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Inside Outside

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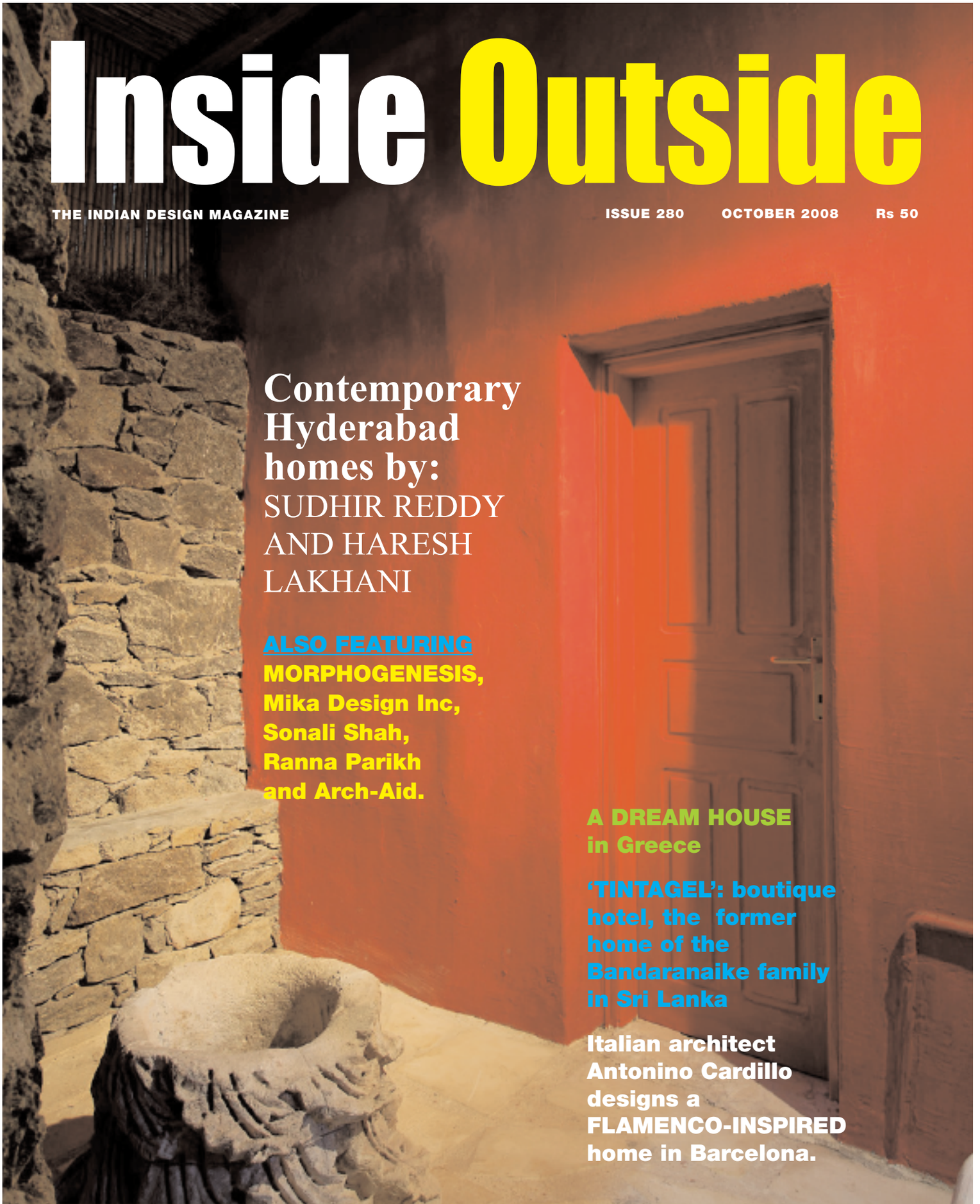


Contemporary Hyderabad homes by:
SUDHIR REDDY AND HARESH LAKHANI

ALSO FEATURING
MORPHOGENESIS, Mika Design Inc, Sonali Shah, Ranna Parikh and Arch-Aid.

A DREAM HOUSE in Greece

'TINTAGEL': boutique hotel, the former home of the Bandaranaike family in Sri Lanka

Italian architect Antonino Cardillo designs a FLAMENCO-INSPIRED home in Barcelona.

SHIMUL JAVERI KADRI reveals her architectural inspirations

The living room, seen from the ‘egg’ chair.

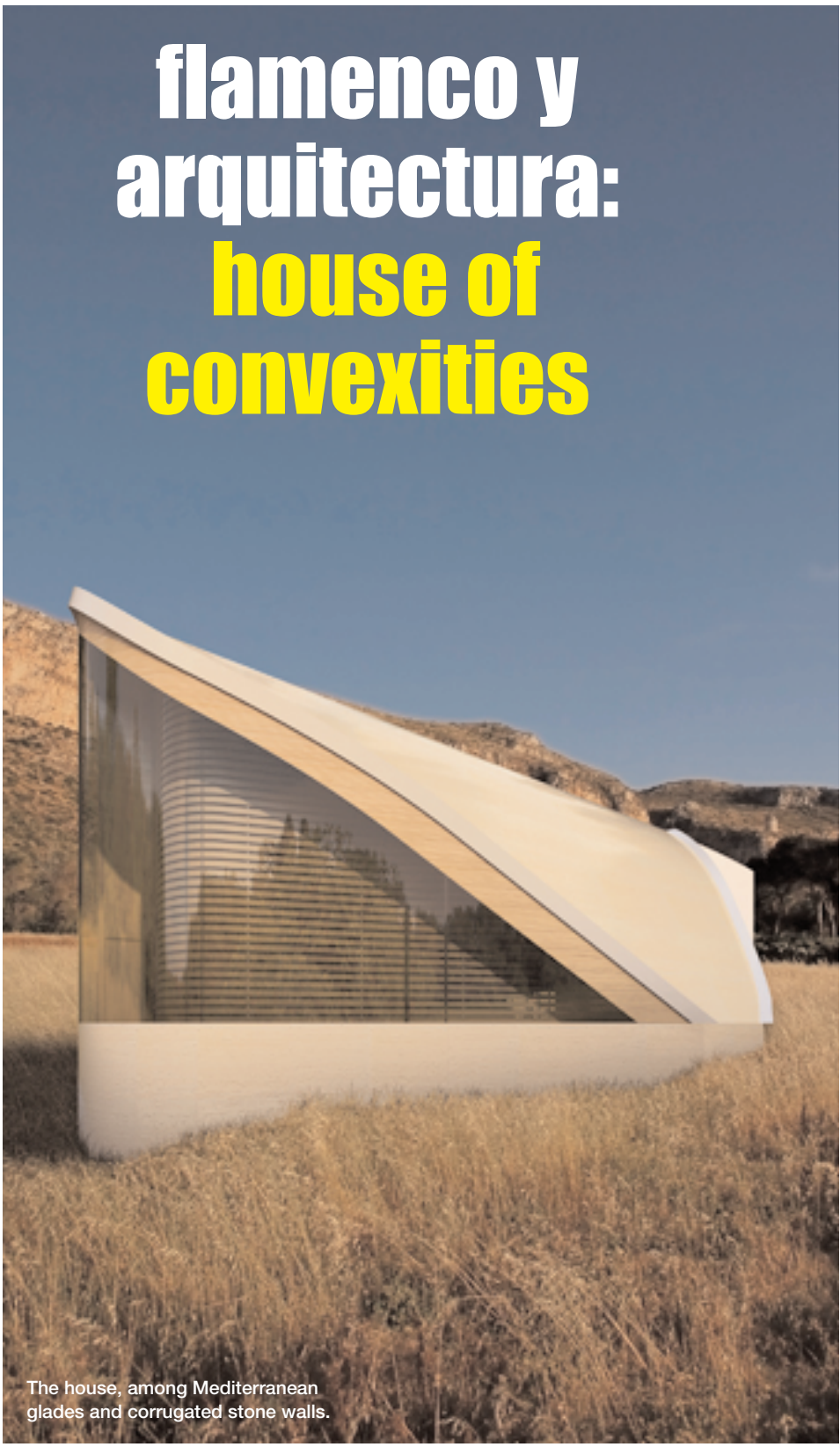
Italian architect Antonino Cardillo talks to Devyani Jayakar about how the Spanish flamenco dance was the inspiration for this home in Barcelona designed by him.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY THE ARCHITECT

Brise–soleil wall in the living room, pierced by innumerable narrow blades. The soaring curve of the wooden vaulted roof defines the space in the living room.

flamenco y arquitectura: house of convexities

An architect who does not wish his creations to bear the indelible stamp of his own design aesthetic...one who believes that architecture has to be a chronicle of our times, to interpret and reflect today, (without either negating the past, or blindly aping its most successful creations)...who sees himself only as a medium of that interpretation, without wanting to create a design signature. Appearing to subscribe to the refined ambiguities of self deprecation, he takes a



The house, among Mediterranean glades and corrugated stone walls.

'The living room is full of sculpted architectural masses, defined by the light from the outside. It bathes the wall and reaches the moment and the place at which, going beyond the curve, it takes a tangent, deciding what will be lit and what will be in shadow.'

stand bordering on a negation of his ego. In a profession full of flamboyant impresarios, meet Italian architect, Antonino Cardillo. Which is not to say, however, that his creations are not flamboyant. You can eulogise, criticise or analyse them, but you certainly can't ignore them – they tug insistently at your sleeve, pouring commentary into your ears.

Despite his self proclaimed, apparently low-key 'reflection of the current times,' Antonino's architecture is instantly recognisable, for more reasons than one. Even if you have been misled by his philosophy, into imagining a characterless design vocabulary, it would take a fair amount of myopia to miss out that there is nothing even marginally self-effacing about his work. But I will come to that paradox later.

'History – not only architectural – is very important for me as an instrument to understand ourselves. I trained as an architect in Palermo University. This city was a very stimulating experience for me, because it is an extraordinary synthesis of different cultures, and in its architecture and its urbanism, you could see the different cultures which were an influence: Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arabian, Norman, German, French, Spanish, Italian. It's really an incredible situation. Now, maybe you can understand why for me, an unambiguous architectural language is a paradox,' says Antonino, in an acceptance and recognition of the splendour of a

The two large architectural volumes in the house – the curve and the straight wall – appear to 'collide.'

The dining area appears compressed, but is open to the outside through the large windows.

generous polyphony. But while he feels privileged to stand on the shoulders of the great architects of the past, Antonino is certainly no 'me too' in his design sensibilities.

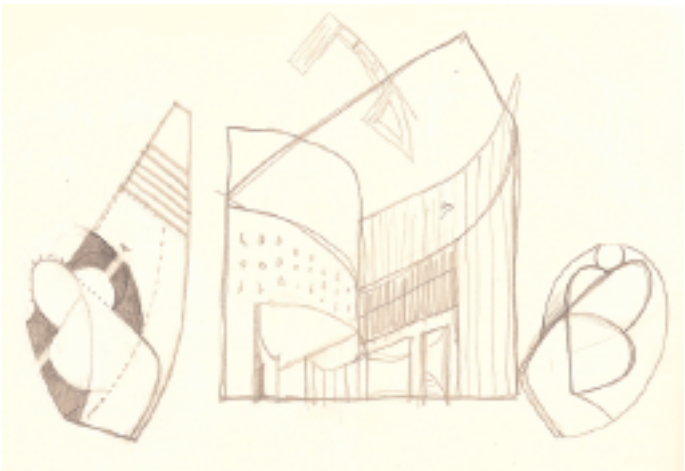
'As you can analyse, in House of Convexities I have tried to interpret a different culture – that of Spanish flamenco dance. I'm not interested in a design signature, look or style. I'm interested rather, in trying to speak different languages and to mix several cultures with each other. For example, the concept of this design was born during a trip to Havana in Cuba, and through an inverse process I reached the Spanish Flamenco,' he explains.

That architecture can combine all the creative arts, is not a new suggestion. Less frequently than it can incorporate painting and sculpture, though, it has been known to incorporate dance. Antonino suggests the very movement of dance, in the play of light and shadow in this house in Barcelona.

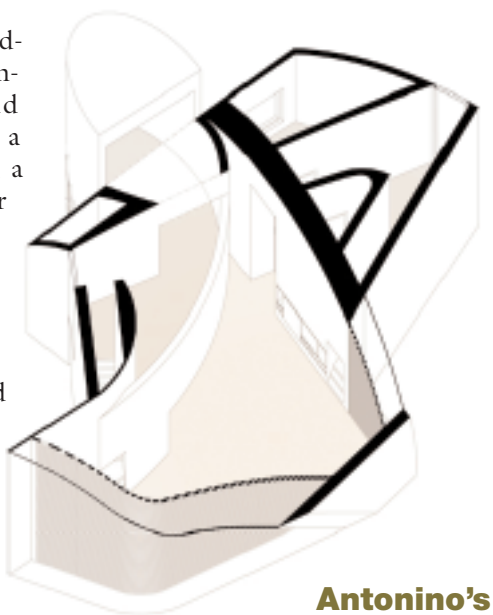
House of Convexities is a two-level home designed with Spanish traditional dance at its heart. Flamenco inspires the lines of the

building, playing with perspective and light throughout the user's transition. Here Cardillo describes his concept of Flamenco y Arquitectura: 'If architecture is music in stone, can its "limbs" dance? Architecture only remains still in pictures. In real life, its natural state is one of transition. Both man and light move within it. Inside the house among coarse Mediterranean glades and corrugated stone walls, a slanting light, piercing though innumerable narrow repeated blades, inscribes and describes the walls with its impermanent, mutable hand. How many possible stories will this light tell over the course of a year? A curved wall plays with the light. The light bathes the wall, but reaches the moment and the place in which, going beyond the curve, it takes a tangent, deciding what will be lit and what will be dark. And this movement suggests the indefinite, mutability, and shading.'

With a dramatic, sensual dance form at its core, did the client have any brief regarding the house? 'The most important requirement was to have two separate night zones (at the first floor) accessible from two different stairs leading from the main living space at the ground floor. As you can see in the plan and photos, this design reveals a kind of Mediterranean, urban sensibility. Each bedroom is located inside two different main shapes of the house. The shape of the master bedroom is deconstructed, following the trail of a deformed spiral, that for the large part is visually connected to the living space below by the vaulted roof, whereas near the ellipse shape, the space becomes a tall tower,' says Antonino.



'The other bedroom is more conventional and could become a room for guests, a partner or for children. The most important thing is that the spaces aren't built following a rigid division of functions that can't be changed in time, but rather following a logic of the shapes and spaces,' he adds.



The materials used are only three: oak wood for the large vault, brise-soleil wall and doors, travertino stone for floors, and white stucco for the walls. The furniture is a black Saarinen oval table with green Verner Panton chairs for dining (inside at the elliptical bow-window), cream tessile Urquiola sofas and gray tapestry for the living area.

Ask him why, in a largely neutral palette, the accent colour

Antonino's work stands apart in its use of light as a sculpturesque element, and in the theatrically sculpted volumes of high vaulted roofs and large spaces which dwarf the viewer.

which he favours is a pale green, and he says, 'I'm fascinated by pale green because it's an elusive colour, and it is incredible how many types of green we can distinguish. However, some time during the creative process, I was tempted with the idea of making the walls and floor a matte white and the ceiling a glossy black. Who knows how that would have turned out? But I prefer not to use saturated colours – I believe that they are incompatible with an architectural space.'

I stick my neck out, when I say that Antonino appears to lose his mental existential battle with himself. Inspite of his avowal of a design credo necessitating no 'signature', his work paradoxically stands apart in its use of light as a sculpturesque element. In the theatrically sculpted volumes of high vaulted roofs and large spaces which dwarf the viewer, the voluptuous curves in the asymmetrical layout, and the slow, mutable chiaroscuro of light and shadow which marks the passing of time, is perhaps where Antonino's 'signature' lies. At least for the present....

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