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TROPICAL MODERN

Striking but incredibly tranquil, this home in Kerala, India, combines contemporary architecture with local materials and traditional touches to stunning effect

Words JEREMY CALLAGHAN Photography GAELE LE BOULCAUT

Exterior The owner and architects agreed early on to use a lot of wood and water in the project to soften the expanses of concrete and stone ▶



Dining area The bespoke table is made from a solid 15-foot piece of timber on a polished cement base
Staircase The sculptural structure is made from concrete and clad in wood



Five years ago, British-born Mike Manwaring stood with renowned Indian architect Sandeep Khosla at the edge of a cliff in south-western India. Before them was a coastal panorama that became the starting point for this spectacular home. Mike had known Sandeep for 10 years and was drawn to the architect's experimental approach. 'I knew he would do something different,' he says. 'My key priorities were that the design had to be contemporary and open to the elements. I think when you're in an environment, you need to get used to it, rather than being separated from it.'

The result is a structure that lunges dramatically towards the horizon – a calm, flowing space that's unrestricted by walls and glass windows. 'I love its sense of spaciousness and Zen-like peace,' says Mike. 'India is a chaotic and frenetic place, but when I step inside the house I'm overcome with a very ethereal feeling.' Here, architect Sandeep Khosla talks us through the design process.

How would you describe the house? The architecture is a style that is often referred to as 'tropical modern', where the boundaries are blurred between inside and outside. We wanted to build a home that maintained a constant visual connection with its surroundings.

How was this put into practice? There are few walls and many large open spaces in this house, which allows the surrounding natural beauty to be ever-present. The lunging roof was always at the root of our original inspiration – we had a vision of a house that launches towards the horizon – but it's also a technical solution that serves to protect the interior from the elements.

Why did you decide to shun glazing in this project? Glass traps heat. Using it immediately requires the use of air-conditioning, which we felt to be against the principles of this design. When we went to the site there was a wonderful breeze, so we

developed a series of wooden shutters for the bedrooms, through which airflow and sunlight could be controlled.

What inspired the spectacular pool? They might have become a bit of a design cliché, but this plot was the perfect place for an infinity pool. It makes the house seem as if it's close to the sea, even though it's not. There's a 60-metre-high cliff that separates it from the shore, then a coconut grove some 600 metres wide, then a large beach. It's quite some distance by road to get there.

And the interior? Mike didn't want lots of precious objects. He wanted a natural, unfussy interior with a meditative feel, which we created using local materials such as wood and Kota stone. This minimalism also serves a practical purpose. If you're going to have a home that is open to the elements, you need to use simple, hardy furniture and materials that will wear well. ► khoslaassociates.com



'THE LUNGING ROOF WAS ALWAYS AT THE ROOT OF OUR ORIGINAL INSPIRATION – WE HAD A VISION OF A HOUSE THAT LAUNCHES TOWARDS THE HORIZON'

Exterior The long sloping concrete wall extends to more than eight meters high. An absence of glass in the entire house allows for an uninterrupted flow of seasonal breezes through the louvred timber shutters ▶



'INDIA IS A CHAOTIC AND FRENETIC PLACE, BUT WHEN I STEP INSIDE THE HOUSE I'M OVERCOME WITH A VERY ETHEREAL FEELING'


Hallway The floor is a mixture of polished and matt Kota stone, which has been laid out in a chequerboard pattern to add interest. The staircase emphasises the incline of the wall and helps to play with traditional senses of volume and space ▶

'THE ARCHITECTURE IS A STYLE THAT IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "TROPICAL MODERN", WHERE THE BOUNDARIES ARE BLURRED BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE'

Living area This expansive and relaxed seating area is furnished with hard-wearing materials that can handle the constant contact with the elements and will improve with age ▶

'THE DESIGN HAD TO BE OPEN TO THE ELEMENTS. WHEN YOU'RE IN AN ENVIRONMENT, YOU NEED TO GET USED TO IT, RATHER THAN BEING SEPARATED FROM IT'

Living area Not only does glass not feature in the structure, about half of this home is unconstrained by walls creating a constant dialogue with the environment ▶



'THIS PLOT WAS THE PERFECT PLACE FOR AN INFINITY POOL. IT MAKES THE HOUSE SEEM AS IF IT'S CLOSE TO THE SEA, EVEN THOUGH IT'S NOT'



Bedroom Each of the five sleeping zones has its own private bathing area, which is sheltered but open to the elements
Exterior 'I believe there is a secret desire in every architect to design an infinity pool at least once in his or her career,' says the architect, before adding, 'and this is ours' **LD**