

DESIGN TODAY

November 2013 ₹100

SPACES ETCETERA

ON COVER
Balancing Barn at Suffolk, UK
See page 106



IN FOCUS

Spaces & Materials

CONTRIBUTING ARCHITECTS: Vinod Kumar, Vinu Daniel, Chitra K Vishwanath, Amardeep Singh, Rajeev Kathpalia, Mohak Patel, Hiren Patel, Sonali Rastogi & Vistasp Bhagwagar

PROJECTS BY: Chitra K Vishwanath, Bengaluru; ΔA, Bengaluru; Synthesis Design Workplace, Kolhapur; Benny Kuriakose, Chennai; A-Cero, Spain; Simone Mantovani, Brazil; MVRDV, The Netherlands; Mole Architects, UK

INDIA TODAY GROUP



Concrete Ideas

Spreading horizontally to contain the large floor area of a single-family home, Concrete House II by Spanish architecture studio A-Cero, located on the outskirts of Madrid, is a sustainably designed home gracefully proportioned to human scale



The compact scale of the building featuring large windows and the surrounding landscaped vegetation, combine to give the home a very warm and inviting presence





Perhaps because of its association with the Modernist Movement, and the subsequent Brutalist architecture it spawned, concrete is normally associated with being cold and impersonal—a material that may work for government buildings and shopping centres but not for private residences. When the movement towards sustainability gained momentum, concrete was further maligned for the high embodied energy involved in its production.

Spanish architecture studio A-Cero decided to remedy this mistaken impression about the material when designing Concrete House II, a private residence constructed entirely in concrete and yet warm and intimate in character. The architects also introduced many sustainable design concepts to make the

building an example of living light on the planet.

Even though the spread of the building at 1,600sq m is quite large, the building volume is confined to a single storey, thereby retaining a human scale. Located on the outskirts of Madrid on a 5,000sq m plot, the single-family home at first

The home at first glance seems almost hidden between concrete walls and inclined vegetable patches that extend all the way to the roof





An angled hood, cabinetry arranged on leaning planes and quirky angles animates the kitchen which also features a large breakfast counter. Zinc, white and grey predominate in the colour palette and all parts of the home are flooded with natural light through large windows





glance seems almost hidden between concrete walls and inclined vegetable patches that extend all the way to the roof. The dark grey and lustrous texture of the concrete walls is achieved using an anthracite coating and setting against the lush foliage ramps that appear to ascend towards the sky.

Punctuated along the walls are large openings that further melt down the solidity of the concrete facade. This, along with the scale of the structure and the angular geometries softened by the vegetation allows the home to take on a very human face. Landscaping plays a significant part in creating this effect with verdant lawns, young trees and water elements including a pond and a fountain combining to handsomely complement the built expression of the structure.

The compact scale of the building does not however eschew a sense of grandeur that one senses when entering the home, largely attained by the luxurious interior scheme. Designed as an open plan layout, the home features a sprawling contemporary living room which affords sumptuous views of

the exterior gardens and is delineated partially from the dining room by a wall with openings cut into it. The large kitchen includes cabinetry arranged on leaning planes that give it a distinctly futuristic vibe. The rear facade of the house which contains the lounge, dining room, library, study and bedrooms permits unimpeded views towards the garden. The wide windows are recessed into the structure, creating porches under the concrete projections outside. Several of these outdoor rooms can be found throughout the home.

Ecological aspects are given considerable attention in the design. Xeriscaping, which involves using plants that require very less water to grow, is implemented along the building's facade and roof, aiding also in the passive cooling of the structure. Furthermore, the house's roof includes a renewable energy system made of wide surfaces with solar thermal collectors that allow for the energy autonomy of the house. Sitting snugly within the landscape the home is exemplary in the way it uses concrete to fashion an inviting and sustainable home.