

W I N D O W T O T H E W O R L D

The outermost fringes of the planet inspire us to seek out the extraordinary things in life. For today's architects too the edges of the world represent an opportunity to explore

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PHOTOGRAPHY: FERNANDO GUERRA

Studio MK27's Jungle House was built to connect its visitors with the surrounding jungle as an organic extension of the wilderness. Still, there is nothing basic about the house with its sleek design, wooden decking and even a luxurious rooftop pool



"THE PIONEER SPIRIT BURNS BRIGHTLY IN ALL OF US"

Constantly riding that fine line on the frontier of discovery isn't just a Land Rover driver's dream. Many people want to expand their horizons and push the boundaries of imagination, delving deeper into the underground to connect with nature and escaping the everyday. The pioneer spirit burns brightly in all of us, whether we're explorers, tourists looking for a temporary escape, or simply individuals looking to immerse ourselves in luxury living while at the very ends of the inhabited earth.

Rows of uniform residential houses just aren't enough for some people; the sense of adventure sits too strongly rooted in their souls to be happy with a standard home. So contemporary architects and interior designers have been put to work, commissioned to build stunning homes that combine supreme luxury with a sense of

all-encompassing wanderlust and connect humans with nature, just as we once lived, open to the elements and under the stars. Some of the most stunning and inspiring of these homes can be found on the ends of the earth, providing a window between our lived world, and the vast expanses of our planet that are still untouched and unspoiled by humankind.

São Paulo-based Studio MK27's Jungle House is one of these spaces that exist at the edge of the planet. Tucked under the awesome green canopies of Brazil's Atlantic rainforest, it marks the frontier between man-made and nature, combining the two in harmony.

Built by the architects Marcio Kogan and Samanta Cafardo, with interior design by Diana Radomysler, the sleek concrete building rests on a wooden decking that echoes the forest floor. Kogan describes the house as "an organic interaction between nature and architectural elements, designed to quite literally project itself out from the mountain". →



“SECOND HOMES ARE ABOUT ADVENTURE. THEY ARE THE HOMES THAT LEAVE THE MOST INDELIBLE MEMORIES”

Above: Built to bring out the very best of the surrounding northwest American vistas, Olson Kundig Architects' Studhorse Outlook emanates understated luxury. A key feature of this elegant residential complex are the floor-to-ceiling windows that double as natural cinema screens

Embedding itself in its surroundings, the property oozes refined luxury with a rooftop terrace that allows the inhabitants to see over the trees and shrubs that surround them, stone staircases that wind their way around corners and edges, and even an illuminated artwork built directly into the house's frame by Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson.

Giving a window onto the world that's not normally seen from houses is what makes these homes unique: the ability to live like a frontiersman on the very fringes of nature, seeing all its glory before you is what attracts people to buy these.

An angular, wood-and-glass construction called Studhorse Outlook, perched on the edge of the North Cascades in Washington state provides that portal into nature. Designed by Tom Kundig of Olson Kundig Architects for a family for whom nature runs wild in their hearts, this exclusive complex of buildings in the middle of 20 acres of wildflower scrubland sits in the Methow Valley, a popular recreation destination in the north-western most corner of the state of Washington, USA.

Floor-to-ceiling windows on the whole lantern-like property give the impression that the majestic vista outside runs right up to the front door, acting as a cinema screen for the wildlife with whom the human occupants share their habitat. Steel, glass, concrete and reclaimed timber comprise most of the property, which has an enormous concrete fireplace at its centre, with living accommodation in one block, bedrooms in another, a garage and storage facilities in the third outpost and a sauna in the fourth, which sits in a nearby meadow. "Second homes are about adventure," Kundig says. "And they are the homes that leave the most indelible memories. The best way to do that is to make them unconventional."

Rejuvenating traditional or classic construction techniques for the modern world is certainly unconventional, but it's a method that Italian architect Alfredo Vanotti decided to adopt for his Casa VI in Piaveda, a house perched on the Orobic Alps a kilometre above sea level. Taking an existing ruin and transforming it into a home worthy of any pioneersman, Vanotti used concrete bricks to build a home

that overlooks the snow-strewn valley from the heights of the Alps. Reclaimed stones encase the outer walls, bringing the property in line with its alpine surroundings, while the interior makes good use of local materials and craftsmanship.

"We were asked to transform the existing ruin into a residence with emphasis on the natural sunlight in the valley," Vanotti says. "We did a careful analysis of the exposure and sunlight during the different phases of the year and opted for a roof with

a single layer and large windows so that we could have the sun shine through all the year. And thanks to a re-interpretation of modern construction techniques and materials taken from the past, almost all of the interior, fireplace, tables, chairs, stairs, bidet, sink, is handmade."

From within the Casa VI, exposed wood beams contrast with the stark white walls that bring to mind the first squint as you take a step out onto the mountain and snow blindness momentarily hits; a contemporary shallow set of stairs takes a 180-degree turn partway up before bending back on itself, drawing the eye up to the first floor, where unvarnished timber clads the walls and floors of two bedrooms and a studio mezzanine. But it is the surroundings of this remote Italian valley that provide Casa VI's most striking feature. Fitted straight into walls of the master bedroom sits a large landscape window perfectly framing a snow-topped peak across the way and acting as a natural canvas of the outside world, inviting for exploration and discovery.

Too often we accept our present surroundings, cooped up in identikit homes on suburban streets. But for the modern frontiersmen of the world, there are innovative architects building homes in which to broaden one's horizons, whether deep in the Brazilian jungle, in a sunny Italian valley or anywhere nature invites us to follow our innate pioneering spirit. Their message is to remind us that we can still recapture that discoverer spirit and enjoy the luxury of beautiful design – even on the very fringes of the world. □

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Italian architect Alfredo Vanotti's Casa VI sits solemnly in a sunny valley of the Orobic Alps in northern Italy. A recurring theme in its design is the natural sunlight, which beams through every opening all year round thanks to its open structure. Most impressive, however, is the master bedroom's portal-like main window which overlooks the valley and nearby mountain ridges