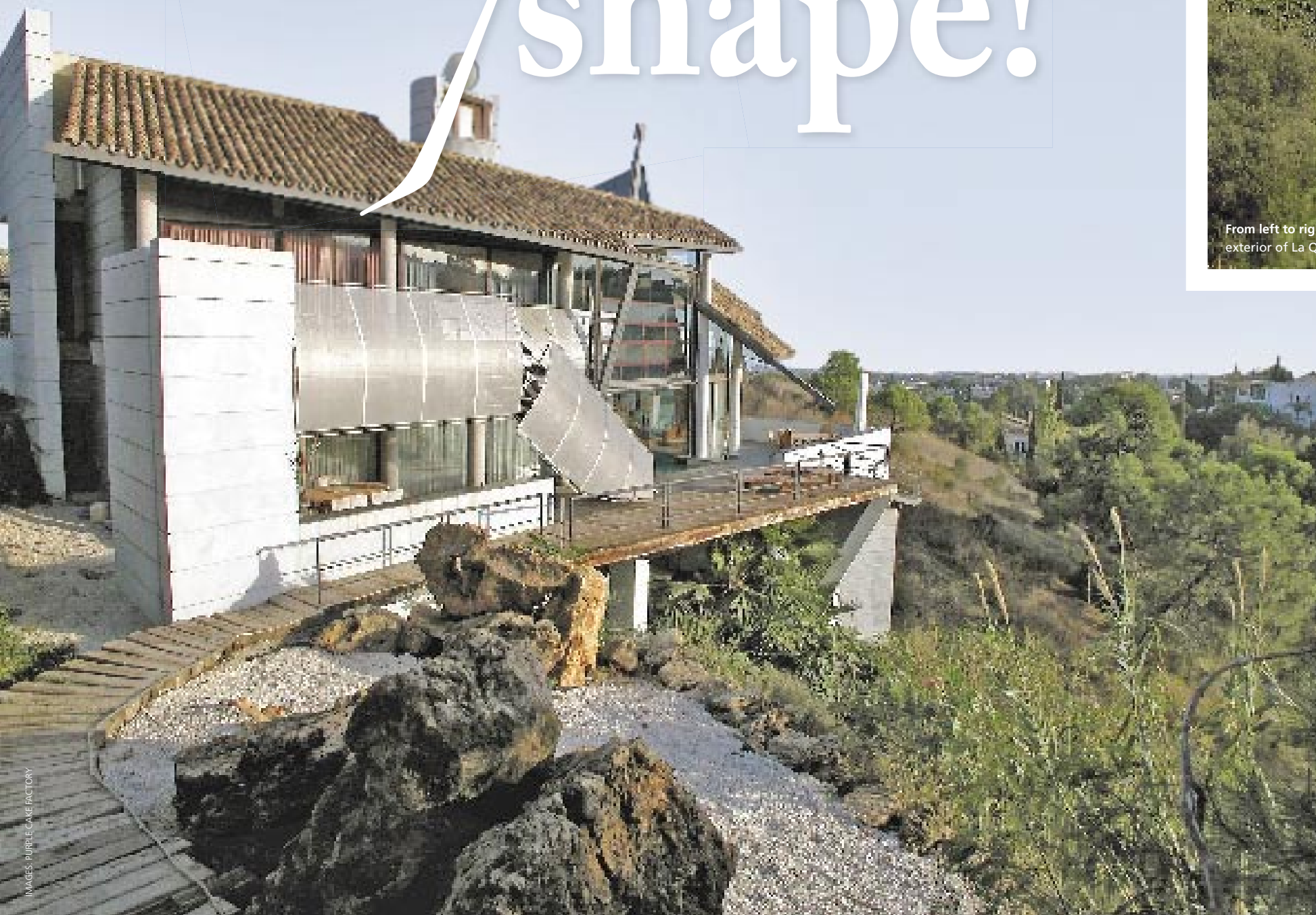


all ship shape!



From left to right: The exterior of La Quinta villa



Sarah Drane investigates how plans for a simple guest house accidentally got embellished to create one of the most eye-catching villas on the Costa del Sol

“It started as a guest house for family and friends, just a little two-up two-down, and then it got somewhat out of hand,” says the owner standing in front of his 500-square-metre luxury villa. “As we were building, because of the steep terrain, I kept seeing this extra empty space below ground level and simply came up with ways to fill it. Rooms like the bar and home cinema just happened, they certainly weren’t planned from the start.”

It’s something of a triumph that his humble plans for a small guest house got ‘out of hand’ as the avant-garde steel, glass and concrete structure, completed in 2000, is a true landmark of the resort in which it sits. All who travel through La Quinta Golf, an upmarket residential community in Nueva Andalucía, five minutes from the stylish marina of Puerto Banús, stop to admire or indeed disapprove of the hillside edifice. Golfers on the fairways below reach for their cameras to sneak a snapshot of the ambitious

architecture and some bravely buzz the entrance gate in the hope of a private tour.

Although many more contemporary properties are now appearing across Marbella and its environs, at the time, nobody had seen anything like it. A home with not even one square room, bursting with geometric interest both inside and out and encased in glass and concrete with sculptured steel shapes clinging to the exterior, certainly stood out. The home was not intended to shock or offend, but to convey through architecture the owner’s interest in shipping and all things nautical, and perhaps, most importantly, to capture the stunning sunlight and views that characterise this most southerly tip of Europe.

The owner enlisted the services of renowned Argentinean-born but Marbella-based architects Angel Taborda Britch and Victoria Gauna Maury, to put his vision into practice. It was a perfect fit as Angel and Victoria had always been keen to step away from the pseudo-Andalucian ‘theme park’ style adopted



“THE HOME WAS **NOT INTENDED TO SHOCK**, BUT TO CONVEY THE OWNER’S INTEREST IN SHIPPING AND ALL THINGS NAUTICAL”

by many developers and have bravely left little pockets of contemporary architecture across the Marbellan landscape, most notably Marbella’s Mosque and a private palace for the Emir of Qatar. Angel poignantly believes that “architecture is, more or less, watching how the sun gets into your life, how it moves around the house,” and if any project in their back-catalogue epitomises this statement, it’s this one in La Quinta.

LIGHT AND COSY

Orientated to the southwest, facing the Mediterranean, the ship-shape (literally) home floods with sunlight, with the double-height dining area and snug lounge sitting at the apex of the property to capture the best of the outlook. Sturdy double-glazed walls of glass keep the rooms bright, cooled with the

aid of air-conditioning in the summer, and light and cosy with underfloor heating in the winter. Arranged over four floors (if you include the rooftop solarium) connected by a central spiral staircase, the villa has plenty to keep the occupants both amused and entertained. Amusement abounds in the quirky nautical-themed ornaments and use of bold colour in the canary yellow kitchen, and blue glass block dividing walls and modern artwork. Whilst entertainment to suit every type, from the sportsman to the couch potato, is on tap, even for the odd days when the sun doesn’t shine and you’re forced indoors.

The basement area is a real ‘den’, with a cosy cinema room, complete with oversized flat-screen TV, rows of boxed DVDs and videos, and comfy red sofas. Step next door and there’s a bright slate-floored games room with billiard table, swanky cocktail bar,



This page: Canary yellow kitchen

Opposite page: Cocktail bar area



“THE BASEMENT AREA IS A REAL ‘DEN’, WITH A COSY CINEMA ROOM COMPLETE WITH OVERSIZED FLAT-SCREEN TV, ROWS OF BOXED DVDS AND VIDEOS, AND COMFY RED SOFAS”

darts board and a mélange of board games, books and model cars and planes to keep the youngsters occupied. Upstairs, at entrance level, a sauna room defies the usual dingy box-like principles, having a window to the outside world and a prism-like geometric ceiling. The fully equipped gymnasium, installed with a TV and music system, looks out through a glass wall to a swimming pool, that, with the aid of an electric glass curtain, can ingeniously be indoor or outdoor at the touch of a button. Several lounges, two large bedrooms and a sumptuous marble bathroom, plus additional guest bathroom, complete the interior of this remarkable home. Outside, the terraces are decked with steamer-style sunloungers from which you can take in the views.

It comes as little surprise to hear that this showcase property captured the imagination of Dutch television producers, and it had its own slice of fame as the set for 15 episodes of reality TV show *The Bachelor* on Holland's RTL channel.

The stylish quiriness of the villa fitted the profile of *The Bachelor* like a glove; a rich, good looking high-flyer who wined and dined 25 women eager to become his chosen partner. Being one of the first reality TV shows, before the days of *Big Brother* and *I'm a Celebrity*, viewing figures soared into the millions and Dutch visitors to La Quinta are quick to recognise the villa that once glued them to their TV sets.

The villa, now on the market as the owner puts the finishing touches to plans for his next contemporary home, has long been a talking point in Marbella, and its future proprietor will surely be as adventurous and fun-loving as his predecessor. And to think it started life as a mere guest house... ■

For more information about this property contact Prasin Properties on 00 34 609 513530; or email prasinproperties@gmail.com

Above: The cosy cinema room, complete with flat-screen TV



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GET THE LOOK

Recreate the stylish avant-garde look of this villa in your own home with glazed walls, glass and stainless steel furniture and dashes of colour to keep the rooms bright, writes **Beatriz Cebas**

1. Nolte Style Kitchen in Vibrant Yellow costs around £12,000, from Nolte Kitchens (www.nolte-kuechen.de; 01279 868500). It has a striking gloss finish and optional chrome handles that have a matching coloured inlay. It is also available in emerald green.

2. Grey Hi-Fi Unit, £74.99, from Next (www.next.co.uk; 08702 435 435). Its back panel includes four cable holes to keep things tidy, and there's plenty of storage for CD and DVD media.

3. These useful **Brushed canisters**, £17.99, will complement any modern kitchen. They are sold in packs of three from Next (www.next.co.uk; 08702 435 435).

4. Glass Dining Table, £2,600, from Alexander Miles (www.alexandermiles.co.uk; 0207 486 486). Its simplistic and elegant glass design brings a touch of modernity to the dining room. It is available in a range of materials and specifications.

5. Stainless Steel Martini Glasses, £14.99, from Next (www.drinkstuff.com; 0870 428 428). This pack of two stylish glasses is ideal for entertaining friends with cocktails.

6. Dualit Jug Kettle (1.5 litre), £54.99; **Dualit Vario Two Slot Toaster**, £135; **Dualit Vario Four Slot Toaster**, £165. These kitchen appliances from Next (www.next.co.uk; 08702 435 435) are available in cream, red, glacier blue, chrome, black and brown.