

Studio — Saxe

Press Release
Casa Bell-Lloc
March 2021

Casa Bell-Lloc



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TROPICAL CONCRETE HOUSE FRAMES OCEAN VIEWS IN COSTA RICA BEACH TOWN

Overview

Studio Saxe was commissioned to design a home perched on the hilltops of the town of Santa Teresa in Costa Rica. Due to the extreme pitch of the terrain, we decided to sink the private areas of bedrooms into the ground and thus allow the main living area to have the best expansive views on top with floating terraces and pool.

Benjamin G. Saxe founder and Design Director of Studio Saxe explains: "This project is a testament of how concrete can be used in Tropical Architecture to achieve low maintenance and longevity without losing openness and deep connections to nature beyond."

Location: Santa Teresa, Puntarenas, Costa Rica

Date of completion: November 2020

Client: Fran Machado and Niko Voorspoels

Area: Approx. 500m²

Studio Saxe Design Director: Benjamin G. Saxe

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Concept

In order to adapt to the topographic conditions, Studio Saxe decided to “push” the house into the ground thus creating the illusion of a one-story house from the street and only revealing its true size once inside. A series of concrete walls shield the house and disguise what will later become a powerful choreographed entrance reveal of the pool and ocean beyond.

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Design

By keeping the public living spaces above and the more intimate bedrooms below, Studio Saxe used the innate characteristics provided by the site to determine the use of spaces. Every space that touches the ground is more solid and enclosed, and in contrast every space above ground is open and ephemeral. A long overarching roof line protects the house and frames a feature entrance pool that cantilevers over the jungle.



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Construction

The clients of this home were clear from the beginning that they wanted most of the home to be built in concrete for longevity, less maintenance, and thermal mass during the hot months of the year. The challenge was to also create open spaces in the living areas with long span concrete beams and a light roof that allows for cross ventilation during the rainy and humid months of the year. The result is a series of retaining walls below that house private spaces and beams and columns above that open to the majestic ocean view.

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Sustainability

As we develop the language of architecture at Studio Saxe, we understand that the impact of construction methods and materials is a big factor in the maintenance and longevity of a building in the tropics. This house sets a new direction where a modern long-lasting material like concrete can be profusely used throughout without losing basic bioclimatic principles of tropical design such as long roof eaves, cross ventilation, water collection, and many more.



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Builder: Jose Francisco Vásquez Navarro

Structural Engineer: Sotela Alfaro LTD

Electromechanical Engineer: CIEM

Photography: Andres Garcia Lachner

— About us

Benjamin G. Saxe set up his own practice in San Jose, Costa Rica in 2004, with the aim of exploring our relationship with the natural environment through architecture. Since then, Studio Saxe has grown into an award-winning international practice made up of a multidisciplinary team, creating buildings and spaces by blending technological innovation with handcrafted techniques to form truly sustainable designs. Founded on the belief that buildings must connect to their landscape – whether a tropical paradise or a concrete jungle – Studio Saxe brings a global attitude to solve local problems. Ideas and techniques from around the world can be harnessed to benefit communities, both at home and abroad. Local traditions and identities are explored and developed, ensuring a process whereby we learn from the past and build for the future.

The dedicated architects and designers at Studio Saxe uncover new design solutions for every project, treating each building as an opportunity to improve methods and approaches, responding to specific places. Working alongside clients and collaborators, the studio continually seeks new forms and functions that blur the boundaries between natural habitats and inhabited space.

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