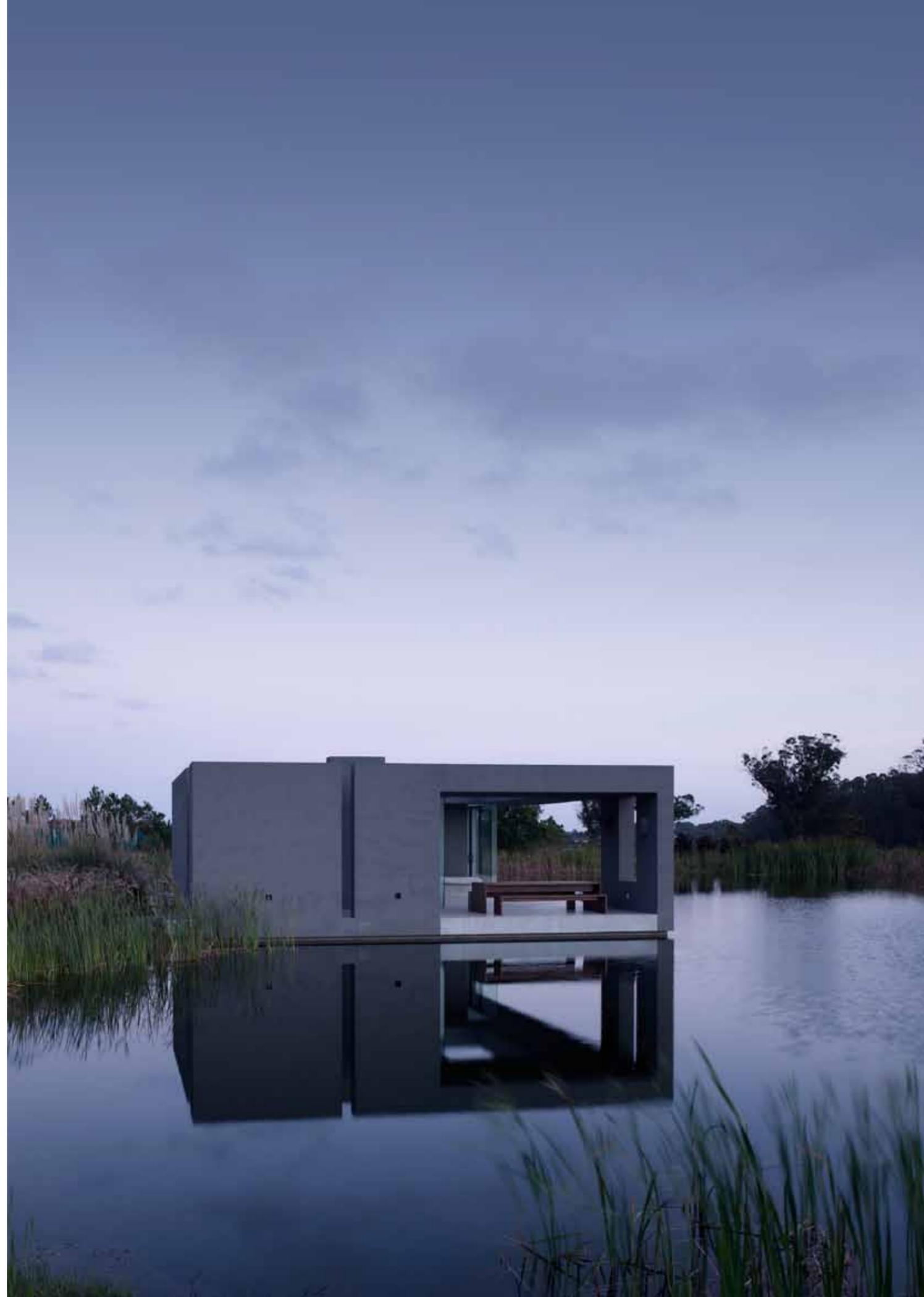


Modern Minimalism

Photos **DENNIS GILBERT** Words **JACQUIE MYBURGH CHEMALY**

Cape Town-born architect Stephania Kallos and her partner Abigail Turin designed these sculptural homes on an estate in Punta del Este in Uruguay to maximise the view as well as the ultimate indoor/outdoor lifestyle – and in the process have reinvented the classic housing development aesthetic.





Stephania Kallos may be Cape Town born and educated, but she's now a modernist design force known from the UK to the West Coast of the US. And it's the award-winning designs in the Uruguayan playground resort of Punta del Este pictured on these pages that are really going to put her and her partner Abigail Turin on the map.

The Kallos Turin signature is already unmistakable. There is nothing superfluous to the clean lines and lean simplicity that this London and San Francisco-based team of architects have made their own.

Stephania left South Africa in 1996 for what was supposedly a limited overseas stint in London after her studies... She now returns to our shores only for holidays.

She says she would love to design something in Cape Town but for the time being she's busy building the reputation of her transatlantic practice as well as completing the Uruguayan development that was last year applauded with one of the top architectural awards in the world, from the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Villalagos Estate, on the coast of Uruguay near the popular resort of Punta del Este (some call it the Plett of Uruguay, where Brazil's jet set come to play) has become a showcase for Kallos Turin's unique brand of turnkey architecture.

The duo offers the full range of design services, completing interiors and furniture designs upon request from their clients.

When Stephania and Abigail were developing an aesthetic for the Villalagos Estate, they determined that it should not resemble a golf course development where houses dotted the unique and often wild landscape.

The Estate developers are a UK-based group and so far five of the "chacras", or smallholdings, have homes on them.

The architects decided on a design language of bars, with each home a different combination of elongated shapes standing like sculptural works of art on the wild landscape.

"We were concerned about the natural beauty and used the landscape as our primary reference when we decided on something abstracted that would have minimal impact on the land."

The planes and forms have no reference to traditional houses but rather resemble conceptual artworks that are respectful of the bird life, lakes and landscapes where they reside.

Composed of three bars that slide past each other on the slope of the site, the uphill portion of Colibri house, pictured here, is a one-storey structure, becoming two storeys as the land drops away towards the south.

One of the chief focuses for all of the residences built so far was the creation of courtyards and outdoor spaces that would mean there was always somewhere to enjoy that most important part of the

Uruguayan lifestyle: the *parilla*, or braai. It's a tradition that certainly makes the South African braai seem dull in its simplicity.

The Uruguayan way is to create two grills with a cage between them where the wood (they only braai with wood here) is turned into coals that are then pushed under the grills according to the chef's requirements. The grills themselves operate on a pulley system that moves up and down.

"It's the focus of every house and we custom-built the *parillas* for all these homes," says Stephania.

One of the most striking features of Colibri house is its relation to the private lake and the floating pavilion that is undoubtedly the guesthouse dreams are made of. The house is clearly a reference to Stephania's most-loved building, Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion, but employing the Kallos Turin team's own brand of luxurious simplicity.

Stephania is a confirmed minimalist. Her greatest inspirations have been modern masters such as Mies van der Rohe and Adolf Loos. Her

first job in London was with true minimalist Claudio Silvestrin and she honed her interior architecture skills while working for the modernist David Chipperfield Architects when they were creating the Dolce et Gabbana stores around the world.

"It works for us to keep the material palettes simple and to show off those materials at their best," explains Stephania.

That said, the Kallos Turin duo have also found a way of introducing touches of whimsy to punctuate the simple lines of their minimalist designs. In Colibri, one of the first houses built at Villalagos, it is a surprising scalloped detail inspired by a hotel in Capri that breaks the straight lines on an outside wall.

So while their work is inspired by some of the greatest minimalists in the world, Kallos Turin are creating their own language of simplicity with a touch of soul. **V**

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THIS SPREAD, LEFT TO RIGHT After a treatment, you're invited to rest – even sleep – for as long as possible before going downstairs for tea. Both clients and therapists wear the same white Thai fishing pants and long tops with flip-flops; Garment bags in the reception area store clothing while clients are being massaged; Everything for the project was custom-made, from the linear furniture by Restorabilia, right down to the tea jars on the geometric Tea Tree.



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