

# **DIMENSIONAL ISLAND LIVING**





Even before the first stone of a house is laid, the location largely determines the living experience. Project Balears by OAAA Arquitectura is located in a special place, and from the very beginning this had a decisive impact on the compelling result you are looking at now. The views are immersive, the hues monochrome, and the dimensions subdued. Welcome to a building where there is no place for hurry.

Since 2011, under the Spanish OAAA Arquitectura, founder Iker Ochotorena has been creating structures that feel voluminous yet serene. For him, a home is like a shelter where warmth awaits us every day. Controlled yet distinct: for this studio, it is evident. Despite the substantiated portfolio and experience the team can fall back on, the clients behind this project still managed to present them with a nice challenge. The couple wanted to have a holiday home built in Menorca that would accommodate themselves, their three daughters, and their families. Sufficient bedrooms, more than just the strictly necessary space and yet welcome privacy for all were therefore soon the main pillars on which the success of this commission rested. The result also did not have to be overly complex, but instead possess a simplicity and a visual ease. In addition, the location, near Mahon Port, proved to be defining for the outcome in several ways. Namely, the north-facing orientation towards the sea and the street side to the south had to be taken into account. The phenomenal views and the specific possibilities of the place determined the architecture from start to finish. The result is fully geared for use as a holiday home amid the splendour of the Balearic Islands: a calm destination that flaunts its proximity to the alluring waters.



the early stages. As a result, there are not that many differences between the initial sketches and the finished result. Since the dimensions and orientation required the necessary attention, these were the initial points of focus. This paid off, as the wishes were fulfilled and all possible doubts removed. Both the clients and the architects were satisfied from the start, which is obviously a clear sign of success. The second most important challenge were the logistics. Given the island location, getting all materials and resources there on time was not a given, but with the support of local people, even this obstacle could be overcome nicely.

As for the studio's style, it is prominent how the team does not try to tie themselves to a particular aesthetic. Instead, they consider it especially important for an architect

to draw inspiration from their previous experiences and reshape them in the current project. Ochotorena therefore always tries to start from a particular idea and incorporate contextual needs and constraints, after which the design can stand independently on its own. If you are already familiar with his work, you will probably agree that he often makes the walls very pronounced and uses as many natural materials as possible. In addition, the proportions should always be in the right balance against each other, and the result should carry an undeniable rhythm. This addition to the portfolio does not deviate from this, and we are happy about that. Once again, the architecture defines itself largely through the weighty walls, which feel at once heavy but organic. Inside, they

#### SIGN OF SUCCESS

Everything has a beginning, and so does Project Balears. Every design starts with the architect considering the location and the pros and cons it comes with. You cannot ignore what already exists. On the south side, the house was to be located not far from a small village. This meant avoiding too many views without denying daylight access, quite the contrary. In the end, the studio devised a pleasant garden with a giant beam. In this way, the residents enjoy as much light as possible while not having to compromise on privacy. Furthermore, it went without saying that the sea on the north side should be able to become a permanent part of the house, and this happened by optimising the views. Because both sides have such a strong influence on the floor plan, the project was unique from

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Fun work processes lead to satisfying results. Thus, not only is the final form of Project Balears a visual masterpiece, but the run-up to it was also more than worthwhile. Indeed, the architect reveals that, on several occasions, the owners invited him to spend his holidays there, which allowed him to enjoy the property in a new way. It is therefore a place where you cannot help but admire the quiet lines and watch a new day unfold in this paradise. The future will no doubt build on the satisfaction the studio felt here, as there are many next projects waiting for them. From close to home in Madrid and Barcelona to further afield in Berlin and Long Island: the world is wide and the urge

are all finished with plaster: a convenient way to bring interior and exterior closer together, and of course visually appealing. On the outside, plaster was used as well. In most places, natural stone acts as the flooring, contributing to the casual character that makes you relax. It is no coincidence that the colour palette inside and outside consists of a monochrome middle ground between brown and beige. By making a solid drastic choice, they succeeded in making the house a natural-looking part of its surroundings. This was a deliberate move, as the characterising shades and the heavily present walls combine to form the DNA of the design.

#### SPATIAL FEEL

There are more than enough reasons to love this project, even as a complete outsider. Besides the earthy materials and soothing colours, the layout is perhaps the strongest convincing factor. Given the clients' desire to have enough space for their daughters and their partners and children, it was indispensable that the house welcomes them with plenty of room to move and breathe. The sea views are like constant companions that join the plenitude, while naturally contributing to the spatial experience. Thanks to multiple patios, residents walk with great ease from inside to outside and vice versa. Such fluid transitions complement the contrasts in an interesting way. Thanks to the pronounced lines, a fierce interplay between light and shadow is created, yet always with a certain balance incorporated. Next to this, you can notice a skilful balance in the alternation between the rather low ceilings, such as in the living space and the bedrooms, and the rather monumental impression the hall makes in some places and the overall grandeur with which the exterior greets you from afar. A significant part of the social scene is located in the aforementioned living room, where the whole family can gather. The adjacent lawn is ideal for enjoying the outdoors without missing anything of what is going on inside. In the kitchen, the omnipresent calm extends further, thanks in part to all the appliances hidden from view. The same serenity prevails in the private areas, where a good night's sleep is a certainty.



to get back to work is strong. Until we can admire new creations, we retreat to this expansive holiday home for a while. Here, location and structure grew into a successful fusion. With the warm sea breeze against your face and the setting sun briefly illuminating the grand facades, this design emerges as much more than just a residence. (Text: Cara Jacobs)



Photography by Rafa Delgado Fotografia

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