



An open book

Modo Designs creates an ephemeral holiday home with dissolving boundaries on the outskirts of Ahmedabad

As one walks along the pathway on the expansive green grounds of this Ahmedabad home, the house reveals itself to those coming around the landscaped hillock. Spreading outward in a horizontal sprawl, this 3600 sq ft home makes use of the width of the plot. The two separate blocks, one hosting the living and dining and other social functions, the other housing the bedrooms and private spaces, engage in a rhythmic interplay with their alternating open and closed facades.

Intended as a weekend home, with an emphasis on hosting social functions, the house has been designed by Arpan Shah of Modo Designs. He says, "The essential brief was to design a resort-like open place. Keeping that in mind, the house is designed as two blocks separated by an open-to-sky space. The idea was to allow natural elements into the blocks and engage the users with these elements and thereby connect them to nature. It was intended that a sense of openness and flow of space prevail."

The material palette for the house echoed the closeness to nature. Shah chose to use Indian granite cladding on the external walls, as well as river-finished granite for the flooring in both the blocks of the house. For the interiors, Burma teak was widely used, the same wood that was used to create the large glass door panels of the living room. "By using natural materials, eliminating false ceilings in internal spaces and keeping RCC slabs exposed, we've give the house its intended informal nature," Shah says.

The front block, where the living and dining are situated, plays up the sense of openness. It is



These pages This holiday home in Ahmedabad is divided into two distinct blocks that bracket a swimming pool. The private spaces like the bedrooms are housed in the rear block and open out on to the pool area while the public spaces of the house are situated in the front block, where the entry to the home is located.



Above A lattice screen made from Burma teak complemented by a reflective pool creates a serene yet unobtrusive entrance court underneath the cantilevered verandah roof to welcome visitors.

designed as a pavilion, standing on steel columns with floor-to-ceiling glass windows to create the desired effect of the hall being open on four sides. "With the house being in a hot arid area, the glass doors and windows were given the buffer of entry foyer in the east, a 12' cantilevered verandah in the south and a wooden screen in the west to optimise heat gain," Shah continues.

The cantilever above the verandah is a dramatic feature that immediately strikes visitors who approach the entryway. "We imagined a floating space and didn't want any columns on the edge of

verandah, so we decided to have mild steel trusses which were then concealed in the inclined wood ceiling," says Shah.

Between the two blocks, a narrow open-to-sky space creates breathing space for the house. Planted ferns and greenery crowd up to the periphery of the living room's glass walls, fostering a close link with nature. Shah describes this subtle insertion as "allowing the user to sense the natural elements, the sun rays intercepting at certain times, the earthy element in the form of plants, the rains and fragments of sky."

Behind the front block, there is a noticeable variation in the expression of the house. The rear block is more stark and introverted in comparison to the floating aesthetic of the front block. It houses private bedroom spaces and the kitchen, which is concealed behind a blank wall, while the bedrooms open out on to the garden and pool area. "In contrast to the living room, the bedrooms use wooden doors and operable louvers to allow for privacy and also reduce heat gain," Shah points out.

These two blocks bracket the pool and garden. This has the double benefit of allowing for a great



view and connection to the outdoors, as well as creating a favourable microclimate to combat the arid conditions during summer.

The furniture inside, particularly in the living room, tempers the strong, straight lines of the architecture. A curvilinear couch creates a sinuous pattern that offsets the bold, deliberate form of the structure. Speaking about the furniture, Shah says, "The furniture was mostly assembled on site. All of it has been made in Burma teak with a natural *telpani* polish so that the interiors are a continuation of the architecture."

Top The cantilevered roof of the front block of the house was created to block the harsh afternoon sun. Instead of columns, Shah decided to support the cantilever by concealing steel trusses within the inclined wood ceiling.

Above The bedrooms in the rear block open out on to the pool deck, with views of the lawns and the front block to give the entire project a continuous visual thread.



Top right As the front block was intended as a gathering place for family functions, the architect chose to encase it on all four sides with glass windows. This allowed for views of the landscaped grounds from the living and dining areas while flooding the spaces with natural light.

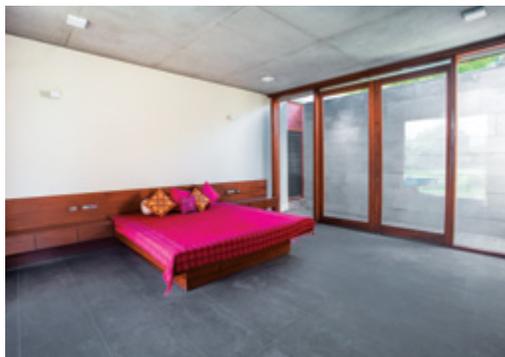
Right The front block contained the public spaces and was intended to function more as an outdoor pavilion than a room. Shah accordingly chose to have glass on all four sides, giving the roof a floating appearance while preventing heat gain using a cantilevered roof as well as a shield wall. The sinuous couch was chosen as its curvilinear form offset the rectilinear lines of the structure.

Taking the brief of creating an open and inviting place, Modo Designs came up with a project that seemed not only warm and welcoming to its inhabitants, but even embraced nature and its surroundings. "The project reinterprets the sense of the Indian traditional spaces which were weaved around open spaces. The materials used are earthy and dark, which also softens the strong natural light of this part. Our concerns also have to been to develop a more inclusive architecture that includes the elements of nature and which we have tried to address in this project too," sums up Shah. ■

Above The dining area is tucked into a corner of the front block. Rows of potted greens on the other side of the glass create an outdoor dining feel.



Above and right The bedrooms and bathroom were kept relatively simple. The idea of the home being a place for communal gathering in the public areas dictated the restrained approach.



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Interiors Saptak Patel
Cladding Pearl Granites
Flooring Jayantilal & Co., Pearl Granites
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Lighting Changi, ABBA Lighting Solutions
Bathroom fittings & accessories Kohler
Slate Tiles Jayantilal & Co.
Bed linen Fabindia
Outdoor lighting ABBA Lighting Solutions

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