

SITTING ROOM

"I wanted a relaxed scheme that would allow the room's architectural details to shine," says Susana, who has used symmetrically arranged furniture and mismatched contemporary pendant lights to frame the arched doors. Beat pendant lights in Black and Gold, from £311 each, Made in Design, madeindesign.co.uk.

TERRACE

A sofa and chairs upholstered in water-repellent outdoor fabric (right) add a note of comfort to this shady pergola, which blurs the boundaries between indoors and out. Chair cushions in Orizzonte in Turquoise, £95m, C&C Milano, cec-milano.com.



COASTAL PROPERTY

GLORIOUS *seclusion*

Set in a lush, semi-tropical garden, this early-20th-century farmhouse has been gently renovated to make the most of its remote location on France's Basque coast

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Susana Beltran and her family had visited the Côte Basque for many years before the interior designer made an impulsive decision to look at this house, situated in a secluded part of the region. The farm dwelling was quite dilapidated and there were so many reasons why they should not buy it, but buy it they did. “It spoke to my senses,” says Susana, “it was a diamond in the rough, just waiting to be cared for.”

Built at the turn of the 20th century, the property is surrounded on four sides by a semi-tropical garden with tempting views of the coast beyond. Aside from a small annexe that was added in 1913 and, later, the addition of a guest house in the grounds, the building’s footprint remains largely unchanged from the original. It was the gardens and the scent of summer, however, that sealed the deal for Susana. “The gardens were planted with acacias and palms, magnolias, olives and fruit trees; just being there felt like paradise.”

SENSITIVE RESTORATION

It is now eight years since the keys of the house were handed to Susana and her journalist husband, Javier, and the property has been gently modernised, as Susana had intended. “The idea was to let the original features sing again,” she says. “We didn’t need to alter the shape of the house, but I wanted each of the five bedrooms to have an adjoining bathroom, and for the kitchen – once a hen house – to become the heart of everything.” For two years, Susana undertook a 620-mile round trip each week from the family’s Madrid base to oversee the work.

The loft was opened up to make a second floor with a bedroom for son Álvaro (now aged 26), alongside an office and a library; while on the first floor, the space was rearranged to create two more bathrooms. “It was all about letting in the light,” says Susana, who had the original windows repaired



EXTERIOR

The porch at the entrance to the property (left) offers respite from the hot sun and is typical of Mediterranean-style whitewashed Côte Basque homes. In summer, the Beltran family feasts on the figs, lemons and oranges produced by the garden’s fruit trees (below left).

SITTING ROOM

“Colourful, contemporary artwork, such as this piece by Bernardo Perez (below far left), works best against a clean, white background,” says Susana. “It is mounted behind Plexiglass for a modern alternative to a traditional frame.”

Saariinen coffee table, from £588, Skandium, skandium.com.

DINING ROOM

“It’s unusual to pair dark, antique wood with white walls, but I like the warm tones that oak brings to a rustic scheme,” says Susana. “Often, instead of foliage, I’ll use vintage jugs and favourite ceramics as a table centrepiece.”



KITCHEN

Susana found these original black-and-white tiles beneath a carpet. “They polished up beautifully, and the cracks are part of their appeal.”

Le Château G4 range, from £5,000, La Cornue, lacornue.com.



ÁLVARO'S BEDROOM

This room (left) on the top floor commands the best views of the surrounding countryside. The rafters were left exposed to create a simple, lived-in aesthetic.

GUEST BEDROOM

The wardrobe (above) has doors made from reclaimed oak shutters that had been left discarded in the house. A large abstract painting by artist Amalia Martínez (below) serves as the only form of adornment in this modest scheme.

using antique glass panes. “I wanted the house to have a simple, Mediterranean feel, but each addition had to be authentic.”

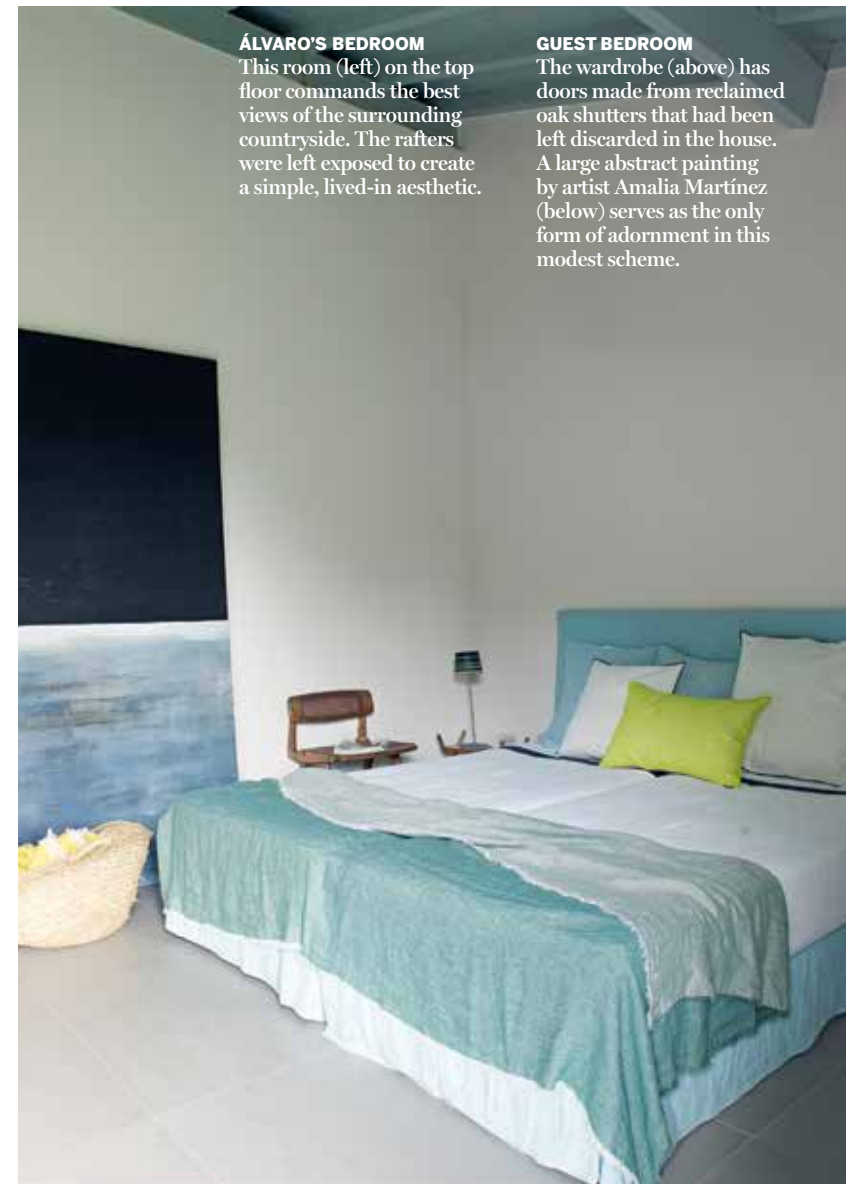
While the transformation as a whole is impressive, the jewel in the crown is Susana and Javier's striking suite of rooms, which includes a double-height living area overlooked by a mezzanine. The walls are decorated with the work of Spanish photographer Isabel Muñoz, which creates a striking focal point.

Susana's attention to detail can be felt throughout, with nothing overlooked: original pine doors and floors have been sanded and waxed; porcelain doorknobs restored, beams revealed and clay-tile flooring revived. Even the fittings in one of the Thirties bathrooms and the antiquated cast-iron heating system have all been brought back to life.

INSIDE OUT

With the house restored to full use, Susana has used faded linens, tactile cottons and textured wood surfaces to add depth, while more contemporary elements, including an enviable La Cornue oven, offer luxurious, if practical, notes. “Very little here is new,” she says. “I've spent hours trawling nearby markets, including San-Juan-de-Luz, unearthing local vintage ceramics, mid-century furniture and antique glassware.” All the Beltrans, including daughter Elena (now aged 29), are avid collectors of artwork and vast whitewashed walls provide an ideal canvas for several contemporary pieces.

It is the verdant garden that remains the showstopper, however. “It provides us with everything we need, including apples, lemons, oranges and figs,” says Susana, “and summer days are now filled with long al fresco lunches and garden naps.” Unsurprisingly, there are no regrets about this off-the-cuff purchase. “We bought the house in two hours, but spent two painstaking years restoring it. Fortunately, it's been worth it. This secluded gem has at last become a home for all seasons.”





LIVING AREA

This double-height space, (above left and above) features soft shades of shell pink and a dramatic artwork by Spanish photographer Isabel Muñoz. Sofa in Saturnia in Flamingo, linen, £129m, C&C Milano, cec-milano.com.

MAIN BEDROOM

Reflected in an antique floor-standing mirror (right), the couple's bed is framed with a reclaimed fireplace to great dramatic effect.

MAIN BATHROOM

"I wanted a monochrome look to enhance the inset arched window," (left) says Susana, "but I knew that texture would add depth and softness, so I chose ceramic wall tiles with a subtle pattern."