



a bit special

Interiors are part of your life, so they have to be right. **Mara Lane** reports. Photography: **Gary Edwards**, courtesy of **Charo Hallin**.

Charo Hallin is not about selling glorious furniture or must-have accessories, it is about lifestyle, interiors tailored to need and taste. Orthodox or unorthodox, trendy or classic, practical with the emphasis on fun, the two-floor showroom presents today's aesthetics in 800 square metres that are the perfect antidote to boredom.

The large space allows owner Marian Hallin to exhibit different collections and contextualise the selection process, so people see what appeals easily. Clients are not confronted with odd pieces of



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furniture simply placed side by side. Oriental antiques, modern aluminium and leather sofas, a crocodile ottoman, a Chinese warrior and large wooden figures catch the eye in a harmonious interior filled with unusual items. "The shape or size is irrelevant, but everything has to be "a bit special", even a little candleholder must have something," Marian emphasises.

She attributes the success of her business, which covers everything from selling furniture to designing a whole house, to moving with the times. "Eight years ago this showroom would not have been possible. People had different taste, they wanted colonial designs, they would never put a glass table near a traditional sofa. Now they are not scared anymore, they just want to be different, because we are all different.

Today's lexicon of interior design stretches further than sofas, chairs and tables, it includes lighting, accessories, paintings, avant-garde fabrics. The trend is to mix and match. Size, too, has changed. "Before everything was smaller. It was unusual to find a sofa measuring more than 2.2 metres, now we sell 3.50 metre ones with no problem. Big items are very popular, like these lamps," Marian says, looking at two enormous circular wire spheres hanging from the ceiling on the second floor that reminded their creator, Enzo Catellani, of

'the light, rolling bushes, blown by the wind in the Mexican desert.'

It's a new era with fabrics, too." Upstairs clients can choose from a wide range in the latest designs from ruched velvets to printed silks that are so unbelievably beautiful, you want to take them home on the spot.

From swanky mansions to second homes, Marian provides the ideal décor solution. "We do everything from classic to contemporary furniture, Moroccan interiors, rustic country houses, ultra modern apartments. Each has its own beauty, it depends how you use it. There are many governing factors in a design scheme. It is very important to listen to what the client wants, to see where the house is situated, to check the light, views, whether there is a young family or animals. It's no use having white sofas with toddlers or dogs, but you can mix them in with other things. You have to think of a way of decorating that goes with their lifestyle. Of course one loves to see kitchens with no shelves, but when you start cooking there has to be somewhere to put the olive oil. It is very difficult to have one style in a house, because we don't have one style of living," she says,

What was once a small shop, albeit with an extensive client base, is now a mini industry, with a whole back up of carpenters, painters, plumbers, electricians and landscapers.

Marian recently designed and manufactured three lines of reasonably priced furniture, Maldini, Java and Viken, in wood or iron with five different finishes. Marketed through the San Pedro shop which her mother, Charo Hallin, opened in 1984, they are suitable for turnkey apartments or second homes, where the owner does not want to spend a fortune.

If clients wish to furnish one room or the whole house, but don't really know which design would be best, Marian will show them photographs of completed projects, visit the home and advise accordingly. That can mean anything from cool neutrals in elegant, contemporary designs to ultra-comfortable furnishings and unusual accessories.

The furniture comes from all over the world, but being half-Spanish (the other half is Swedish), she tries to buy as much as possible from Spain.

Marian couldn't imagine working in any other profession. "I always say this job is *muy agradecido*. We go into an empty house and create a home, not only with furniture, but lighting, rugs, paintings, objects, soft furnishings." ■

Charo Hallin, Pol. Nueva Campana, Local 17, Marbella. Tel: 952 92 9757 or Calle Hermanos Álvarez Quintero s/n, San Pedro de Alcántara. Tel: 952 78 7245 www.charohallin.com