

BANDOL
INSPIRED BY THE HORIZON

Photography: Vincent Leroux



From Geneva, where she lives, to Menorca, Bandol and Warsaw, Valérie Chomarat's projects for villas, fincas, chalets and yachts are defined by her own particular vision of minimalism and by her characteristically sensitive integration of architecture and environment.

Nature, geography, climate, history and purpose: for Valerie, preliminary studies and hand sketches are crucial for understanding each of these defining aspects of a project in the early stages of a design. It was under the mentorship of the British designer, John Pawson, that Valerie Chomarat learned the fundamentals that have driven the evolution of her own signature style - the primacy of proportion, space, surface, light and shadow.

This approach is also showcased in this recent project by Valérie Chomarat - a family home in Bandol, France.

From the sea, almost nothing is visible. Forms that blend seamlessly into their setting, clarity of line and a restricted palette of local materials: these are the signature elements of Valérie Chomarat's style. For this family home located in a cove in Bandol, close to the house where the architect spent holidays as a child, Valérie looked to the horizon for inspiration. Her response is a sublime architectural panorama of graphic longitudinal strokes, stretched volumes and elongated openings, in which the azure line of the sea is commandeered as both backdrop and protagonist. Drawing on the influences of the home in the Ardèche forest where she grew up and of the work of Tadao Ando, whom she so admires, Valérie has created a subtly layered composition in which interior and exterior worlds - house, garden, sea and surrounding nature - infiltrate and enrich one another.

From the tobacco-hued tiles to the ochre exterior walls and the earthy hues of the masonry benches, everything has been chosen to embed the natural colour palette of the coast around Bandol within the house. With the same local stone used for floors, basins and worktops, the design is a study in the strength of simplicity and singularity. Everywhere the clarity of the attenuated lines of the architecture plays out against the unbroken materiality of the walls, benches, floors and ceilings, creating a quiet visual field in which to register the grain of the walnut doors, cupboards and kitchen units, the gentle influx of nature and a painstakingly assembled collection of art and design pieces.

Amongst Valérie's cherished possessions are design classics that include a Pierre Jeanneret bench, an Akari light by Isamu Noguchi, chairs by Poul Kjaerholm and Georges Nakashima and a vintage Magistretti lamp, a gift from her parents, which are set alongside African shields and burnt wood tables in the living room. An art lover with an exceptional eye and refined curatorial instinct, Valérie Chomarat has also added ceramic pieces by Bénédicte Vallet, works of sculpture - from an oversized necklace on a stand by South African artist Julia Atlas and to a Robert Courtright mask - and paintings by Japanese artist Sadaharu Horio and Korean artist Yun Hyong-Keun. Two photographs by her mentor and former employer, John Pawson, sit prominently on a shelf in the kitchen.

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