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“Organic buildings are the strength and lightness of the spiders’ spinning, buildings qualified by light, bred by native character to environment, married to the ground.”

Frank Lloyd Wright

Many of the most interesting architectural structures emerge as a direct response to their environment. Frank Lloyd Wright, considered by many the father of modern architecture, advocated what he described as an ‘organic’ approach, eschewing the established ‘classical’ styles to which his contemporaries were attached, in favour of one that drew inspiration directly from the site.

This symbiosis between natural and built environments has long guided the Balinese; their family compounds, built around garden courtyards, reflect the sacred topography of the island and their unique cosmology, a blend of Hinduism and ancestor worship. Even beds are specifically orientated so that the head faces northward, towards the sacred volcano, Gunung Agung. A deep understanding of the challenges posed by Bali’s equatorial climate is reflected both in the use of materials and

THE RICE FIELDS

The Wabi

Gfab Architects

"We like the idea of invisible architecture..." says Hetta Thyne of Gfab Architects, the firm set up by noted English architect Gary Fell. Wabi is a new development comprising nine villas amidst the rice fields of Umalas, a popular and picturesque area close to Seminyak. "Our challenge was to give the villa owners as much feeling of space and privacy (as possible) on a relatively small plot, yet allow the building to tie into the environment as if it were carved from the site." This is precisely what Gfab did, using rocks quarried from the adjacent river to build the villas' walls, placing them in strata layers. The flat roofs feature grass and water, echoing the surrounding paddies; moreover, because the villas are stepped downward, following the natural topography of the site, neighbouring buildings appear as extensions of the villa's garden. "You'll always have neighbours; one of our challenges was to make the neighbours disappear," says Hetta. Gfab have achieved this on a 4.5 are plot, providing each villa with a 15 metre pool, with extensive

gardens and lawn space. "The villas are an extrusion of the site... a migrating bird might not realise we were there," Hetta concludes.

www.gfabarchitects.com



a 'rejuvenation' approach, where homes and temples are continually renovated, usually with a consistent standard of artistry.

Modern architects have found in Bali a manifold topographical terrain with which to work and while the island has its fair share of generic villa developments, it also boasts some of the most architecturally innovative resorts and stand-alone homes in the world. Environmental and climatic challenges encourage architects to push the envelope, transforming potential problems into advantages.

Here, HOT! Property looks at four projects that reflect the diversity of Bali's landscape. We ask the architects about the specific conditions each locale presented and how they engaged with them.

