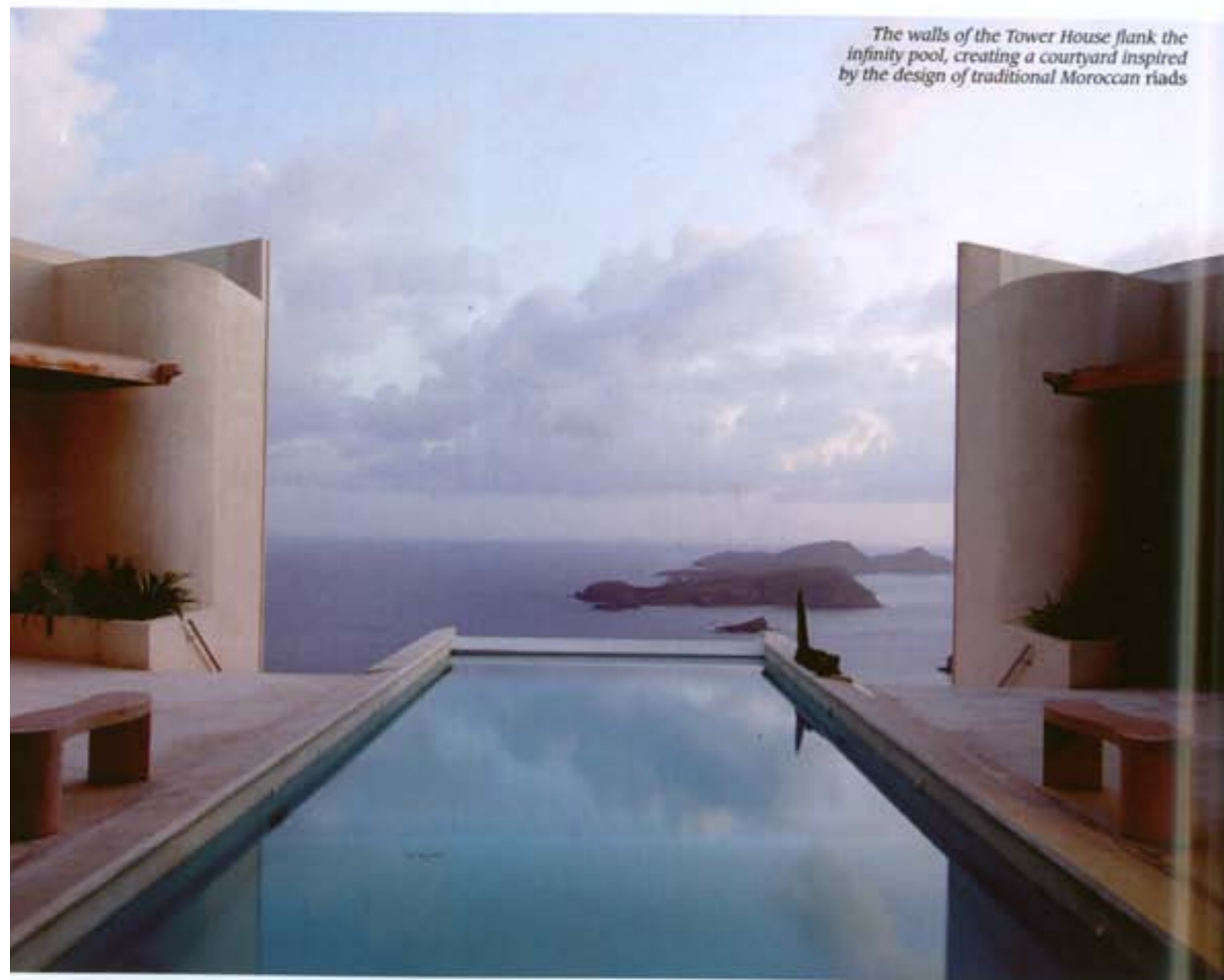


The walls of the Tower House flank the infinity pool, creating a courtyard inspired by the design of traditional Moroccan riads



# TO THE CARIBBEAN BY WAY OF MOROCCO

The Tower House unites modernism with traditional design. The ecologically conscious home is perfect for those seeking privacy and comfort

FEATURE: MATTHEW HAMILTON, PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF EDGLEY DESIGN



Red timber and concrete are the primary building materials of the home, chosen for their rustic finish and resistance to hurricanes

After a steep descent along a winding road near the coast of the Caribbean island of Bequia, you see a long, low wall, with a few small windows. If you look closely, you can spot the blue waters of the sea through the small panes of glass and presume that the structure before you is like so many others situated on steep, coastal Caribbean cliffs: a small, private and almost quaint home. Stepping into the home, however, you see the error of such presumption – the Tower House, as this coastal manse is dubbed – is private, but with its five bedrooms, 342 square metres and cool, cavernous spaces, it is anything but small and quaint. Designed by Jake Edgley of the London-based Edgley Design, the Tower House imports the fundamental design of the Moroccan *riad* to the Caribbean coast, offering its residents an abode that stays cool amid tropical heat, is capable of withstanding the occasional hurricane, melds seamlessly with local architecture and offers guests unadulterated views of the sea.

To conceive the overall design philosophy, Edgley travelled to Morocco to study more closely the fundamentals of the traditional *riad*. “[The *riads*] are often several stories high, totally enclosed to the outside and arranged around a central courtyard,” which in a macro perspective of cities like Marrakesh, results in “a townscape of narrow passages between blank walls, punctuated solely by private doorways,” says Edgley. “While derived from an understanding of natural climate control, the overall approach yields peaceful, private houses.” The Tower House captures both elements of its architect’s insights: the temperate privacy of the home itself, and the romance of the high-walled, windowless in-between spaces among traditional Moroccan homes.

One enters the house at the mezzanine level, and from the balcony overlooking the common and living area, one immediately grasps the size and depth of the Tower House, part of a gradual unfolding that continues as one explores the house on its different floors and tiers situated on



Five-metre-high doors permit the cool breeze off of the pool to enter the main living room

“A COURTYARD PROVIDES SHELTER DURING THE DAY, AND A POOL NATURALLY COOLS THE AIR - A CONCEPT USED IN TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE FROM THE ROMAN AGES BUT OFTEN FORGOTTEN IN CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE”



A narrow staircase leading up to a guest bedroom tower evokes the high-walls dividing riads in Marrakech

the cliff. A kitchen, dining and seating area are grouped below, set before three five-metre-high doors opening outwardly into the courtyard and pool, all of which is eclipsed by the majestic seaside view in the background. “The basic principle is that a courtyard provides shelter during the day, and a pool naturally cools the air - a concept used in traditional architecture from the Roman ages but often forgotten in contemporary architecture in a hot climate, where design principles derived in a temperate climate have been globalised,” says Edgley. A grand staircase on one side of the expansive common area delivers one to the multi-tiered house’s main living area where the room’s appointments display a modern, rustic eclecticism: a modern, matt-finished kitchen; mission-style wooden furnishings for the seating and dining areas; abstract artwork; and unobtrusive lighting from above. Windows on either side of the common living area, one of the rare instances where the



A world-class art collection lines the back wall, offering small splashes of colour to the monochromatic home



One enters the home on the mezzanine, upper right, and finds a grand living room and kitchen opening out to a courtyard

A red timber deck connects the staircases leading to the bedroom towers, each a separate structure with a private seating area and bedroom



house employs glass rather than wooden screens, offer vertically panoramic views as well as comprehensive ventilation. Coupled with the spartan materials used to build the home – concrete and red timber – the décor is not intended to compete with the grandeur of the natural views while the architectural materials themselves form a natural aesthetic that will weather with age, helping the house merge with its environment.

Nearly every other room or living area is located off of the courtyard, adhering to the principles of the *riad*, and the house, like the *riad*, manages to include tremendous height variation. Explains Edgley, "Instead of designing the house as a series of low buildings running along the contours of the hill, as would have been logical, the house was expressed as vertical towers, so that from a distance, the house is seen as a series of slender towers rising out of the forest." Thus, five guest towers frame the pool and courtyard, each with its own living area, private access stairway and bedroom. Putting guests in towers continues the unfolding process central to the architectural posture of the home: new spaces to be explored continually emerge, tantamount to discovering more unexplored territory after reaching the top of a summit. Unlike the central rooms of the home, which look straight out towards the sea, the guest bedrooms and living areas flanking the courtyard look outward towards the bays on either side of the home, with the eastern side specifically looking out to Mustique Island. Among the towers are stairwells, narrow passageways, suspended timber balconies and

terraces of varying sizes, one of which doubles as an outdoor eating area. Such a design approach "lets the prevailing wind pass between the structures," says Edgley, who benefited from a thorough study of "the dynamics of the individual site." Using the multi-towered approach also transformed the experience of living in the house into "one of openness and light ... in total opposition to the almost fortress-like experience of the exterior," adds Edgley, giving the residents not only physical privacy but experiential privacy as well; few can accurately surmise the manner in which the homeowners live.

Notable for the Tower House project is its ecological consciousness. According to Edgley, the lack of air conditioning and heating systems "makes this project an eco-building to a standard virtually unattainable in the UK climate, and one of the few buildings on the island that is naturally cooled with no air-conditioning." The inherent cooling properties of the home are attributed by Edgley to the tower structure: "It is the solidity and mass of this enclosure that absorbs the heat of the midday sun, gradually re-emitting this heat during the evening to balance the internal environment of the house."

The outcome of such conscientiousness and expertise on the part of Edgley and his team is a house that is modern yet rustic, lavish yet ecologically conscious, integrated in the environment but capable of shielding its inhabitants from the extremes of such an environment.