

ZOOH

Reflections on Spanish interiors and décor- Maison & Objet Digital Fair

I was born and lived in England for many years but my home has been in Asturias in the north of Spain for well over a decade. There is an English saying that an English person's home is their castle and this is definitely true for most English people I know- instead of going to church on a Sunday or having long lunches with family, or sitting lazily in the terrace of a bar watching people walk by in their Sunday best, English people are buying and doing things for their homes and gardens.

Perhaps it is to do with the bad weather that England suffers, or the fact that families tend not to stay living close to each other, or even the prohibitive expense of eating out and cultural pursuits. Whatever it is, making my home a haven of beauty and peace is in my blood. When I moved to Spain in 2005, one of the things that became apparent to me was that on the whole, Spanish people did not see their homes as castles.

Most Spanish people live in apartments in city and town centres for one, and even those in the pueblos who have houses tend to live in tiny houses with minimal interior living space. The other thing I noticed was that Spanish people do not as a rule invite people to their homes, family being the exception of course. Friends and family meet in local bars and restaurants, and home tends to be a place for sleeping and to be in when not living your life outside. My Spanish friends and family on the whole have functional homes with everything needed to cook, eat and sit, but not much more. I've seen this minimalist approach replicated across homes where there is and isn't money to be spent. Importance is placed on family photographs of special occasions like weddings, communions and baptisms hung on the wall, and perhaps some religious icons, but not much more.

I've decorated several homes since I have lived in Spain and my quest to find pieces that I love for these homes is what inspired me to produce things I love myself. Spanish design is, in my opinion, amongst the best in the world but I was looking for pieces for my home, big and small, that gave me comfort, made me smile and touched my soul. I wanted pieces that I would have for years and be able to pass on to my children and grandchildren. Pieces that would make them smile in 50 years' time and connect them with a place of comfort and joy. Maybe my equivalent to the 'family photos' that I see in the homes of my Spanish friends and family?

After so long living in Spain, I wouldn't dream of spending all my precious leisure time shopping and working to make a perfect home and I am sold on long lazy meals sitting around the table putting the world to rights with friends and family- the 'sobremesa' is a tradition and attitude that ought to be taken up around the world. Yet I still want my table to be beautiful and comfortable. Tablecloths and table mats that start a conversation, napkins that could equally be a piece of art or clothing, chair cushions that you sink in to, made of robust, sustainable and recycled materials that will last more than a lifetime.

I've watched Spaniards changing their approach to interior decoration over the last 10 years. Ikea coming to Spain gave people an affordable alternative to the old fashioned, ornate and (dare I say) uncomfortable furniture that has always been around in Spain but Ikea is the default and now we see too many homes looking like identical Ikea showrooms. There is still a focus on minimalism in Spanish interiors in the premium market that I appreciate but personally find it too stark and soulless as an overall aesthetic. The Spanish spirit is generous, warm and brave and Spanish people are not afraid of colour and texture. I want to see the Spanish personality in people's homes, the bright colours, warmth and comfort, the daring mix of traditional and modern and the edgy Spanish contemporary art.

The ZOOH mission is to create more comfort and joy in people's homes and to do so in a way that respects our environment and is sustainable. Perhaps we will play our part in bringing a bit more colour and life into Spanish homes.

Alicia Wood

Managing Director

ZOOH

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For more information on ZOOH products <https://mom.maison-objet.com/en/brand/10679/zooh>

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About ZOOH

ZOOH designs and produces a range of printed textiles, glass, porcelain, metal and wood. We work directly with artists to create functional pieces for use in the home and business, using local and sustainable materials wherever possible.

ZOOH is based in beautiful Asturias, Northern Spain and we're inspired by the Asturian landscape and life-style. Our range of tableware combines traditional imagery with bold Spanish design and colour. Our contemporary art range has functional pieces that can be used on the dining table and in the home or displayed as works of art in their own right.