

Behind the Keys



THE HISTORY, INSPIRATION, AND PEOPLE BEHIND OUR HIDDEN GEMS

Falkenberg Family Properties



Over the last two decades, Bob and Martha Falkenberg have turned two corners of the world into places for family and friends to gather - one on a stretch of Pacific coastline in Punta Mita, and the second on a bend in the Mara River in Kenya. The homes carry different names and sit on different continents, but the people behind them are the real story.

A MEETING OF TWO WORLDS

Bob Falkenberg grew up in a Kansas City suburb in a small family, with a tape measure and a level always within reach. His father led large, modern home-building projects, and Bob learned many skills from him before turning to a career in investment banking. The appreciation for clean-lined modern architecture and good workmanship, though, never left him.

Martha grew up in Guadalajara, Mexico, the youngest of seven children. Her father, although not a builder by trade, was very involved in constructing vacation homes for the family in diverse locations from lakes to mountains. These homes featured color,

texture, and vibrancy, reflecting a bustling family life that was anything but clean-lined and quiet.

The two met in Puerto Vallarta in 1990. Upon Martha's first visit to Bob's modern, minimalist home, she recalls: "I could not relax and enjoy myself. It felt cold! Like an operating room!" Bob remembers his first trip to Guadalajara just as vividly. He spent time with Martha's family, joining in at the neighborhood fiestas and reveling in the energy and novelty. He recalls, "I felt like I was leaving a black-and-white world and entering into full color!"

But opposites, as they say, attract, and the two married and settled in Northern California, where they first started to combine their shared, if opposite, aesthetics. The house they built was a stunning combination of clean lines and color, and it was to be the first of a legacy of beautiful homes.



The happy couple on their honeymoon

BUILDING A DREAM

In 2008, Bob decided he was ready to leave investment banking behind and retire. Almost immediately, the couple decided to look for another property to share with friends and family. The location they found lay at the tip of the Punta Mita peninsula, facing the Bay of Banderas. The home they set out to create would reflect not only their personal aesthetics but also geometry and organic earth materials using locally-sourced product.

They found the perfect team for their project in Manolo Mestre and Juan Collignon. Mestre brought a playfulness to the project and an eco-sensitivity in-tune with the native sensibility. Collignon's organized formality brought a balancing structure to the water-driven estate. Bob talks about the project in terms of geometry; Martha talks about falling in love with it.



Whimsical elements include this vintage surfboard bar, which extends through the wall.

Bob and Martha have always described their goal in simple terms: a home built for families, theirs and others. And while each visitor experiences Casa Majani differently, this intention comes through strongly in many ways, including the name itself, which is a combination of "Ma" from Martha, and "JaNi" from the couple's two children, Jacky and Nikki.

The care and warmth that runs through everything the Falkenberg family does extends naturally to Majani's full-time team who, in turn, welcome guests the same way; as family. It's why the guests so often feel, when they leave, like they are saying

goodbye to people they love, and not just a place that they vacationed. And it is also why so many find their way back to Majani.

ANOTHER HOME IN ANOTHER WORLD

Years after Casa Majani opened, the Falkenbergs' began another project. This time the adventurous family found themselves in Naretoi, a private estate on the northern edge of Kenya's Maasai Mara, within the Enonkishu Conservancy. It's here, on a bend of the Mara River, that the family built Jamani House.

The home was named once again using a combination of the family's names: the first 2 letters of their daughters names, Jacky and Nikki, and the first 2 letters of Martha's name appropriately snuggled between them. Unknowing



Wild animals have begun to return to the conservancy.

visitors might not notice many obvious similarities between Majani and Jamani, but the family-centric inspiration shines through the same.

Those with an eye for design may notice the choices made in Jamani echo those made in Punta Mita. One theme throughout both projects is the family's loose hold on the land, which they develop with intention, foresight, and a reliance on local knowledge. Enonkishu itself is a rewilding project - land that spent decades as intensive farmland, now handed back to the local pastoralists and to the wildlife that once roamed it. As visitors will experience, the conservation efforts are evident, with wild dogs, leopard, and even a resident pride of lions returning to the area.

The Falkenbergs involvement in the region doesn't stop at their little corner of the land on the river. In 2018, The family helped sponsor Maasai guide and community leader, Moses Nampaso, to represent his people and his conservancy in London. It was his first



Moses Nampaso

trip overseas, and the positive effects of his journey are still being felt. It's a small gesture, but a telling one: the same instinct that thoughtfully developed a stretch of Mexican coastline into a home for family and friends, shows up again, an ocean away, as an instinct to include the people who call that land home.

It is beautiful to note that Majani, translates as "leaves" and Jamani as an exclamation of wonderment, in the local dialect of Swahili. Whether that was intentional is a detail known only to the family, but it remains fitting.

A FAMILY, NOT A PORTFOLIO

The Falkenberg's story spans two continents, three countries, and three properties, and who knows what the future has in store. Whatever that may be, it can be assured that it

will be Bob who brings the structure, and Martha who brings the color and warmth. As Martha summarizes, “a home, wherever it’s built, exists so people can gather, relax, and enjoy being together.” This goal has been passed and surpassed through Casa Majani and Jamani House.



The Falkenbergs near Jamani in Kenya