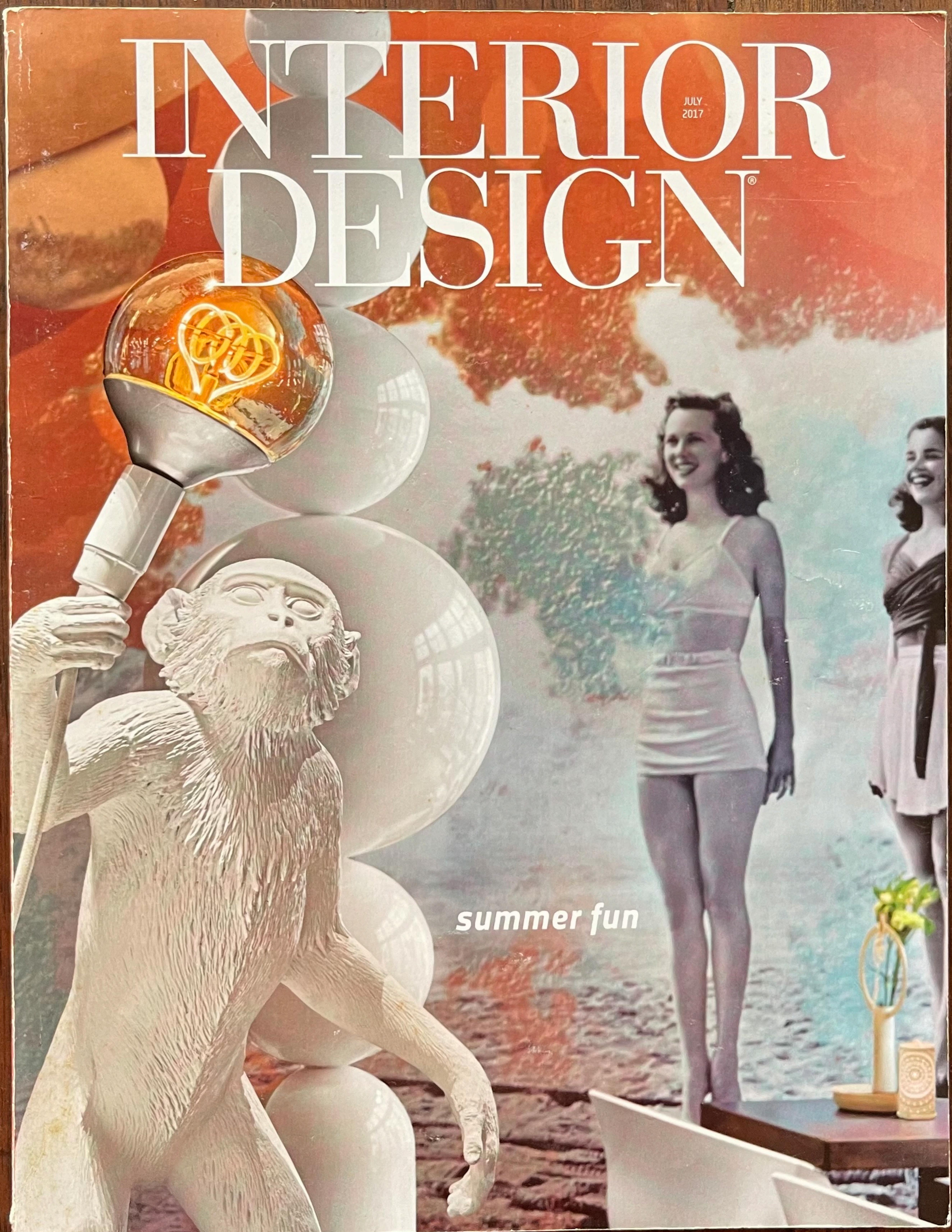


INTERIOR DESIGN®

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summer fun



rooms to breathe

At Terra Lodge, a Cape Verde hotel by

Ramos Castellano Architects, resourcefulness is in the air

text: c.c. sullivan
photography: sergio pirrone



Hotel designers often suffer from the mixed blessing of abundance. With so many furniture, fabric, and finish options available, the best practitioners must excel at exercising restraint, at editing and curating. This dilemma evaporates, however, in the sunshine of Cape Verde, a nation of volcanic islands 400 miles off West Africa. "It's a totally different logic on Cape Verde," Moreno Castellano says. "We lack materials and fabricators, so we lack freedom in some ways." You would never miss it.

A Sardinian who arrived 13 years ago, Castellano co-founded Ramos Castellano Architects with Eloisa Ramos, a Cape Verdean who had lived and worked on three continents before returning. Ramos



Previous spread: Terra Lodge, a hotel in Mindelo on the Cape Verde island of São Vicente, consists of five ground-up buildings by Ramos Castellano Architects on the grounds of a mansion from 1900.
Top: Panels made of African wood are hinged to open above windows or unglazed openings. **Center:** There are 11 standard guest rooms. **Bottom:** Custom tables and chairs in the breakfast room combine iron with wood reclaimed from old cable spools.
Opposite: The new buildings are predominantly lime-plastered concrete.



and Castellano have become known for hotel design notable for its colorful forms and elegant lines in addition to its pragmatism. "Every solution is carefully studied to use local resources as well as African artisans and technology, with a global vision," Ramos explains. The most adept moves fuse handcrafted and upcycled elements, at varied scales, to harmonize visually with the indigenous palette and textures—thereby supporting the architects' mission to buy and think local. They also have a flair for merging contemporary architecture with the natural landscape.

Reuse is essential to the innovative design of Terra Lodge, their hotel for another transplant, this time a Frenchman. Théo Lautrey first came to Cape Verde to lead mountain expeditions, then fell in love with its history and architectural heritage. ▶





"The architecture mimics the typical construction in the densely packed district"

Lautrey's preservationist bent and passion for sustainable tourism ingratiated him with the prominent Marques family in the port city of Mindelo on the island of São Vicente. When family members decided to sell a colonial mansion, dating to 1900 when the archipelago belonged to Portugal, they received several generous offers. "But they prioritized mine, even though it was lower, so they could sell to someone intending to preserve the neoclassical architecture, which is very beautiful," Lautrey says. Now refurbished and washed in a vibrant green, the mansion houses his travel agency, Nobai.

The plot behind the mansion was just big enough, with some creativity, to add a hotel, and that was the springboard for Terra Lodge. Ramos and Castellano's initial concept was to show how simple and easy it is to live the island life, perched on the side of one of the mountains ringing the port. There's a lovely view over the city to the Atlantic Ocean beyond, and the music scene has in recent years become as renowned as the stunning landscape.

Ramos and Castellano built five structures more or less side by side, rotated to maximize the view and ventilation, on a rocky ledge behind and adjacent to the mansion, appearing to emanate from the very earth. Guest accommodations—11 standard rooms including one that's wheelchair-accessible, plus a suite—are stacked inside the new buildings, along with reception and the breakfast room. Terraces occupy the roofs of the breakfast room and the mansion, the latter's interior offering two lounges as well. Between the side of the mansion and the property line, the architects inserted a lap pool.

As a good neighbor, the architecture mimics the typical construction in the densely packed district. "The structures are adapted to the morphology of the mountains," Ramos explains. White lime-plaster exteriors are fronted by gridded

wooden volumes that partially enclose private verandas, with some of the squares closed off by panels and other squares simply windowless open frames. When wood is not available on the islands, where material resources are scarce, it's usually imported from African countries such as Ghana and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as it was in this case. The sun-washed timber has a feel that's elemental and native. Meanwhile, the colorful painted iron panels of the front wall, screening the entry patio from the street, were recycled from oil barrels.

Guests are invited to participate in the eco-friendly approach. Taking advantage of cross ventilation, supplemented by ceiling fans rather than air conditioning, the hotel is comfortable year-round, thanks to Cape Verde's mild and dry climate, very rare for a tropical location.

Opposite: Guest accommodations have private verandas. **Top:** Doors open in the front wall, constructed with a steel frame and painted iron panels recycled from oil barrels. **Center:** With no air conditioning, ceiling fans cool the rooms. **Bottom:** Mahogany decking runs between the mansion and the lap pool.





Sustainability has a few cost-reducing benefits, too. The electricity bill, for instance, tops out at the equivalent of \$35 per month. Castellano adds that, despite taking a beating from the strong sun and salty winds, the unfinished wood tends to last longer.

The blend of found materials and rustic finishes, integrated with an elemental modernism, suggests an authentic and organic rebirth of an early 20th-century ideal. It's mixed with a uniquely African island way of showing how local materials and handmade furnishings can add up to a singular experience. According to Lautrey, Terra Lodge's made-in-Africa vibe draws a steady stream of European accents, especially outdoorsy trekkers from France, the U.K., and Scandinavia. One thing they won't find in their rooms? Televisions. ▶

PROJECT TEAM

ILÍDIO ALEXANDRE: STRUCTURAL ENGINEER. RICARDO MARTINS; JOSÉ NEVES: MEP. MESTRE PULU; RUI: WOODWORK. DUKA: GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

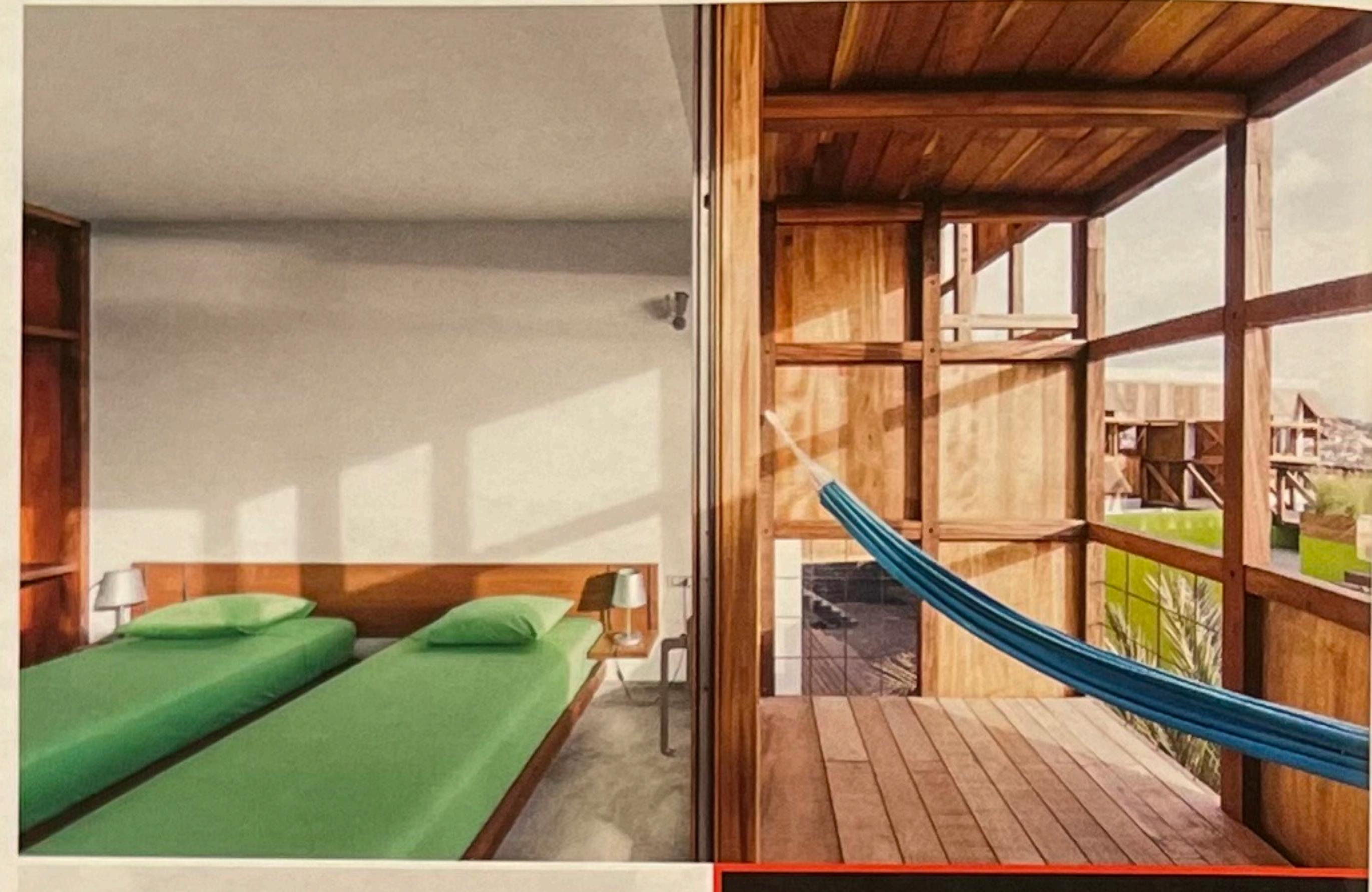
PRODUCT SOURCES

FROM FRONT PERENZ: FANS (GUEST ROOMS). IKEA: BEDDING. THROUGH HAMAC.FR: HAMMOCKS (VERANDAS). THROUGHOUT DANIEL CABANAS: CUSTOM FURNITURE. OFICINA LIZARDO: CUSTOM LAMPS, SCONCES, CEILING FIXTURES. OFICINA TI NENÉ: CUSTOM DOORS.

 [interiordesign.net/ramoscastellano17/](https://www.instagram.com/ramoscastellano17/)
for more images of the hotel



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Top: Cotton hammocks hang on the verandas.

Center: The bathrooms' shower enclosures and flooring are hand-polished concrete. Bottom: Above the entry patio, a footbridge links the roof terrace to guest quarters.

Opposite: A veranda faces Santo Antão, one of the nine other volcanic islands that make up the Cape Verde archipelago.



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