

Vincent Van Duysen
(b. 1962)

Casa M
2019

Melides
Portugal

"This house is my place," says Vincent Van Duysen of his Portuguese retreat, Casa M. "It is a shrine, a sanctuary, a domus in which I feel protected yet inspired. It's an argument for eliminating noise and clutter from my life, for receding into the natural environment. It's where I unplug, decompress, and leave the world outside."²⁰³

Surrounded by cork trees and marine pines, Casa M sits within a secluded landscape not far from the coast to the south of Comporta. It is a region known for the beauty of its beaches and its nature reserves, which Van Duysen got to know well over a number of years until, eventually, the Antwerp-based architect and designer decided to build a second home here. Van Duysen wanted to design a house that felt as though it belonged, forging a close relationship between architecture, interiors, and landscape.

The single-story home references Jørn Utzon's Can Lis (see page 308) and the work of Luis Barragán (see page 32), among others, in its sculptural sensibility and quiet, modern character. The textures and tones of the key materials chosen for this deeply contextual project connect with the sandy soil and rolling dunes. Van Duysen opted for a concrete structural framework, mixing local aggregates into the cement to achieve a tonal range close to that of the landscape, while doorways, ceilings, and bespoke joinery make use of Brazilian hardwoods, adding to the organic quality of the interiors.

The plan of the house encompasses a U-shaped residence framing a central courtyard, bordered by a concrete colonnade. Bedroom suites sit within the wings, while a spacious living area lies at the center, with the sitting room to one side of

a double-sided, cubist fireplace and the kitchen and dining room to the other. Much of the furniture is also by Van Duysen, with the exception of a number of pieces by Brazilian designers including Lina Bo Bardi (see page 42), Carlos Motta, and José Zanine Caldas. A separate pavilion nearby holds guest suites while another, alongside the swimming pool and pool terrace, hosts changing rooms and other amenities.

Van Duysen describes the aesthetic of Casa M as "warm Brutalism," where the engaging materiality and sophisticated simplicity enhances the ideal of a true escape. "What strikes me most is how calm its expression is," says Van Duysen, "especially when compared with my house in Antwerp. There, life is framed by movement, culture, and an urban rhythm. Here, everything expands outward into silence."²⁰⁴

