

The vacation home according to John Pawson

From the iconic Neuendorf House in Mallorca to two new villas in Ibiza. "Despite their generous dimensions, they are very integrated and connected to the landscape"

by Massimo De Conti | Images courtesy of John Pawson for Sabina

At the time of the interview, John Pawson has just returned from a long tour in Asia, which has touched South Korea, Japan and the Philippines, a tour of the numerous construction sites in progress of the residential projects that have made him famous. No holidays for the English designer, who, on the other hand, thinks of creating the ideal environment for those of the others with **two villas** , Can Adelfa and Can Almendro, **which will soon be built on the island of Ibiza** in the Balearics for the Sabina group (of Anton Bilton, Glyn Hirsch and Agustín del Pino).



The British designer John Pawson. Photo Marco Guastalla

Pawson is not new to the area: 30 years ago he designed one of his first masterpieces with Claudio Silvestrin just around the corner: **Villa Neuendorf on the island of Mallorca** , a holiday residence revisiting the Arab house, with the inauspicious reputation of being was the cause of the professional division of the two, in fact their latest co-signed project.

For this new project in Ibiza, Pawson has staged the usual **repertoire of essential forms, open and relaxed spaces , and a limited number of materials** , the hallmark of that style defined as **Minimalism** but which is actually the alchemy for the quintessence of 'elegance.

The ecological housing solutions, scattered around a 17-hectare park organized by the landscape designer Andrea Sanchez, will be inserted in a residential complex equipped with all the **luxury services** , consisting of about fifty villas designed by a group of international

architects which includes, among others, Sir David Chipperfield, Marcio Kogan and Manuel Aires Mateus.



Can you tell us how you accepted a choral project of this type?

When I visited the site they allowed me to choose a spectacular south-west facing spot to build, right at the point at the edge of the gorge with uninterrupted views, from which you can see nothing but the sea and the mountains. Very tempting, seductive. This is why I also convinced David Chipperfield to participate.

Almost a project between friends sharing the same language ...

Normally I would be a bit shy in doing something in which others are involved, but here I worked alone: I designed two villas, independent, not part of a sort of Frankenstein. The others have a unique project.

Two villas in the pure Pawson style or did you have to adapt it somehow?

They are very connected to the site, with low dry stone walls of rural origin, tall trees. I used pine wood, the typical white plaster walls, the local stone, very integrated despite the generous dimensions.

In fact you are a master of measurement, how did you reach it in this case?

I reduced the majesty: I didn't want them to look like palaces, I liked them to maintain a certain modesty and harmony from the outside; they are built with a view to responsible architecture and with attention to sustainability, responding to the requirements of the customer but also of the place.



Can Adelfa, one of the two villas designed by John Pawson for Sabina. Image courtesy of John Pawson for Sabina

Do you think we will one day be able to carry out completely sustainable projects?

I don't see how. Whatever is done, even in simple reuse, requires energy consumption. Recycling involves production. The interesting thing, as happened in my project in Treviso (Casa delle Bottere, built for a member of the Benetton family, 2006, ed), awarded for sustainability, is to design with zero impact, which moreover has the possibility of producing energy in excess to share.

In 1989 you designed Villa Neuendorf on the island of Mallorca. What are the differences between these two projects that are geographically close and 30 years apart?

I went back there for a week with my family and found the freshness that Claudio (Silvestrin) and I had created. We had put so much into that project or, rather, we had removed, reduced, making it as simple as possible. Each project becomes a reference for the next one.

And, after all these years, what are the differences in the architect?

No difference, I'm still childish. All the projects we carry out are team collaborations with the people I work with and I am inevitably influenced by them. Speaking seriously, over the years I have learned to listen more to customers, to other people, which I did not do before and in that sense I have matured.