

World
Architecture
Festival
Arena Berlin
16 - 18 November 2016

SHORTLISTED HOUSE ON THE ELEPHANT HILLS
DESIGN EL+D ARCHITECTURE + INTERIOR DESIGN



Why do you think this project was shortlisted?

The architectural scale and its layers coexist alongside the scale and layers formed by the topography. The architecture of the house leverages on the raw, vast expanse of green wilderness thereby reflecting the emotions in the use of extremely raw materials such as board formed concrete, exposed structural steel, corten steel, locally available wood and stones, both in external as well as interior applications.



Visuals: Courtesy EL+D Architecture + Interior Design

INSPIRATION

The first instinctive movement as you enter the site is to walk northwards towards the large mountains and valleys, faced by the vast expanse of the beautiful panorama. Adding to the excitement of this exploration was a natural spring water collection tank that was discovered in the middle of the site. The biggest source of inspiration was thus the sheer scale of natural topography set against the skies, and tea gardens layered along its gentle slopes. Projecting itself out of the topography while still maintaining an understated stand, the architecture had to do justice to the expanse of the wild and beautiful mountainous forests.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Located at the edge of a hill, amidst dense tea gardens and forests, the house is an ideal place to unwind in the arms of nature, among the wild life and its panoramic views unobstructed. The objective was to form a strong relationship between nature and the architecture, so as to blend the design into the rawness of the hills, and the structure to merge into the topography; to build a house that would reach out to nature and not stand up against it. Two volumes are layered one above the other to optimise their reach into the vastness - connected by a large central spine that is lined with concrete vertical slats, which define its approach into the indoor and outdoor spaces demarcated by

the programmatic division of the spaces. The junction at which the two blocks meet defines the access into the house and also introduces through its gateway, spectacular views that the structure beholds. Outdoor viewing decks situated below large overhangs blur the boundaries between interior and exterior spaces, strengthening the relationship between indoor and outdoor environments, as well as the architecture and its mountainous context. The architecture of the house leverages on the bare, vast expanse of green wilderness, thereby reflecting the emotions in the use of extreme raw materials such as board formed concrete, both in external as well as interior applications. Wooden louvers that serve as privacy screens permit protracted



views across forest greens, while adding a layer of warmth and softness to the sculpted concrete form. An indoor pool extends outdoors, the water reminiscent of the natural spring water tank prevalent on the site that is referenced to orient the project.

UNIQUE FEATURES

The central north-south axis hinging the blocks is the defining feature that not only connects the house with the existing road network but also to the other end, towards the northern cliffs. The axis was lined with a large, overpowering faceted wall that was broken down into smaller modules, which could be repeated to form an abstract composition. We experimented

with linear elements of various scales that would stand tall and yet be understated, to create solids and voids that reflect small segments of nature into an abstract composition. Thus, adding to the whole experience of walking in.

LIGHTING INTENT

Daylight is the essence of the design, and therefore played the biggest role in determining the exact orientation of the two volumes in order to optimise the quality of light based on the programmatic division of spaces. The lower block, which houses day time activities is oriented such that its large openings are in the east-west direction, while the upper block, which comprises mainly of bedrooms,

is oriented such that its large openings are in the north-south direction. A light box is captured in the junction where the two blocks meet, with indirect light and winds flooding in from both sides, creating an in-between space that blurs boundaries between interior and exterior environments.

The lighting scheme at night is designed to accentuate the sculpted forms of architecture and its natural habitat, without being overpowering - allowing for the quiet darkness of the forest to take centre-stage.