

# BEDMaR & SHi

## The Bali Villas

Edited by Oscar Riera Ojeda  
Text by Darlene Smyth  
Photography by Albert Lim

Perched on the spectacular southwest coast of Bali sits Ernesto Bedmar's long-awaited first project on the island that has so inspired his successful career, the exquisitely designed, award-winning villa, The Jiva Puri. 'Jiva' in Hindu religious texts denotes the immortal essence of a living organism or being, while the Sanskrit 'Puri' refers to a place or large dwelling.

Although highly contemporary in expression, the villa's design is intrinsically linked to the built history of the island and shows a deep understanding of traditional Balinese architectural concepts and their relationship to the landscape. With a foreword by Darlene Smyth that puts The Jiva Puri into context, sumptuous photography by Albert Lim that takes the reader on a detailed tour of every pavilion, and comprehensive plans, elevations and details, this monograph gives a fully rounded view of a villa complex that has set new standards of subtle architectural brilliance on the island.

Oscar Riera Ojeda is an editor and designer based in Philadelphia, Singapore and Buenos Aires. Darlene Smyth writes widely on design and architecture, and runs her own design practice, DLab3. Albert Lim is an architectural photographer based in Singapore whose images have been published worldwide.

With 172 illustrations, 88 in colour.

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PUBLISHERS



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Introduction by Darlene Smyth

The seemingly endless rhythm of open fronted roadside stalls selling locally made crafts and products slowly begins to decrease in frequency toward the outskirts of the famous shopping region of Seminyak. At first, glimpses of more distant mountains and fields can be seen through the openings between these simple buildings lined against the small country road. The almost surreal, intense green of the tropical sun-washed landscape of palm trees and rice fields overwhelms the senses. This is the Bali so often captured in paintings and batik prints, the beautifully terraced rice paddies with ripe crops gently blowing in the warm wind and the ominous black earth and stone reminding the villagers of the silent power of the volcanoes on the horizon. The haunting beauty of this place and its culturally rich architecture has deeply influenced much of the career of Ernesto Bedmar, who runs his design practice in the busy tropical city state of Singapore, just a few hours' flight away. Yet the commission of the Jiva Puri villa in Bali to Bedmar and Shi was the Argentinean-born designer's first long awaited opportunity to execute his designs on the island itself. The slow journey to the villa, with its gradual paring down of all forms of urbanization is an integral part of the physical and mental preparation required to open the senses to the villa and to its intricate connection to the built history and dramatic landscape of the southwestern Balinese coastline.

After turning off the main road into one of the many narrow neighborhood streets, the atmosphere changes once again. Young children play freely along the quiet roadside near a series of dark volcanic stone temples with traditional Balinese figures

carved into every surface. With minimal warning, a large gateway appears to the left of the road, marking the understated entrance to the villa. From here, Bedmar brings the visitor on a carefully choreographed journey through the site, on which the architecture, open spaces, vistas and gateways all act in unison to allow for the gradual uncovering of the subtleties, the mysteries and the dramatic beauty of the site and its surroundings. The journey through the grounds is also planned with an understanding of the traditional Balinese architecture of a residential compound and the concepts and belief systems that regulate the arrangement of spaces and pavilions within it. Much of Balinese everyday life is linked to a common belief system of rituals and mythology that remains very strong in society to this day. Concepts that govern the traditional arrangement of the housing compound relate to a belief in the importance of a cosmological ordering of elements, as well as the path of the sun and the axis of the mountains and the sea. In Balinese belief, the cosmological order is derived from the map of Bali, which is seen as a microcosm of the whole of the cosmos. Since the holy Mount Agung is in the Northeast of the island, this cardinal direction is seen as being more sacred and is where the temple of each compound would be placed. The center of the island is seen as a transitional zone, so the middle of the housing compound is traditionally left open as a field or courtyard. Toward the South and Southwest is the sea which is associated with the sunset, with death, and with the profane. Bedmar and Shi has understood and reinterpreted these associations in the planning of the Jiva Puri.



From the street, the villa is almost completely hidden from the spectator by a tall boundary wall. The fence around a property is referred to in Bali as “angkul-angkul” and is thought to protect the inhabitants as well as help control the views into the property. The visitor enters the grounds through a tall, narrow gateway. At The Jiva Puri, this gateway has been simplified by omitting the traditional carved stone detailing, yet the traditional proportions of the entrance gateway have been retained. Through this narrow opening, Bedmar is able to control how much to reveal and how much to conceal. The experience of the villa and the gardens is delayed by the gateway and slowed to the pace of the movement of the body through the space as opposed to what can be captured in the quick glance of an eye. This controlled revelation and uncovering of the site is orchestrated by Bedmar in a manner that focuses the attention on the long, carefully composed vistas and spatial arrangements, making it possible to appreciate the subtleties of the architecture and landscape at each turn.

The view from the entrance gateway comes as a bit of a surprise. After travelling along a narrow roadway where the eye is focusing on objects and scenes within a few meters distance from the vehicle, Bedmar and Shi then rewards the visitor with a very long, stretched out, almost one point perspective across a simple open field to the next gateway in the distance. This perspective is accentuated by a long white stone path down its center, leading to a bright opening in the wall of the villa beyond. To the left of the path is a simply-planted open field, reminiscent of the open, transitional center of traditional Balinese housing compounds. To the right is a series



of black ponds with branching paths leading to four separate sleeping pavilions for invited guests. Fully bloomed Frangipani trees cast beautiful shadows on the simple white stone of the paths. The architectural elements of the path; the plain white walls, the pure shapes of the pavilions, are all pared down to their simplest form. This allows the decoration of the vistas to be the shadows and textures of the trees, and the rippled reflections the water casts across the surfaces of the walls.

Due to the strong contrast between the light stone of the path and the darker lawn and black ponds, the path appears almost to float, evoking a feeling of lightness and peace within the visitor. As the paths traverse the ponds, this illusion of floatation is further enhanced by the detail of the thin edge of stone along the sides of the path that projects beyond the recessed supports. These recessed edges create dark shadow lines under the stone slabs, making them appear as though they are hovering over the water. This simple but elegant detail of a groove between materials is continued throughout The Jiva Puri where Bedmar expresses but simplifies the connections between materials with grooves, recesses and shadow lines, gently marking the transitions between spaces and building elements. The side walls of the four sleeping villas that border the central field are treated in a similar way to the external walls of the compound. These walls not only provide privacy, but become the canvas for the shadows and texture of Frangipani trees that emerge from the ponds in small planters. A natural bio-filtration system in these ponds makes them appear as if they



naturally erupted there, and also gives the water an impossibly black and reflective quality. The darkness and reflectivity of the ponds furthers the impression that the buildings and pathways float above them. Bedmar and Shi deliberately construct vistas and visual perspectives to bring the visitors into the bedroom villas which are here controlled by the bounding walls of the villa along the white paths to frame the views as one passes through the sets of walls. Several of these framed views use linear “artworks” along the end walls of the view, to create attractive compositions as well as to stretch the eye around the edge of the framed view toward the next direction of travel. Upon closer examination, these linear artworks are in fact carefully chosen pieces taken from traditional Balinese buildings, such as carved roof eave details, and weathered timber columns.

In keeping with the simplification of architectural elements and forms in the project, the traditional heavy-looking thatched Balinese roof is here reinterpreted using light grey wooden shingles and exposed Balau timber rafters on the undersides of the roof with bamboo mat ceilings between them. The edge of the roof eave is made much slimmer than the traditional Bali villa by projecting the battens off the ends of the rafters and edging them with a thin timber fascia. The ends of the rafters are cut parallel to the ground so that the whole eave appears to come almost to a sharp point that conceals its actual thickness. Bedmar plays with the impression of the heaviness of the massive roof by abstracting its edge to make it appear almost paper-thin.

This same illusion also occurs inside the sleeping pavilions where the walls are lifted so that they almost meet the roof but then stop short in order to recess and conceal the connection. Again, the massive roof appears to float above the walls. This impression is also accentuated by the artificial lighting in the four corners of the rooms which up-light the underside of the ceiling, giving it a magical lightness. The intricacy of the detailing and local craftsmanship of these ceilings starkly contrasts with the simplicity of the plain white internal walls of the pavilions, once again turning the craftsmanship into a form of artwork set against a blank canvas.

As one moves from the larger open space of the central field into the realm of the sleeping pavilions, there is a deliberate scaling down of nature from the open public common center to a semi-public rock garden shared in between the four pavilions, and then to a private garden outside the bedroom of each villa. At each stage of the decreasing scale of the gardens, the designer has also brought the natural elements closer and closer to the visitor so that the small plantings and pond outside the bedrooms feel very personal, almost as if they were a childhood memory of a favorite corner of the garden. The last stage of the progressive scaling down of the gardens is in the semi-outdoor bathrooms behind the bedrooms where nature literally touches the visitor. Here, the plants are within close reach and the raindrops are felt as part of the cleansing ritual. Upon exiting the bedroom villas, the visitor is faced with a simple, long wall and covered walkway at the opposite side of the central field.



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The Project









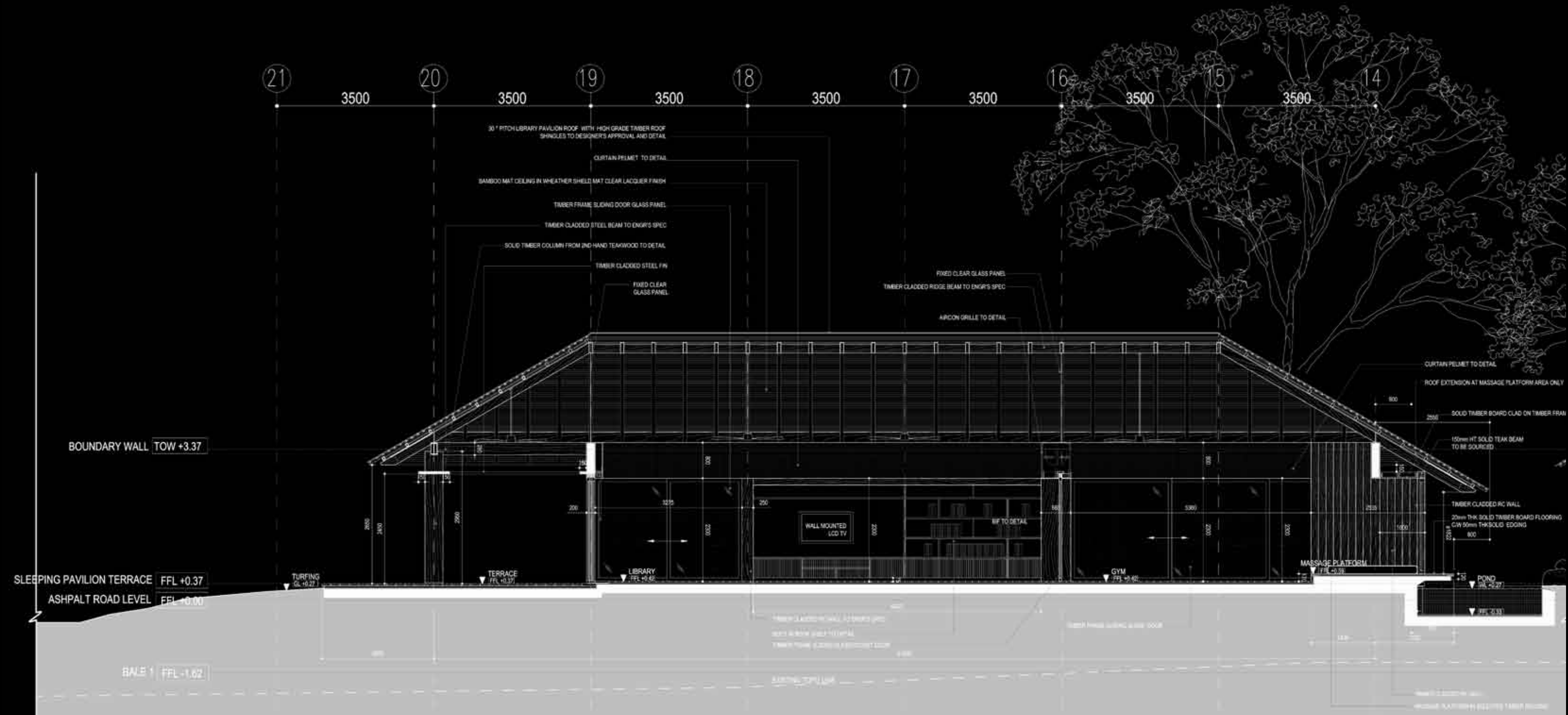


01 : View of the court from under the covered walkway



02 : Interior view of the Main Pavilion





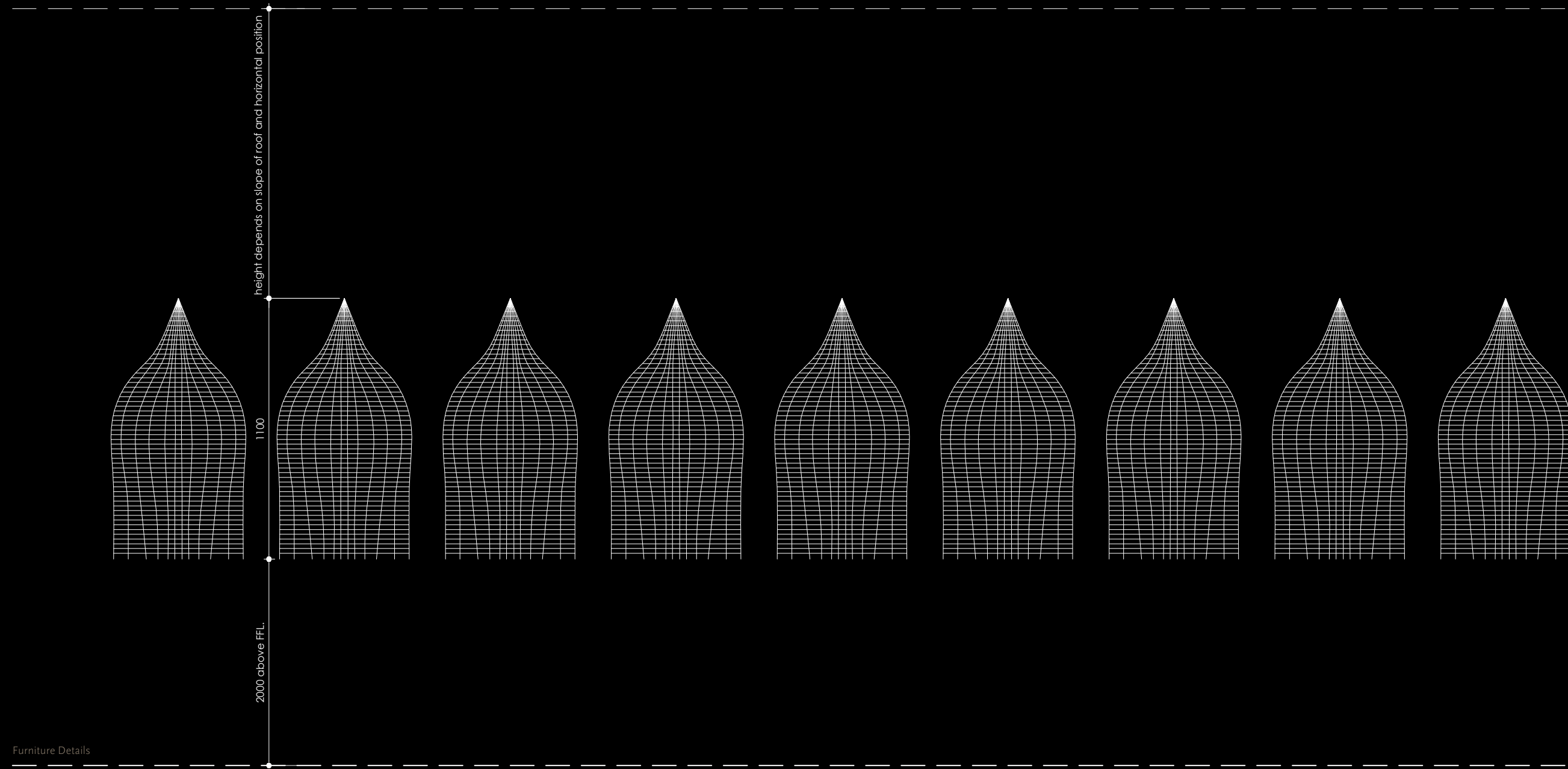








.: Closed-up of lamps above dining table



Furniture Details



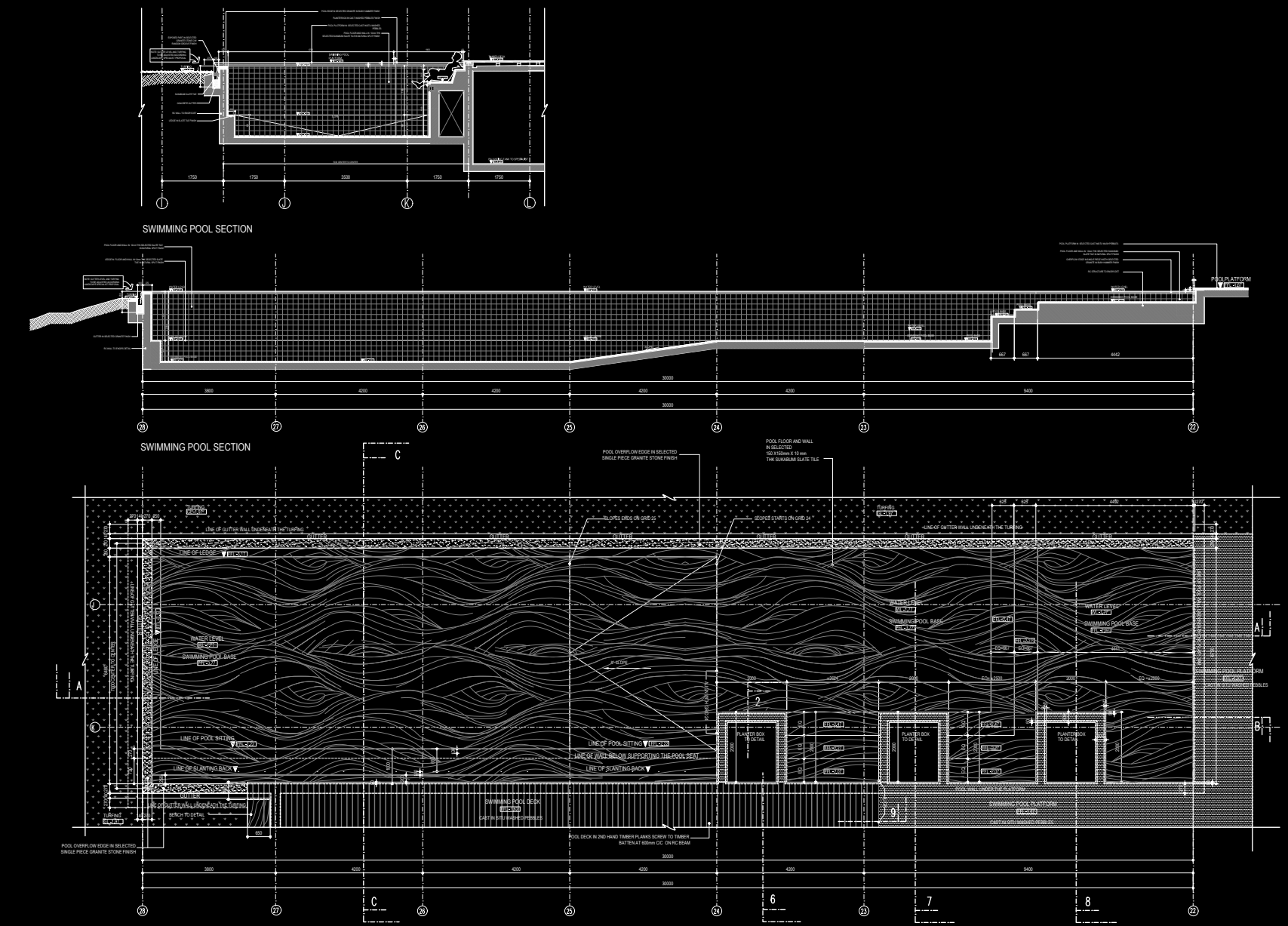


01 : View of swimming pool deck with furniture





View of swimming pool deck with furniture



Swimming Pool Details



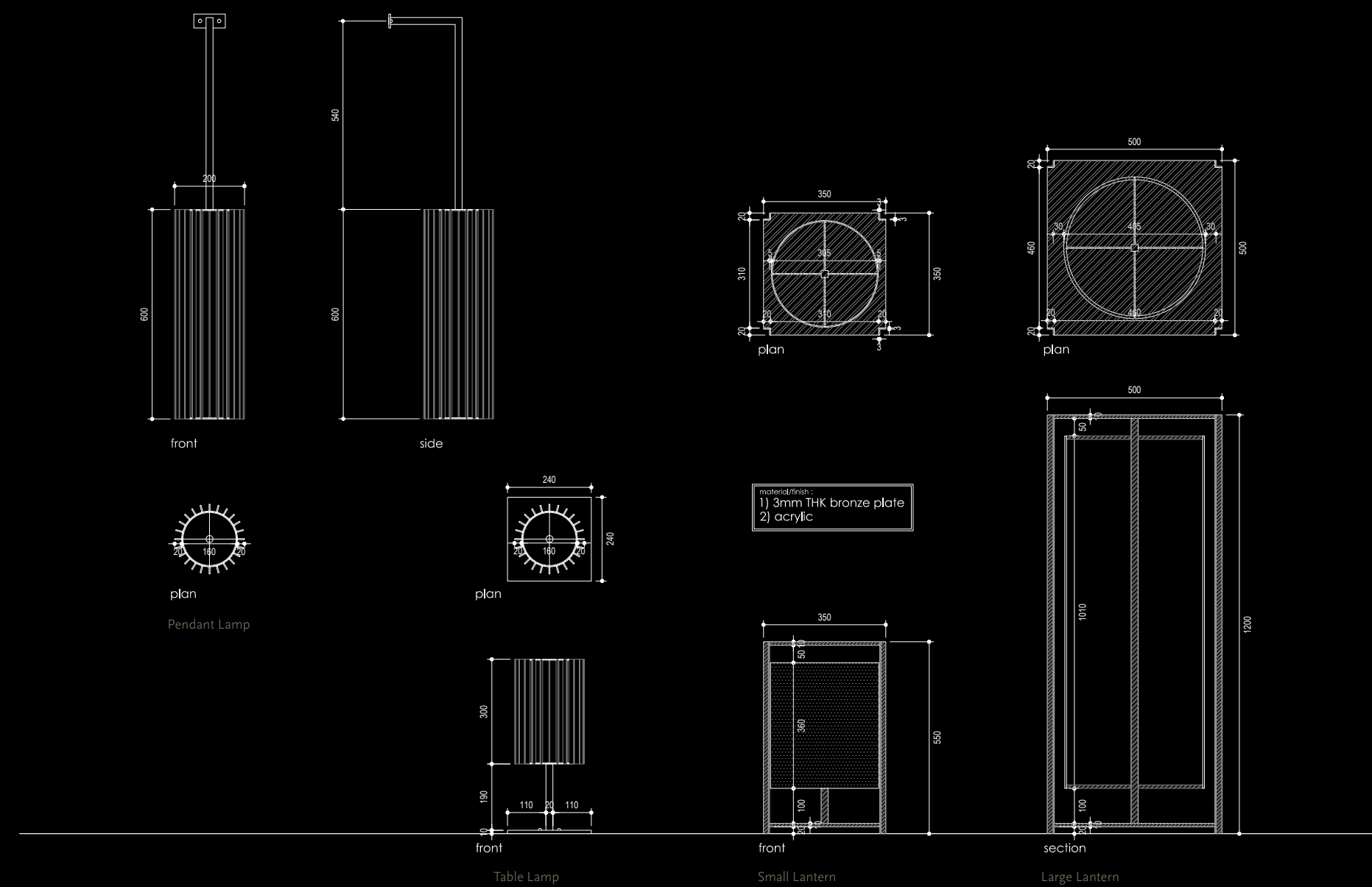


View of internal 3rd Court inside the Guest Villa; stone garden, circulation, and timber screens





Detail of furniture built in situ







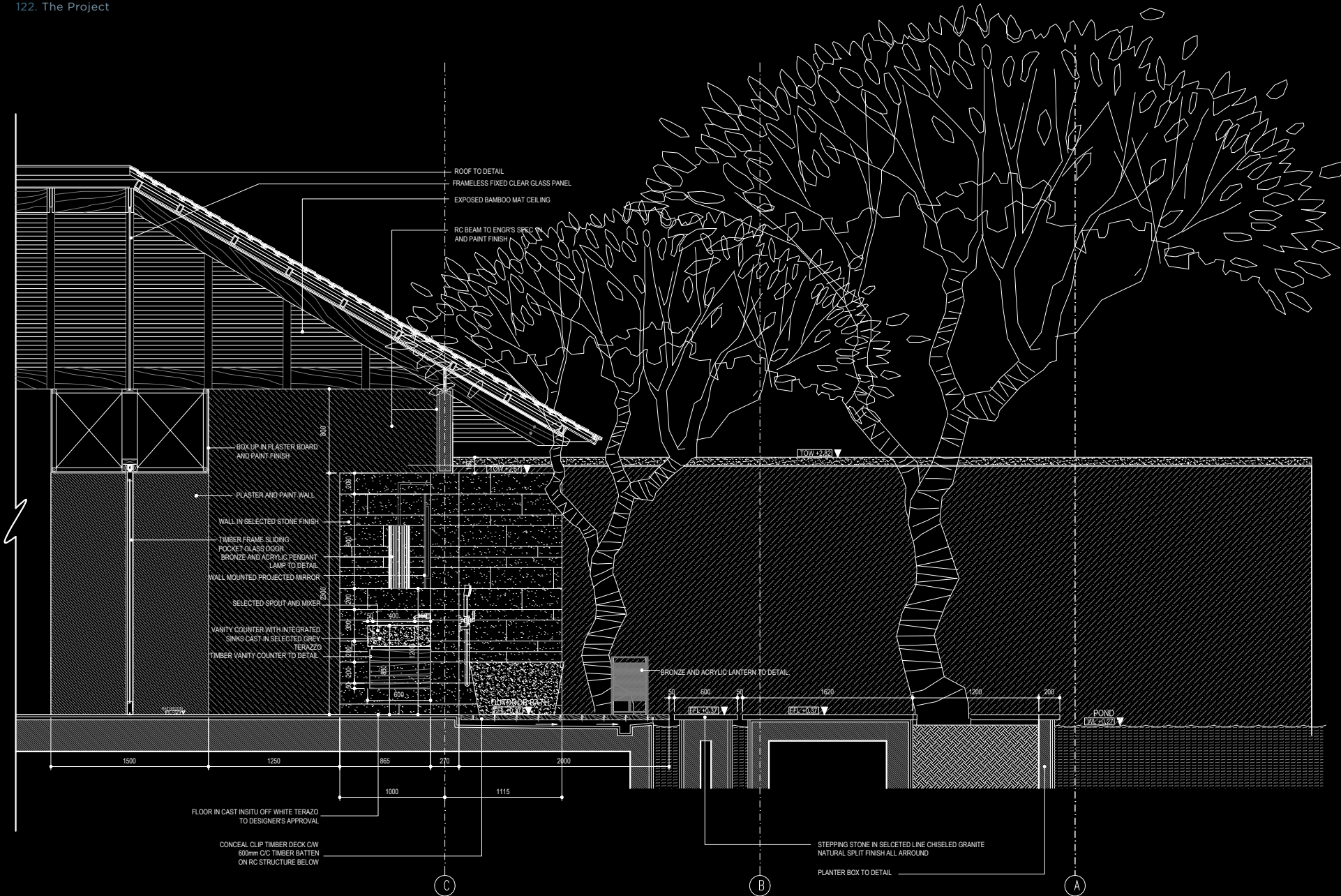
Detail view of furniture built in situ & outdoor stone table designed by Ernesto Bedmar



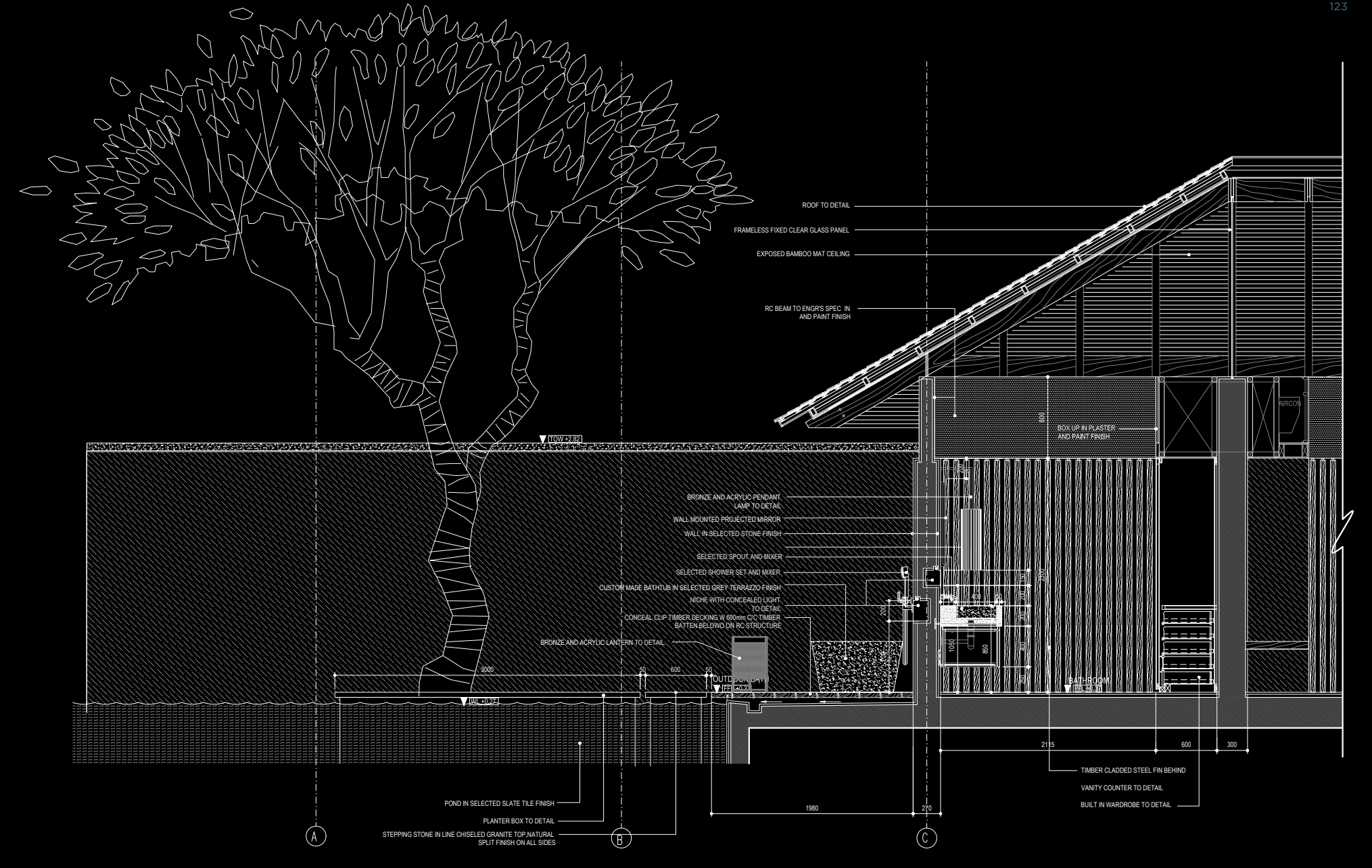


View of the bathroom in the private Villa with open garden. Bathtub & vanity counter were custom made.





Sections of Guest Bathroom 4











01 : View of dining area in the evening



02 : Evening views of Main Living Pavilion





01 : Night view of Entry Court & detail views of circulations

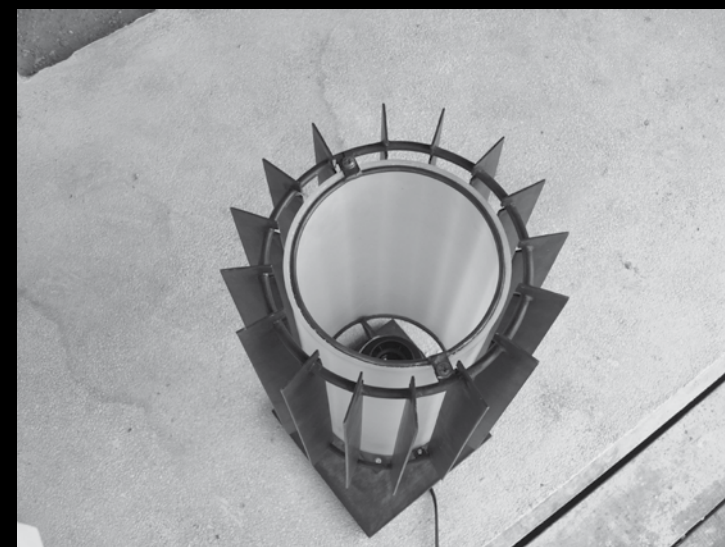
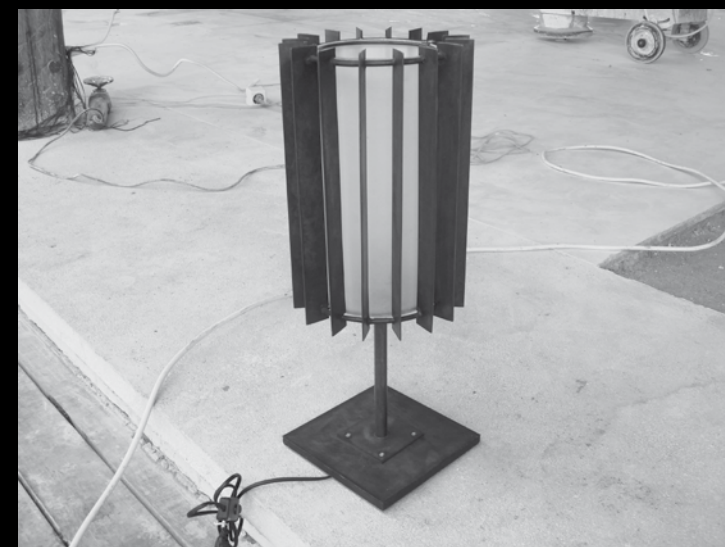


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Site and Construction











Ernesto Bedmar, an Argentinian, graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1980 from the University of Architecture & Town Planning, Cordoba, Argentina; he received the award for the Best Design in the Final Year. He is a Registered Architect in Argentina and also a Registered Architect in Singapore, as well as a Corporate Member of the Singapore Institute of Architects. Ernesto's career began in 1977 when he did practical work in the studio of Miguel Angel Roca, Argentina. In 1980 he became an Associate at Miguel Angel Roca, South Africa, and designed a town planning project for Protea New Town – South Africa and the Jabulani Administrative Centre in South Africa where he worked with the Architects M.A. Roca and F. Pienaar. In 1982 he was made an Associate at Miguel Angel Roca, Hong Kong, to develop the Tai Long Wan Tourist Resort on Lantau Island, HK. He then joined Palmer & Turner, Hong Kong as a Consultant Architect in 1983 and was involved in a vast urban project for Macau as a member of the planning group under the Architect Alvaro Siza Vieira.

In 1984 he came to Singapore and worked with SAA Partnership until 1986 when he set up his own practice; Bedmar & Shi Designers Pte Ltd, and since then has been a Director/Design Consultant at the company. From 1989 to 2000 Ernesto was a part-time tutor at the School of Architecture at the National University of Singapore and from 1993 to 1995 he was a Member of Design Committee at Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore, where he also acted as External Examiner for the Bachelor of Arts (Architecture/Hons) program from 2007 to 2010.

In early 2009 Ernesto was invited by the Architecture Society at The National University of Singapore to give a guest lecture and in May 2009 he was invited by Raffles University, Singapore, to act as an External Examiner for Design Programmes.

He has received several awards including some listed here in chronological order:

- 1989. Du Pont Antron Design Award – Honorary Prize – Store Planning Category.
- 2000. No. 15 Whitehouse Park – Architectural Heritage Awards (URA).
- 2002. Merit Prize (from the Singapore Institute of Architects – Hunter Douglas Design Competition).
- 2006. 3 Houses at Jervois and Trevoise 12 – The Chicago Athenaeum International Architecture Award.
- 2006. Cityscape Architectural Review Awards.
- 2006. Dubai – Winner of Residential Built Award.
- 2010. 10 th SIA Architectural Design Awards in the categories for Recreational Buildings and Individual Houses.
- 2011. The Asia Pacific Property Awards for The Jiva Puri interiors.

Besides his monograph “Romancing the Tropics” also published by Oscar Riera Ojeda, Ernesto's works have been featured in many international publications.

## Firm profile

Bedmar & Shi is a Singapore based design practice established in 1986, incorporating a wide range of architectural, conservation, landscape and interior designs.

Since its inception, it has always maintained a staff of twelve; a multicultural mix of personalities from various parts of the world, designers with a singular desire to explore the relationships between buildings and nature with a particular emphasis on quality design and execution of its diverse portfolio.

The company founders, Mr. Ernesto Bedmar and Madam Patti Shi, personally liaise and direct each of the company's projects.

Our portfolio includes works in New York, London, New Zealand, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Tibet, Bhutan, Hong Kong and Singapore.



