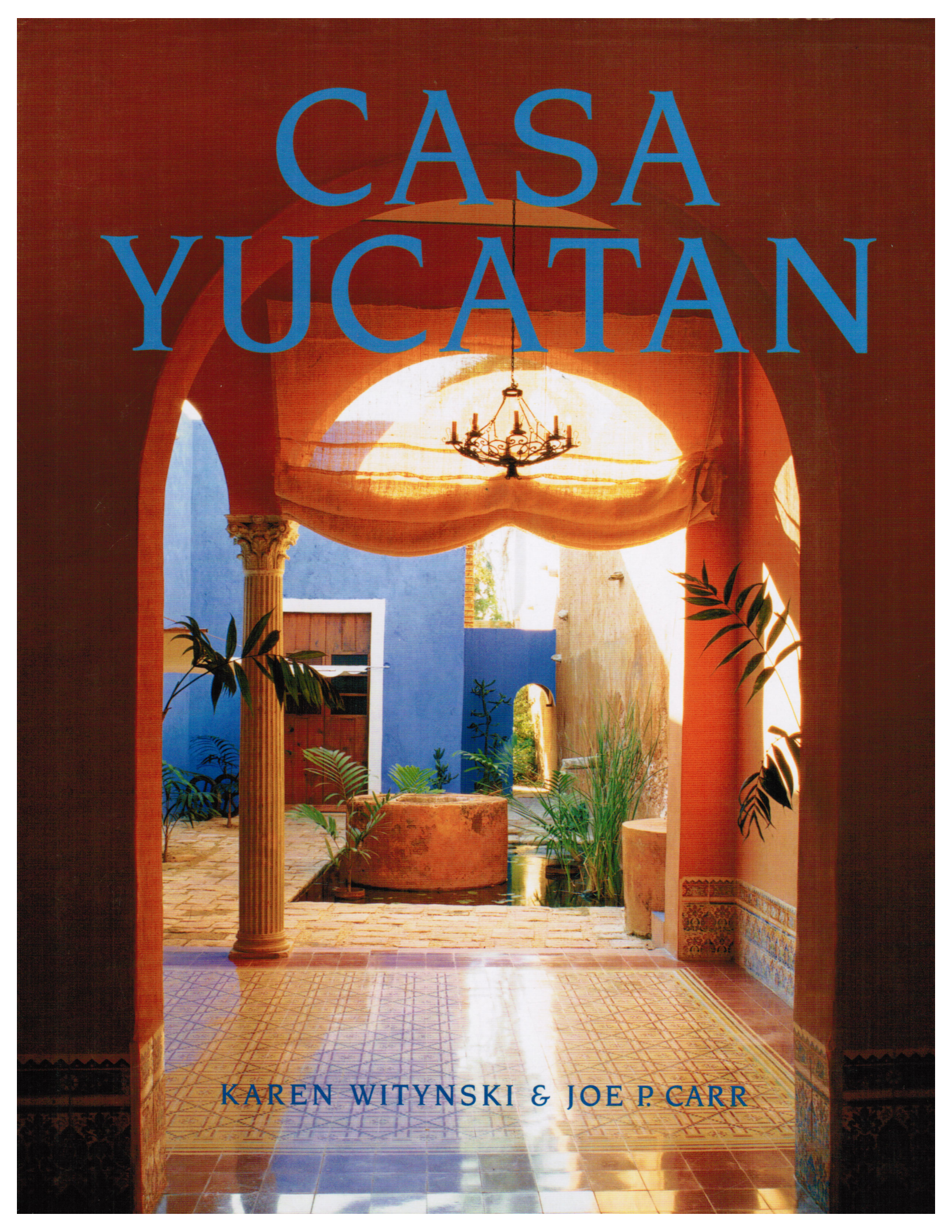


CASA YUCATAN

The image is the front cover of a book titled 'CASA YUCATAN'. The title is written in large, blue, serif capital letters at the top. Below the title is a photograph of a courtyard. The courtyard is viewed through a large, arched opening in a reddish-brown wall. Inside the courtyard, there is a large, circular, terracotta-colored stone structure, possibly a well or a large planter, surrounded by various tropical plants. A chandelier hangs from the ceiling of the courtyard. The floor is made of light-colored tiles with a geometric pattern. The overall atmosphere is warm and inviting, with strong sunlight creating shadows.

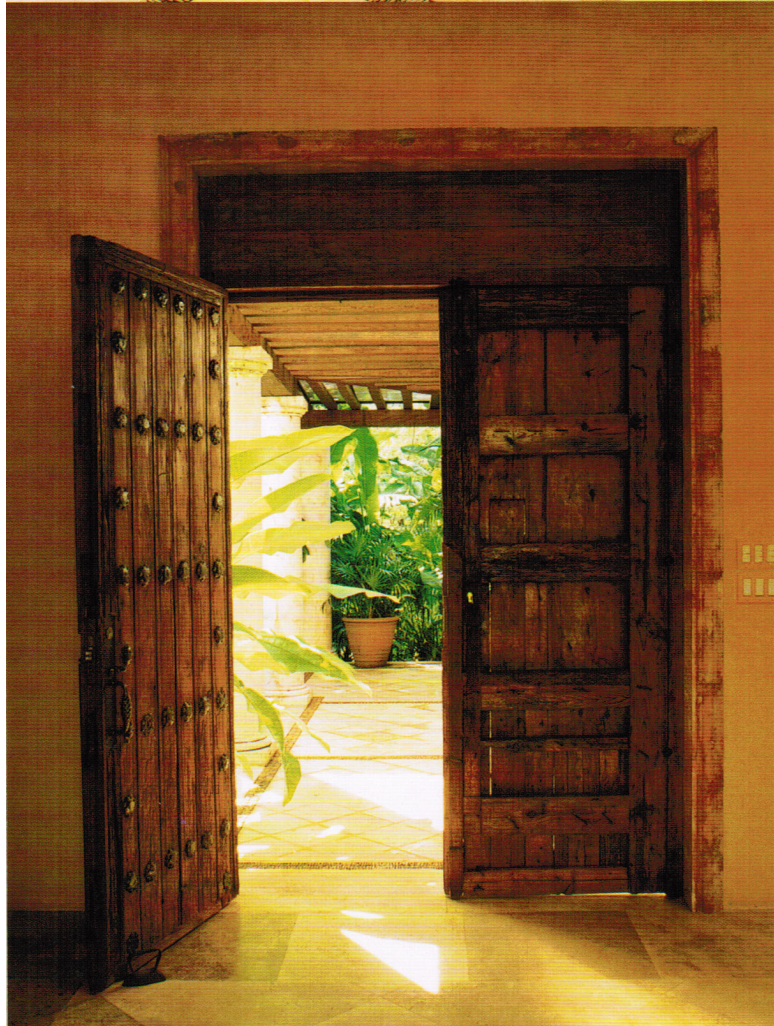
KAREN WITYNSKI & JOE P. CARR



architectural interest to the sixty-five-foot-long dining and living room is a masterful brick *bóveda* (vaulted) ceiling, crafted by artisans from the state of Jalisco. Its presence decorates the room with a rich feeling of Mexican craftsmanship.

Homes by Architect Alvaro Ponce

In the Mexican contemporary homes designed by architect Alvaro Ponce, the welcome is warm, and homage to Yucatán's natural materials and their infinite textures is visible and palpable throughout. Ponce combines timeless materials in new and inventive ways, infusing them with modern-day comfort and distinctive details to make each home unique. Finding inspiration in both Mexican Colonial and Balinese homes that focus on bringing nature inside through courtyards and interior water gardens, Ponce's signature designs focus on a true integration of architecture, furnishings and gardens. He adeptly hand-designs custom architectural elements, including doors, iron gates, light fixtures and carved-wood columns inspired by those seen in Antigua Guatemala. Ponce's influence also extends to gardens, pools and decorative outdoor elements, such as copper planters, stone water basins that echo colonial *pozos* (wells), and baptismal fonts, specially aged with earthen pigments to meld into the landscape.



In Hacienda Sodzil, Alvaro Ponce designed a residence to embrace the owners' love of nature, open-air living and entertaining. The 10,000-square-foot home faces inward to surround a spectacular contemporary pool, garden and *palapa* (a thatched-roof open-air structure). Visible from every room in the house, the sparkling, cobalt-blue pool is both water haven and sculpture. The modern design is an impressive feat of engineering and spans thirty-six feet. Reflecting into the long span of water are the massive geometric shapes from a Ticul-stone wall that progressively decrease in size in precise, smooth sections.

The elegant arcaded *portal* holds court as the heart of the home, incorporating both dining and living areas. The owners' favorite outdoor "room," the *portal* is anchored on both ends by textural garden spaces that glow with sunlight from above. Floors of *fiorito* (crosscut travertine) and hand-chinked walls blend contemporary polish with the colonial traditions of *rajueleado* (stone-chinked surfaces). Playing a large role in the lives of the home's owners, contemporary Mexican paintings and artworks line the rooms and corridors of the home. In addition to classic landscapes and modern sculpture, their collection also features an early Carlos Mérida painting, one of his few



Designed by Alvaro Ponce, this elegant home in Hacienda Sodzil features a colorful entrance that leads to an inviting courtyard lined with *macedonia* stone columns and lush, tropical plants.

OPPOSITE: This lush inner courtyard leads to the dramatic front doors of this contemporary home in Hacienda Sodzil.



Architect Alvaro Ponce created a graceful, open-air *portal* to enjoy lush garden and pool views. Residence in Hacienda Sodzil, interior design by Vivian Hedges, New York.







figuratives painted early, before he became known for his geometric abstracts.

Surrounded by fragrant mariposa and secluded off the master bedroom, the private porch is a favorite place of respite for the owners. Its shaded relaxing view looks onto the gardens and pool. Only steps away from the pool, the master bathroom provides easy access to it through a private garden courtyard. The master bedroom's elegant *bóveda* ceiling and subdued lighting create a refreshingly cool atmosphere. The high walls are accented by a hand-painted floral pattern inspired by fabrics found by the

owners. The decorative addition of hand-painted details throughout the home was prompted by one owner's memories of her grandmother's colonial Mérida home that featured decorative stencils.

The contemporary home Ponce designed for its owners in San Antonio Cucul is a masterful balance of artistic treasures, architectural details and soothing garden spaces. Setting the stage for the home's prodigious use of stone textures, iron accents and rich color pigments is its front entrance. Massive wooden doors are surrounded by an intricate replica of a colonial stone *marco* (door surround). Its ornate carving is juxtaposed

A spectacular pool designed by Alvaro Ponce is both water haven and sculpture in Hacienda Sodzil. The Ticul-stone geometric shapes are a masterful progression of precise, smooth sections.



This peaceful master bedroom in Hacienda Sodzil features a bóveda ceiling decorated with hand-painted floral designs.



Holding court beside a lush interior garden is an antique ivory horse. Residence in San Antonio Cucul designed by Alvaro Ponce.

with ocher stucco walls and iron window grilles, reflecting the home's Mexican craftsmanship.

The house's gracious entrance gallery holds court with the soothing sound and sparkle of a bubbling floor fountain that rises up amidst a cluster of stone spheres in varying shades of cream-white and rich deep orange. Overhead,



recessed lighting plays up the patterns in the impressive *bóveda*, which adds dimension to the art-filled entrance. Throughout the home, a vast art collection reveals the owners' fondness for Mexican contemporary paintings, sculpture and unique antique objects, including an ivory horse from India. Hand-painted designs by Humberto Hou also serve to decoratively accentuate the walls and doorways. Ponce's attention to designing with light and shadow is also a pleasing element in the three interior courtyards that dance with striped light throughout the day.

Honoring the influences of Mexican architect Luis Barragán, Ponce designed three Mérida homes—Casa Madina, Casa Sansores and Casa Maiz—that celebrate the bold use of color and the play of light and shadow. Each property features a multilevel layout, providing an open feeling to the house while allowing each room its own mood and "sensation" with the spatial separation of a few steps. In addition to floor-to-ceiling glass windows that flood corridors and rooms with natural light and garden views, skylights also play an important role in Ponce's homes. At Casa Madina, Ponce designed a dining room interior with a stepped wall of potted plants bathed in overhead natural light and bright pink paint. His fondness for bright colors was also employed



at Casa Sansores, where rich colors are splashed on focus walls and wall *nichos*. The outdoor spaces at Casa Maiz create a pleasing oasis for the family home: an inviting pool rests next to an adjacent open-air *palapa*, which features a hand-painted floor and nearby changing room with a garden shower open to the sky.

The entrance at Casa Sansores features a lily pond and Ticul ceramic pots. Designed by Alvaro Ponce.

OPPOSITE: Bold color is at home inside Casa Sansores with this brightly painted skylit room.



Carved-stone spheres beautifully anchor a floor fountain in this home by architect Alvaro Ponce.

OPPOSITE: The Ticul stone-tile wall by Alvaro Ponce provides a pleasing backdrop to this interior garden space.



"ink" pigment obtained from *tzalam* wood can be combined with white cement plaster to produce a color tone that harmonizes with surrounding elements. The pool at Hacienda Uayamón was treated with this tinted mortar to produce a light reddish-brown color that complements the *tzalam*-wood deck surrounding the pool.

Set amidst the dramatic backdrop of the estate's ancient stone walls, the plunge pools at Hacienda Itzincab and Hacienda Uayamón are also lined with red *chukum*. Situated only bare-foot steps away from the interior guest rooms, the pools are draped in private lush gardens of ginger and bamboo. The spout for the bath at Uayamón is fashioned from one of the estate's original *caños*, or stone channel pieces, that once carried water through the property's vast aqueduct system.

Designed and built by Francisco Faller, the colonial hacienda-style home shared by Faller and his wife Ann Walström de Faller is a tranquil haven that pays homage to the soothing sights and sounds of water, both inside and out. Anchored by a jade-green lily pond fed by stone aqueducts, the lush property is accented with water troughs and antique stone *pilas* that harbor exotic aquatic plants. One of Casa Faller's unique water features glows like a jewel in the

Architect Alvaro Ponce integrates indoor and outdoor spaces with garden-view showers.
OPPOSITE: A unique pool passage leads to an interior tub in the master bathroom at Casa Faller.

BELOW: Designed by Alvaro Ponce, this contemporary home features a *portal* with a unique courtyard.

OPPOSITE: An antique stone basin filled with water lettuce anchors this tranquil open-air space.



Yucatán's open-air spaces celebrate the region's relaxed lifestyle. Not just for socializing and dining, outdoor spaces provide for lounging or sleeping as well as cooking and bathing. Rooftop terraces and outdoor baths and pools are

considered vital to the Yucatán outdoor-living landscape. The soothing sound of water is also a common feature. Further description of many of these features is included in the Water Spaces and Coastal Homes chapters.





variety of local delicacies, including *tikin'xic* (fresh fish barbequed in *achiote* sauce), tropical fruit gelatos and *cocada* (coconut dessert).

Another coastal home that is a beautiful integration of surroundings and interior space is Casa Sak-Ik, designed by architect Alvaro Ponce. Taking its design cues from the Greek isles, this Mediterranean-style home features multiple balconies that welcome sea breezes into every corner. Ponce creatively integrated water and vegetation into daily living spaces to satisfy the owner's desire to coexist with nature.

collects in cisterns, part of a water system modeled after those used in many Greek-isle homes. With its deep-blue cushioned *bancos* that appear to stretch out to sea, the rooftop is a favorite for sunset gatherings and dinners.

Adjacent to the house is Casita Feliz, an open-air pavilion that looks out to the pool and sparkling sea beyond. A large hand-painted mural by Yucatán designer Carlos Millet anchors one wall and re-creates a tranquil beachfront scene. Comfortable chairs and a built-in sofa surround a large hardwood table used for casual dinners featuring a



Above, left: Designed by architect Alvaro Ponce, Casa Sak-Ik was inspired by Greek-isle homes.

Above, right: A natural seaside landscape leads to Casa Barlovento, designed by Alvaro Ponce.

In order to protect the beachfront's silvester fauna, the home was built with a raised construction and long pier to reach the beach. The swimming pool and its soothing waterfall, surrounded by shady pergolas and grass-thatched *palapas*, make it possible to enjoy the outdoors at any time. Inside, *conchuela* stone and rich tropical hardwood accents were used to harmonize the cool and warm surfaces.





The design of Casa La Madriguera reveals strong Maya influences, and features creative use of grass-thatched roofs and porches. Also designed by Alvaro Ponce, this beachfront home is anchored by a striking yet graceful floor, designed by combining dark and light *fiorito* (crosscut travertine) with seashells. Outside, Ponce created a spectacular optical fusion of pool and ocean, thus producing an endless visual extension of the property.

Designed by Alvaro Ponce, a grass-thatched *palapa* offers soothing sea views at Casa Barlovento.

OPPOSITE: A sisal hammock swings in the ocean breeze at Casa La Madriguera, designed by Alvaro Ponce.