

THE BEST IN INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AND DECORATION

HOUSE & GARDEN[®]

SEPTEMBER

2011

£3.90



SARAH RAVEN'S
plants for colour

**Between a London
houseboat and
a Cornish cove**

- a designer's life

SMART IDEAS

**CLEVER
DESIGNS
FOR SMALL
SPACES**

**WOODEN
FLOORING
TO SUIT YOUR
BUDGET**

**DECORATOR'S
NOTEBOOK
- THE BEST
OF THE NEW**

**SORT IT OUT
- STYLISH
STORAGE
SOLUTIONS**



THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Sculptures by Hidetoshi Nagasawa are placed both inside the house and in the surrounding gardens. A hall links the new sitting-room pavilion to the main house. Light pours in through a glass door and bounces off the wall. Each interior space has a view out to the garden. Wooden walkways fork towards different vistas. There is a water garden between the sitting room and its surrounding cedar-pole screen. The airy living space is open plan and painted white to maximise the light. Vegetation mingles with a Nagasawa sculpture placed on the exterior of the house (centre). OPPOSITE The cedar screen that surrounds the pavilion filters the sunlight



SHADOW PLAY



The architect of this villa in Puglia wrapped an unremarkable house in a wooden screen and added a glass pavilion, blurring the boundary between inside and out in a dramatic counterpoint of light and shade



THIS single-storey villa, in the countryside outside Casarano, south-east Italy, has been transformed from a very ordinary-looking house into something strikingly modern and considered, blending art and architecture and inside and out in imaginative ways. Demolition, which would have been the easiest approach, was rejected; instead, architect Toti Semerano decided to take what was there as his starting point. The original building was enveloped in a new wrapping – a screen of white-oak planks that completely redefines and unifies the façade, while also acting as a support

for vegetation that is allowed to grow through it and become part of the architecture.

The relationship between the building and its environment has been subverted. 'I let the place speak to me and tell me how I should intervene,' says Toti. 'The new must be subservient to the established character of the place. To create a dialogue between the living space and the external landscape one must allow nature to dictate the rules. A close connection with the outside was the primary aim of this harmonious and relaxing space.' The house is set within a luxuriant garden where paths 'fork like tree branches,

breaking up the garden in many different vistas'. Every room looks on to a tiny private garden, each with its own colours and scents.

The sitting room is contained within a new pavilion, linked by the hall to the rest of the house. Its interior blends dramatically with the garden – there are no walls, only a long curved window of glass and a ceiling that appears to float, supported by overhead beams that rest on virtually invisible supports. Surrounding the glass is a semi-transparent screen of cedar poles that filters the light and, when it rains, scents the air. It also encloses a water garden that wraps

‘To create a dialogue between the living space and the external landscape one must allow nature to dictate the rules’



The pavilion is encased by a curved glass wall, and topped by a ‘floating’ ceiling supported by overhead beams. White furniture and accessories, including sofas by De Padova and lights by Artemide, enhance its spacious, airy feel



THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PICTURE
 A decorative screen can be drawn to hide the kitchen from the dining area. Gauzy bed hangings give the main bedroom a romantic air. The spare room opens on to a private terrace. The main bathroom has a large Jacuzzi and Antonio Lupi basins.



round the curved sitting room, further dissolving the boundaries between inside and out.

'There is a special quality to the light here,' says the Paduan architect, who set up his practice in Puglia because he was fascinated by this same light's sharp intensity. 'It transforms the dimensions and weight of every material.' In this house, it is admitted through slits and openings precisely positioned for the purpose; it streams in through windows and diffuses through openings in the roof; it pierces the interior through doors and fissures; it pours through long corridors, bouncing off the interior walls, which direct and reflect it.

The gravity-defying works of Japanese sculptor Hidetoshi Nagasawa are found both inside and outside the house, forming an integral part of its design. Fittingly, Hidetoshi's motto is that 'good design resembles nature' □

Toti Semerano: www.semerano.com



THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The new house blends harmoniously with its surroundings. Its modern look is a marked contrast to its appearance before the renovation. The garden furniture on the terrace is by Richard Schultz for B&B Italia. Another Nagasawa sculpture is incorporated in the exterior screen. A small study has full-height garden views. A tree can be seen through a window in the screen (centre)

