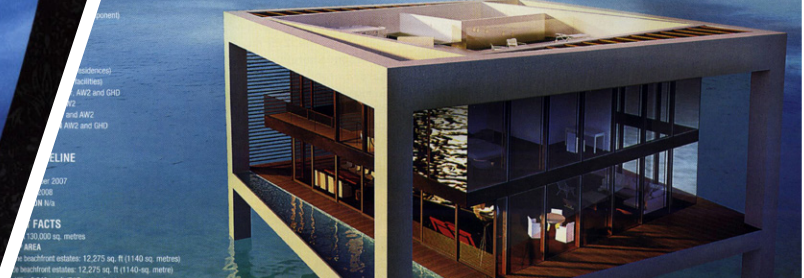


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# SOLITARY LIVING



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The desert island is close to you. It hides in relative isolation from the urban metropolis, a short boat or helicopter ride away. It sits in an orbit of clear waters and is ringed with pristine, sandy beaches; there is a complete lack of colonisation of its interior by either structures or buildings. Flora and fauna are sparse, gesturing to an equivalent in human interventions. It approximates the archetypal desert island of our childhood imagination, promising the luxury of peace and solitude. These impressions ground the basis of New York-based multidisciplinary design studio Dror's initial design concept for the Island Nurai development situated off the coast of Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the United Arab Emirates.

According to Dror Benshetrit, founder of Dror, the challenge lies in the resolution of the paradox between the preservation of the rare qualities captured in these initial reactions while at the same time claiming this outpost of solitude; the environment needs to accommodate the foremost amenities available to a nomadic, cosmopolitan and selective lifestyle for a discerning clientele integrated into the design without interrupting the fragility of the solitary experience.

"But, on an island of this size [130,000 sq. metres], how is it possible to realise a measure of solitude among a community of users?" ask Benshetrit. "Even with service amenities 'swept under the carpet' or 'screened behind the waterfall', the fact of other individuals interrupts the expectation of being languorously alone", he observes.

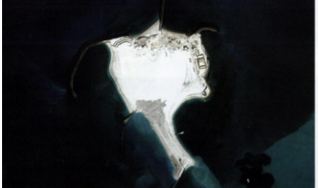
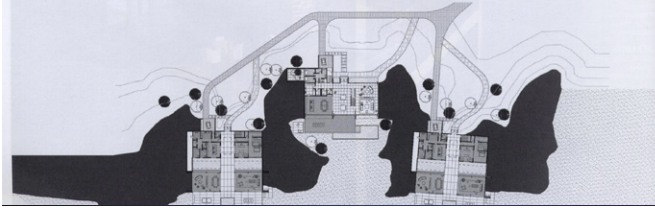
Thus, the immediate task faced by the architects is to establish limits and walls without their physical implementation. In the masterplan of the island, this is achieved by engineering the majority of possible view corridors from any point on the island to deflect the likelihood of visual or spatial overlaps through two key design solutions: by taking advantage of the natural givens and orientate all views whenever possible outwards towards the water expanse and the horizon; and changes in elevation are natural, gentler profiles of the wall - visual cones can be stacked, staggered or angled and manipulated so each seldom meet or coincide supplemented and made more elaborate by careful landscaping and arrangement of landscape elements.



The metaphor of the carpet serves well as an organisational tool principle for the island's programmes and components. The rolling landscape of the island is sculpted to outline form and assign responsibility to development that includes 31 residences on the shore and an additional 36 Water Villas and a host of amenities including a full suite resort, spa and fitness centre, three restaurants, private beaches, water sports facilities, a helipad and a marina with a welcome lounge. This landscape 'carpet', through rips, tears and peels, reveals moments that otherwise would have remained completely obscured; calculated breaches in the surface reposition points of view and referee streams of activity by subordinating it into the larger topographic framework. Having been laid, it associates all components visually and structurally including the two types of onshore estate conceptualised by Dror.

Using the carpet as a topographic and landscape device, the spaces of the 'Shoreline beachfront estates' are brought right up to the beach; their exterior elements revealing the carpet edges and changes in edge thickness and depth while maintaining privileged views of the water.

To be built on plots varying in size from 2,800 to 5,100 sq. metres, the 12,275 sq. ft (1,140-sq. metre), six-bedroom, seven-bathroom Shoreline beachfront estates include a private beach and garden, rooftop garden with spa pool, infinity swimming pool, indoor reflecting pools, concealed service quarters, entertainment patios, outdoor dining areas, chef and show kitchens and outdoor showers. >>>



The spatial programme of the Shoreline beachfront estates focuses on a strong central axis that separates domestic functions according to traditional domestic configurations. Two bar like spaces are pulled apart and bridged by a footpath placed over a pool of water. The courtyard pool, besides providing a band of tranquillity between the spatial divisions, also provides thermal and lighting properties that maintain a cooled pocket of air and reflect daytime light into the living spaces. The bar closer to the beach is a double-height space that is open-plan and flexible.

The division of the space into two bars creates a zone of indeterminacy in the heart of the estate that allows for elements of the carpet to weave through the structure and assert its continuity in and through the built components.

The 'Seaside beachfront estates' are set back from the beach and have the traditional advantage of canopies and foliage to ensure privacy. In their more enclosed location, the estates do not participate in defining the carpet edges but assist in definition by serving as a point of fixity within the landscape.

Again, positioned on plots varying in size from 3,000 sq. metres to 6,050 sq. metres, the 12,275 sq. ft (1,140-sq. metre), five-bedroom, six-bathroom Seaside beachfront estates include a private beach and garden, rooftop garden with spa pool, infinity swimming pool, indoor reflecting pools, concealed service quarters, entertainment patios, outdoor dining areas, chef and show kitchens and outdoor showers.

Internally, these residences are spatially organised around a central double-height volume while private and public domestic areas are divided between the floors. Interaction with the carpet occurs at the reflection pools located at the perimeters of the structure. Beyond the staging of light effects, the pools give autonomy to the boundaries of the residence, a feature that paradoxically highlights the encroachment of the carpet and its assertion of the natural.

Alternatively, the resort Water Villas offer an unparalleled over-water living experience. Hovering over the clear waters enveloping the island,



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