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ESCAPE ARTISTRY

A lush outdoor setting is just one of the fabulous features of this Balinese villa. See Bali High page 156.

PHOTOGRAPHY: TOMMASO BINK. HANDWRITING BY LESLEY POOREMAN

Artisanal techniques and authentic touches help to keep these homes grounded without sacrificing any of the wow factor.

BALI HIGH

An old Dutch colonial house from Borneo has been packed up and transported to Bali – now it has become an idyllic retreat for fellow travellers.

Photographs TOMMASO RIVA Words CARLI PHILIPS Styling LISA SCAPPIN



This page The swimming pool draws on mid-century design influences, with its cut-out metal screens and contemporary daybeds. Kettal 'Park Life' daybeds designed by Jasper Morrison. Opposite page Shutters fronting the upstairs bedrooms and the living areas on the ground level of the old house ensure good ventilation and a relaxed, tropical feel, especially when painted in refreshingly distinctive spearmint green. The vintage glass pendants gracing the verandahs were sourced in the Czech Republic.



This page In the breezy kitchen, artwork by Italian-born, Bali-based artist Filippo Sciascia. Vintage pendants sourced in Italy. Vintage Italian 1950s stools reupholstered in velvet. Opposite page, clockwise from top left in the dining area, pendants made from old mercury pots rescued from a sunken Chinese vessel. The table is one piece of solid wood atop antique legs. Emu 'Re-Trouvé' dining chairs by Patricia Urquiola. Antique pots on the terrace. Ornate detailing in the old part of the house is referenced in the adjoining new sections, albeit less embellished, to provide a visual link.



It took Hong Kong-based Marcus Foley five years to find the perfect plot on which to build his villa in Bali's Batu Belig neighbourhood. "I knew I wanted to be on this street so when the agent said a block had come up, I jumped on a plane that night and bought it the next day," he says. "It's in a quiet cul-de-sac, just two minutes' walk to the beach and, even though it's so close to the action, you can't hear a thing. It's on a beautiful brick road that feels like a piece of paradise."

The Australian-born interior designer drew up meticulous plans for the old rice paddy, but scrapped them when an industry contact showed him some photos of an old Dutch colonial house "in the middle of nowhere". The only obstacle? It was in Pontianak Kalimantan, Borneo, and his plot was in Indonesia. "It just captured my imagination," says Marcus of the 138-year-old house that he later called Villa 1880 after the year it was built. "It was constructed from ironwood, which is some of the strongest in the world, so we stripped it down, put it on 10 trucks and drove it to Bali. Each piece of timber was numbered and we brought in a Javanese crew of timber workers capable of reconstructing it. It was pretty epic."

Balancing authenticity with contemporary living was paramount, so the house was oriented in the middle of the block and flanked with two modern architectural structures: an open pavilion and swimming pool at the front and double-storey block at the back with two bedrooms. A private staircase on the first floor leads to a pitched-roofed attic converted into a main bedroom. "We brought in new materials to complement some of the nostalgia but we really had to play a lot with the proportions, scale and size of the overall project to blend it all together," says Marcus.

His design vision was strong, but it was a constant work in progress, as materials and products were found and procured. "I didn't want to buy everything as new, so changes were made along the way. If I found something, I would adapt the design to suit the material, object or lighting," says Marcus, who went on trips to Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Surabaya and Italy, sourcing pieces such as the bathroom sink, leached silver antique terracotta pots, and vintage pendant lights from the Czech Republic.

Italian furniture, such as the Patricia Urquiola Emu 'Re-Trouvé' dining chairs, and reupholstered 1950s kitchen stools, were discovered by the



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This page In the airy, open living room, “Colony” armchairs from Miniforms. Statue bought in Ubud. Custom-made sofa. Floor tiles custom made in terrazzo with brass inlay. **Opposite page** Indoors and out, nature and the built form, old and new all blend harmoniously here. The old terracotta plant pots, leached with silver to brilliant effect, were once used for extracting silver.



SPEED READ

» Australian-born Hong Kong-based designer Marcus Foley searched for five years for the perfect piece of land to build a Bali retreat. » When he was shown photographs of an old Dutch colonial house in Borneo he scrapped plans to build a new house and instead arranged for the house to be dismantled and transported to his land. » Additional pavilions were built to provide open living space with a pool and extra bedrooms. » Vintage pieces for the house were sourced from around Indonesia and Italy, and mixed with designer items, giving the old-new feel that Marcus and his wife Irene sought.



discerning eye of his wife, Irene Capriz, who owns vintage furniture showroom Casa Capriz in Hong Kong. She says that everything had to have an “old-new feel about it” and, in the spirit of the home’s original plantation style, new mint-green shutters were installed, lining the bedrooms on the first and ground floor verandahs.

Marcus admits it was more work than he anticipated and gives much of the credit to Job Theelen, of Hydrogen Design Group, for the complex project. “It’s super challenging to build in Bali,” Marcus says of the hurdles associated with construction in the tropical climate.

Extra care was taken to angle the pavilion overhangs to prevent rain from entering, and new louvres were carefully treated in a kiln, so they didn’t warp and buckle in the heat. The installation of a new water well and filtration system means that tap water can be consumed, an incredibly rare luxury in Indonesia. “Things weren’t just done from an aesthetic point of view, but also very much from a technical perspective,” says Marcus. “Everything is precise in how it functions.”

Complementing its brains is its beauty, much of which was achieved by using ancient techniques. “Finding the people who were capable of using the materials in the way I wanted was difficult, because it wasn’t a mainstream house,” says Marcus, who employed many ‘old-school’ building methods, depending on where he could find the most skilled artisans and workmen.

In the showers, massive three-metre concrete slabs were carried in using ropes, brass inlays on the floor were handmade, a process taking six months, while slate for the 60-metre long wall by the pool was hand-cut and installed.

Now the lucky can experience Villa 1880, because Marcus rents it out. And it comes with the full package. “You arrive, get picked up in our kombi and there are pineapple drinks waiting on arrival,” says Marcus. “A masseuse comes a few hours later and, within a day of hitting this property, it’s total relaxation.

“In my industry, and especially in Asia, everything runs at a million miles an hour. Having this retreat and getaway is my ultimate rejuvenation.” 15

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This page The main bedroom is in a converted attic. A screen separating the main part of the room from the wardrobe is covered in Hermès ‘Equateur’ fabric. The floor tiles were custom made using terrazzo and brass inlay. Opposite page, clockwise from top left An elegant composition. In the bathroom, ‘Meringa 35’ pendant from Servomuto. Mirror sourced from Yogyakarta. Sink sourced in Jakarta. Irene re-covered a vintage armchair in Manuel Canovas ‘Tiana’ fabric. Stilnova sconce.