

VOGUE

Sheela Levy
with husband
Ivan, daughter
Shaana and
son-in-law
Uraaz Bahl

Nestled in the Son
Naava estate, Levy's mansion
is the perfect balance of
functionality and beauty

The palm-wreathed pool
deck of the estate overlooks
the family's olive groves

paradise FOUND

A Hollywood star, a globally renowned jeweller and one life-altering slice of cake led interior designer SHEELA LEVY to her sprawling zen-inspired Balearic sanctuary. By AARTI VIRANI

Photographed by NATXO BASSOLS

T

o hear Sheela Levy recollect her initial encounter with the honey-hued stone villa she now calls home, on the island of Majorca, off the coast of Spain, evokes a whirlwind courtship. “There was just this feeling of having arrived,” she says dreamily, perched on a daybed in her courtyard, before sneaking an upward glance at a squad of silvery rain clouds inching across the expansive Mediterranean sky. They add just the right dose of drama to an already engrossing tale, featuring a glamorous cast of characters, including movie stars and crystal magnates.

LET THEM EAT CAKE...

Levy, who spent nearly three decades running the Swiss edition of the cosmetics kingdom, The Body Shop, with her husband, Ivan, before it was acquired by a local supermarket chain, recalls travelling to Majorca shortly after that sale, in 2010. With its cobalt waters and crumbling fortresses, this rugged coastal gem, inspiration for many a Joan Miró masterpiece, struck the Levys as a no-brainer when it came to the backdrop for a holiday home. But they weren’t prepared for the exhaustive search—nearly 60 open houses—that followed. When Levy finally laid eyes on an inviting five-bedroom finca near Montuïri, a medieval hilltop town studded with windmills, she was dismayed to learn it was recently sold to actor Joseph Fiennes. “He was due to send the money from Los Angeles in a matter of days, but it hadn’t been received yet,” explains Levy. “And my

realtor said, ‘it’s quadruple your budget’,” she adds. “Never tell a woman she can’t afford something.”

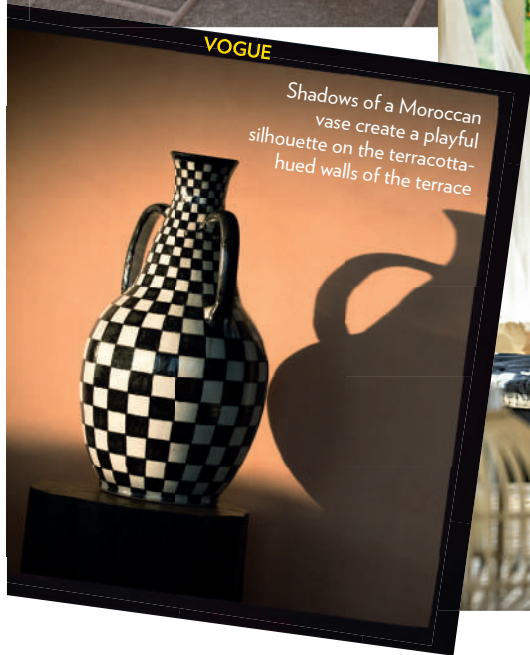
After an enthralling tour, complete with tea and banana cake on the sun-speckled terrace, Levy was officially besotted. “I don’t even eat bananas but had the cake and thought that this has to be heaven,” she remembers. She might as well have been expressing her sentiments towards the bucolic, 25-acre estate itself. Upon learning the property belonged to the Swarovskis—serendipitously, a family Levy was already acquainted with—she rang the illustrious moguls and stated her case. “There was something so uncanny about the whole thing: I’d been sitting in the Swarovski office less than 24 >



Artwork from Jaipur artist Gouri Shankar Soni, hand-painted cushion fabric from Argentina and a wooden door that's now a coffee table dominate the living room



Overlooking the olive groves, the outdoor dining area is used every day in the summer





A pair of round lamps by Paul Cocksedge and a candelabra from Moooi add an industrial edge to Swarovski's original French dining space

hours before I saw the house. “By that evening,” she says, almost incredulously, “we had it!”

THE RIGHT KIND OF WRONG

Once the honeymoon goggles came off, Levy, who recently parlayed visual merchandising chops from her Body Shop days into an international interior design business, applied some much-needed elbow grease to the tranquil space. During its Swarovski days, the finca was a hodgepodge of clunky fur-

niture—Chinese lacquer chests, raw silk curtains and gaudy chandeliers—that seemed incongruous with its airy surroundings. “I’d just spent a fortune on the house so I tried to find a way to fall in love with the pieces,” says Levy. “The only way to do that was by painting them black,” she continues, revealing the actual reason behind the villa’s newspaper-inspired palette. It’s why much of the artwork on display, ranging from arresting portraits of Rabari nomads from photographer Rohit Chawla’s Kutch collection, to a sumo-

size Annie Leibovitz tome, propped up on a tripod in the living room, also adheres to the black-and-white dress code. One of the few exceptions is a striking marigold and crimson abstract by Spanish painter Antón Patiño, which Levy first spotted on the ceiling of an avid art collector’s home in Zurich, then scored in exchange for purchasing a bed for the owner’s pied-à-terre. “It’s been with us for over 20 years,” she muses.

Over the years, Levy’s cosmopolitan imprints have also surfaced in the form of Majorcan ikat headboards, Moroccan rugs and Indian lamps, enhanced by modern furnishings from B&B Italia, Missoni and Tribù. Paired with slate floors and reclaimed wood accents, namely, repurposed, century-old doors that Levy scavenged from local reclamation yards, the resulting vibe is that of a meditative refuge.

ANOTHER DAY OF SUN

But that doesn’t translate into an isolated existence. Summers, which include a revolving door of guests, are an idyllic blur of spontaneous swims, farm-to-table barbecues and fiery, photogenic sunsets. Days start with cups of tea on the terrace and morning yoga, followed by a homemade lunch, which Levy’s daughter, model-actor-producer Shaana Levy-Bahl, preps in the rustic farmhouse kitchen. A generous fruit and vegetable garden provides the fuel for their lemonades and gazpachos, while the nearly 3,000 Alberquina olive trees onsite, which hold the distinction of being Majorca’s only biodynamic grove, power the Levys’ latest business endeavour—a thriving line of Demeter-certified organic olive oil. “Our grounds started blossoming as we spent more time here,” says Levy, underscoring the island’s long-standing reputation as an agricultural powerhouse, a credential it has claimed since the Moors conquered, circa 900 AD. “Our quality of life is amazing,” she affirms.

So it’s no surprise that even their house guests prefer the villa’s restorative confines to the pulsing beachfront clubs of nearby Palma. “It’s like a bottomless pit, actually; no one ever wants to leave,” confesses Levy. “Everybody wants a piece of this paradise.” ■



The entrance hallway features photographs by Rohit Chawla, artwork from Pakpoom Silaphan in London and a console that Levy designed herself