



# PILGRIM'S Progress

A long walk leads to an opulent sanctuary

BY MARK HISS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAMANTHA GOH

“It all started with that Camino walk, it really did,” Ariane Hudson says.

She’s referring to the Camino de Santiago, the pilgrimage route that has been drawing spiritual souls and adventurous travelers to Northern Spain since the ninth century. Coping with the death of her husband after a long illness, Ariane, along with her daughter, Hillary, made the trek from the French Pyrenees to the World Heritage Site of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, a six-week journey on foot that covered hundreds of miles.

Drawing on that experience from 2013 carried Ariane through the arduous process of selling the Jamul home she raised her two daughters in, buying a new house in La Jolla, tearing that down to the ground and building a dream home that has become the gathering place for her children, grandchildren and extended family (she has six siblings).

“When I was ready to buy the house I thought, ‘I don’t know if I can do this.’ But I just needed to remind myself that when I finished that walk I said if I ever doubt

myself all I have to do is remember that I did this and I can do anything.”

It helped that her team—architect Caitlin Kelley, interior designer Cheryl Hamilton-Gray and contractor Erin Calver—was made up of can-do women as well. “They and their talent brought life to the dream in my head. It was truly a collaboration.”

Completed in 2018, Ariane’s home is now a fantastical sanctuary, filled with eclectic art, artifacts, textiles and architectural elements from around the

The paintings in Ariane Hudson’s La Jolla home are by her friend, artist Rima Fujita, known for her vivid hues on black surfaces.

Facing page, clockwise from top: The foyer’s centerpiece is a statue of Quan Yin riding an elephant. The platform was built to display it. • A hand-carved Tibetan altar is painted with crushed mineral pigments over gesso. • A hand-carved and painted wooden panel from Southern India portrays the Hindu gods Lakshmi, Shiva and Ganesh.





These French doors were specifically designed to accommodate this teak archway from India. The columns were too short so interior designer Cheryl Hamilton-Gray created matching pedestals to support them.

Facing page: Ariane, right, and her daughter, Hillary Oliveira, completed the grueling and inspiring pilgrimage walk to Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain in 2013.



world. And it's all housed in an Old World, Southern European-style structure that could easily pass for a luxurious Spanish *parador* somewhere along the Camino de Santiago. Add in the home's ocean views, beach access around the corner, pool (with dancing water fountains) and yoga room, and you can imagine any weary pilgrim—let alone family member—would be more than happy to rest their bones here for a while.

It was no simple feat incorporating Ariane's extensive collection, requiring detailed organization and meticulous planning that allowed for the building of niches, pedestals and wall spaces to receive specific pieces. "I wanted to have a home where all the things that make me happy would be."

"I had photographic records, as well as dimensional records, of the pieces she wanted incorporated within the architecture," Cheryl says. "There were antiques that Ariane had bought with the hope that whoever was going to design the home would find a place for them, so it was all built around artifacts that she already had. And because a lot of it is old, nothing was plumb or straight, so we had to deal with those oddities, as well."





Also of key importance was the kitchen, which features an epic, nearly 6-foot-long, custom-designed La Cornue range topped by a copper hood (“I was a little intimidated by my stove in the beginning,” Ariane confesses); a refrigerator cleverly disguised as an armoire (in a matching color to the stove); and parallel kitchen islands—one sheathed in butcher block and featuring a sink for prep work and one designed as a seating area.

“Ariane’s an avid cook and really interested in a functional kitchen,” Cheryl says. “We realized her whole life would revolve around the kitchen so we wanted to place it in an area where she could enjoy

the whole family around her, so we made a great room open to everything—the dining room, patio and living space. Many people can hang out in the kitchen.”

Up a sweeping staircase, the main living area and kitchen access the view and sea breezes, and the hideaway patio doors allow for the creation of an even larger indoor-outdoor space. “I wanted to have my living area up here and what I confessed to Cheryl was that I wanted to think of this as my Paris apartment,” says Ariane, who was actually born in the City of Light. “I feel like she just brought it all together; she designed the couch, the chairs, the ottoman.”

The curving, undulating, 20-foot couch is particularly impressive, creating a conversation area while also providing a thoroughfare that draws you out to the patio. “I used two different fabrics on this—mohair velvet on the front and then crushed velvet on the back—that kind of gives you a sense of waves, so the idea is waves leading you to the waves,” Cheryl says. “It was quite tricky to get made because it never had been done before; they hadn’t tackled anything this big.”

Cheryl also proposed a novel approach to softening the large area: layering rugs. “Piece by piece we inched them together until it was a comfortable overlay that

## Taking Chances

To design Ariane Hudson’s La Jolla home, Cheryl Hamilton-Gray drew inspiration from images of Parisian apartments that illustrated how beautiful interiors can be when you’re not afraid to use lots of colors and patterns together. “Ariane loves prints and so do I,” she says. Here, Cheryl shares a few of her favorite ideas:

### FIND YOUR COLOR STORY

“I caution to tell people to stick to three or five colors,” Cheryl says. “Don’t limit yourself.” Instead, she says to pick a palette. In Ariane’s home, she worked with warm shades of green, brown and orange that served as the foundation.

### LAYER RUGS

Cheryl tasked Ariane with getting rugs she loved in the autumnal color scheme the pair agreed upon. “I specified the sizes of rugs she should get, and she found patterns and solids at Seret & Sons in New Mexico that complemented the palette,” Cheryl explains. So various floor coverings in rich reds, deep olives, even some mustard look cohesive together.

### GROUND THE SPACE

When you’re combining so many different prints and hues, you need to create some moments of visual rest, Cheryl says. She suggests making your largest furnishings the solid elements in the room, such as the large custom sofa Cheryl did here. “This piece, the anchor in the room, gave me the license to mix to my heart’s content.”

### PICK SOME NEW NEUTRALS

“A tiny chevron or a polka-dot print read like a neutral from a distance,” Cheryl explains. And so does an animal print like the leopard pattern Cheryl selected for the round ottoman in front of the sofa.

### ENHANCE POSSESSIONS

The perfect complement for a low-back chair might be an oversized paisley with pheasants on it. “It has those warm tones, and it relates to items that Ariane already had with feather motifs,” Cheryl says.

### REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT

Cheryl chose a similar same-scale suzani print for the dining chairs but did them in different colorways “Mixing large- and small-scale patterns around a circular table wouldn’t have worked,” Cheryl explains. “If you’re going to play with scale you have to do big in one corner and small in another on the other side of the room.”

### BE BOLD

“The more color, the more interesting the space,” she says. “Designers have been playing with color and pattern in commercial spaces for some time. When you have the courage to do it residentially, it can be so successful.”



Above: A tiny powder room was transformed into a mini-adventure. The walls feature travel stamps like those that pilgrims along the Camino de Santiago walk receive, as well as an Henri Rousseau-inspired wallpaper. “It’s like a jungle with animals peering out,” Cheryl says.

Right and facing page: The sanctuary-like master bedroom incorporates an intricately latticed Mughal arch from the Swat Valley in Afghanistan as a headboard, along with a trio of Hindu gods.







would suit the furniture layout on top of it," she says. "What's so great working with Ariane is she loves boldness; she's totally open."

The master bedroom suite is another marvel, fit for a pasha, mogul or maharaja. It incorporates a Mughal arch from Afghanistan as a headboard, along with a magnificent hand-carved wooden panel from Southern India, depicting an assortment of Hindu gods. (Ariane has a number of representations of everyone from Ganesh to Jesus throughout her home: "I've got all the deities covered. I'm not taking any chances; don't know what's out there.") Framed beautifully in tile is a two-way fireplace that warms the bedroom as well as the master bath, where yet another treasure resides: an exquisitely carved marble jali from India that serves as a lattice screen for the toilet.

Oh, there's more, trust us; we could go on. Ariane's home boasts a profusion of details, stories, colors, family history and cultural lore. There's the Quan Yin riding atop an elephant; the full outdoor kitchen; the television hidden behind a portrait of a white cow; the twinkling stars in the ceiling of a guest bedroom; the ancient front gate from Afghanistan.

As she says of herself: "Grandma's got cool stuff." And a lot of it.

And if super-purger Marie Kondo might have an issue with all that "stuff," it's possible Ariane could suggest she just go take a walk. ❖



Clockwise from top left: Ariane's coastal retreat has become a gathering place for her children and their families, including Hillary's dog Olive. • Extensive tilework, limestone and a copper range hood add to the kitchen's Old European feel. • An outdoor living room follows the home's eclectic, exotic themes. Facing page, clockwise from top: The great room features built-in niches for *objets d'art*. The cow painting by artist Cindy Austin rises to reveal a TV. • Double kitchen islands provide space for working and entertaining simultaneously. The red armoire is actually a refrigerator. • Cheryl softened the large living area by layering carpets on top of each other.