

# Pure & simple

*A contemplative residence  
in the Portuguese countryside  
combines monastic  
restraint with rustic charm*

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Photography NICOLAS MATHÉUS/LIVING INSIDE

In the rolling landscape of Alentejo, dawn is a magical moment. The stars begin to fade, a gentle warmth envelops the sky and the sun reflects its glow onto the pastures and cork-oak trees. There's no better time to view this modern building, accessible via a dirt track, than when it is bathed in that golden light, which emphasises the ascetic spirit of its clean lines and its palette of raw concrete, grey slate and Kebony Clear wood, as well as the grand volume of its 35-metre-wide windows. The property, so skilfully integrated into the rural landscape as to become almost invisible, belongs to avant-garde architect Gonalo Bonniz, who hosts meditation retreats here in the spring and cooking classes during the summer, using produce from the garden.

Crafting an interior that matched the rigour, but also the softness, of this home's design was the task of Emma Pucci and Valentina Pilia, creators of the Lisbon-based Flores design studio. 'We were introduced to Gonalo early in the project, which allowed us to intervene at the right moment and establish an easy collaboration,' says Emma. They chose a colour palette inspired by the land: warm earth tones and ochres, with greys, off-whites and creams referencing the bark of the old cork oaks. This stage found them selecting the most natural, simple and local materials possible, to avoid any artifice. The decoration came later, always with the goal of harmonising with nature. 'The challenge was to use materials and craftsmanship that were emblematic of Portugal, but through a contemporary lens,' says Valentina. 'To be honest, we work with pieces we would like to have in our own homes because, in the end, they are timeless.'

Ancient artisanal techniques can be seen throughout the house, from the solid-wood tables to poufs filled with local cork granules and jute lamps – a material traditionally used for baskets. Linen (used for the curtains) was sourced from a nearby weaver whose husband grows, harvests and processes the flax in his own garden, while wool – naturally dyed with avocado or onion – came from neighbouring sheep. The idea was to 'warm up' an almost monastic decor with a cosy, soothing atmosphere, from the large communal space to the six simple and welcoming bedrooms. Everything in the home has been thought out to promote interaction, removing the superfluous to return to only the essentials, lightening the form to emphasise the content. 'The minimalist, frugal spirit fosters a demanding simplicity,' explains Valentina. 'There is no greater contemplation than the permanent movement of colours in these fields,' concludes Emma. [florestextilestudio.com](http://florestextilestudio.com); [gbarquitectos.pt](http://gbarquitectos.pt) ►





**Exterior** Close to the beaches on the Atlantic coast, the house, designed by architect Gonalo Bonniz, is nestled in the rolling hills of Alentejo. Composed of three 45-degree wings, it follows an east-west orientation. With its flat roof, it is perfectly integrated into its environment: several hectares of wild land where pastures are dotted with cork oaks

**Pool** Hidden by native grasses and flowers, the concrete pool is bordered by a wide pine deck and features teak sunbeds and loungers from Skagerak

**Terrace** Sheltered by an overhanging concrete extension, the terrace is home to a pleasantly shaded outdoor-dining area. The ceramic-topped teak 'Illum' table is from Tribù and the metal 'Arholma' chairs are from Skargaarden ►





### Living room

A 35-metre-wide window offers a panoramic view of the landscape. A curved sofa by Pierre Augustin Rose is paired with a vintage coffee table from Galeria Bessa Pereira and two vintage armchairs from Barracuda Interiors in Lisbon. The ceramic lamp, rug and poufs are all by Flores Textiles Studio

**Kitchen** A central island acts as the nerve centre of the home, with a bar area with black lacquered-wood stools by Vico Magistretti on one side. The cooking area is simple, with its induction cooktop, cast-iron cocotte from Staub and ceramic dishes from Raisin Ceramic in Lisbon. The storage and walls were custom-made with Kebony Clear wood



**Dining room** The custom-designed table by Flores Textiles Studio is surrounded by 'Karnak' chairs by Ferdinand Kramer from E15. Above hangs a 'Lipari' pendant lamp in travertine and brass by Garnier & Linker. Against the wall (below), a bespoke metal cabinet is adorned with tapestry fronts made by DeFio Rugs in Lisbon. On the table sit a raw-cork bowl and glazed-terracotta jug, both flea-market finds ➤



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**Outside** Gonçalo Bonniz prioritised materials that blend with the indigenous colours of the land and offer good durability in the harsh Alentejo climate. Deep-grey concrete was chosen for both interior and exterior floors, as well as for the overhanging extension that acts as a shield from heat and sunlight. For the façades, he opted for Kebony Clear treated pine

**Bedroom** The six bedrooms all have access to the massive terrace that runs along the building, with its views over the wild, hilly landscape. Maison AD Textile made the curtains in 'Lathi' linen by Yutes

**Bathroom** On the wall – covered in custom-made Azulima tiles – hangs a large mirror that invites the greenery inside. The vanity is custom-made in Kebony Clear with bespoke stone basins and Fantini taps. The wall lights are by Flos and the vase is from Raisin Ceramic in Lisbon

See [Stockists](#) page for details

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