



TAKING IT ABROAD

Irish architects have not only made their mark at home, but have also created masterpieces in holiday locations, drawing on location, light and landscape. One project stands out for Sandra Andrea O'Connell

Working from their studio in Dublin's Liberties, de Blacam and Meagher Architects (www.deblacamandmeagher.com) have become internationally renowned for their bespoke villas in Mediterranean settings - from the island of Ibiza to the French coast and Spanish hillside. Their new villa at San Lorenzo, in the exclusive Quinta do Lago resort in the Algarve, draws on traditional Portuguese and Mediterranean architecture. While the house appears decidedly modern, it takes inspiration from local tradition, such as the simple

white cubic volumes of the Algarve's hillside Moorish villages. The white walls of this villa contrast with the deep blue sky and the soft green contours of the landscape of the neighbouring golf course. The strong Mediterranean light projects shadows of the surrounding pine trees onto the white forms, animating the house with plays of light.

A private entrance gives way to a generous double-height living room, which features as its focal point a curvaceous fireplace that is inspired by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto. The open-plan living space is contained in the largest cube and connects in an L-shape with a lower volume that houses the kitchen and dining space. The master bedroom

suite, complete with a private terrace, is at first floor level, while three guest bedrooms have been tucked into the contours of the sloping site below. All rooms bring their own relationship with the outdoors. The en-suite guest bedrooms, for example, have been positioned to face east to capture the morning sun and open into small white-washed private courtyards, where light plays on the walls.

The most dramatic aspect of this villa is the tall and elegant portico that surrounds the living spaces on the pool and garden side. The covered terraces link the indoor living spaces with an outdoor kitchen and dining area. It is in this seamless transition between indoor and outdoor living that the San Lorenzo villa succeeds so exceptionally well. The architects have carried the same materials through,



The clever design of this house means there are calm, spacious communal areas and areas for total privacy - which make it the perfect house for entertaining guests. The link between inside and out is elegantly made with the use of just a few unified materials.

such as the smooth Portuguese limestone flooring and the earthy terracotta roof tiles, which are a traditional feature in Mediterranean architecture. Their strong earthy red colour also reflects the redness of the soil outside and roots this house in its place. ■

