

THE SPORTING LIFE

A Tennis Pavilion With a '50s Vibe

A family gets an athletic retreat that is just this side of camp.

By STEPHEN WALLIS

Is it yellow? Or green? Wherever you come down in the great tennis ball color debate (for the record, the International Tennis Federation goes with “optic yellow”), the sulfurous shade is one that, according to Ghislaine Viñas, “only about three people in the world absolutely love.” You can count her as one.

“Nothing could be more thrilling for me than to actually have a perfect excuse to use that color,” said the South African-born, New York City-based interior designer, and intrepid colorist. Her “excuse” was a fanciful tennis pavilion she masterminded for a family’s summer home overlooking Lake Montauk, on the tip of Long Island.

The pavilion is the latest project Ms. Viñas has completed over the past two decades for Paige West and Christopher Cooper. Ms. West, founder of the now-closed Chelsea art gallery Mixed Greens, is the curator of the West Collection, which she has assembled with her father, Alfred West Jr., the chairman and chief executive of the financial services firm SEI. Mr. Cooper, her husband, is a founder of FanHero, a technology company that helps celebrities monetize their social media content.

The couple have three teenage sons, and they have tailored their Montauk home — working with Ms. Viñas and the architecture firm Arcologica — to be a stylishly low-key refuge for play and relaxation with plenty of guests. They even gave the house, which sleeps up to 24 people, a droll portmanteau name: the Floritauk Motel — a mash-up, coined by Ms. Viñas, of the home’s two primary aesthetic influences, Montauk and Florida. The latter looms large in Ms. West’s childhood memories, thanks to the many vacations she spent there with her family.

The idea behind Floritauk, she said, was to capture the carefree, toes-in-the-sand feeling the family associates with Montauk, while also channeling a vintage Florida vibe with tropical, beachy hues set against clean white backdrops. “It was all very fun and tongue-in-cheek,” the designer said.

After buying an adjacent empty lot a few years ago, Ms. West and Mr. Cooper decided to extend the narrative by using the land to build a tennis court and pavilion that they named — why not? — the Floritauk Tennis Club.

Local ordinances stipulated that, in order to put a tennis court on the property, they

had to build a structure on it as well. So they commissioned Arcologica and Ms. Viñas to create a 1,650-square-foot pavilion: a low white-brick building tucked against the slope and topped by a roof with a bocce court and sedum plantings to blend in with the surrounding vegetation.

That restraint, however, ends at the pavilion’s minimalist glass-and-steel French doors. Inside, Ms. Viñas took a very different approach to the spaces, which consist of a kitchen and bar, a lounge area with a television and Ping-Pong table, and a locker room. “We definitely went with the whole kitsch-retro vibe,” said the designer, who amped up the pattern and exuberant color, including, yes, that distinctive tennis ball hue.

In fact, Ms. Viñas gave it a starring role, upholstering the lounge’s 12-foot long banquette and a pair of rattan-framed poufs in an S. Harris fabric the company calls light green. Complementary shades abound, from the viridian tile bar with brass details and its tufted teal leather stools to a glossy Granny Smith-green credenza. A tropical trellis fabric by Christian Lacroix clads the two daybed-like sofas, which have a modern Saarinen table between them.

A clubby canvas awning, in bold black-and-white stripes with a shapely scallop edge, adds graphic flair above the banquette and wall where the Floritauk Tennis Club logo is playfully stenciled. Providing similar visual punch in the kitchen and bar area is a classic Florence Broadhurst bamboo lattice wallpaper that Ms. Viñas had “morphed up like it’s on steroids, 20 times bigger than it is usually,” she said.

“Those bright colors and the brass and the stripes and the bamboo trellis wallpaper — all of that was my childhood growing up,” said Ms. West. “It’s a very ’70s, ’80s color scheme that I remember from my grandmother’s beach house, and we just kind of ran with it.”

For the locker room, Ms. Viñas chose a chipper gold-and-white scheme, covering the walls in a canary yellow Bamboo and Birds paper by Bob Collins & Sons. She had custom tassels made for the lockers, whose nonconsecutive numbers correspond to family birthdays and other special dates.

In another winking nod to old-school country club culture, just outside the locker room Ms. Viñas installed a mock trophy case, with the artist Jonas Wood’s hand-painted tennis ball wallpaper as a whimsical backdrop. The glass cabinet is filled with



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vintage engraved chalices and platters, most acquired on eBay by Ms. West, who sought out only runner-up awards. “There’s not a winner in the bunch,” she said. “But there are some really great mixed-couples trophies and third-place cups.”

To round out the Floritauk story, Ms. Viñas’s husband, Jaime Viñas, a graphic designer, has created a collection of Floritauk-branded hats, T-shirts, sweatbands and bags, as well as stationery, postcards, trays and cocktail napkins. There’s even a bar menu, which lists special house cocktails like the Floritaukito, the Route 27 Sour, and the Esther, named after Esther Williams, a hero of Ms. West’s grandmother.

“When you go down to the tennis pavilion, you’re just kind of delighted and trans-

ported to another world,” Ms. Viñas said. “It’s all very theatrical.”

And for this active family, the pavilion was a major blessing during last year’s Covid-restricted summer. “It was the first year we really got full use of it, and with three teenage boys, we found that they were down there more than they were up at the house,” said Ms. West.

So what’s new for this summer? Ms. West said a bocce drinks menu is in the works, as are — at the request of one of the boys — Floritauk bucket hats to give away to what they hope will be more guests than a year ago.

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