LIKE A Scandinavian MARRIED A Californian

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"I really don't love to design things that you can put your finger on," says Roman Alonso, who, with Steven Johanknecht, founded the Los Angeles interior design studio Commune in 2004. "We like to mix things up a bit," Alonso adds, noting an irreverent mélange of influences at the heart of their practice. A recently completed Malibu project provides a prime example, pulling from a panoply of eras and cultures to draw "a very fine line between what's contemporary and what's vintage." Picture: a 1960 shearling Henning Kjærnulf armchair with a contemporary ottoman by LA textile designer Adam Pogue, sitting harmoniously below a Kojima Shoten lantern handmade in Kyoto.

The clients were an East Coast couple with a penchant for surfing who wanted to build a vacation home on the rocky Malibu promontory of Point Dume. The homes overlooking the coastline's idyllic cliffs span a far-flung range of architectures. "You see all kinds of things," Alonso says. "Some are good. Some are really horrible."

In contrast (thankfully) to a prevalent Malibu style of "too much glass, too much steel," these clients were more drawn to the well-worn textures of a Scandinavian summer house. For Commune, those Modernist contours struck an immediate resonance with surf shack, a midcentury residential style distinguished by its humble wooden interiors. Among Malibu's great and varied archetypes, surf shack happens to be one of Alonso's favorites, he says. "Everything else I could do without."

In a highly coveted, difficult-to-permit area, the pair was lucky enough to acquire a property that had already permitted plans for construction. The catch? The 10,000-square-foot house charted by those plans was "monolithic," according to Alonso, "and for lack of a better word, boring." Locked into the gargantuan footprint of someone else's vision, Commune focused on carving out spaces that felt more intimate than expansive. From the outside, a contrast of materials cultivates an illusion of three separate but connected buildings. Two limewashed brick wings are a subtle nod to the work of Scandinavian Modernists like Hanne Kjærholm and Jørn Utzon. The central barn-like space is clad in boards of weathered Monterey cypress, which developed their silvery patina during a full year left outdoors in Northern California. "If there's one thing that ties all our projects together, it's that love for the handcrafted, and natural finishes that will age well with time and with use," Alonso explains. Inside, more California woods: walls of bleached, hand-finished cypress, contrasted by the deep richness and graphic wood grain of cabinets custom-built from claro walnut. In true Southern California fashion, glass doors framed in steel glide into the walls along the home's perimeter, dissolving the gap between inside and outside.

Inside, to combat an abundance of space, "we created different worlds," Alonso continues. The open plan of the central barn, which can comfortably accommodate upwards of 30 guests, is arranged to encourage large parties to retreat into more intimate gatherings. Each corner is uniquely attuned to the movement of the sun: The custom breakfast table by California furniture-maker Tripp Carpenter catches the best morning light, while vintage Swedish armchairs form a reading nook overlooking a garden that becomes luminous in the late afternoon. Looking at the project as a whole, the range of influences begins to blur together, like one big happy family: "It's like a Scandinavian married a Californian, and invited their friends from all over the world."



The home's cypress exterior serves as the backdrop for a lush front patio, surrounded by landscaping culled by Garden Culture. A Studio Joye ceramic table and seating are illuminated at night by Remains for Commune cylinder exterior wall lanterns.

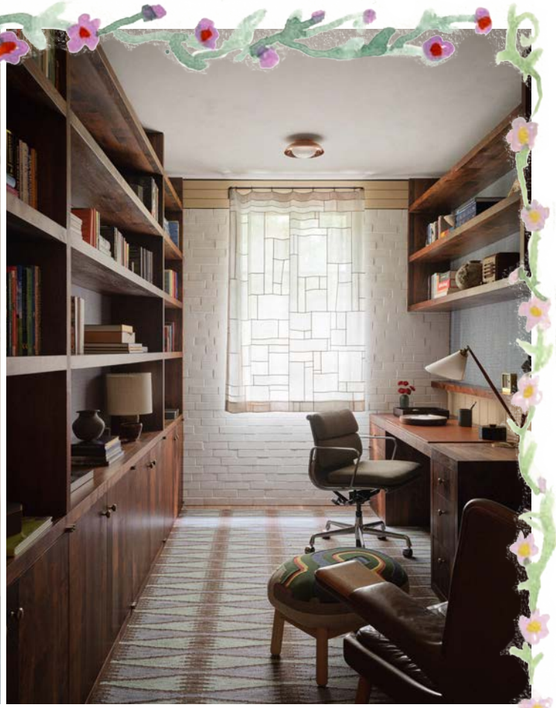


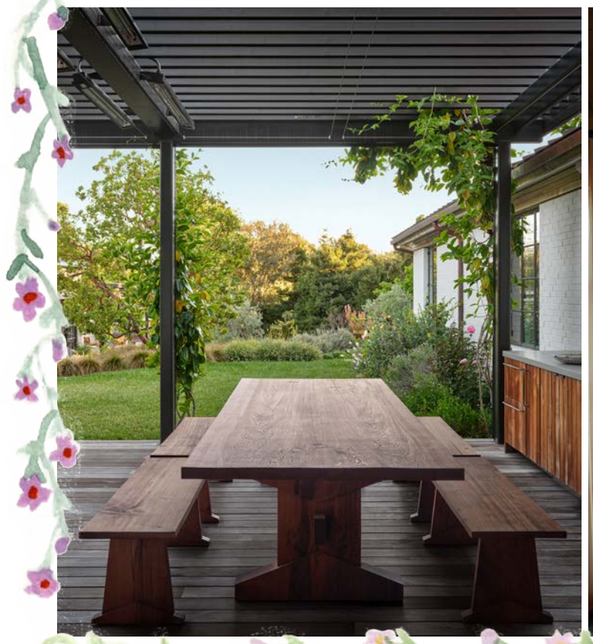


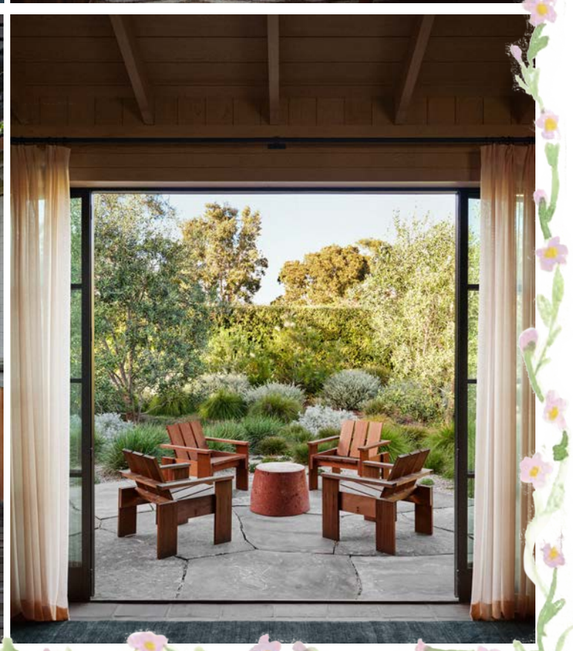


The focal point of the Great Room (above) is a custom Japanese washi paper pendant by Kojima Shoten. It hangs over a J.B. Blunk redwood bench. On the wall is Christy Matson's *Commission Landscape of Point Dume,* 2023. The kitchen's stunning green hue comes by way of Heath Tiles in Jade Manganese, installed over claro walnut cabinetry. In an alcove of the primary bedroom, the family reclines in a Goddard Armchair by Pinch London, set over a rug by Grand Splendid and next to a 1950 lamp by Hans Bergström.





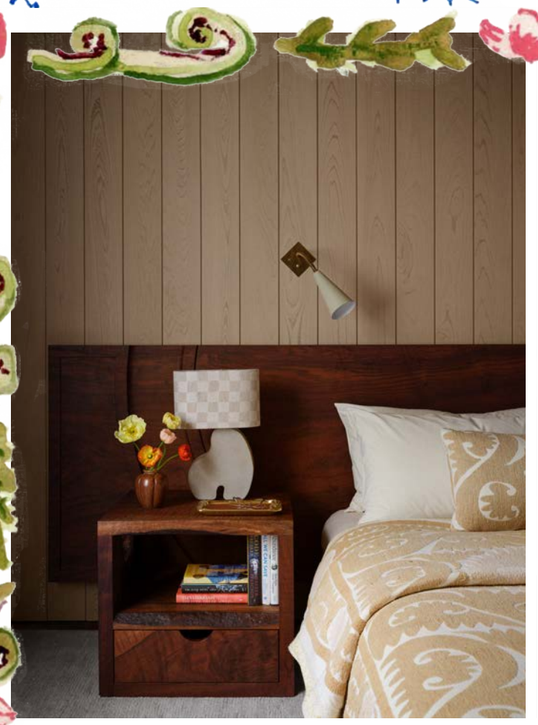




The Great Room (top left) also features a Nazca Culture Gauze Textile from AD 1–700, as well as an Espenet dining set and wicker bench by the Fong Brothers. Claro walnut cabinetry extends into the office (top right), which features an off-kilter curtain and footstool by Adam Pogue, as well as an Eames desk chair and vintage Hans Wegner Mega Papa Bear Chair. The main deck (bottom left) houses a custom redwood table and benches by Lucas Ford.

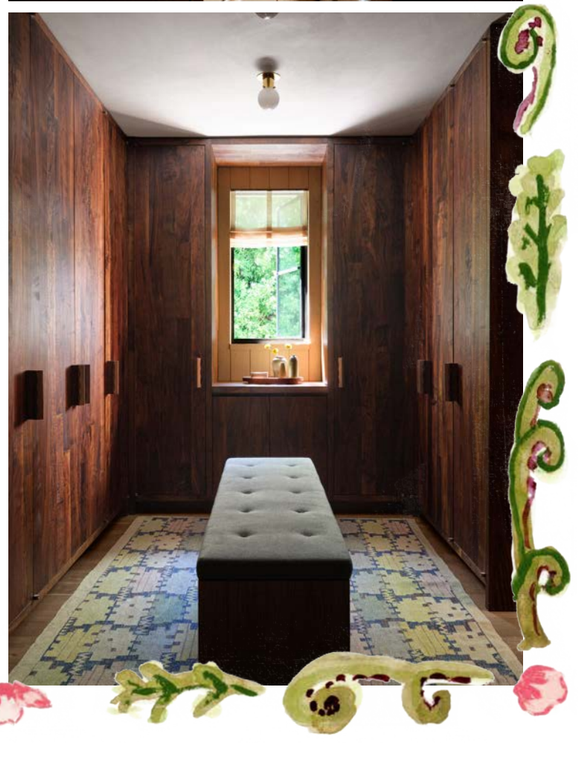


The home's stark brickwork is coated in Portola Paints Limewash. An Agra wool rug in Juniper by Armadillo Rugs is thrown over Black Spanish Alicante terra cotta tiles by Exquisite Surfaces.









In the primary bedroom (top left), a claro walnut headboard by Ido Yoshimoto and bed and nightstand by Tomlinson Woodworks are complemented by a Lisa Viscardi for Commune table lamp. The guest bedroom and bathroom (top right and bottom left) feature a cypress vanity and concrete countertop by Concreteworks, with Vola fixtures. Carved walnut drawer pulls are by Green River Project. In the primary closet (bottom right), walnut is offset by a custom Swedish flatweave rug by Doris Leslie Blau.