

COUNTRY LIFE

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All fired up
Pots and panoramas in Puglia



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wild in Ravenna

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hit all the right notes

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Home is where the art is

For centuries, artists and craftspeople have drawn inspiration from Mallorca's radiant light and terracotta-hued landscape. Anna Tyzack discovers how this same elemental energy, together with the island's artisan traditions, is driving new generations of creatives



Above: Long and winding road: artists and artisans are tapping into Mallorca's natural beauty, seen in the Tramuntana mountains. Facing page: A table fashioned from a 200-year-old door by Studio De Rogatis is the centrepiece of August's property at Fornalutx

IN her workshop on a quiet street near the Old Town of Palma, Mallorca, Anna Lena Kortmann uses *cordats mallorquins*, a traditional—and time-consuming—method of cord weaving to make seats for minimalist oak chairs. Historically, this needle-free craft was used to make baskets and chair seats from *bova* (bulrushes), but Ms Kortmann, who founded her furniture company, Studio Jaia, in 2020, weaves with linen and recycled cotton cords. Her geometric and flame-pattern chairs are found in villas all over the Balearics and one of her pieces is part of the permanent collection in the Design Museum in Barcelona. 'There seems to be an appetite for tactile pieces that tell a story,' she says. 'There's a nostalgia to my work, but it's also rooted in the present.'

Ms Kortmann is one of an increasing number of artisans and artists across the island choosing to introduce ancestral Mallorcan techniques into their work. Originally from Germany, where she worked as an architect, she first came across *cordats mallorquins*

at a craft fair in Palma. After moving to the island in 2017, she took lessons for three months with a local weaver. 'There's very little documentation. He'd learnt from his grandfather. He taught me about knots and tension and then I started experimenting on my own pieces. I was drawn to the patterns—some of them date from the 1870s, but they look strikingly modern.'

Mallorca's intense light and fiery red landscape have inspired artists and makers for centuries, notably the Surrealist Joan Miró, whose mother was Mallorcan and who settled permanently on the island in the 1950s. He said he was drawn by the 'empty spaces and bare horizons' and produced some of his most famous works, including the monumental painting series, 'The Hope of a Condemned Man' (1974), in his Palma studio. 'It's impossible not to feel creative on Mallorca. People talk about the light, but it's also the raw materials and the fact that there are people here from so many different cultures,' says Drew Aaron, serial entrepreneur and art collector who

founded Gallery RED in Palma and now has 18 exhibition spaces across Spain. 'I came here to retire and live life in the slow lane, but within a short time I'd opened a gallery. You feel the creativity here. It's impossible not to when you wake up every day in the sunshine. You simply want to get outside.'

Whereas muted beige and white palettes have become synonymous with contemporary Mediterranean villas, designers such as Ms Kortmann and Claudia Urvois, an interior designer based in Alaró, at the foothills of the Tramuntana mountains in the north-west of the island, are rediscovering the colour and pattern of Mallorca's past. *Roba de llengües*—a brightly coloured, flame-patterned ikat textile still woven by artisans today—is believed to have reached the island via the Silk Route in the 18th century. Hand-blown coloured lamps have been made at Gordiola, in Algaida, since 1719. 'If you look at the island's 1950s Modernist homes in Palma, they're filled with colour and pattern and floral hydraulic tiles,' Ms Urvois says. →



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Global hotel groups are adopting Mallorcan style: the new Mandarin Oriental, which opened on the island this summer, features ikat cushions and bespoke, free-form ceramics by local makers; colourful hydraulic cement tiles by Huguet, a third-generation Mallorcan tile-maker, have found their way into private members' club Soho House in the UK. Meanwhile, the Danish designer Malene Birger has installed Gordiola lamps in her townhouse in Felanitx. 'Mallorcan design has gained a global following,' Ms Urvois says. 'These handmade objects aren't only beautiful, they're useful and they last. They're the antithesis of mass production, which fits with the modern sustainable aesthetic.'

'I think art here has traditionally been part of daily life, not merely decoration'

Mallorca's vibrant craft culture developed largely from local necessity and the availability of raw materials and, in the 14th and 15th centuries, the island was an important Mediterranean trading port. When you live and work in Mallorca, you begin to understand why these traditional homewares evolved to be how they are today, Ms Urvois says. 'You're surrounded by Nature and natural materials, so you start using the local colours and natural dyes and you learn to adapt to the elements,' she says. 'The sun is strong. The traditional colour for shutters is glossy green because it blocks out the light and is easy to clean.' One of Ms Kortmann's patterns, Marisa, is inspired by the morning fog that looms in the countryside. The landscape is also



A resurgence of interest in Mallorca's craft heritage prompted Huguet to resume making decorative hydraulic tiles, which formed the basis of the business when it started in 1933

a theme for Tonia Fuster, a former industrial designer and architect who founded Studio Islas, creating handmade ceramic lamps that echo the island's rural simplicity.

In the 1950s and 1960s, as Mallorca was transformed by mass tourism, many of the island's traditional textile workshops and

manufacturers either closed or adapted to serve the construction boom. Huguet, for example, shifted its focus from decorative hydraulic tiles to concrete building materials. By the 1980s, environmental campaigns and stricter planning controls had halted some of the most aggressive coastal development, helping Mallorca avoid the scale of overdevelopment seen elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Yet it is only in the past decade that there has been a renewed appreciation for the island's artistic and craft heritage. Artists such as Toni Garau reference the demise of the textile factories in their work, whereas initiatives such as La Escuela Artesana, an Arts-and-crafts school, are preserving and passing on the island's heritage techniques. 'Mallorca hasn't lost its soul. You can still find it again, but you have to know where to look,' Ms Urvois says.

Indeed, Antoni (Biel) Huguet, whose grandfather founded Huguet in 1933, had to call on former factory workers when he decided to revive the family tile business. They taught him traditional hydraulic tile-making techniques and he was able to recover the original moulds and presses. Today, the company is again →

From figs to fine wine

The exacting standards of a new generation of chefs and food lovers are driving the island's artisan food movement, according to British restaurateur Eddie Hart, who runs El Camino and El Caminito in Palma, two of Drew Aaron's favourite restaurants. 'Before tourism took off, Mallorca was an island of farmers,' he says. 'The soil here is incredibly fertile and there's an abundance of almonds, figs, olive groves, sheep and *porc negre*, the indigenous black Mallorcan pig.'

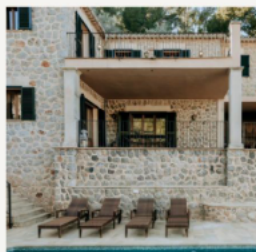
A revival in farming and small-scale food production has brought traditional cheesemaking back to the island, and

olive oil is once again being produced from indigenous Empeltre olives. Together with *sobrasada*—the paprika-rich spreadable cured pork for which Mallorca is famous—restaurants are also serving *figatella*, a pâté made from pork cuts and spices. 'The recipe was almost lost, but it's now being revived,' Mr Hart says.

In early summer, he suggests trying anything with tomatoes—gazpacho or *pa amb oli*. August is the season for figs: there are said to be more than 200 varieties on the island. Excellent wine is also being made in Mallorca. 'Prensal Blanc is a dry, austere white, which can be exceptional when made well, and Callet is a light summer red, similar to Pinot Noir,' adds Mr Hart.

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Where to buy



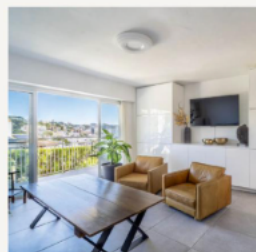
Deià, €3.3 million (about £2.8m)

This waterside village property sits on the spectacular UNESCO-protected Cala Deià Cove. Built using terracotta tiles, simple stonework and stuccoed plaster finishes, the villa features three bedrooms, three bathrooms and light-filled reception rooms. Outside, the original stone walls add yet more character, as do the mature gardens with lemon and olive trees. *Knight Frank* (020-7861 1139; www.knightfrank.com)



Port d'Andratx, €2.95 million (about £2.5m)

This newly built townhouse boasts airy, open-plan living spaces, sunny terraces and three bedroom suites spread over four levels, all offering glorious views out across Andratx town, the port and the mountains behind. The rooftop terrace has both a summer kitchen and a pool, making it ideal for entertaining. *Knight Frank* (020-7861 1139; www.knightfrank.com)



Palma, €560,000 (about £480,000)

This modern two-bedroom apartment offers far-reaching views over the Bay of Palma. Filled with light, its accommodation includes a modern kitchen and a cosy sitting room that leads onto a spacious terrace. The complex has a private pool and two little-known beaches only moments away. *Lucas Fox* (00 34 87 118 1063; www.lucasfox.com)



Santa Ponsa, €7.75 million (about £6.69m)

This exceptional villa boasts an excellent frontline position—and the owners benefit from direct access to the crystal-clear waters below. Inside, the living areas have clean lines and picture windows, three bedroom suites offer spacious accommodation for six and the extensive terraces ensure outdoor space on every level. *Engel & Völkers Santa Ponsa* (00 34 97 169 9063; www.engelvoelkers.com)

internationally recognised for its Mallorcan tiles and it still operates from the same premises in Campos where it began more than 90 years ago. There has also been a resurgence in weaving. *Artesanía Textil Bujosa*, a family-run workshop in Santa María del Camí that has been making *robos de llengües* since 1949, now has a new generation of younger weavers operating the traditional looms, with Teixits Vicens, which has been weaving *roba de llengües* for five generations, collaborating with designers including Matthew Williamson and hotels such as La Residencia, as well as helping to preserve labour-intensive dyeing and weaving techniques. Kaviari Parmar, founder of XTANT, the annual gathering of artisans and designers from around the world that takes place in Mallorca each spring, believes that the island's ancient weaving techniques are symbolic of roots, continuity and strength. The five-day event showcases textile traditions and craft practices from across the world but, according to Ms Urvois, it is often the Mallorcan pieces that stand out. 'I think that's because art here has traditionally been part of daily life, not merely decoration.'

Mallorca's increasing appeal, both as a second-home destination and permanent place to live, is also helping to revive its craft tradition, according to Hans Lenz of Engel & Völkers in Palma. Mr Aaron is one of a number of wealthy

entrepreneurs who have bought and restored historic properties on the island over the past few years. He restored Turmalina in Alaró, originally owned by the Swarovski family, and his current home is S'Atalaya, a former monastery in the hills near Valldemossa on Mallorca's west coast. It houses his collection of paintings by Mallorcan artists, including Toni Salom, Iván Montaña and Toni Garau, and ceramics by Maria De Haan, a British/Spanish ceramist based in Mallorca. 'Before I moved here I had no idea of the depth of history: from my front door, I can see across to the Royal

Charterhouse of Valldemossa, where Chopin and George Sand stayed in 1838,' he says. 'I want my home to have a sense of place and local authenticity both inside and outside.'

The joy of owning a home in Mallorca is the easy access to homegrown artists and one-of-a-kind craftsmanship, agrees Mélie Denod, founder of August, a design-led second-home owners' club with several properties on Mallorca. At the company's newest home, in the medieval village of Fornalutx, Palma-based furniture-makers Studio De Rogatis has created a table for 12 people from a 200-year-old door. 'I like the company's Japanese *wabi-sabi* philosophy that celebrates imperfection and age,' she says. 'What emerges from their hands is entirely new, yet is also rooted in the past.'

A commission such as this can take three woodworkers up to three months to make, explains Adrián de Rogatis. The long lead times for artisan furniture and textiles can be frustrating, but patience is a small price to pay for a one-off piece that truly belongs to its setting, Ms Urvois says. 'Recently, we visited a local third-generation weaver who told us that we would need to wait six months for a bespoke piece because the artisan responsible for that technique was retiring and busy teaching the next generation how to do it properly,' she says. 'To me, that really sums up the spirit of Mallorca.'



Studio Jaia
is noted for its
cordats mallorquins
woven furniture