes, graphic art and summery colours. On walls and fabrics she has used straw yellows, leaf greens and dusty pinks. To reference the island's history and its people, from Phoenicians and Romans to Arabs and Spaniards, she mixed bits from around the world: ancient Hellenistic vessels with contemporary Danish pottery, 1950s Italian furniture with new rattan chairs from Valencia, old Venetian glass with mid-century French cabinets. It's a look she describes as "like walking into my brain: not organised and, for some people, too much, overkill. But to me it's totally beautiful."

To adorn walls, while she says she would "love a Rothko or a Cranach" to add to her Picasso and Miró etchings, she has assembled all sorts of eclectic finds from auctions, flea markets and odd shops. "I adore flea markets," she says. "There you find orphans - things on their own that you could help, things that have no signature, no provenance, but are just beautiful and give you pleasure. It's all about intuition, finding little bits that go together. You have to see my collection of porcelain ... I have plates from a store here, bowls from everywhere, single glasses from Murano. I am an auction junkie - every week I check in to see what's being sold in Chicago, Madrid, London. Nothing goes into storage either: if I buy it, I put it in my house."





## INTERIORS



Clockwise from top left: the poolhouse, designed to resemble one in a Moroccan painting; a spiral staircase inspired by a structure in the US by Rafael Guastavino, adorned with an artwork by Manuel Marin; a dining area

Among her serious antiques and valuable works she has slipped in art by two great forgers: a painting by Elmyr de Hory, who copied masters, and a mobile by Manuel Marin, who worked for Alexander Calder and made millions from copying him. "Even if you know they're not the real thing, if they're beautiful that's interesting to me," she says. "Sometimes kitsch and tackiness works."

She's equally passionate about the colour yellow, which dominates the sitting room, from the Miró tapestry to the custom-made Pierre Frey-upholstered sofas. "It reminds me of the sun, so when you walk into the room you feel lifted." Although the wrong yellow tone, she warns, "can be a dangerous thing. If you put too much on the walls it gives you an ulcer. It has to be a specific yellow like this one, which is perfect."

The house, she says, makes her feel "like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, following the Yellow Brick Road back home".

Yet it's the garden that brings her most joy. Designed by the British landscaper Tania Compton, its terraces are rich with varied textures, soft colours and exotic scents. By the shower Compton planted three types of jasmine "which waft as you wash". Flowerbeds feature local herbs and plants. Fountains tinkle, filling the air with cool spray and soothing sounds.

Askari's next book, to be published in May, is about Ibiza's most interesting architectural houses. She credits her love of creativity and people who create to her late mother, who had an art gallery in Valencia and "incredible taste".

"As children, she'd take us to art places in the middle of nowhere, to markets and stores and antique shops, and find the most incredible furniture. She was very creative: she'd make the four of us move furniture around to see how it looked, to learn about upholstery and discover great art in galleries. We'd be taken to every gallery on earth and bribed with an ice cream and Coke to keep us going. And today all of us love design: my sister is a designer and has a hotel in Valencia. My brother has a 16th-century mas [castle] and has the best eye for architecture. My mum's imprint is in all of us in different ways."

Her mother also "found inspiration everywhere", Askari continues. "That might be a door knob she saw in Versailles or a dresser she spotted in a movie or a connection to a book. She believed beauty was a human right, it was fundamental to living. She never thought it was superfluous. And it didn't matter about budget. She taught us that you don't need to own beauty - you can go to a museum for free. What was important was to make sure you understood beauty, and were surrounded by it."

Which here, at home in Ibiza, Askari clearly is. *Inside Ibiza* by Emma Roig Askari, with photography by Ricardo Labougle (Vendome Press £65). To order a copy go to [timesbookshop.co.uk](http://timesbookshop.co.uk) or call 020 3176 2935