Title:  Good Vibrations

Intro: A family home in Madrid is turned into sun-kissed day at the beach, complete with a breaking wave, the feel of glistening sand, and the sensation of being immersed in the pastel-hues of a perfect sunset.

Text by Blaire Dessent

Patricia Bustos has been enamoured with the beach and sunsets since she can remember. Her childhood summers spent on the coast of Galicia along with a love of classic surfing magazines, with their glossy images of California coastlines, pastel-infused Hawaiian landscapes and perfectly breaking waves, were an essential part of her childhood and eventually her creative vision as a designer. Based in Madrid, Bustos received a master’s degree in fashion design at Central St. Martin’s and worked in fashion before moving into the world of interiors and furniture design. Her studio is known for its distinctive approach to colours, “I get engrossed in contemplating sunsets and my colour palette has a lot to do with that,” she says, as well as its undeniable appreciation of 1970s and 80s aesthetics. Her projects are immersive and emotional, fantasy driven with a feminine edge, mixing references to art, design and fashion, but are singular in their results. “My spaces are somewhere between reality and utopia,” Bustos explains.

With “Casa Ola,” Bustos’s family home in a residential community in the north of Madrid, the designer was able to fully realize her love of the beach and all its dreamy beauty. When the pandemic hit, Bustos and her husband, who were then living in central Madrid, wanted to have easier access to outdoor space for themselves and their three-children. They found a spacious but very traditional apartment, with straight lines and minimal decoration, yet with a large community garden and nearby parks. After many sketches and designs, it was Raül Almenara’s, Casa Najarro, designed to capture the movement of a Flamenco skirt, which sparked Bustos’s idea for “Casa Ola” and her determination to realize its design.

‘Ola’ means wave in Spanish and the central living area of the apartment is shaped as a breaking wave, with softly curving walls and a ‘tube-like’ entrance way featuring reflective polycarbonate walls and an illuminated ceiling, that sweeps visitors into the space. For Bustos, who is a surfer and skateboarder, curves are an important part of her design language. “Curves are important in interior design because they can soften hard lines, create a sense of fluidity and movement, add elegance and sophistication, and emphasize the organic, flowing nature of the elements. All of these can contribute to creating a harmonious and welcoming environment, which can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of the people who occupy it.” The open-plan living area is meant to encourage energy circulation and communication, while curtains and flexible partitions create more intimate spaces when needed. The curves of the living room walls are complemented by archways and rounded niches that appear in the bathroom, children’s rooms, and kitchen, reinforcing the fluid rhythm of the home.
Glimmering light and diaphanous colours are infused throughout “Casa Ola”. Upon entering into the main living space, you are immediately bathed in a sunset-like glow thanks to the effect of the iridescent vinyl, called metanoia, which is placed on the glass louvers in front of the large living room window; When the sunlight enters through them, the tones shift depending on the time of day, giving the effect of living inside of a pastel-hued sunset.

Washes of soft pinks, creams and purply-oranges, as well as iridescent and ombré patterns are found on nearly all of the furniture, rugs and surfaces; The living room walls are covered in grated microcement to evoke the glistening sand just after the water retreats from its surface, and the custom pink terrazzo counters in the kitchen, with embedded pieces of quartzite and turquoise, remind the designer of a beach full of shells and pebbles.

Virtually everything is custom made for “Casa Ola”, from custom wallpaper to the furniture. Bustos has a fascination with craftsmanship and works regularly with local artisans, using materials such as brass, marble, leather and soft textiles. The Mater Arm Chair, originally designed for Houtique, is a low-slung, 1970s inspired chair that involved the skill of rattan artisans in Valencia, who achieved the curving, ombre painted rattan tubes that are draped over the furry armrests as if they were soft. Other custom pieces, which form her “RoBustos” furniture collection, include the Inflatable Sofa, made with wood and leather, but which looks like it could float on the sea (not recommended), and the kaleidoscopic Element Pouf with its Brutalist base that emits pastel hues of light through cut out geometric shapes.

Bustos explains that it was a huge challenge to combine so many different materials and create a harmonious space, but in the end, it all came together. Her children delight in the house and she sees that, “it has opened up their imaginations and creativity. My kids love their bunk beds and living in a house shaped like a wave. I think the house has given us a lot of energy and the open layout brings us together every day.”

Catalan architect, Antoni Gaudi, is an important influence on Bustos, specifically his approach to design in which he would work on every facet of his projects, down to the smallest decorative details, as well as his collaborations with artisans and his use of locally sourced materials. “As a designer we always have to aspire to dream the impossible in order to achieve a more striking aesthetic experience. [Like Gaudi], I want to make utopian worlds, to create new sensations and attain the highest form of beauty that I can. I want to impact people’s lives and surrounding ourselves with beauty puts us in a good mood and helps us to be happier.”