

HOMESWORKS

INSPIRATION IMPROVEMENT STYLE



THE
COLOUR
ISSUE

TRAVEL STORIES

MANY YEARS SPENT SAILING THE GLOBE HAS GIVEN CHA CHA AND ERIC VERBEECK A UNIQUE COLLECTION OF OBJECTS WHICH THEY HAVE BROUGHT TOGETHER TO WONDERFUL EFFECT IN THEIR HOME IN PORTOMASO

Photography: Alan Carville
Words: Rachel Loos

Outside lounge: a backdrop of *Pachycereus marginatus*, or Organ pipe cactus, in differing heights, makes an eye-catching backdrop to the seating area. On the sofa are cushions by Jean-Philippe Demeyer, made from Belgian heavy sand-coloured linen and knotted small multicoloured bows in the fabric, so they move in the blowing wind. On the small chairs found in a little shop in Chang Mai, Thailand, are 'jeans' cushions with 'random heavy-coloured stripes applied asymmetrically as with a Yves Saint Laurent 70s dress,' says Jean-Philippe. The large mosaic vase, showing a peacock, is vintage Seventies and found in a shop in Holland.





'I HAVE LOVED COLOUR ALL MY LIFE. IT MAKES ME FEEL HAPPY.'

Cha Cha Verbeeck has travelled all over the world, recently spending five years sailing the Pacific and Indian Oceans, along with her husband, Eric, on their 114ft long catamaran. They visited many different countries, including Thailand, Burma, Indonesia, New Zealand and Fiji and Vanuatu, and their finds have come together to create a wonderfully eclectic home that very much reflects Cha Cha who is the driving design force.

The apartment, in Portomaso, is full of interesting objects and textures in a rainbow of colours. 'I have loved colour all my life,' says Cha Cha. 'It makes me feel happy.' And the apartment certainly has a joyful vibe, from the cushions on the sofa to the colourful pots on the terrace to the striking cacti mural on the outside wall.

The couple, originally from Belgium, now call Malta their home, having fallen in love with it when visiting their son who himself

has recently moved here. This apartment was chosen for its sea views but also because when they bought it, it was little more than four walls which allowed them to configure it just the way they wanted. They did this with the help of a Belgian architecture firm, the starting point being the living room which was orientated facing the sea, with the rest of the apartment ranged behind it. Now with three main bedrooms, each with ensuite bathrooms, it also has an extensive dressing room, library as well as the spacious open-plan living and dining area which is in turn framed by an expansive terrace. With the floor-to-ceiling doors pulled back, the inside segues to the outside, for a real sense of alfresco living.

The walls of the apartment are deliberately the same shade – the colour of the earth in Malta. In fact, the colour was made using actual Maltese earth which was then mixed into a paint by a craftsman in ►



Dining area: the long dining area which joins the living room and the library is filled with a table, the antique feel adding depth to the apartment. It sourced by the architectural firm from its stock of 16,000 pieces of furniture. The mix of upholstered chairs and Oriental stools give character and the blue ties in with the surroundings. The Thai mural tells of the story of the life of Buddha. The floor-to-ceiling glass doors pull back for easy access to the terrace.



Living room: an eclectic mix of furniture and accessories in many colours, the blue sofa reflects the colour of the sea and is styled up with a mass of cushions created by Jean-Philippe Demeyer. 'They were inspired by Mrs Verbeeck's personality – she likes fringes, tassels and animal prints, and I wanted a link with Malta so made Maltese crosses entwined with 'C' for Cha Cha in strong colours and prints,' says Jean-Philippe. The eye-catching oversized lamp is a Pakistani folk art parchment lamp which was bought by Jean-Philippe in an Antwerp antique shop. The chair next to it is made of wood and was bought in Burma. Jean-Philippe covered it with a cushion made of patchwork linen, inspired by a painting by Gerrit Rietveld. The table lamp opposite has a terracotta base resembling a sea urchin, the lampshade made from blue linen and wool, to resemble a fishermen's net. On the coffee table, made of burnt wood, are marine artefacts that Cha Cha and Eric have collected. The curtains, the pole hidden behind the dropped ceiling for a neat look, are the same shade as the wall for a seamless feel.



Library: the shelves of the library are filled not so much with books but with the artefacts collected on the Verbeeck's travels creating an art installation type feel. A burnt orange rug adds great colour.

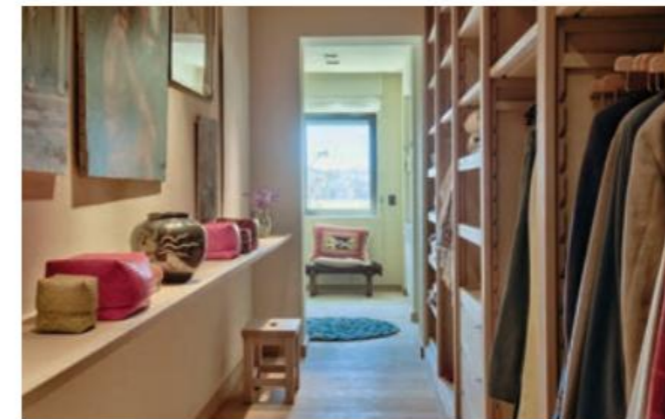
Belgium who has fine-tuned his art by working with historic buildings. Along with the lightly bleached oak floor, the sandy hue makes the perfect neutral background for the rich colour of the furniture and accessories, giving the space a sense of calm despite the energy of the colour.

Many of the items are from the couple's travels, one-offs made by local craftsmen and women, such as the mural on the dining room wall which is from Thailand and shows the life of Buddha. 'It is simple but I like it because it has meaning,' says Cha Cha.

In the living room, a wooden chair bought in Burma is teamed with a patched cushion for interesting texture. The cushion, made from patchwork linen, was created by Belgian antique dealer and interior designer Jean-Philippe ▶



Private space: at the back of the apartment but with its own terrace, the master bedroom is an oasis of calm. Connecting the bedroom to the bathroom is a long dressing room, the walls decorated with artworks. The bathroom, with its neutral walls is a restful space.



Kitchen: large enough to handle the couple's love of entertaining, the top is made of Caesarstone. In the bathroom (above right), is natural stone in beige which coordinates with the drawer fronts in bleached oak. The walls are of natural lime plaster.



The terrace: Cha Cha's brief to The Garden Studio was a terrace of cacti and succulents. 'Plants were sourced from different suppliers in order to achieve the necessary variety and quantities,' says Melina Scodanibbio from The Garden Studio. 'We designed compositions of large feature cacti, striking specimens such as the Aloe bainesii, Dasyliirions and unusual Agaves and Opuntias, with cascading succulents, paying attention to the details of leaf and flower colour and individual silhouettes. On the soil, a top layer of lava rocks preserves moisture and prevents the onset of weeds.' Elsewhere bespoke corten steel succulent sculptures and prickly pear ceramic leaves carry the planting theme through to the decor



Cacti mural: made of glazed terracotta, this strikingly effective mural was Jean-Philippe's idea. 'I found this wall a little flat and so I thought of a terracotta cactus, following the theme, and adding transparency and depth to the wall,' says Jean-Philippe. 'It was made in Italy and the pieces were rather heavy so it took three days to assemble the 140 pieces. But it was a joy!'

Demeyer, who made all the cushions found in the apartment. Off-setting the sense of the new, is an enormously long wooden dining table, its patina giving a comfortable lived in feel. 'We do like to cook and entertain, have family and friends around,' says Cha Cha.

Guests can enjoy the view from the terrace which is rich in interest. Created by The Garden Studio, brightly coloured pots found by Cha Cha in Asia are filled exclusively with cacti and succulents, the wide variety offering variations in colour, texture and look. 'I love the plant but it is impossible to grow it in Belgium,' says Cha Cha. 'As soon as I came here I realised I had the perfect place to grow them.' And the perfect place to enjoy them too. [HW](#)

