Re-designing a beach house in Hurghada

REMODELLING A BUILDING HONES THE architect's awareness of the client's aesthetic and functional requirements as well as forcing a thorough and objective consideration of the existing building's successes and failures. Short of demolishing the building altogether, the architect has quite a lot of leeway in re-designing an already existing structure. In the case of the Sevilla house in Hurghada, architect Hany Sioufi has reconfigured the house's orientation to create a pleasant private space and optimise the views.

From the top of a hill, and over looking the Marriott bay, the site has a splendid view of Hurghada's turquoise water. To ensure beauty, privacy, and to extend his garden, the owner decided to join two plots for the house. The client was living abroad - but he commissioned a local architect to start working on the project. Communication between the client and architect was done via correspondences. Which in the end resulted in the construction of a building very different from what the client had imagined. The design did not fulfil any of his expectations. The fundamental problem was that the sea and living space were not related to each other.

In order to adjust the design a structural engineer teamed up with the architect. Columns, parts of slabs and beams were removed. In addition, cantilevers were added to the existing skeleton. The house has three levels connected by a spiral staircase.

At the entrance level are a main living room, dining room, kitchen and toilet. Three bedrooms, bathrooms, and a large terrace with a double height space over the living room forms the second floor. On the top floor is a family room, barbecue area, and skylight that tops the double height volume.

The triangular shaped plan places the living room in the heart of the house, the seating and dining rooms in one wing, the kitchen and toilet in the other. These two wings meeting at the main entrance. The living room's new location, which is now adjacent and open to the garden, in effect becomes a natural extension of the outdoors into the indoors. This effect is accentuated by the continuous flow of stone used for the outdoor seating and flooring into the interior.

By contrasting forms, the sharpness of the triangular plan with the curves of the circular balcony the space is quite dynamic. The forms reinforce and augment each other.

With its panoramic view, the large, north facing, double-sided circular balcony extends the first floor outside the house creating at its centre an oasis-like double-height living room volume that furthers the relationship between the indoors and outdoors.

By partially integrating the balcony and the swimming pool the design is increasingly more unified, tying together both the building and the landscape.

On the southeast and southwest sides of the triangle there are solid walls to effect privacy, by obstructing the view into the neighbours lots. These solid walls also reduce the effects of the glaring sun. Along this side of the building are the bedrooms, living room and garden.

Fresh air is however circulated to the bedrooms through the two triangular balconies at the far edges of both the sides of the triangle. These jagged edges are softened by the half circular north-side skylight with east and west sun breakers that are at the top above the internal part of the oasis.

Remodelled building:
Client: S. Serag El Din
Date: 29 December 2000
Location: Hurghada, Egypt
Architect: Sioufi Architects & Interior Designers
Structural Eng: Hafez Akhrass
Materials: Concrete Skeleton
Contractor: El. Khadem contractors
Cost: LE150,000
Photographs capture the sea-facing balconies.

Original plan of the existing structure overlaid with conceptual sketch, showing how the house has been extended and reoriented.
Opposite page:
Entrance level, showing the integration of garden, house and swimming pool into a fluid whole

This page:
Solid southeast and southwest facades

Sketch, showing the fundamental concept: the reorientation of the house towards the seaview and garden

Axonometric, demonstrating integration of garden, swimming pool and building

Sketch, roof showing concrete canopy
Sketch showing interior spaces and pool

Southwest facade

North facade

South facade
Structural plan, first level, showing new balcony addition and the removal of columns to create double-height space.

Structural plan, roof, showing the back cantilever and concrete canopy.