

Can Bordoy Grand House & Garden

PALMA DE MALLORCA

The botanic world takes centrestage in the conversion of a historic mansion, set around the largest private garden in central Palma.

Words: Agnish Ray • Photography: © Jose Hevia

When Swedish businessman Mikael Hall got his hands on a disused, centuries-old mansion in the heart of Palma's old town, he first planned on turning it into an apartment block. What quickly changed his mind was the secluded garden he found tucked away at the back, said to be one of the largest in the historic centre – an offer too wonderful to keep from public access.

Tasked with remodelling the site into a hotel instead, Paloma Hernaiz and Jaime Oliver – founders of Spanish architecture and design studio OHLAB – discovered several different time periods reflected in the building's remains. The front façade, explains Oliver, could date as far back as the 15th century, with its small windows above, designed for the privacy of the household's noble owners. The large, evenly spaced windows at the back, on the other hand, indicate the more egalitarian, socially inclusive layouts of 20th century architecture. Meanwhile, the stairway inside the building was almost certainly built by a 19th century middle-class.

From aristocracy and bourgeoisie to the nouveau riche who made money through colonial trade in Latin America, this house is likely to have been home to many different types of







In the dining room, bird-shaped lamps by Neri & Hu hang alongside antique bird cages, whose doors have been left open as if their former inhabitants have taken flight

families over the centuries. The sense of home was therefore what the new hotel's owners were most interested in evoking. Although a five-star establishment, Can Bordoy aims for the ambience of a family-run guesthouse. Living rooms and dining rooms replace lobbies and restaurants here; in fact, guests can dine wherever they choose, whether it be the library, garden, or their own suite. Homely and comfortable is the name of the game. There is even a pet dog – a majestic Afghan galgo hound called Mr B.

The designers have preserved many of the elements of the building as they found it: original, typically Balearic stones like santanyí and marés remain in the walls; and many of the windows have been made from pieces of blown glass discovered on site. Inside, from the pine fixtures to the velvet curtains and silk Turkish rugs, much of the decor recreates the opulence of centuries past, with furniture and ornaments sourced from local and foreign antiques dealers.

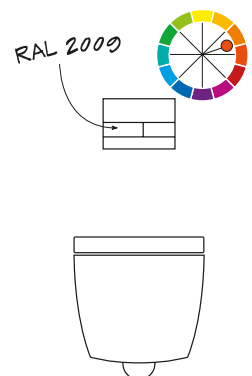
But just as old meets new in the building's architecture, OHLAB wanted the hotel's interior to contain similar contrasts. Bold pieces of contemporary art and design sit among the antiquity – like a mirror installation on the ceiling above the cocktail area, reflecting the glimmering bar beneath it. A series of 28 abstract paintings by the artist Pedro Oliver hang on bare, unframed canvases around the hotel – a

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sharp contrast with the period portraits of noble figures also found on many of the walls.

Reminders of the colonial era are found in the hotel's furniture – like the wicker chairs in the dining areas. Elsewhere, contemporary seating ranges by Moroso and Tonet mimic the colonial styles, but sport bright colours and abstract shapes. Emblems of local craftsmanship are found in items like the ceramic jars in the bathrooms, dispensing soaps, moisturisers and shampoos, designed by Mallorca-based Paparkone studio.

In the garden, landscaper Salva Cañís has breathed new life in to the 750m² oasis. Filled with laurel, wild olive and Jacaranda trees, it now seats al fresco diners of the Botànic restaurant, run by chef Andrés Benítez with a menu championing healthy, fresh local produce.

A European hackberry tree – recognised as a sign of welcome in Mallorcan houses – provides shade while a carefully placed hedge gently conceals the private pool area, complete

with hot tub and massage tables. The natural essence of the wildlife outside penetrates the interior, too: creepers spread across the ceiling of the lounge area, joining the front patio and the back garden; and bird-shaped lamps by Shanghai-based contemporary design practice Neri & Hu hang overhead in the dining room. These are perched among numerous antique bird cages, whose doors have been left open as if their former inhabitants have taken flight. Such touches contribute to a charming design scheme that has captured the attention of the industry – Can Bordoy has been shortlisted for no less than three AHEAD awards – and undoubtedly makes its mark in a crowded market.



EXPRESS CHECK-OUT
 Owner: Mikael Hall
 Architecture and Interior Design: OHLAB
 Main Contractor: RROCB
 Graphic Design: Studio Roses
 Landscaping: Salva Cañís
www.canbordoy.com