



# MODERN IN MÁLAGA

A Spanish interior designer references the colors, mood, history, and joy of his native city when fashioning the rooms of a new home for a client



INTERIOR DESIGN BY *Pablo Paniagua*  
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Opening pages: Traditional white stucco, ceramic tiles, and organic forms characterize a house in Málaga, Spain, designed by architect Rafael de La-Hoz. Garden designer Inés Parias chose plants able to withstand the area's strong winds and salty air. Opposite: The living room is centered with an oval coffee table. A custom limestone fireplace is balanced by a pair of plaster floor lamps, made in France in the 1960s, behind which are artworks by Agustín Ibarrola. The mantle contains a sculpture composed of burnt wood by Jose Cháfer, along with a bronze armadillo. This page: Interior designer Pablo Paniagua designed the sofa, above which he has hung a pair of 1960s golden brass sculptures by Curtis Jeré that depict birds in flight against a sunburst. The ceramic table lamp was made by a local artisan.





Opposite: The entrance to the kitchen from the breakfast room is marked by louvered wooden doors that echo those at the entrance to the house. Paniagua's sideboard is made of smoked oak wood and topped. A traditional Andalusian woven-wool pattern, likely from the 1930s, is used as a wall hanging. This page: The dining table and pendant lamps were designed by Paniagua; Jordi Vilanova's iconic Billiard chairs, circa 1961, are made of natural pine with bulrush seats. An early 20th-century Saharan mat is used as artwork.





This page: Elements from all eras are used in the breakfast room—a turquoise sofa upholstered with vintage fabric from the 1950s, Japanese artwork from the 1970s, an 18th-century table made of chestnut wood, and a 1960s Italian glass pendant. Opposite: The master bath vanity is composed of lacquered stainless steel and limestone; the chest of drawers is made of humidity-resistant iroko wood, which is used throughout the home. The wall sconces are made of natural raffia.





Paniagua had a green sofa he designed upholstered with vintage fabric from the 1960s and positioned it in an office space off the master bedroom. An anonymous work of art, circa 1950s, depicts a boat at sea, rendered in a half-relief form out of embossed copper plate.



**B**ORN AND RAISED IN MÁLAGA, one of the oldest cities in the world, designer Pablo Paniagua invariably turns to his hometown’s spectacular history as inspiration for the interiors he creates wherever he works. Everything he does, he says, is rooted in “my dreamy city—light, color, mass, void, geometry, endless seas of olive trees, sunsets like burnt embers, huge moons resting on the beaches.”

But it’s also about the mix of people—Phoenicians, Romans, Moors—who have left their stamp on Málaga over time with craft traditions carried on by artisans who work in the city and other parts of Andalusia today. In this home on the coast of Cádiz, in southwestern Spain, the designer elegantly channeled his passion for the region by telling a visual story of its layered history distilled with modern grace.

Used as a year-round getaway for a retired couple and their grown children and young grandchildren, the residence was designed by architect Rafael de La-Hoz, who recommended that the materials and forms for the interiors be carried out by Paniagua and his team at the same time. “The family gave us total creative freedom under the premise of working with the traditional decorative arts of Andalusia but revised to align with the contemporary spirit of the architecture,” says Paniagua. “They wanted a clean and clear environment, but also one that was noble and timeless.”

What appears as a single-story house is actually configured on two levels to adapt to the landscape. The public living areas of the six-bedroom dwelling occupy the highest level, while bedrooms and private zones are distributed on the lower—all with a seamless connection to the outdoors. “The relationship with the outside is part of the poetics of the architecture,” says Paniagua, referencing in particular the house’s ample terraces, which were designed by the garden designer Inés Parias.

Solidly built and finished with white mortar in the style typical of Andalusia’s famed *pueblos blancos*, the home’s central rooflines intertwine and overlap to form a passageway of sorts that leads to the inner garden. Floor-to-ceiling windows and doors open to covered inner courtyards, and porched galleries reminiscent of the oldest architectural traditions of Andalusia embrace the natural surroundings brimming with mastic, palm, and magnolia trees, orchids, oleander, and jasmine.

To bring the beauty of the outdoors in, Paniagua’s strategy for the interiors was to keep things minimal. “The idea was to draw on a broad repertoire of traditional crafts to create simple, robust spaces in harmony with the architecture,”

says the designer. “Andalusia is a very rich region. Since time immemorial, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Tartessos, Iberians, Greeks, Romans, Muslims, and Christians have left their traditions—including crafts of ceramics, rope, wood, iron, and textiles—on this land. We put the capacity of the artisans of these crafts at the service of the project—all from a simple point of view with little ornamentation.” Among the major interior elements he introduced, with the help of local craftsmen, are doors and millwork made of local oil-finished iroko wood, a grade that withstands the area’s high level of humidity, and a monumental limestone fireplace built by Andalusian stonemasons.

In keeping with the restrained modern spirit of the home, the designer furnished its rooms with a mix of clean-lined custom pieces of his own design and vintage modern elements from the 1920s through the 1960s sourced from Spanish, French, Danish, and Swedish antiques dealers. “The lifestyle of the house is calm, relaxed, healthy, and sporty, and we wanted all these qualities to coexist with the idea of beauty in architecture and interior design, so it was important that each object had its place and could be easily understood as its own entity,” he insists. Signature pieces, such as the coffee table by Johannes Andersen positioned next to the corner sofa in the living room and a desk by Gunni Omann and bookshelf by Pol Cadovius in the study, add extra layers of international flavor to every room, as do works of art and crafts that include a painting by Cuban artist Diego Hernandez and a Saharan tribal mat from Morocco in the dining room.

The highlight of the project for Paniagua, however, was working with local artisans who infused the home with the spirit of Andalusia. “Perhaps most interesting were the makers of the ceramic trays on the dining room table who crafted them with secret ancestral techniques that arose at the beginning of the Abbasid Caliphate in the 9th century,” he says. “With the arrival of the Moors in the Iberian peninsula and the flourishing of the Muslim-ruled area then known as Al-Andalus, metallic-reflection ceramics reached Europe. Over time, this technique disappeared in the Islamic world and is now produced only in various pottery centers in this region.” With grace notes by artisans like these, Paniagua has not only sensitively grounded the home with the essence of Andalusia but also deftly brought the rich history of the region forward. In assessing the finished project, he emphasizes, “Although there is a lot of work behind each detail, everything is perceived as something simple, natural and timeless.” ■



In the master bedroom, Paniagua purposely designed a bed to mimic the curvature of the wall; his lacquered wood bedside tables, fitted with knobs made of local white marble, are topped with lamps from local potters. Right: For a guest bath, Paniagua designed a vanity of painted iron and solid brass. A circular mirror reflects a work by the Cuban painter Diango Hernández. A trio of Murano glass vases dates from the 1960s.

