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AERIE

Complex Taj Rishikesh Resort & Spa

Rishikesh, India
yh2

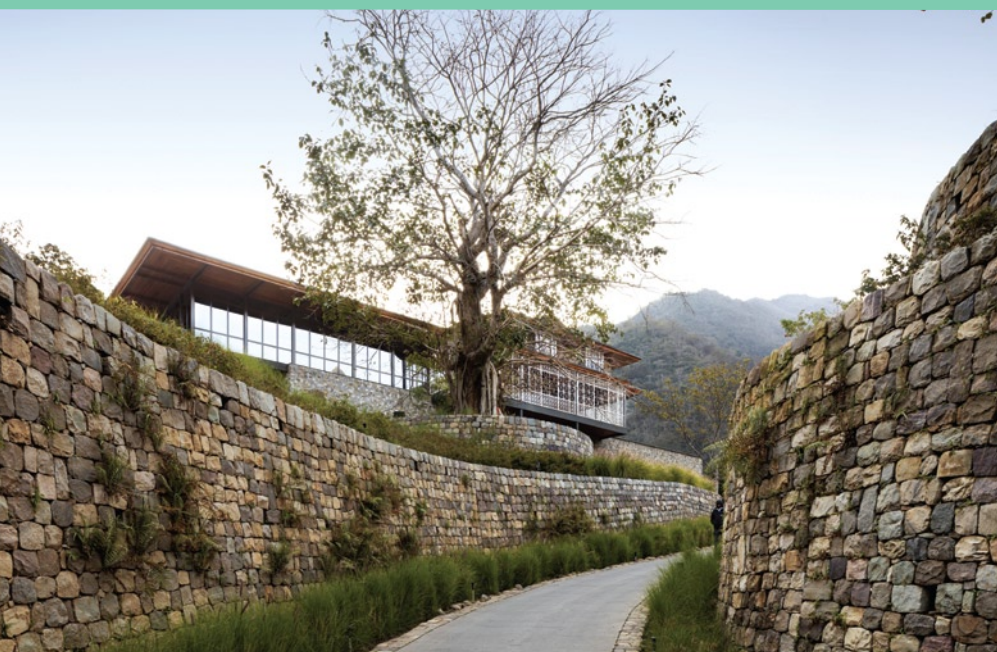
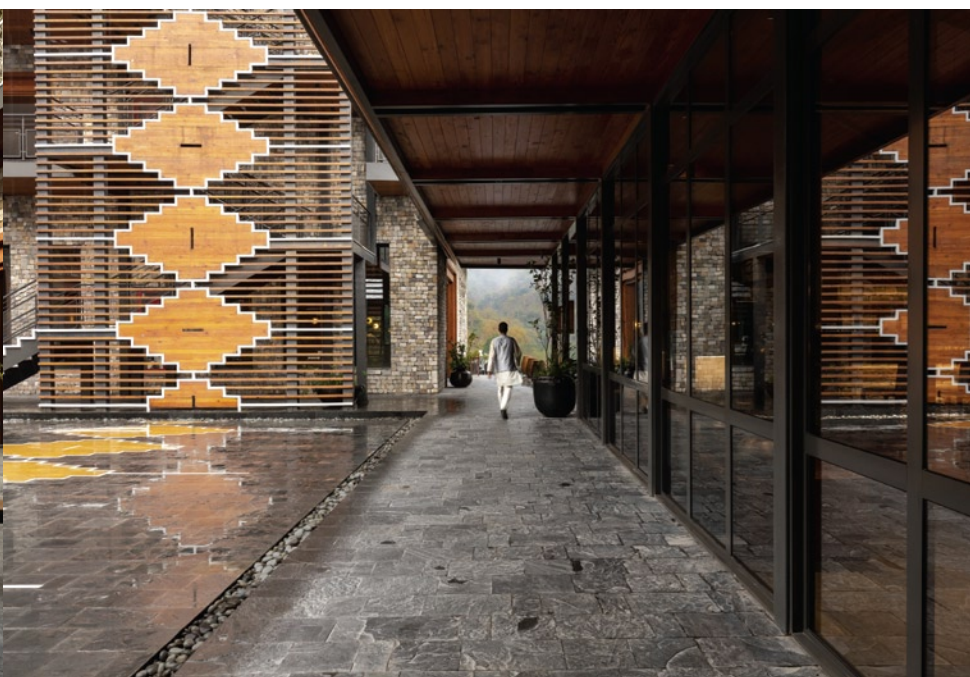
Photography by Maxime Brouillet

Set amid spectacular hills overlooking the Ganges river gorge some 250 km from New Delhi, this spa and resort complex by Montreal-based yh2 is a sensitive intervention inspired by local historical building traditions. The site is the star, without question, but that only ramped up the pressure on the design team to do it some justice. Based on vernacular typologies of *Darbargadh* residences, which housed rajas, a principal building is centred among outlying minor villas and structures. At the heart of this is an enclosed courtyard, which centuries ago provided protection for occupants against occasional outward threats. So the essential components are both inward-focussed and outward-viewing - it's hard to look away from those views.

The main hotel block holds the reception, dining, lounge, boutique, library and gathering spaces, whilst the villas spread out from this across the hill, developed as pavilions offering secluded privacy. Stone walls and terraced walkways link the resort. Stone, timber, steel and concrete combine to structure the buildings, all used with a nod to indigenous construction techniques, even when modern materials are substituted. This results in a forceful building envelope that is nonetheless casually elegant; luxury here is understated, expressed in the permanence of materials rather than their sparkle, and in the generous proportions and flowing spatial experience. The stone facades are capped with pitched roofs with deep overhangs. Many of the smaller structures are finished in white stucco.

At a lower hillside shelf sits the spa and swimming pool area, with close views of the Ganges passing nearby. There is even a small beach for those ready to dip in the storied waterway. The project is of quiet character and longterm quality. It aims to respect a place of exceptional natural beauty.





SQUARES

TEO Center for Culture, Art and Content Herzliya, Israel A. Lerman Architects

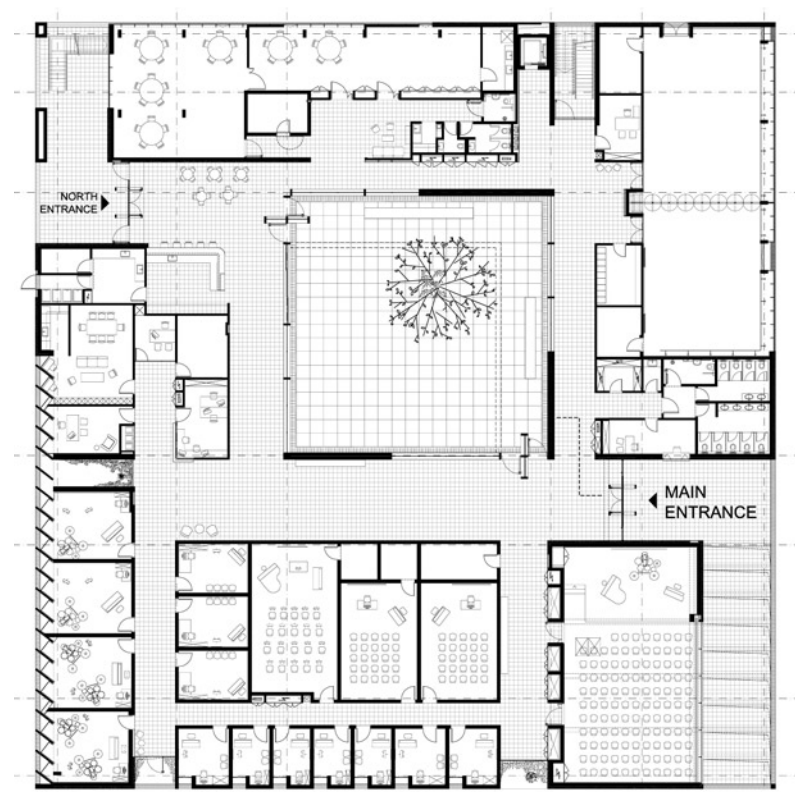
Photography by Nimrod Levy

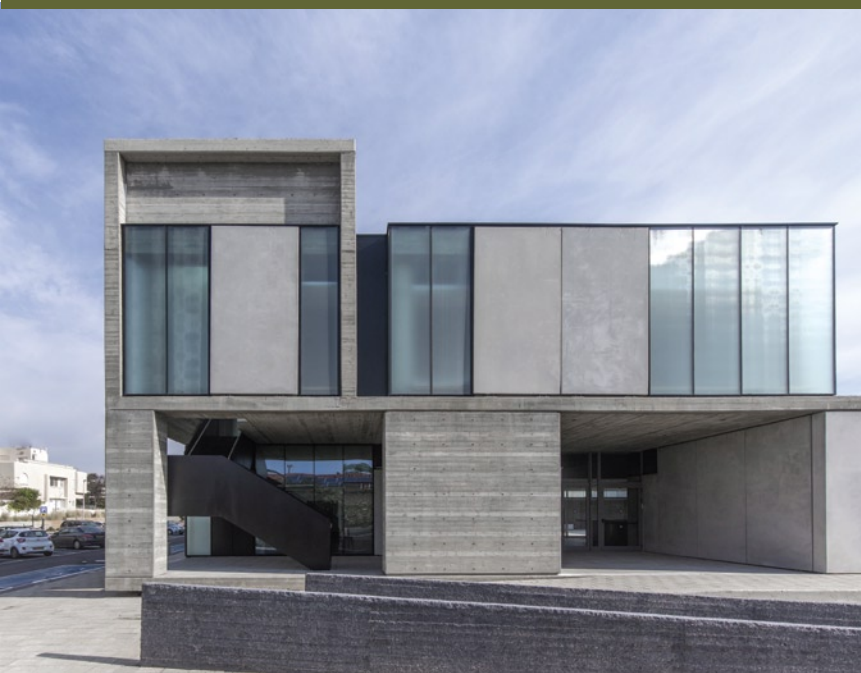


This community cultural centre for arts is set amid private villas near the sea, and it establishes a distinct identity through its planning and architectural form. Basically a large square in plan, organised around an open courtyard space that can be accessed for events, the building is deliberately low-rise - a single storey for the most part - and set back from the main avenue behind a lawn. Its programme includes art and ceramics studios, a music conservatory and dance school, exhibition galleries, a cafeteria and a recreation centre for seniors. The centre's library occupies a single second-storey wing, opening onto a roof terrace.

Geometry plays a core role in the design scheme: strong orthogonality rules the parti. And concrete is the dominant material used, both structurally and as finish surface. The imagery is powerful, slightly defensive, permanent; this seems a building bent on staying here for a long time, and protecting its occupants and their activities. Textured and translucent glass is prominent. Even the courtyard is largely hard-surfaced, with light landscaping added. The external facades are compositionally interesting and attractive - proportions enhance the combinations of panels in glass or concrete, with shadowed voids participating equally. The centre has the forcefulness of Brutalism, but thanks to scale and moderation, the 2500 sqm TEO is more welcoming and outwardly open.

The internal spaces are spare, generously scaled and pragmatic, often bathed in ample natural light. This is a place serious about its role and determined to get on with it. And the building plays some visual tricks with scale, seeming at some angles to be grand, thanks to its formal language, yet quite humble in actual size when viewed against nearby villas or from the air. In that sense it is a neighbourhood, not national, institution. The duality serves it well.





SIBLINGS

Oslo Residential Complex

Oslo, Norway

Reiulf Ramstad Arkitekter

Photography by Ivar Kvaal and Reiulf Ramstad Arkitekter



A three-block array of white masonry palazzi that combine different apartment configurations makes a quiet statement about tradition and context in Oslo. Surrounded by much older buildings, the scheme set out to be respectful, staking its contemporary bona fides in whispers not shouts. Subtle clues such as discreet projections of square bay windows, glass balustrades or minimalist frames cohere in the tryptic, but the overall impression is almost neo-classical. The facades are clad in handmade bricks of rough finish, lending the project a higher craft element that works very nicely with the metal window frames and

large plates of glass. Inside, things stay politely luxurious - a standout is the twisting wood staircase rising up an internal courtyard atrium. Oak, polished concrete, fine fixtures and fittings complete the picture. Whilst the scheme reads strongly as a set, the blocks increase slightly in height toward the largest, set on the corner of the plot, and sporting ground level commercial space to mark its more public aspect. Each of the buildings raises its top floor in height, lending the proportions of the elevations some quiet flair. This trio makes a handsome family.

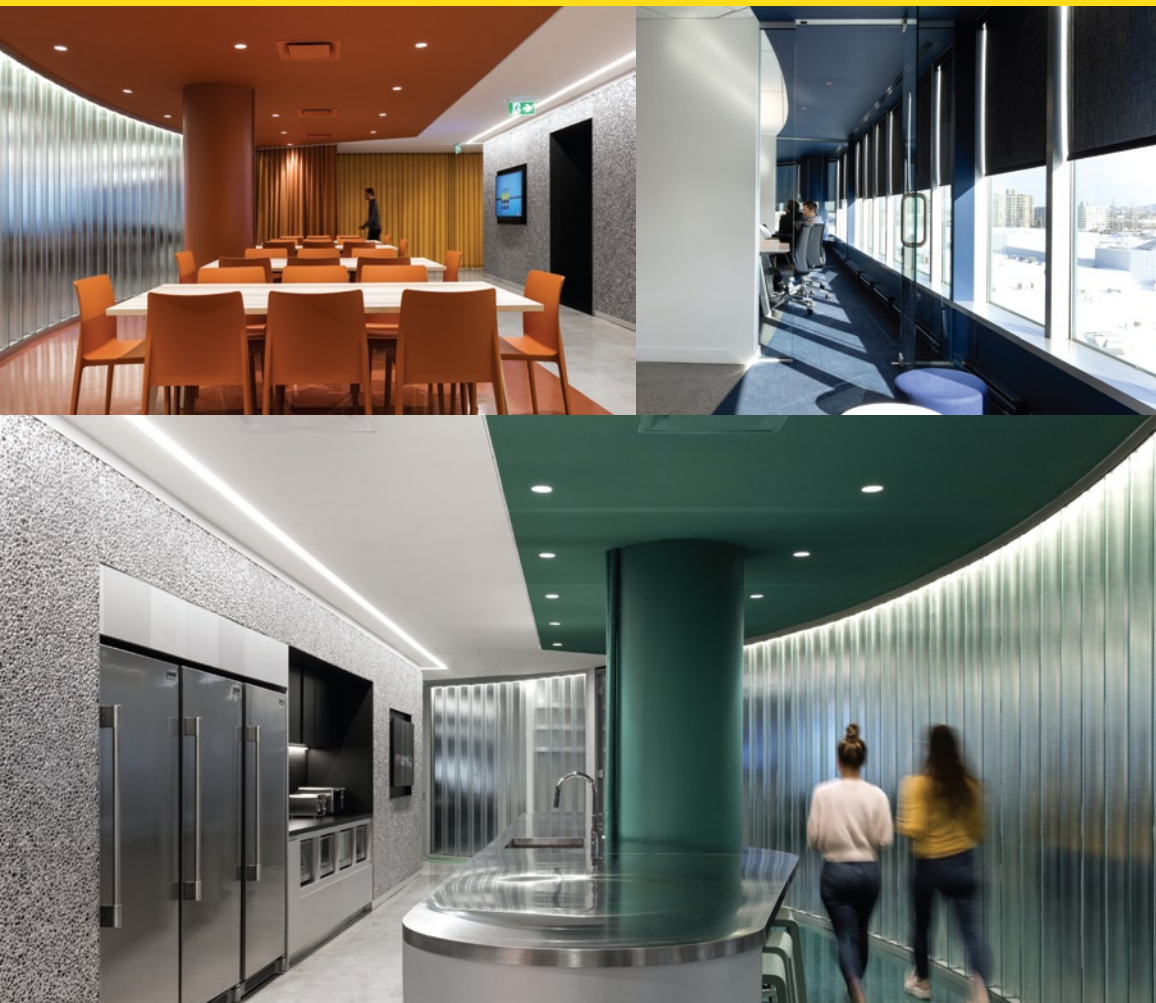


NO TURBULANCE

FlightHub

Montreal, Canada
ACDF Architecture

Photography by Maxime Brouillet



Are we growing weary of tech-leaning office interiors? All the bright splashes of colour, hotel-worthy pantries, cutsey napping pods and under-used foosball tables? Well, depends who designs them. Just because a trend in a design genre takes hold and doesn't let go, doesn't discredit it per se; the best design firms merely have to up the ante each time. ACDF doesn't do things second rate, and this Montreal HQ for the travel company FlightHub is sophisticated across its 13,000 sqft. The scheme introduced three themes: Technology, Travel and Tribes, but they are indirectly readable in the final outing. In fact, the office is decidedly understated, as if made to last a while, which, given this year's assault on the travel industry as a whole, might now seem ambitious.

There's a very subtle 'retro' vibe to the place. Colours such as jade green and earthy brown-orange feel like they've been revived from the early Sixties, which in turn feels like a nod to the era when air travel blossomed into a familiar but still romantic reality. The plan is logical and eases open circulation. Needs for privacy or quiet meetings are met through translucent glass partitions curved like airplane wings. The overall plan shape of an octagon offering abundant perimeter glass views and light makes the space feel like a traffic control tower. It's all straightforward and competent and avoids things that will date or seem forced. A light but firm hand on the controls, one might say. ACDF has piloted this one for a smooth landing.