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issue 25

Orama Sydney  
Villa Além  
Roadside Stop

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# ORAMA

Orama Sydney

Smart Design  
Studio



This house addition is a fine example of how to successfully marry new architecture with old. >



North elevation



West elevation



> The work, involving the restoration of an 1866 Victorian house in Sydney's eastern suburbs and the addition of a new section, was carried out in two stages. In the first, architects Smart Design Studio, restored the historic dwelling to suit the changing needs of its owners. A series of labyrinthine accretions added over the building's life were demolished and the original house was restored sensitively, and minimally, to provide bedrooms, formal living and study spaces. Original features were revealed, a painted ceiling in the main living room was cleaned and restored. Walls were painted white, timber floors replaced and the rooms were adorned with works from the clients' extensive collection of Australian contemporary paintings and sculpture.

Stage two involved the addition of an informal living area and kitchen and a guest suite, plus new garaging for vehicles and a small pool. It is here that the architects showed true courage. A spectacular, double height concrete box was added to the rear of the house, at the same monumental scale of the original structure. And it is this addition that is outstanding. Constructed entirely of insitu concrete, 300mm deep, the new structure is an exercise in extreme minimalism. Walls, roof and ceilings are struck as one of insitu concrete. Tie holes, precisely positioned in formwork, are left exposed. Each concrete pour was meticulously inspected and signed off by the architects; the aim, to achieve concrete finishes of extreme purity. Walls rise spectacularly for almost six metres, a full width skylight washes the south face of the box with sunlight. To the north, six metre tall black steel-framed windows flood the space in natural light. A wall of glass to the south leads to a pool. The space is spare, save for a large painting on one wall and a small kitchen tucked into one end of the room. A black steel library is built into the concrete structure. There are echoes here of Tom Kundig's addition to a Seattle house. Dubbed "The Brain", the addition is a concrete box that provides complete flexibility to adapt the space at will. Inserted into the box is a steel mezzanine and library of black hot-rolled steel.

The transition between old and new in Sydney is via a black steel portal – a black steel box – which acts as a threshold between old and new structures. A single tree adorns the space between. A bridge link connects the two buildings at first floor level.

The house won a National Award at the AIA 2015 National Architecture Awards. The jury citation read, in part: "The jury was impressed by this monumental concrete and glass extension, which is a perfect contemporary companion to Orama, the stately Victorian villa of similar proportions that sits in front. The transitions from the old to the new are deftly handled to celebrate the new partnership of forms with framed views from one to the other. The junctions are seamless and preserve the qualities of enclosure in the original rooms. The resolution of detail throughout the project is consistently intricate, meticulous and at times breathtaking in its precision. Such execution is a credit to the close working relationship between builders and architects.

The grand proportions, mass and fine detail of the original villa reinterpreted in a bold and dramatic contemporary extension that celebrates the collective skills of the designers and builders in the same way the original house did in its day. The result is a balanced composition where old and new do not compete but speak equally of gracious contemporary living." **Joe Rollo**



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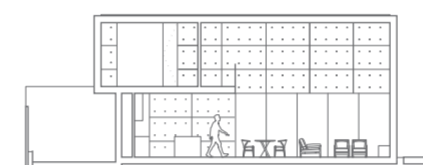
The resolution of detail throughout the project is consistently intricate, meticulous and at times breathtaking in its precision



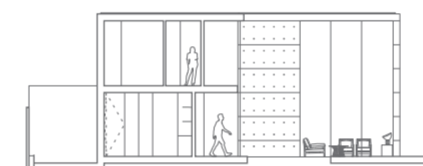
**Project Statement**

The transformation of 'Orama', a gracious Victorian villa in Sydney's Woollahra was an opportunity to enhance and expand the historic house to suit the changed needs of its owners. Built in two stages, the project addressed the original villa as a distinct entity, housing bedrooms, formal living and study spaces. Elements of the original house, such as fireplaces and early paint schemes, were retained. Other parts were updated. By contrast, the new addition was designed to be minimal in form and detail, with textured raw concrete extending from the walls out into the garden, punctuated by water (the pool), vegetation, lawn and pebbles. A striking double-height living room forms the nucleus of the extension. Six metre tall windows on the northern side flood the room with light, overcoming the limitations of the south-facing site. Upstairs, a guest bedroom and bathroom occupy a glass link between the old and new parts of the house. The new wing has been designed and built with the same intricacy, attention to detail and superb craftsmanship of the original villa, applied to modern methods of construction. The material palette of concrete, glass, dark steel and zinc beautifully complement the black and white scheme applied to the historic house. Separated by a century and a half, the two parts of 'Orama' stand as beautiful examples of the best construction standards of their day. **Smart Design Studio**

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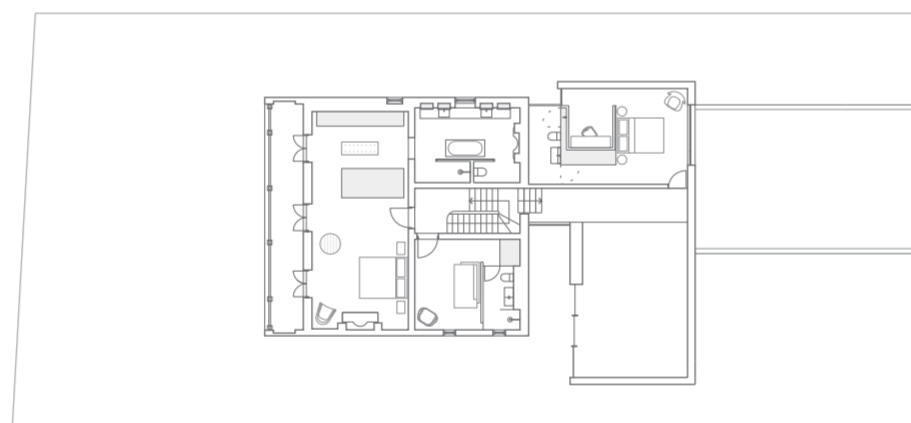
Section B



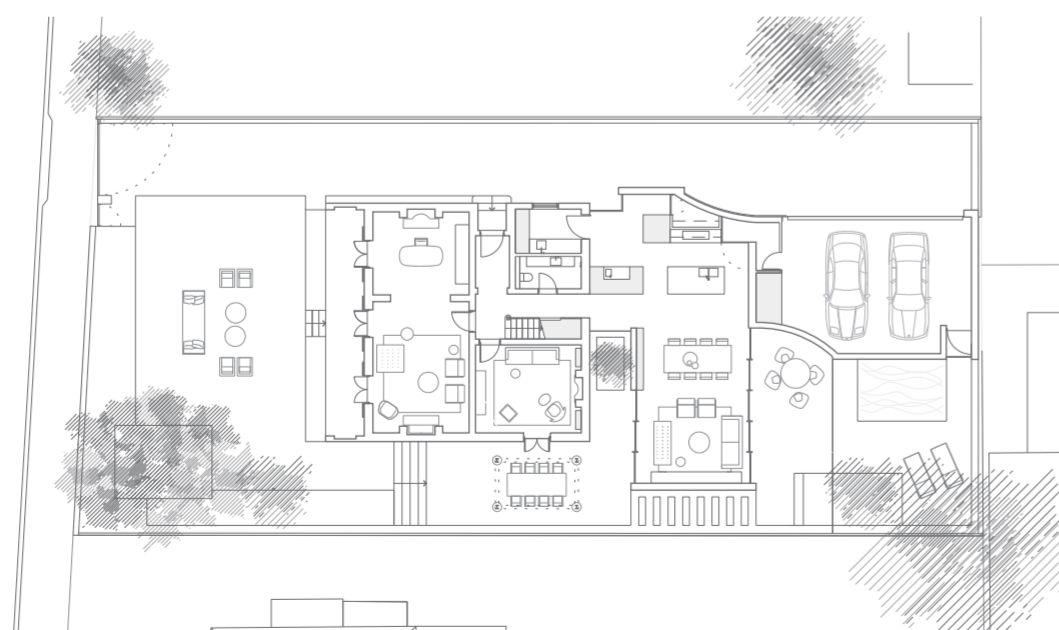
Section C



Section A



First floor



Ground floor



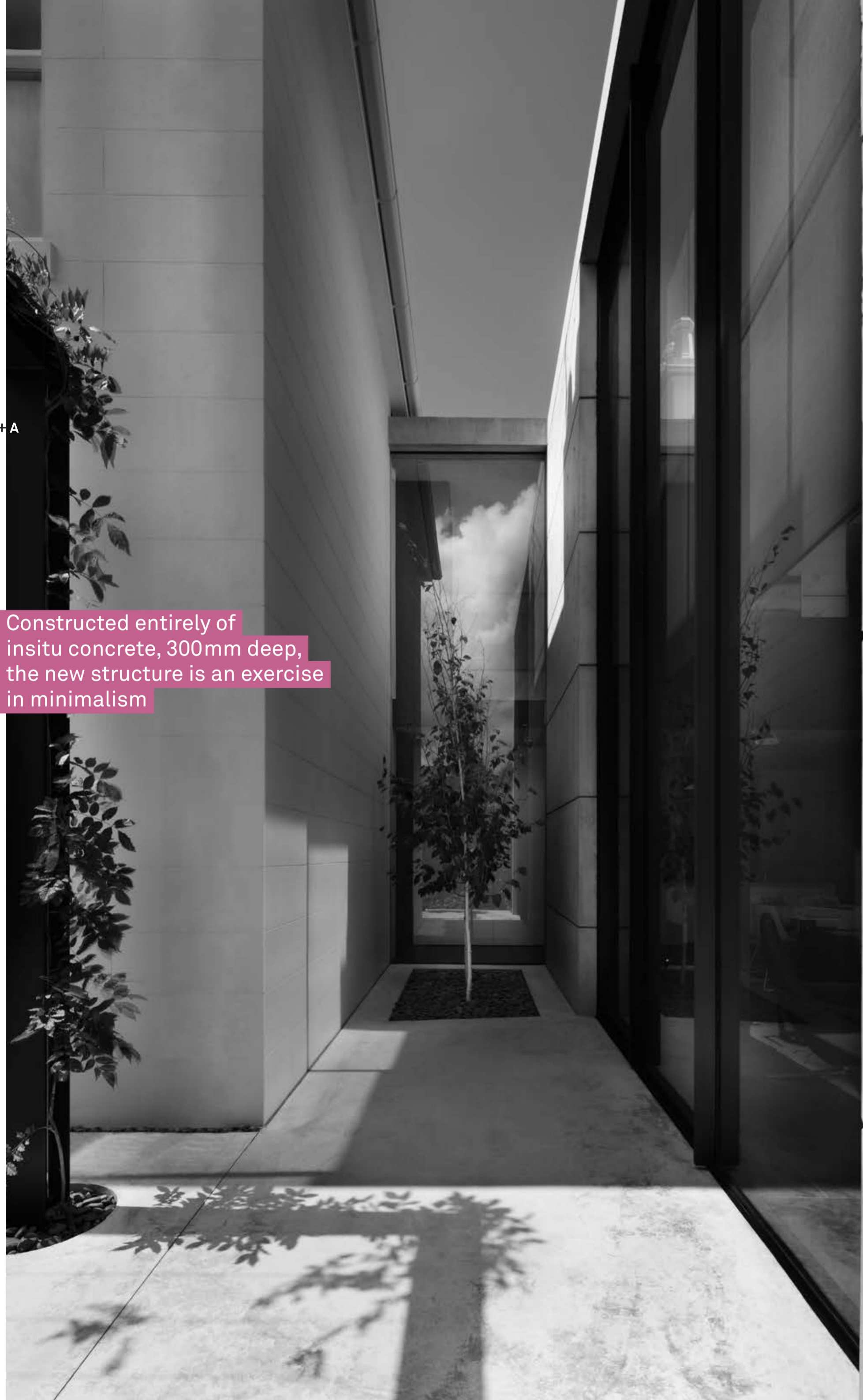
Walls, roof and ceilings are struck as one...the aim, to achieve concrete finishes of extreme purity



Project Orama Sydney  
Architects Smart design Studio  
Project Team William Smart,  
Lucy Bedbrook, Anita Panov  
Surveyor Geometra  
Structural Engineer Istruct  
Heritage Architect Tropman and Tropman  
Landscape Architect Will Dangar Design  
Planner GSA Planning  
Photography Sharrin Rees

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Constructed entirely of insitu concrete, 300mm deep, the new structure is an exercise in minimalism



# VILLA ALÉM

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Villa Além  
Alentejo Portugal  
Architect  
Valerio Olgiati

# ALÉM



If you've had the good fortune of visiting the Court of the Myrtles, Patio de los Arrayones, at the royal Moorish palace at the Alhambra in Granada, Spain, you will understand the inspiration for Swiss architect Valerio Olgiati's Villa Além in Portugal. ›

› Twice as long as it is wide, the majestic enclosed court and garden is set out as a series of parallel bands comprising a central pond framed to either side by paths and plantings of myrtle bushes. The long walls are sheer; the roofed colonnades at either end designed to provide the sultan and his court with areas from which to survey the garden, sheltered from the searing summer heat. Olgiati's take on this, in the remote and wildly beautiful Alentejo region of southern Portugal, retains much of the court's essential organisation – an imbalance of roofed and unroofed space – although on a smaller scale. It has been laid out on a north-south axis with only one roofed section at the northern end – the residential component – comprising just 20 percent of the building's overall area. Set near the crest of a hill within a forest of cork trees, all distinction between the building's covered and uncovered parts is concealed from the outside world. On approach, the only reading of the house and garden is one of inscrutability. All that can be seen is defined by a single material: a rough board-marked concrete of a ruddy colour, not unlike the colours of the earth from which it rises. The perimeter walls rise to not much more than head-height before the large flaps of concrete fold over, rather like an open cardboard box or, to use Olgiati's description, "like petals that open and close to the sky". The concrete flaps are there for shade, but also to create tension within the enclosure, the long axis of which is defined by a centrally located marble-lined pool – designed here for swimming rather than goldfish – flanked either side by plantings and trees which, in time, will take on a jungle-like density, framing the long view closely. The device of garden and wall lends the building a startling monumental character.





# W A T E R M A G A Z I N E



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Openings in three of the perimeter walls afford views to the wider landscape beyond the enclosure. The house inhabits the northern end on a single level. Struck entirely in board-marked insitu concrete, as of a single piece, the house comprises of a living zone, with an insitu concrete sofa from which the sitter can survey the framed scene outside. The effect is cinematic. Extending down the length of the pool, through the opening in the far wall and out to a range of mountains, the vista communicates a sense of your situation within multiple scales of enclosure.

A kitchen also opens out onto the courtyard, while an office is connected by a server to Olgiati's atelier in Flims, Switzerland, to enable Olgiati and his wife to remain and work in residence in Portugal for long periods. Here a single opening in the concrete, on the west elevation and well out of sight of the main approach, provides a view to the wider world outside. Each of these spaces is tweaked slightly: there's a peak in the roof of the office, while the back wall of the living room cant inward slightly, mimicking the folded concrete flaps on the perimeter walls outside.

There is a distinct sense of the processional in this project. The long journey required to reach the building for one, as does the use of the long courtyard as a transitional space between the exterior and the house proper. But it is in the elaborate labyrinthine internal planning that you find this impulse most pointedly inscribed. Great lengths have been taken to extend the distance travelled from room to room. For instance, the kitchen and studio are not linked directly with the living room, as you'd expect, but are linked to it by a brief tunnel-like passage.

The most northerly part of the house contains three bedrooms, and here the journey is most circuitous: each reached along a narrow 40 metre corridor, barely lit, providing a processional route around a hair-pin bend and continuing on until it ends at the west wall. As in earlier projects – Atelier Bardill in Scharans and an apartment block in Zug, both in Switzerland – oval openings in concrete slabs over tiny internal courtyards provide the only natural light into the bedrooms. The courtyards are entirely bare, save for the discs of brilliant sunlight that travel across them over the course of the day to mesmerising effect.

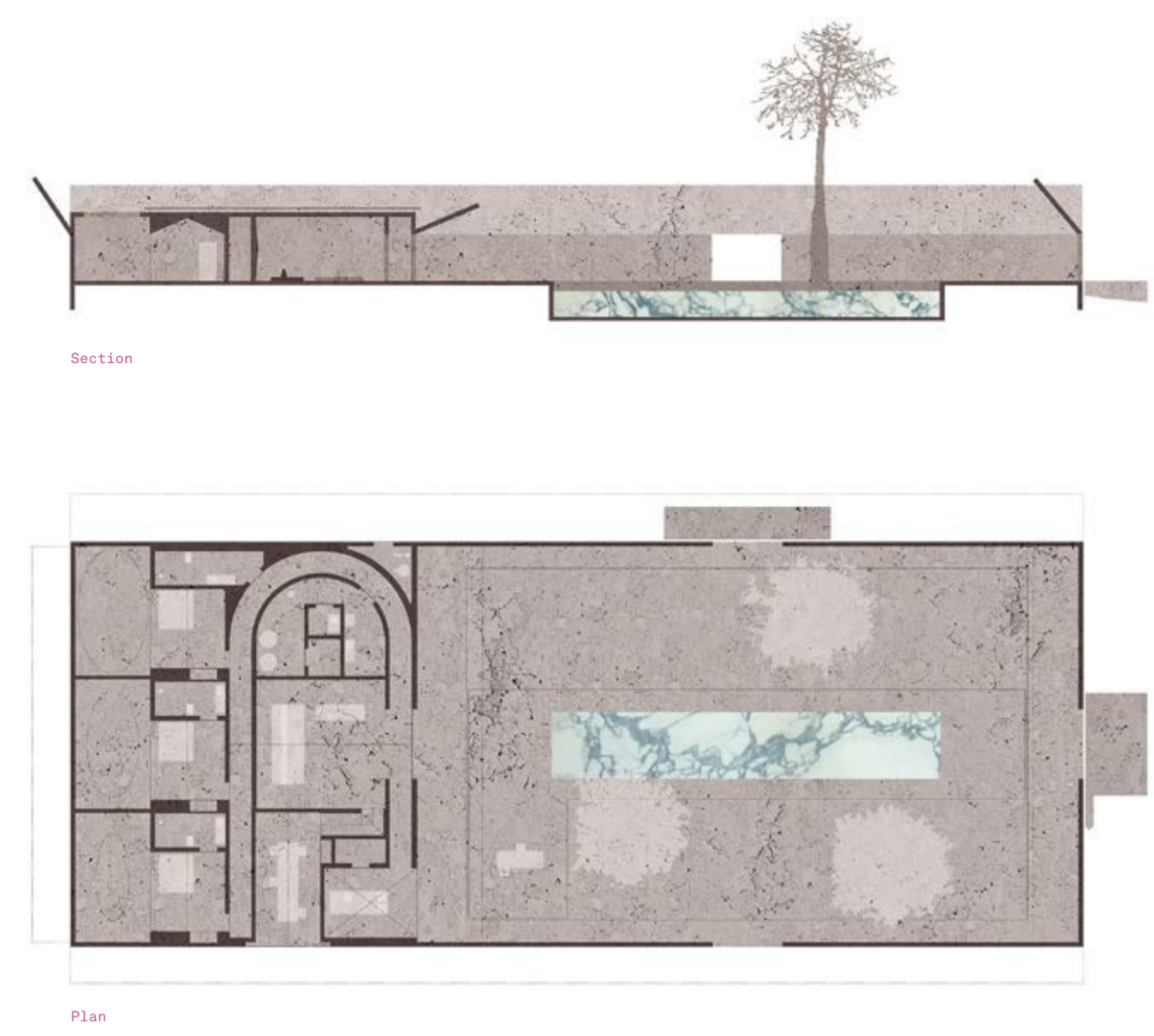
Joe Rollo

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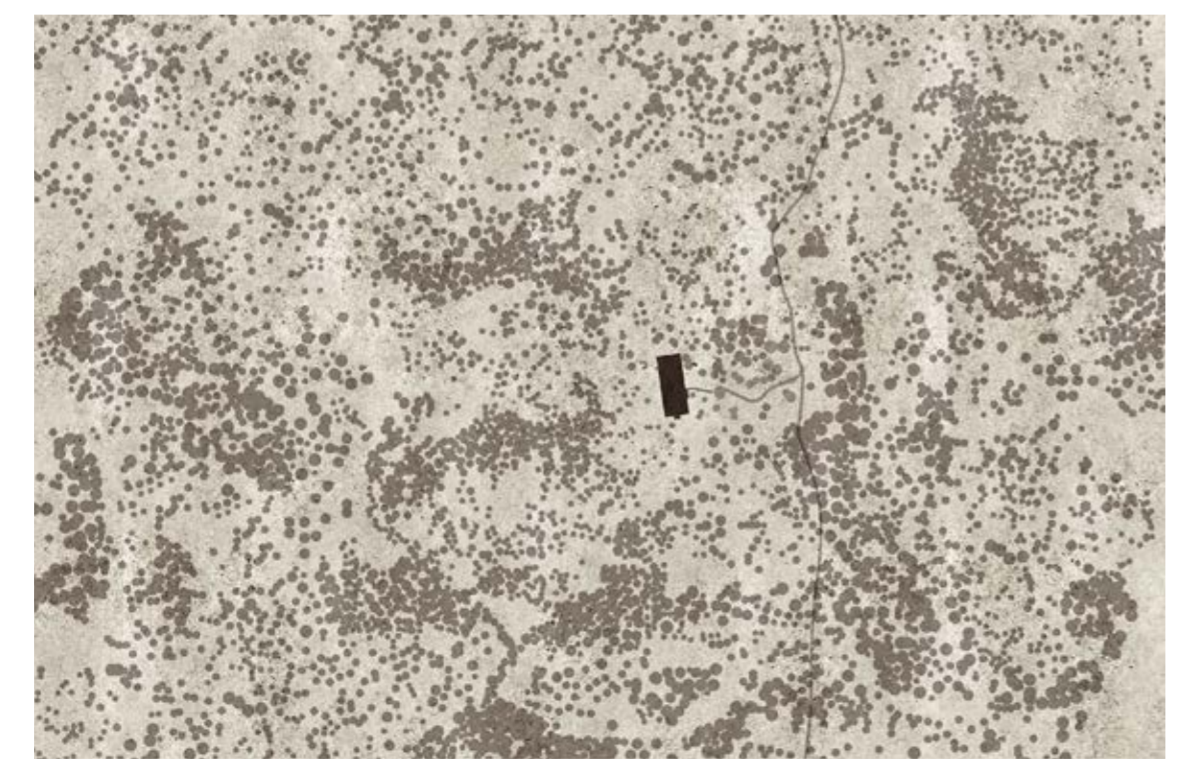
Defined by a single material: a rough board-marked concrete of ruddy colour, not unlike the colours of the earth from which it rises



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Perimeter walls rise to not much more than head height before the large flaps of concrete fold over, rather like an open cardboard box



Site plan



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All distinction between covered and uncovered parts are concealed from the outside world



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**Project Statement**

This project is located in Alentejo about 10 kilometres inland from the Atlantic Ocean. The area features a hilly, rural landscape and is covered with beautiful old cork oaks.

The climate is mild and dry. The primary intention here is to create a secluded garden. The surrounding walls are up to five and a half metres high to provide the necessary shade and the entire impression created is one of a desert; dry, stony and dusty. Everything is constructed from slightly reddish insitu concrete.

The character of the complex is chiefly defined by the surrounding walls, which create the impression of petals that close and open towards the sky. The dwelling itself is invisible and develops across a single floor behind the surrounding walls.

The living room is located at the end of a strict axis leading from north to south. It overlooks the pool and offers a view through the southern door in the garden wall across a flat and empty landscape. A curved hallway allows the inhabitants to retreat into shadows and into the introverted private rooms. **Valerio Olgiati**



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# VILLA ALÉM

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Project Villa Além  
Location Alentejo, Portugal  
Architect Valerio Olgiati  
Project Team Patrícia Da Silva (project manager),  
Daisuke Kokufada, Líviu Vasíu  
Contractor Matriz Sociedade de Construções Lda.  
Materials Insitu concrete, steel, marble  
Photography Archive Olgiati

# VILLA

Roadside Stop  
Norway  
Reiulf Ramstad  
Arkitekter

# ROADSIDE STOP

Havøysund National Tourist Route is a 66km stretch of road between Kokelv and Havøysund in Finnmark, northern Norway. >

> The landscape here, at 71 degrees north, changes quickly from coast to fjord to plateau and mountain. The arctic light, midnight sun and the northern lights can all be experienced along the route. Fishing, hunting and settlements in the area can be traced back 6,000 years. Remnants of turf huts used for processing whale oil, dating back to 100BC, can still be found in the area. It is along this stretch at Selvika, the only accessible beach along the road between Snefjord and Havøysund, that architect Reiulf Ramstad has designed a roadside stop and beach access ramp that invites visitors to wander into and through the stark landscape. Made entirely of cast insitu concrete, the sinuous meandering ramp from the roadway to the beach provides the framework from which to experience the nature and location of the area from different viewpoints. The walk ends at an open fireplace, outdoor kitchen and seating.

At the carpark, the project includes sheltered bicycle racks and an information point, as well as a small service building with toilet facilities. At the end of the ramp, on the beach, there is a fireplace, an outdoor kitchen, food preparation table and a grouping of seating benches.

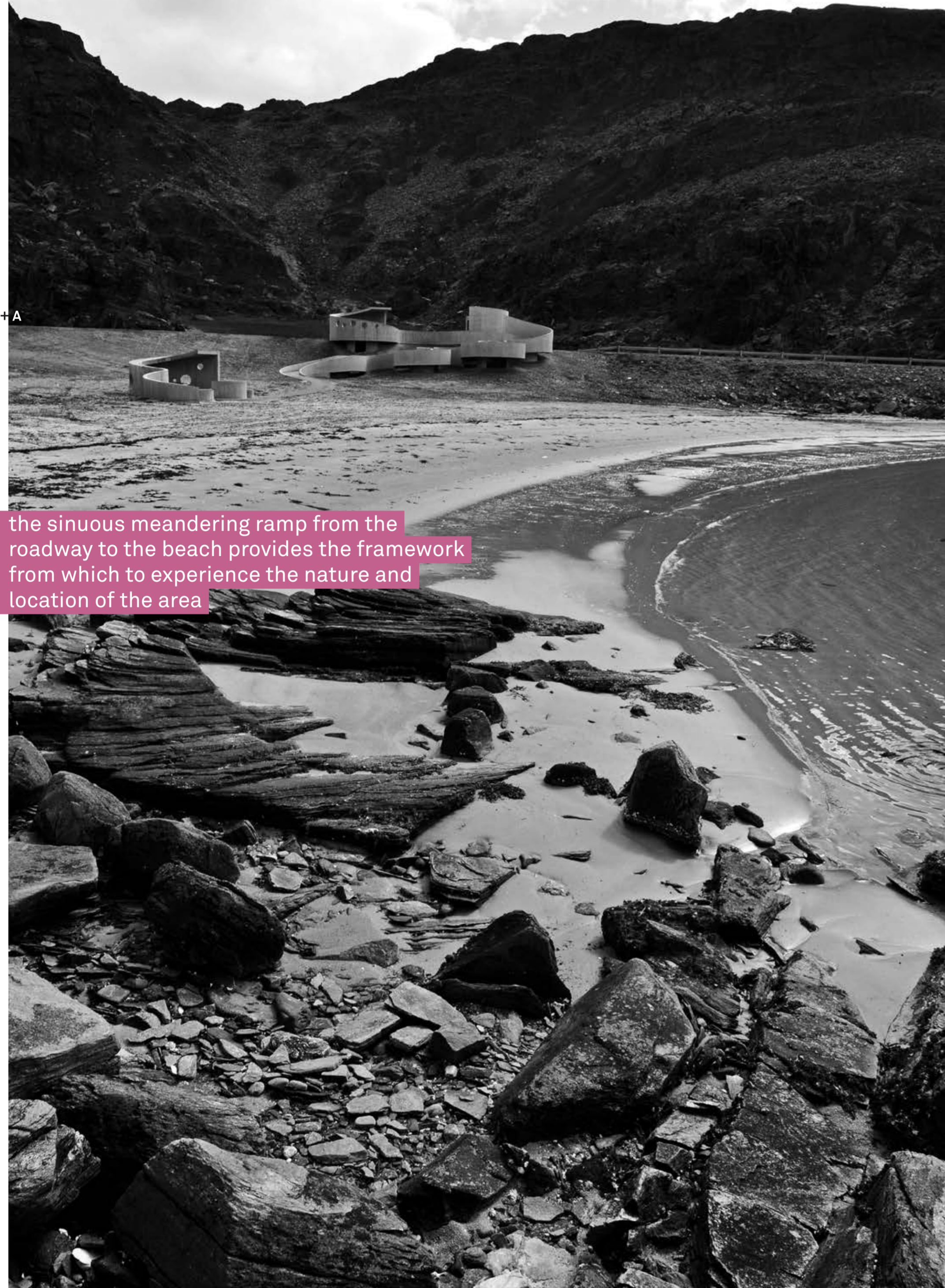
Based on studies of organic forms, seashells mainly, found in the area – a series of radii were connected to create the flowing sequence – the design was intended as a new architectural element in the powerful and wild landscape. Site surveys were carried out to ensure the completed project enhanced the experience of moving from the road to the beach. An important challenge was to slow the pace of movement along the ramp as a means of creating awareness of the surrounding landscape.

Instead of a more traditional stair and ramp solution usually adopted for universal accessibility the structure is, in essence, a singular ramp meandering through the terrain. Concrete was chosen as the primary material for its plasticity, as well as strength and ability to weather well in the harsh environment.

After considering conditions for casting the concrete, it was decided to use upright vertical timber formwork for all vertical surfaces – the concrete used locally sourced aggregates, with white pigments and titanium oxides – 35mm boards with trapezoidal profile were positioned accurately to minimize the gap between each board and make the flowing effect as dynamic as possible. Boards were chamfered in the inner curves for positioning edge to edge without gaps.

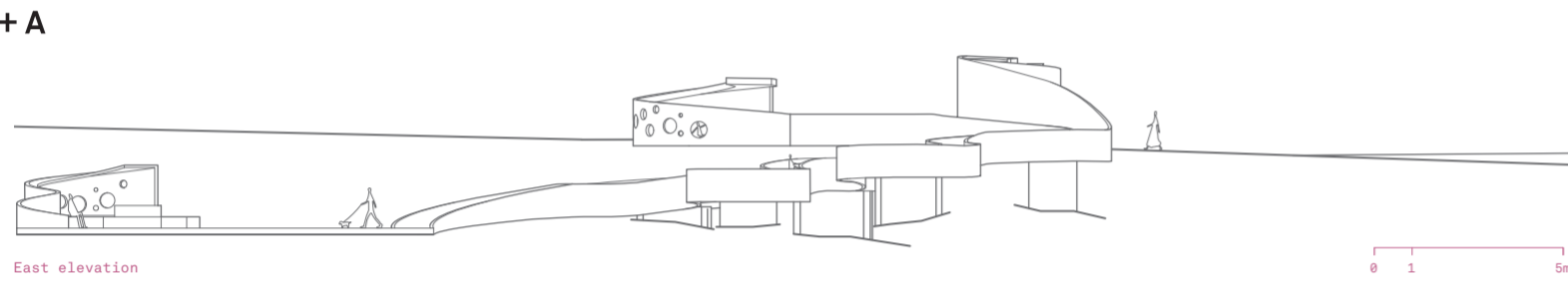
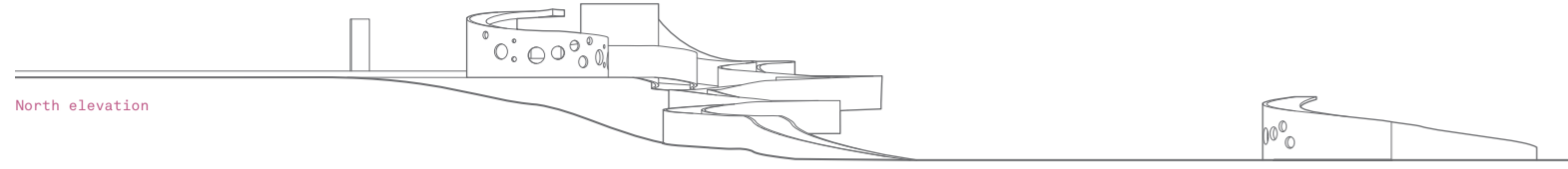
The outer curves and straight corners had boards placed edge to edge without chamfers. Before casting the concrete, the formwork was moisture-treated to avoid gaps. Tie holes were kept to a minimum, with each tie rod carefully located by the architect.

The walking surface of the pathway is finished in washed concrete, exposing the finer particles of the aggregate to make a tactile and slip resistant surface. The flooring of the toilet facilities is of polished concrete. Concrete seating and benches are lightly washed in order to achieve a softly textured surface. "The general notion was to create a human detail in the vastness of the landscape and to bring attention to the relationship between the duration of experiences and the hugeness of the spatial circumstance," Reiulf Ramstad says. "The main concern was to slow down movement and make the path a means of refocusing on the experience in a measured, restrained approach that creates awareness. **Joe Rollo**

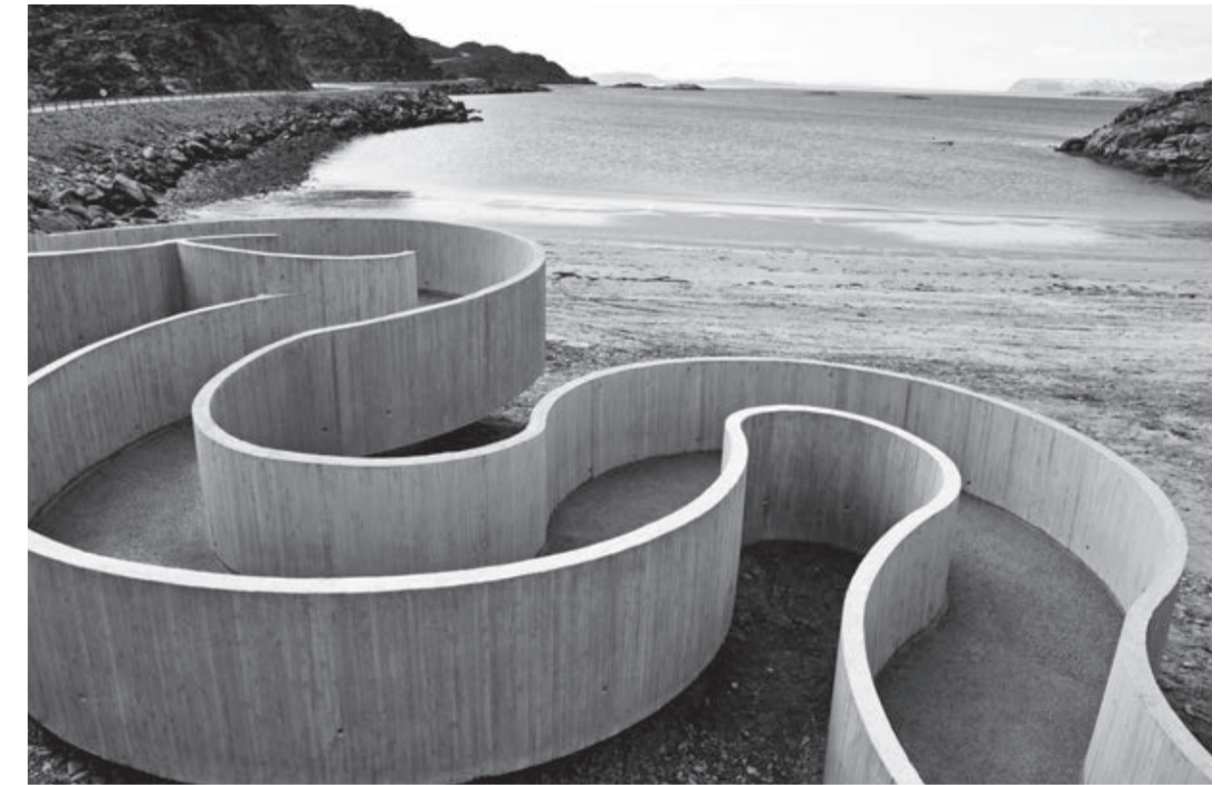


the sinuous meandering ramp from the roadway to the beach provides the framework from which to experience the nature and location of the area





based on studies of organic forms found in the area, the design is intended as a new architectural element in the powerful and wild landscape



**Project Statement**

The objective of this project is quite simply to single out and magnify the experience of walking from the roadside down to the seaside of this very special place. Therefore, a chief concern was to slow down this movement and make the path itself a means of refocusing the experiential mode: a measured, restrained approach that creates awareness. The primary functional concern was universal accessibility. Instead of opting for a dual solution with staircase and ramp, we came up with the notion of making the ramp the common entryway and developing it into the integral character of the project. Because of the site's slope, the ramp needed to be very long, which also serves to create reductive motion. The winding river of the path prolongs the approach and in so doing opens up new perspectives and experiences for the visitor. Located in the extreme north of Norway, in a landscape almost lunar in its barren and inhospitable beauty, the facility should ideally be completely self-sustainable in terms of power input and waste output. The general notion was to create a human detail amidst the vastness of the landscape that is as timeless as the landscape itself and that brings attention to the relationship between the duration of experiences and the hugeness of the spatial circumstance. Reulf Ramstad Arkitekt



Project Slevika National Tourist Route  
Location Havøysund, Norway  
Architect Reiulf Ramstad Arkitekter  
Client Norwegian Public Road Administration  
Photography Reiulf Ramstad Arkitekter

a singular ramp meandering through the landscape...concrete was chosen for its plasticity and its ability to weather well in the harsh environment





# REARVIEW

The Phæno Science Centre in Wolfsburg Germany is remarkable for more than Zaha Hadid's radical take on her notions of what a science museum should look like.

For here, in Germany's car city, the woman whom Rem Koolhaas once described as "a planet in her own inimitable orbit...it will be impossible for her to have a conventional career", made real architectural ideas that previously could only be guessed at through her wild and fanciful paintings.

After a string of early works – among them a fire station, a tram terminus, a ski jump and a small museum, and the 2004 Pritzker Prize for Architecture, she delivered the goods with this, her first major mature building.

Rising on the site of a former carpark, Phæno is unlike anything else in this industrial city. And while it sits at the endpoint of a chain of important buildings by Alvar Aalto, Hans Scharoun and Peter Schweger it is distinctly a twenty first century building.

Propped on ten giant cones of steel reinforced concrete eight metres above an open public space, the distorted three-sided concrete box looks wild and alien. Six of the cones support the box, while the other four pierce the floorplate to sustain the complex swooping steel framework supporting the roof. Slung over the interior's column-free landscape, this massive grid structure stands in stark contrast to the fluid simplicity of the museum's concrete floors and walls. The cones also serve to house functional spaces like a bookstore, a conference room, a 250-seat theatre and the museum entrance inside the largest of them. Unstable by themselves, the cones are locked in place by the weight of the distorted concrete box they support

"The Phæno is the most ambitious and complete statement of our quest for complex and dynamic fluid spaces," Hadid said at the time.

"The visitor is faced with a degree of complexity and strangeness, ruled by a very specific system based on an unusual volumetric structural logic."

Whatever you make of Hadid's architectural gymnastics, Phæno is also remarkable as a showcase for the plastic possibilities of concrete and the application of new technologies to make the probably unlikely possible.

The new technology came in the form of self-compacting concrete in which chemical additives were introduced into the concrete mix, significantly increasing its workability without any resultant loss in strength.

Photograph: Helene Binet

Zaha Hadid, October 31, 1950 – March 31, 2016

The Phæno Science Centre was published in C+A Issue 4, 2006

