

MEXICO'S HACIENDA DE SAN ANTONIO

A RESTORED 19TH-CENTURY ESTATE IN COLIMA WELCOMES GUESTS



Text by Hunter Drobojowska Philp/Photography by Tim Street-Porter

Having survived both a revolution and a volcanic eruption, Hacienda de San Antonio, in Colima, Mexico, is something of a miracle.

The stately pink manor house, on a five-thousand-acre plantation, is one of the few haciendas that have not been severely damaged since they were built in the nineteenth century. Nestled among lush mountains beside the El Cordoban river, it is surrounded by a dramatic volcanic rock aqueduct, built in 1904, that channels water around the estate. The humming of cicadas and the cries of wild turkeys can be heard,

and the moist air carries the scent of the distant Pacific mixed with tuberose.

Although Volcán de Fuego and Volcán Nevado de Colima appear docile, at the end of the nineteenth century Volcán de Fuego's eruption threatened the existence of Arnoldo Vogel's coffee and sugarcane plantation, then known as Hacienda de Santa Cruz. As smoke and sparks flew, the German planter's Mexican wife, Clotilde Quedo de Vogel, prayed to Saint Anthony that their home be spared. She thought it a miracle when the lava avoided the crops and buildings and ran alongside the river. Shortly thereafter the Vogels built

a chapel and renamed the hacienda in honor of their purported celestial guardian.

In 1910 politics nearly accomplished what nature had failed to do. During the Mexican Revolution the country's plantations were seized, and many haciendas were demolished by the rebels. Hacienda de San Antonio was spared, though it fell into disrepair for more than a half century.

In 1978 Mexican architect Mauricio Romano was hired to renovate the hacienda. He constructed bedrooms with high beam ceilings, fireplaces and terraces facing the original courtyard; he added a billiard room, a club room and a television room; and he restored the chapel, now considered a fine example of Neoclassical architecture.

A decade later French ar-

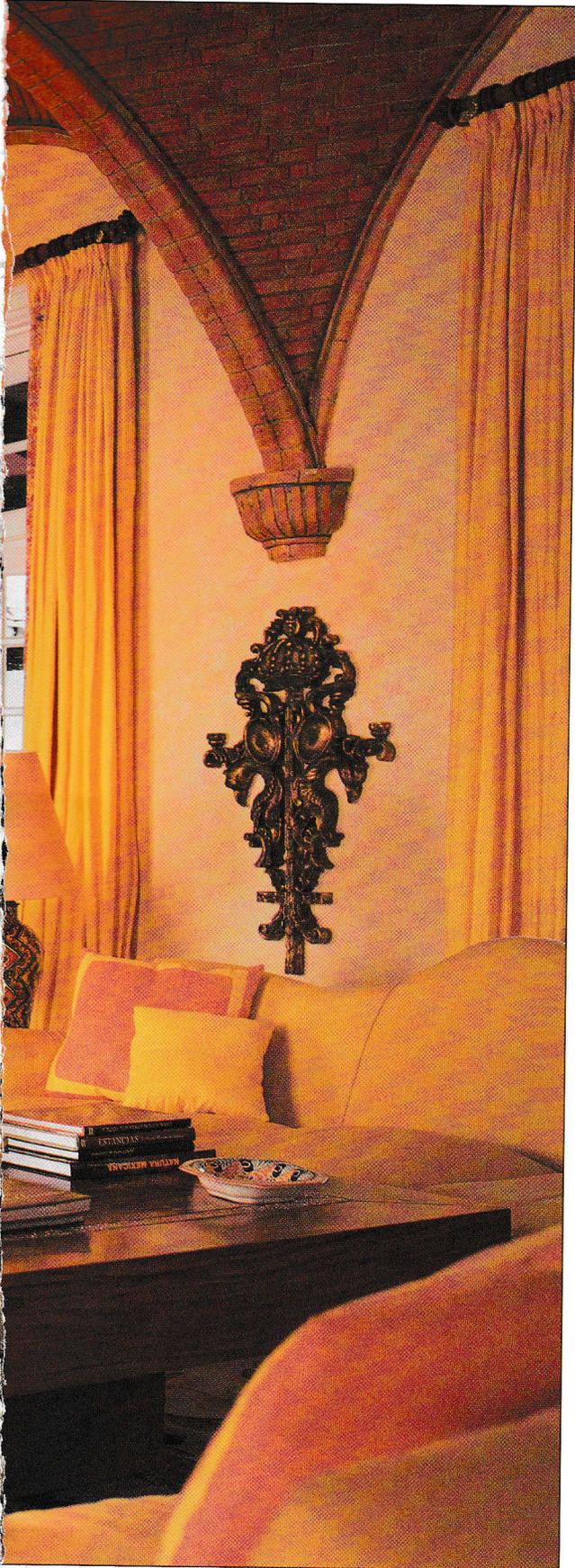
"We preserved the spirit of a Mexican hacienda and the soul of a family home," Alix Marcaccini says of Hacienda de San Antonio, a manor house she decorated on a plantation in Colima, Mexico. **OPPOSITE:** Charros' hats from Jerez hang from ox yokes. The pots are Guatemalan.

ABOVE: The 19th-century hacienda, which can be rented by groups, was restored "in keeping with regional styles," says architect Robert Couturier, who added a new wing. **RIGHT:** The pool pavilion was painted pink to resemble the main house.



BELOW: Barrel-vaulted brick ceilings define the dining room. "It was remarkable to watch the artisans from Guanajuato construct

the ceilings," Couturier says. "They weren't engineers; they did it all instinctually." Drapery fabric from Designers Guild.



chitect Robert Couturier expanded the hacienda, bringing a classical European perspective to the project. "The hacienda is totally theatrical," he notes.

With the help of his colleague Piero Manarat, Couturier added a second story to an existing wing, bringing the number of bedrooms to twenty-seven, each with spacious tiled baths, vaulted brick ceilings, fireplaces and French doors that open onto the forest. A monumental staircase with iron balustrades leads to the second floor, where bedrooms are to the left and a rooftop terrace to the right provides views of the mountains and volcanoes.

Couturier demolished the small rooms once used for storing machinery and built a living room and dining room

around a second courtyard. Mirroring one another, both are finished with fifteen-foot vaulted brick ceilings, wood-plank floors and fireplaces made of black volcanic rock. (The porous black stone was also used for steps, walkways, reflecting pools, stairs, casements, moldings, finials and other details.)

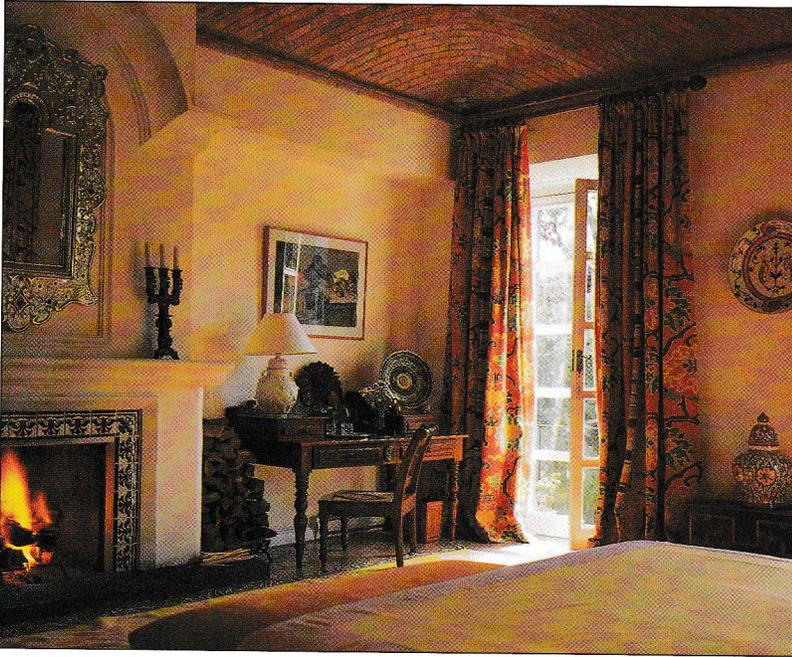
The architect fitted these two main rooms with French doors; beyond are star-shaped formal gardens loosely modeled after those at the Alhambra in Spain. Brick and tiled walkways lead across lawns to the fifty-foot pool, tennis court, outdoor dining area and amphitheater, where plays and concerts are held.

This massive complex, some 60,000 square feet, was handed to Alix Marcaccini, who had just nine months to de-

"NINETEENTH-CENTURY OWNERS OF HACIENDAS MIXED CHINESE WITH SPANISH WITH MOROCCAN."

BELOW: For one of the 27 guest rooms in the hacienda, the designers brought together a Oaxacan carpet, a ceramic Michoacán can-

delabrum, a lamp by Guanajuato artist Gorky and a silver overmantel mirror from Mexico. Designers Guild bedcovering fabric.



sign the interiors. To prepare for the project, she visited more than forty haciendas. "I saw how the nineteenth-century owners had mixed Chinese with Spanish with Moroccan," Marcaccini says. "They were the only people who traveled in those days, and they brought things back with them. But it could look cluttered. This is the same concept but in a calmer style."

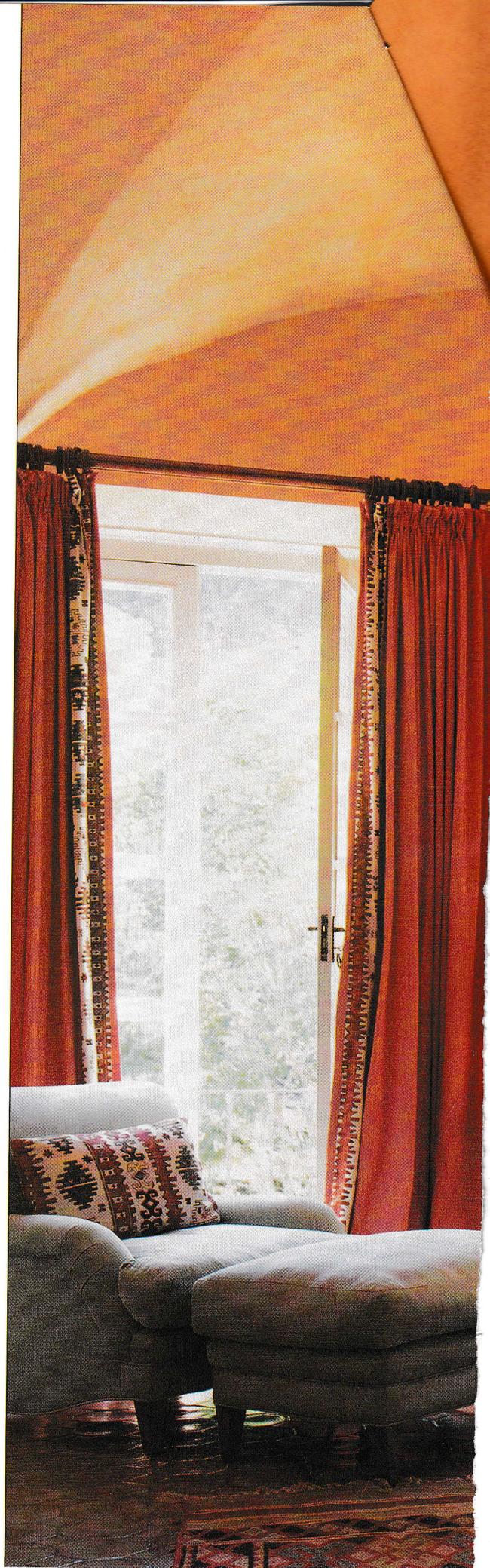
Working with designer Armand Aubery, Marcaccini came up with three principal mandates. The first was brilliant color. The windows of the yellow living room are draped with yards of jonquil linen; the dining room windows are lined with cascades of burgundy linen. Patterned fabrics for other rooms were imported from Spain and Guatemala. Five seamstresses from Mexico City went to

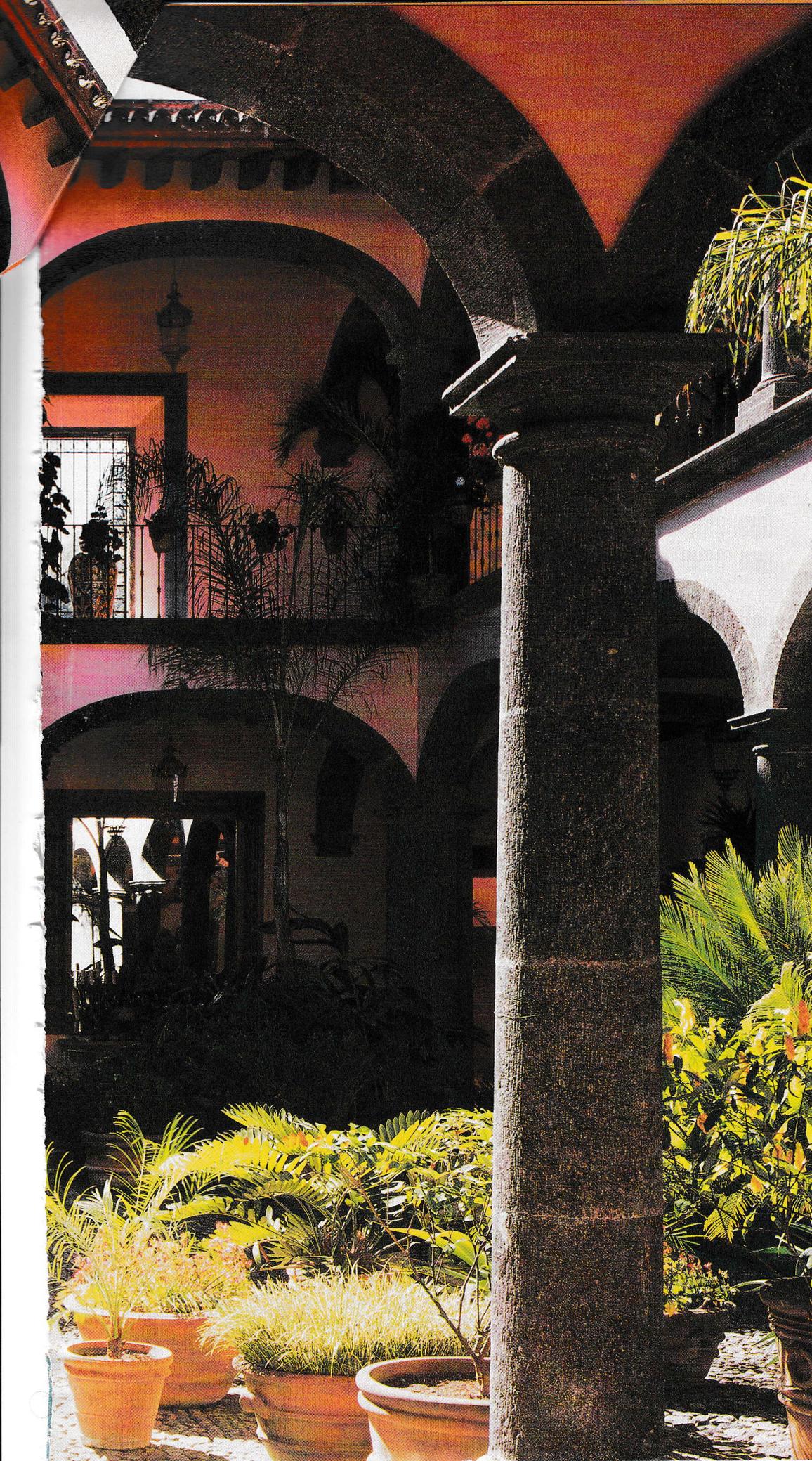
live at the hacienda. "They spent a month sewing draperies, slipcovers, tablecloths," Marcaccini recalls.

Although raised in Paris and London, Marcaccini has spent many years in Mexico. "Having lived for so long in this country, where nature is rich and varied, where the indigenous people have such an ability to mix colors in ways others could not, I've learned more than at any school I could have attended. I've stayed in houses designed by architects like Marco Aldaco and Diego Villaseñor, and that opened my mind and gave me a visual education, too."

The second mandate was scale. Upholstered sofas and chairs in the living room are voluminous. In the dining room, regal wood chairs line a table that seats more than twenty. All of the beds are

Marcaccini visited haciendas throughout the country to gather ideas for the design. "I wanted each of the bedrooms to have its own style and feeling," she remarks. RIGHT: In a second-floor guest room, a low table displays a trio of antique stone urns.





built long and wide, which meant that custom-tailored bed linens had to be ordered from Mexico City.

The final mandate was to incorporate the craftsmanship of the indigenous people of Mexico without resorting to the hackneyed style of *casa turismo*. By visiting the Mexican pueblos of Jerez, Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, Morelia and Oaxaca, and Lake Atitlán in Antigua, Guatemala City and the Guatemalan highlands, Marcaccini developed an eye for diversity in furniture and textiles. She bought Highland Maya textiles and primitive colonial antiques—benches, tables, iron bedsteads and trunks—made after 1865 by Indians in the earlier colonial manner.

She quickly discovered that whenever she found the perfect spiral-leg table, she needed another five. “At the beginning of the process I thought, Where are we going to find enough spectacular pieces for the whole house? I’d go into a little village and buy fifty pots, but they’d vanish because the house was so big.”

Her solution was to have Mexican craftspeople reinterpret pieces in different woods or finishes. Variations on a nineteenth-century spiral-leg table turn up as a massive desk in an office and as side tables in a couple of the bedrooms.

Traditional elements are used in nontraditional ways, such as the silver *milagros*, or charms, inlaid around the border and center of the wood

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All the guest rooms open onto the courtyard, which Couturier restored and enlarged. New columns, like the originals, are made from stone quarried nearby. “It’s a dream of what a hacienda should be like,” Couturier observes. Over-size mirrors flank the far door.