

# PROPERTIES

## Drenched in bold color and Spanish light

SOTOGRANDE, SPAIN

**Mexican architect brings couple's vision to life off the Mediterranean coast**

BY SUE CHESTER

Fire-engine red and cobalt blue add drama to the audacious structure at the top of the hill overlooking the entrance to the Mediterranean. Of all of Sotogrande's elite homes, the Legorreta house is a statement building that has become a neighborhood icon.

"I wanted a special Spanish house," said Gisela Roth, who commissioned the live-in artefact with her husband Peter, now retired as a professor of economics and business from Munich University.

Sotogrande is a strictly no-bling, high-end development that was founded in 1962 by an American entrepreneur, Joseph McMicking. He bought 2,000 hectares, or 4,942 acres, on the coast 25 kilometers, or 15 miles, east of Gibraltar.

Fifty-one years later, Mr. McMicking's vision is a thriving community of second-homeowners, 6,000 of whom consider it their main residence. During the high season of July and August, the population swells to 300,000 and competition is severe for use of the five golf courses, sailing club, tennis academy and beach clubs.

Completed in 2004, the Roths' house is now on the market for €3.5 million, or \$4.5 million, through Noll & Partners, in association with Chesterton Humberts.

The Roths, both architecture enthusiasts, decided that in building their home they would realize their "castle in Spain."

"We've had many properties over the years, so we decided to have 'the' house where we like every corner, with no compromises," Mr. Roth said. They started researching architects and, while leafing through a book about modern architecture and swimming pools, stumbled upon an eye-catching design by Ricardo Legorreta — "who we then found out was a student of Luis Barragán, whose work we knew and liked, who started the modern Mexican architectural style," Mr. Roth said.

In designing the Roths' home, Mr. Legorreta continued Mr. Barragán's use of grand sculptural forms, brise-soleil walls and roofs, and signature open stairways, which cast light and shade on a highly customized color



A terrace at Gisela and Peter Roth's house in Sotogrande, Spain. Light and shade are the result of juxtapositions and use of multiple levels.

palette of purple, red, hot pink, cobalt blue, bright yellow and mustard.

"Ricardo said he'd never built 'such a small house,'" Mrs. Roth recalled. But a visitor notes the house's large courtyard, with a roof of dramatic concrete strips, and the living area's 4.5-meter, or 14.7-foot, ceilings. They echo some of Mr. Legorreta's grandest works before his death in 2011, like the Museum of Contemporary Art in Monterrey, Mexico; the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History in Texas; and the Fashion and Textiles Museum in London.

Walking through the only private Legorreta home in Europe is like an interactive experience, going from bright light into dark, through color that changes shade, like purple to fuchsia. The juxtaposition of various levels, stairwells, walkways and columns, as well as large spaces to small, creates contrasts in scale — and all to the sound of wind chimes and the courtyard's garden fountains.

The house is divided into three main living areas. Once inside the front door, the fuchsia paint-work accenting the brise-soleil wall bounces light throughout the lofty red hallway. To the right, a purple corridor leads into a small, bright patio area that overlooks a glassed-off desert garden (Mr. Roth's favorite spot), off which a set of vertical steps creates a 3-D effect around a three-meter-high doorway, creating a grand entrance to Mr. Roth's office and library.

Up the Mayan-inspired stairs is the master bedroom — what Mrs. Roth calls "a room with a view" for its panorama of the olive, pine, palm and cork tree-strewn countryside that leads down to where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic.

From this level, opposite the dressing rooms and bathroom, a quirky glass-fronted minstrel's gallery overlooks the two central courtyards below and across to the guest wing — a two-level area that includes a bedroom with en

suite bathroom and a kitchen — that forms another corner of the building.

A tropical brise-soleil roof of horizontal concrete strips connects these two wings of the house. The concrete strips allow air and shafts of sunlight to stream through their yellow flanks, also casting shade over the courtyards, which are joined by vast pivoting glass walls allowing a framed vista of the desert garden and out to the sea.

The house's third wing directly overlooks the courtyards. Inside is a large open-plan living and dining area partitioned from the kitchen by a large stone work counter, complete with fossils; overhead storage cabinets; and a geometric skylight that allows more light in.

What is the Roths' favorite memory in their Legorreta home? In 2005, "we had a party for the opening of the house. We had a group of Flamenco dancers on the patio — it was the most splendid evening you can remember," Mr. Roth said.



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