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/ WORDS **MICHELE KOH MOROLLO**

BRUTALISM BY THE BEACH

Tapping into the simple and sturdy beauty of raw concrete and stone, this relaxing retreat makes the best of the sea view.

1

My An Pham Thi and Michael Charruault of Ho Chi Minh practice MM++ Architects have designed a holiday rental residence. It brings the strong and streamlined elements of Brutalism to a tropical, beachside context.

The 310m^2, two-floor residence was commissioned by a Vietnamese client looking to create a unique holiday rental property in the coastal resort city of Nha Trang in southern Vietnam.

His brief was simple: to enhance the experience of the Nha Trang sea views for his guests, and provide them with a home-away-from-home that is peaceful, serene and conducive to complete beachside relaxation.

A CONCRETE SOLUTION

After much thought, My An and Charruault decided that the smooth, strong and clean lines of Brutalism, warmed up with plenty of earthy, natural interior finishing, was the best way to meet their client's brief.

Inspired by the topography and context of the site, the 180-degree panoramic views of the bay it presents, the street-level entrance that is set on a higher plane than the

/ 1
A motorised, extendable glass box in the master bedroom can extrude from the facade so inhabitants can enjoy 180-degree sea views.

property, and the eclectic "organised chaos" of the other properties in this hilly part of the city, MM++ Architects designed a house of cast concrete, stone, solid teak wood timber and aluminium-frame windows.

Because the house would be built on a rocky and hilly plot, they decided on stone as the material that would best help the new house harmonise with its surrounding landscape.

They chose timber and basalt stone floors for the interiors to give the spaces a nature-inspired, holiday feel.

2

3

"The timber and basalt brings you out of the city instantly and puts the villa in direct connection with the natural, panoramic landscape," says Charruault.

"The intention of the Brutalist architectural language of exposed concrete and raw cut stone was to catch the light and shadows, and give the façade an intense visual texture."

The programme was designed to maximise the views and create an atmosphere that's ideal for large group holidays.

On the ground level is an open-plan living room with a snooker table, a dry and wet kitchen, a bathroom, an outdoor patio, a large pool and pockets of green garden spaces.

Between the living and kitchen, a spiral staircase ascends to the upper level where the entrance to the house, a single car garage and three bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms are located.

The bedrooms were designed with sliding timber panel doors, so the sleeping areas are flexible enough to be reconfigured according to the number of guests renting the property.

/ 2-3
The striated stone facade makes the house look as if it were carved from rock.

/ ABOVE
Floor-to-ceiling windows open to connect the interiors with the terrace, pool and the spectacular sea views.

/ ABOVE
A spiral staircase visually demarcates the living lounge and kitchen and dining area in the open plan, communal space.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

To make the most of the coastal scenery, the architects incorporated a motorised, extendable glass box in the master bedroom.

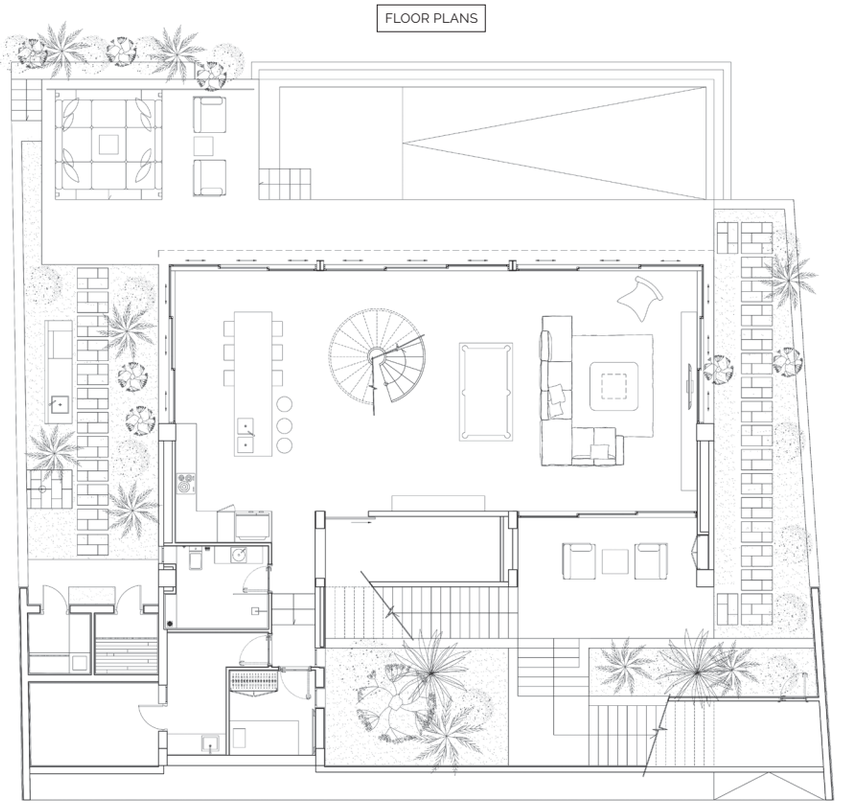
This box-like structure extrudes from the facade, extending beyond the internal floor area, so guests can be projected outwards beyond the exterior wall to enjoy 180-degree sea views.

"The idea was to create a special place for the master bedroom where the experience of the sea view panorama is at its best. Under the sky, the house doesn't exist anymore, there is only you, the ocean and the sky above your head," says My Ann.

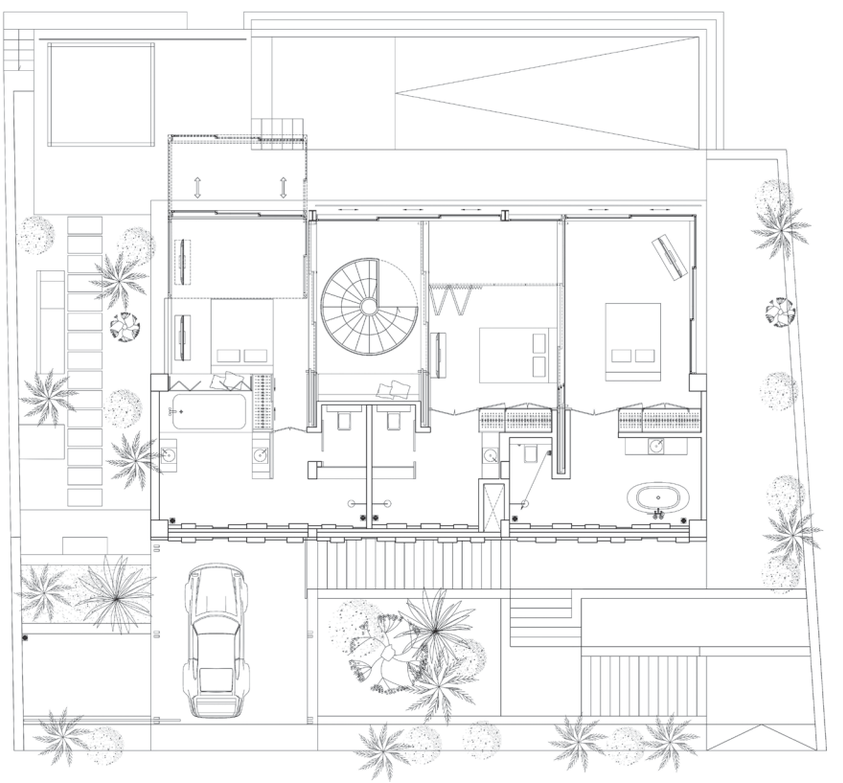
All the built-in systems and furniture were custom-designed by MM++ Architects to give the house a cozy, comfortable, but minimalist look that evokes the simple, calming atmosphere that their client had asked for.

Because of the complexities of some of the house's features, the architects faced a

FLOOR PLANS



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

4

STONE HOUSE

LOCATION ⁄ VIETNAM
COMPLETION ⁄ 2018
SITE AREA ⁄ 800M²
BUILDING AREA ⁄ 310M²
GROSS FLOOR AREA ⁄ 160M²
ARCHITECT ⁄ MM ++ ARCHITECTS
CONTRACTOR ⁄ MM ++ ARCHITECTS

5

6

/ 5
Two guest rooms become one large room when the walls are fully opened.

/ 6
The sliding timber panel doors allow for varied room configurations.

/ 7
The panel doors can be closed for increased privacy when needed.

/ 4
A white, spiral staircase with "floating" wooden treads connects the two floors.

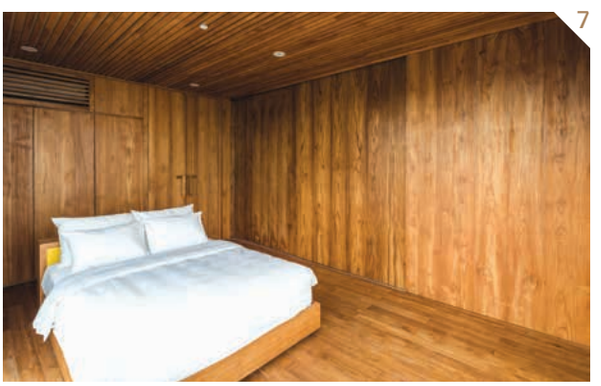
number of technical challenges during the construction process.

"The main structure does not have any columns, which might block the views. Though the cantilever is long, it only used two small, steel columns integrated in the frame window system to support it, so building the framework was quite an engineering feat.

"Creating the motorised system for the moving box in the master bedroom, installing the huge stone block walls, and integrating the timber panels for the railings were also challenges that we managed to work through successfully to achieve the results we wanted," says Charruault.

By layering a paired-back brutalist canvas with plenty of warm, natural materials and finishing, MM++ Architects has created a seaside oasis where concrete and stone work wonderfully together to highlight the beauty of the blue waters of the South China Sea.

7



Visit www.DesignAndArchitecture.com for more images of this project and a Q&A with the architect.