

DESIGNERS OF THE YEAR TANG GUAN BEE AND CHAN SAU YAN SONNY
HANSHA REFLECTION HOUSE NAGOYA JAPAN BY STUDIO SKLIM
HOUSE AT BUKIT TIMAH SINGAPORE BY RT+Q
VILLA-A NAGANO JAPAN BY SATOSHI OKADA
THE ALL-NEW SPACE ASIA HUB BY WOHA
preview THE FLOWER DOME at Gardens by the Bay

d+a[®]

design and architecture

www.designandarchitecture.com



ISSUE 065. 2012 | S\$8

SINGAPORE \$8 MALAYSIA RM18 HONGKONG HKD90 AUSTRALIA AU\$14.95 OTHERS US\$12

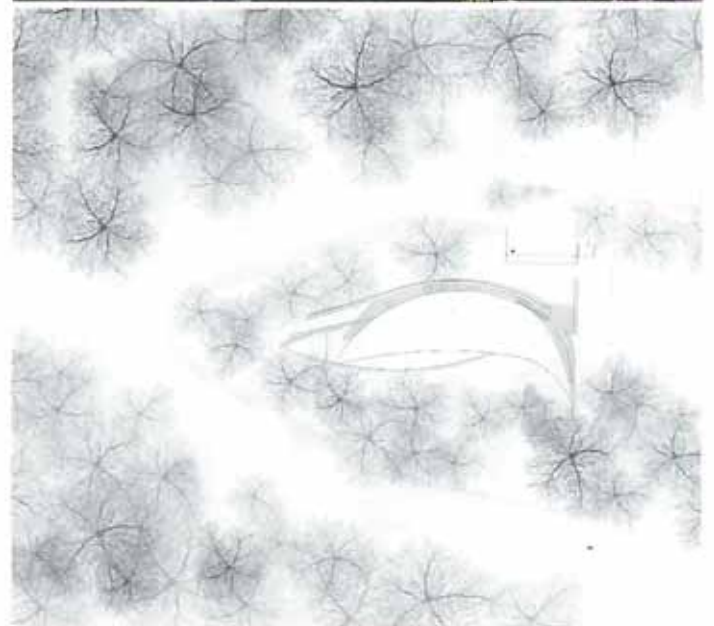


Villa A by Satoshi Okada, in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture, Japan.

in nature defined

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SERGIO PIRRONE

Nested on a trees covered hill site 1000 metres above sea level, Villa A is a summer vacation house in a town that has earned a reputation for its beautiful summer residences. The site, situated in Karuizawa at the east end of Nagano Prefecture, is within easy reach from Tokyo. In order to protect the pristine environment of Karuizawa as a town of refined culture and tradition, the local building authority stipulates that buildings erected should be less than two-storey high and at least 10m off the borders of public roads, and any type of the roof constructed should be a minimum 1/5 gradient. Leveraging on the soft tranquillity of its surroundings, Villa A is architect Satoshi Okada's experiment to integrate architecture and landscape, in collaboration with British horticulturist, Paul Smither.



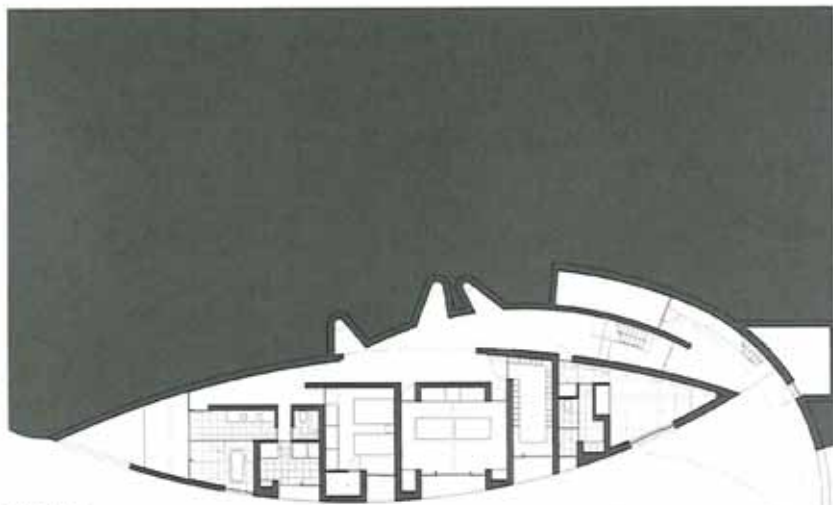
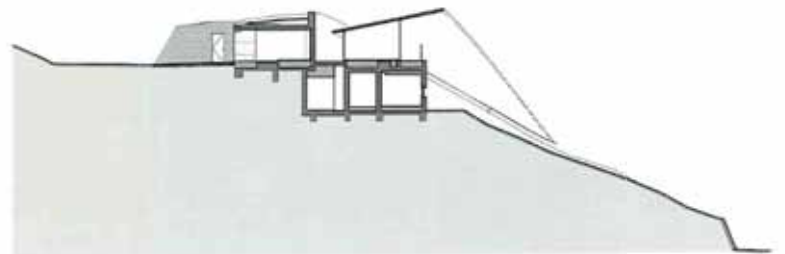
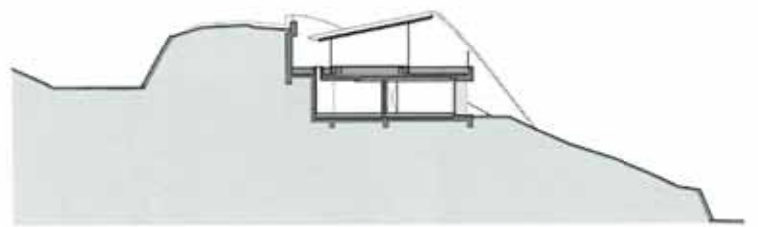
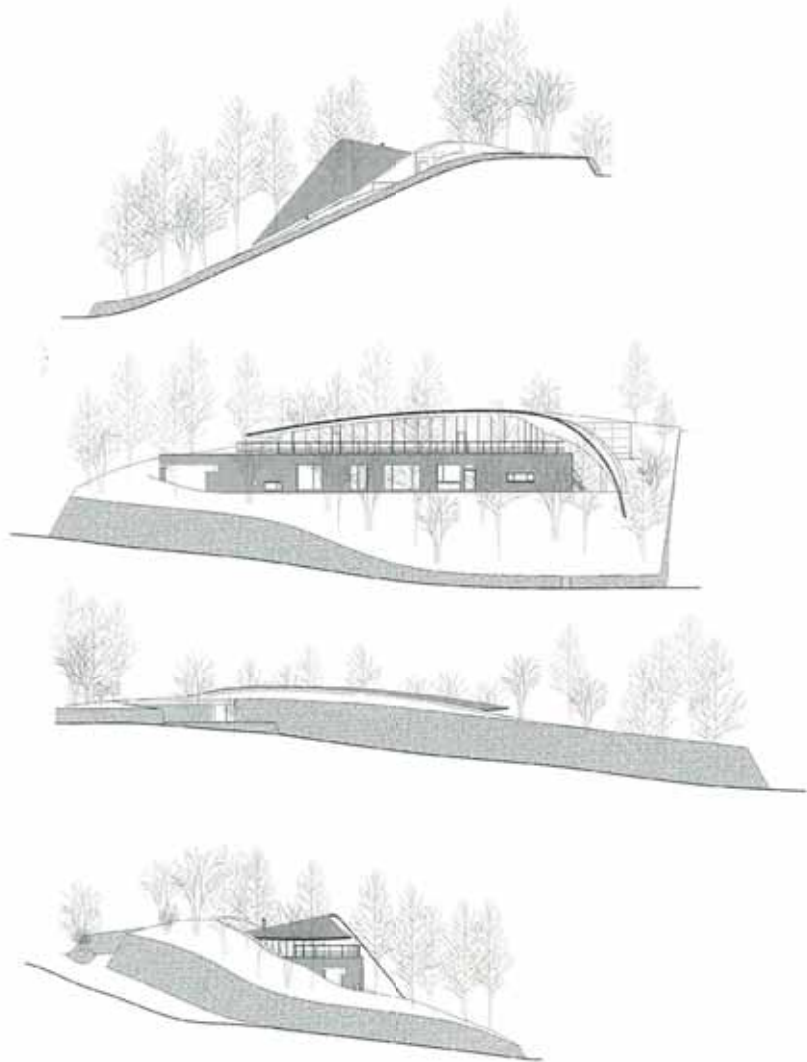


It is the nature of any organic building to grow from its site...the ground itself held always as a component...part of the building.' (Frank Lloyd Wright) Indeed, the site marks the beginning of Villa A that aspires to be architecture under the technical perfection and craftsmanship of Satoshi Okada. The side of the building facing the road appears closed off and concealed from the public eye, while the other side is entirely open to a panoramic view of nature. The triangular site gently slopes down towards the south where the surrounding landscape is integrated into a forest of towering deciduous trees and bamboo grass. Armed with an astute understanding of the hill site's unique topography, Okada recommended that a spindle-shaped floor plan is the most suitable for existing contour lines, as well as for the posture of the load-bearing wall against the horizontal load from the earth. The building not only effectively made its mark but also mirrored the topography in its own form.

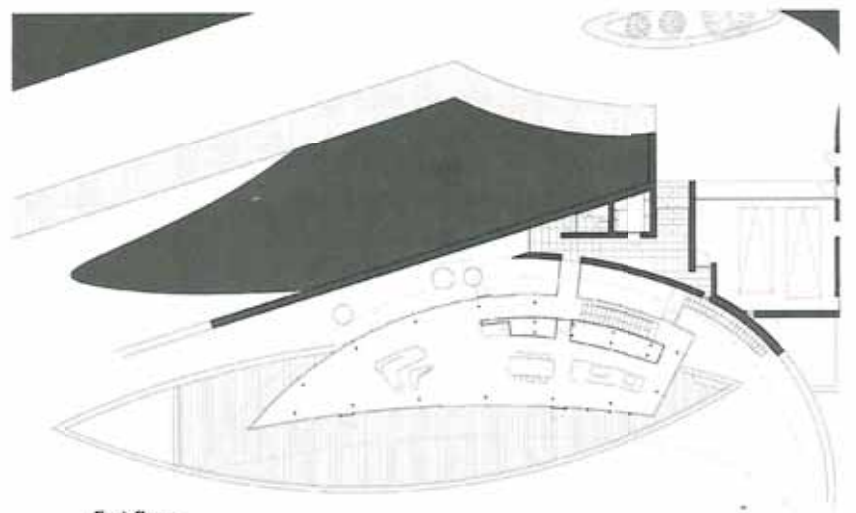
The curved roof is undeniably the villa's most innovative element, designed to shelter the upper floor with an image of a bird's wing fully extended over a nest. The roof plate is bent two-dimensionally and inclined at 1/5 gradient. Structurally, the roof is only 15cms thick and made of sandwiched panels from Corten steel plates with lattice ribs in its interior. The roof plane is then positioned at a gradual curvature onto the ground, giving the impression of the house sheltered under a bird's wing. In this manner, the roof strategically reduces the visual mass of the building and intentionally blocks out the view of the neighbouring building on the east border. Okada has successfully drawn inspiration from nature to provide privacy for the villa's inhabitants, achieving both function and form.

Despite its spindle-shaped floor plan, the Japanese ingenuity for enlarging limited interior spaces is well articulated in this design. The lower floor level, made of a reinforced concrete structure, has one section buried into





basement



first floor



the ground and other half opened to the southern terrain. The bedrooms, guest room, library and a bathroom are located in this semi-underground section of the house. Okada has excelled in reinterpreting Japanese architecture while maintaining a minimal aesthetic in his design. Within the interiors are voids to create a flow of space. The void eventually takes a life of its own as the lines within the interiors flow seamlessly. The emphasis is on the almost spartan delineation of space with a subtle palette of colours and a tint of sophistication to its elegant finishes.

The aboveground spaces are designated the living room, dining area and kitchen; the building is constructed with a steel structure and encapsulates the interior with tall transparent glass walls. Driven by his penchant for merging the indoors and outdoors, Okada's graceful solution creates

invisible boundaries while adding depth and richness to the interior. The overground section doubles up as a viewing point for its inhabitants where the distant natural landscape is captured as part of the foreground. This is achieved by designing a frame located some distance from the viewer, using glass panels to conceal the intervening space that has the visual effect of bringing the distant forest landscape forward to the built foreground.

Despite its simplicity, the architecture and design of Villa A evoke strong emotional impressions. The perception of freedom is accorded to its inhabitants to experience tranquillity and liberation away from the steel skyscrapers, tile-clad concrete apartment buildings of the urbanized cities, through the medium of a calm and soothing environment. +