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LIVING THE TROPICAL DREAM

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When I asked Danielle Van Poppel why she had built a holiday villa in Bali, without a moment's hesitation she replied "to live my tropical dream".

Being someone who travels a lot, Danielle has visited many holiday spots around the world but Bali is the one place she never tires of coming back to.

We were sipping iced mint teas on one of the large 'ikat silk' covered day sofas over looking the Badung Sea from her 'stately' holiday home, Villa Ylang-Ylang.

Villa YY is not your typical western designed tropical pad; its one of the most contemporary residential structure you will find on the Island. "I love modern design but wanted to capture the feeling of a temple; a sanctuary merging contemporary architecture with the spiritual essence of Bali."

Well, Danielle did achieve just what she set out to do and so she should have; she has several advantages over the rest of us! For a start her husband Mike, among other things, is a supplier of quality furniture so much of the contents of Ylang Ylang has arrived from 'internal sources'¹

However, perhaps more importantly, Danielle's an academic when it comes to home building. She studied art history in Utrecht, Rome and Florence so she has an abundance of inspiration.

"It certainly helped having a husband involved in fashion and design, as we were able to access wonderful fixtures and fittings. Everything that you see in this house completely originated from us, we didn't use a designer or architect, we did it all ourselves!"

Despite this head start, Danielle is quick to add a note of caution. "We thought that the stress would arrive during the design phase but I can tell you;

don't try to run a construction project such as this unless you are here in Bali most of the time." She was referring to the telephone calls at 4 in the morning to her apartment in Milan asking her to make some decisions. For example the black stone tiles had run out and would it be alright to use up some of the left over palimanan tiles to complete the patio area – it could be done nicely!

"Actually, they did a very good job in the end but the problems which did arise would have been avoided if I had been on site more and I would have got more sleep as well"

"For example, I was persuaded that it would be easier to live with the different levels between the living area and the pool rather creates a single level. In hindsight, flattening out this area would have looked much better, but you cannot visualize these sorts of things from the other side of the world."

Another pitfall she encountered had to do with the terrazzo floor finish. Danielle discovered, like many others in Bali, that there is good terrazzo and there is bad terrazzo. "You see, unless terrazzo is properly done it is prone to cracking; I know that earth tremors are common in this part of the world, but some of the cracks we experienced were ridiculous."

The layout of Ylang Ylang is simple enough. A large central living atrium and two connected accommodation wings forming a 'U' shape around the swimming pool. 'I tried to create many private spaces in this villa; one of my favorites is the upstairs gallery, which is wonderful breezy and such a quiet place to lie back and read' choose this quiet stretch of beach on Bali's east coast?" We love this area; it is 'real' Bali. We often go out to dinner over on the other side (meaning Seminyak of course) but its only a 30 minute drive and look at what we come back to", she explains with arms wide open.

I had to agree it is special. The property is surrounded by tall coconut trees and the landscaped garden, dotted with modern sculpture, leads right down to the beach. The views on this side of the Island are much more interesting too. Eastwards you have Nusa Penida and off to the north, Mount Agung and the Candi Dasa coastline are clearly in sight.

I'll let you into a little secret! Danielle isn't anti Seminyak at all...she is about to launch a swish new villa resort called 'Number 1 Seminyak'....traitor!

As far as Ylang Ylang's décor is concerned Danielle opted for light floors and walls, contrasted by strong, rich browns and gold textures for the upholstery and fabrics.

"Designing a home to 'holiday' in versus a home to live in is completely different." Explained Danielle. "As we travel so much, Ylang Ylang is very much our holiday home. It offers total relaxation for the occasions when we have the opportunity to be together, which is not that often these days! However, if this was our main home, then we would have done things a bit differently. For example I would have built fewer bedrooms (she has six), added a room for a library, a larger walk-in wardrobe and a bigger kitchen with a breakfast area'

I wonder whether Danielle and Mike will ever have a 'main home', Their current address is currently at 40 thousand feet somewhere between Bali, Singapore, Milan, London and KL. If and when they do come.