Palmyra House

Nandgaon Mohalla, Murud Jhansira Road
Nandgaon, Raigad district
Alibag, India

Architects
Studio Mumbai / Bijoy Jain
Mumbai, India

Clients
Jamshyd Sethna
Alibag, India

Commission 2005
Design 2005 - 2006
Construction 2006 - 2007
Occupancy 2007

Site 4,047 m²
Ground floor 155 m²
Total floor 300 m²
Costs 380,000 USD

Programme
This house is sited on a working coconut plantation south of Mumbai. It comprises three volumes, two above and one below ground, and is accessed only on foot, which necessitated the construction being carried out by hand. The open louvres that give the house its name are handmade from local palms. The structure is A'in wood and local basalt was used to make boundary walls, plinths and paving. Plaster finishes are pigmented with sand from the site. Passive cooling is enabled by the louvres and extensive shading and water is harvested from four on-site wells, resulting in a project that is fully integrated into its landscape.

Situated in a coconut palm and betelnut grove on a remote section of coastline south of Mumbai, the house is designed as a place for refuge, and is made up of spaces that shelter from, as well as invite in, the elements, mediating and regulating air, water and light.

Built by a community of sixth generation carpenters, using local and recycled materials harvested from the region, the three volumes, two above ground and one below, slide into, and are set within, the coconut grove, looking out to infinite horizons in all directions – the ocean in one and a seemingly endless density of coconut trunks in the other. The built structures echo the site with its coconut-palm trunks rising vertically like columns to support an almost continuous canopy of palm leaves.