



Interior Architecture Award for Residential Projects: Forward Architects

Forward Architects were presented with the residential interior award for their work on a villa in Birguma, resulting in a bright, sophisticated family home.

“When the clients approached us to take over as architects of their villa in Birguma, construction of the property had just about reached completion,” explains Michael Pace, Partner at Forward Architects, adding that the clients also requested that Forward re-work the exterior look and feel, and to take on the design of all interior and exterior spaces from scratch.

“The clients, a family unit, had a clear idea of the lifestyle they wanted their future residence to accommodate. They trusted the professional opinion of the architect and were quick and clear with their feedback,” he maintains, affirming that the team’s first challenge was remodelling the exterior appearance of the house.

With the client’s trust, the architects were able to carry out discreet changes to the architectural form of the building and radically transform its appearance using bold volumes and an acute attention to detail. “The front façade was transformed through the modification of volumes and elimination of all external apertures other than the main door of the house. The introduction of an insulating layer onto the façades provided a useful additional skin to the walls, enabling

the creation of new visual proportions and custom housing for fully openable single leaf sliding external apertures,” he describes.

The team chose white plaster and slate as the material of choice for the façade, with the slate repeated in the external paved areas and planters. “The result is a monotone emphasis on simplicity, materiality and proportion.”

The general layout of the house was the second challenge, Perit Pace reveals. “A very particular lifestyle on the part of the client led the designers to distance themselves from the more obvious kitchen/living/dining area that they would have taken almost for granted, in exchange for a living area that was physically separated from the kitchen/breakfast area,” he says, affirming that the living area was shifted to the lower level of the house - a floor reserved specifically for entertainment and work, as well as housing client-specific spaces such as a gaming area, study, gym and cinema room.

This provided for an upper floor dedicated solely to cooking, eating and sleeping. “The oversized kitchen/breakfast area has every piece of equipment and gadget only a keen

cook could hope for,” he maintains, adding that “the master bedroom, possibly the most unique room in the house, hovers over the swimming pool, complete with ensuite and 20 square metre wardrobe.”

Finally, the third and major challenge was the interior design. “The house has been technically equipped with the most advanced installations, including underfloor heating, PV panels and fully integrated smart home automation. This all needed to be housed and kept discreet within a visually minimalist interior, requiring meticulous detailing and coordination,” Michael maintains. As with the external areas, the architects kept the materials to a minimum, comprising mainly concrete floors, white walls and simple light wooden joinery, with exceptions in areas like the master bedroom and kitchen, where a dark slate floor replaces the concrete, and dark tones and custom wooden panelling single out the space from the look and feel of the rest of the house.



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Hospitality Tourism Accommodation and Leisure Award: Forward Architects

Forward Architects received a second award on the night for their design of Rosselli, a five-star boutique hotel in Valletta.

AX Rosselli is a lifestyle hotel located within a 17th century palazzo in Malta's capital. The hotel offers 25 rooms, each belonging to one of six unique design collections. The collections pick on different settings to create a particular mood. "An element of design timelessness is achieved as fashion and current trends are side-lined and mood becomes the main driver of the design. The result is an eclectic fusion of styles resulting in a bold, whimsical atmosphere that aims to stir emotion," explains Michael Pace, Partner at Forward Architects.

Describing the materials used as undeniably contemporary with an artisanal emphasis," Perit Pace notes the use of composite marble flooring, mosaics and terrazzo, which co-exist with intricate wood panelling and hand-crafted brass inlays. "Furniture and furnishings follow an equivalent passion for craftsmanship, with

a clear preference for tailored details and reworked design icons from past masters. This is further enriched with a top layer of bold patterns and geometrical fabrics. The result is an unapologetic and uncompromised nod to the baroque context setting within which it exists, so much so that it would feel out of place anywhere else," he describes.

Speaking of what made the project stand out in its category, the architect believes that the Rosselli was a strong contender because the team managed to successfully accommodate the complex operations of a five-star hotel within the existing palazzo. "This was quite a challenge from a spatial point of view," he admits, adding that every detail was meticulously mapped out to ensure a seamless interface between the back and front of house, whilst respecting all heritage, safety and sanitary concerns. "Any accretions and alterations that had been implemented over the years were removed to expose and celebrate the original architecture of the building. Once we had succeeded in this, we focused on making a powerful interior statement. Our design aims were to create something that is bold, strong and evokes emotion."

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Photos by Jeremy Debattista

