

Wallpaper*

JUNE 2019

*THE STUFF THAT REFINES YOU

UK £10.00
US \$16.99
AUS \$16.99
CDN \$17.99
DKK 129.95
FR €14.50
DE €14.90
ITA €14.50
JPN ¥2000
SCP \$28.50
ES €14.00
CHF 18.90
AED 85.00



Higher order

Next-level design, fashion,
architecture and art

Travel & Transport Special plus... Virgil Abloh | Cindy Sherman + Catherine Opie | John Pawson
Diller Scofidio + Renfro | Hedi Slimane | Isaac Julien | Herzog & de Meuron | Eva Rothschild



Architecture

FLYING HOUSE, DESIGNED AS A HOLIDAY HOME FOR A DELHI FAMILY, FEATURES A V-SHAPED ROOF THAT MIMICS THE MOUNTAINOUS LANDSCAPE, WHILE THE INTERIOR IS SHADED BY PINE SHUTTERS (OPPOSITE)

The Indian city of Dharamshala is best known as the centre for Tibetan culture in the country – a place of pilgrimage, religion and spirituality – and for its famous patrons. The Dalai Lama’s official residence is here, and movie stars such as Richard Gere and Uma Thurman are said to be frequent visitors (such is the influence of celebrity there’s even talk of installing a Hollywood-style sign on the city’s hills). The surrounding rural district of Kangra is an area with significant natural charms, and its deep forests and high mountains were a key point of reference for New Delhi-based architect Martand Khosla, founding partner at Romi Khosla Design Studios (RKDM), who was tasked with designing a holiday house about 15km from the city.

Set between farmland and a lush forest on the Dhauladhar mountain ranges of the Himalayas, the site is in an area where other structures are few and far between. Khosla drew inspiration from the surroundings but, for him, context is not just about pretty views. ‘Context has to mean something much deeper, particularly now that our planet is moving in a certain direction. Context also means materiality, local skill and community. We wanted to impact positively the local economy and industry.’

With that in mind, he created a residence that feels modern but is rooted in traditional materials and techniques. Called Flying House, it has been built using local resources – stone, stabilised mud brick, slate and pine. ‘Even though it is a high-end, contemporary house, we were not looking for the obvious luxurious solutions,’ says Khosla. A lot of the earth and stone dug out from the site during the foundation excavation went back into the construction. Building site wastage was minimised and a lot was recycled, making this house quite literally of its place. Stabilised mud brick – one of the structure’s main components – is a relatively new method for building sustainably, and the architects decided to train local builders in its use. They organised

this in workshops for about ten people, which were led by skilled craftsmen from the plains, who also taught workers how to use equipment from Development Alternatives (a social enterprise for sustainable solutions in India) to make the bricks. This way, not only would the local stonemasons be able to build this particular house, but they would be able to master the craft and continue using it in the future.

The double roof that inspired the house’s name is inverted, ‘following a V shape and the direction of the landscape,’ says Khosla. ‘We wanted the house to open up to nature,’ he adds. This is achieved through the property’s form, and also the orientation. ‘We wanted to incorporate the views, as the house is high up a hill, and looking down you see the forest’s amazing emerald green.’ Large glazed openings make the structure feel light and transparent. The windows are protected by elegant pine shutters, which create an intricately articulated façade, as well as safeguarding privacy.

The client, a Delhi-based family of four looking for a weekend retreat, defined the programme, but apart from asking for great views, gave the architects carte blanche. Khosla placed more intimate and inward-looking private areas on the lower level (restricted in terms of views by the site’s sloped nature), while the upper level, which opens up to the landscape, is home to the main living spaces and some of the four bedrooms. Terraces wrap around several parts of the house. Interiors are simple, yet sharp, and materials range from plastered brick to hardwood.

Khosla conceived the house as a light pavilion, underlining the expansive views. At the same time, the stone and brick elements anchor the building to its site, both physically and conceptually. This is a house that is flowing and modern, but is also strongly contextual. ‘We were exploring our own version of modernist and what it means in this context, as well as in the context of contemporary Indian architecture within present society,’ reflects Khosla. ✪ rk-ds.com



Thrill station

A sustainably minded escape offers drama in Dharamshala

PHOTOGRAPHY: EDMUND SUMNER WRITER: ELLIE STATHAKI