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# METRO Society



*Two-Cover Exclusive*

Powerful Women:  
Gina Lopez and Vera Wang

*Holiday Issue*  
**Gina Lopez**

This fearless philanthropist uses her passion  
for protecting the environment to pave the  
way for change in the country

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P 250









# Villa

## BY THE SEA

by METRO SOCIETY STAFF

photographs by NADIM ASFAR and MARWAN HARMOUCHE

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and BLANKPAGE ARCHITECTS + KARIM NADER STUDIO

The family living area opens up to a spectacular view of the sea. The owners wanted a minimal level of obstruction between themselves and the environment.



Villa Kali in Lebanon, designed by Blankpage Architects and Karim Nader Studio, makes the most of its stunning beachfront location by maximizing lines of sight to the sea



**V**illa Kali is situated in front of the Mediterranean Sea, on the coast of Lebanon, in the town of Mounsef, north of Beirut. The site is close to the ancient seaport city of Byblos, one of the oldest continuously inhabited towns in the world and one of the most ancient Phoenician cities.

Architects Patrick Mezher and Walid Ghantous (Blankpage Architects) and Karim Nader (Karim Nader Studio) have been working on the project for this luxury beachfront mansion for almost four years, designing every single detail of a house that reinterprets a series of environmental aspects of the site: the sunshine, the air, the rock formation of the coastline on which it sits. The vision is to construct without any unnecessary mediation other than the perpetual sound of waves crashing onto the shore.

The house, inspired by the nearby rock formations in its composition of overlapping levels, refers to the layout of traditional homes where rooms are grouped around a courtyard. The courtyard here opens up completely towards the sea, the two side volumes set at an angle that allows them to embrace as wide a horizon as possible, nature flowing through them. In this sense, the topography and the rock formations of the coastline continue ideally within the house; the sea

itself is very much part of this residence, as water and the salty breeze dialogue with the stratification of its architectural elements.

Villa Kali has a total surface area of 2,000 square meters and consists of two volumes opening towards the sea in a V-shape with connecting bridges. The two side wings direct people's gaze towards the Mediterranean through an ample staircase that leads from the garage to a reception area, in the very core of the house. Around this more public area, that may be sheltered or totally opened up to the elements by means of a sliding glass door system, are the living room, the bar, the gym, the kitchen. From the reception area, one may step out onto the terrace, walk towards the pool, descend towards the beach. The two upper floors contain 11 bedroom suites, each with views of the shoreline and the water, and other living rooms. A suspended terrace at the ground floor facilitates circulation between the two wings. A garden roof completes the composition.

It is a four-year effort that involved collaborations with numerous designers and contractors that truly inspired the renewal of the possibility of architecture as a total work of art. Revisiting the traditional oriental home in a seaside setting—a house with several bedrooms that surround an open courtyard with a water fountain—this version of the concept is achieved through splitting the volumes into two horizontal





**Left:** Standing on the central roof bridge with unimpeded views to the sea and overlooking the pool garden below.

**Below:** Villa entrance: Guided from the parking towards the central courtyard by water features.



movements that open up towards the Mediterranean, allowing for uninterrupted sea views to all spaces of the house. The external void revealed by this split of the volumes reveals a cascading spine with a terraced staircase and water pools that gently fall down from the entrance level all the way to the seaside garden via the bridging reception area. The glazing system in the reception can slide away completely, creating a cross-ventilated outdoor covered space that can be inhabited across seasons in the pleasantness of the shade.

The architectural language of the house is inspired by the stratification of the nearby rock formation on the shore, at once graphic and dramatic. The language articulates a series of superposed horizontal planes, thin and extending. Every one of those planes becomes the support for a variety of programs: a lower public level at once internal and external, houses the reception areas, gym area, and outdoor pool terraces all the way to the shore. The two upper levels house a multitude of bedrooms, with family living areas on both levels and a spectacular mid-space suspended terrace equally open to the back garden and the horizon on the seaside. The final layer of this horizontal composition extends the circulation all the way to the roofs in the form of suspended gardens and outdoor terraces.

"The process of designing, constructing, and inhabiting the house has been exciting for us all: architects and owners. As designers, we responded

to our clients' request for a light-filled beach house that would be spacious enough to accommodate large parties and gatherings. We experimented with a surprising interplay of interior and exterior space, taking full advantage of the site and topography. The residents very much enjoyed following the entire homebuilding process and are now ready to take full advantage of their elegant yet exuberant home, built for entertaining large groups of friends," says architect Karim Nader.

"The most important lifestyle components of the villa, which we elevated to the major organizing features in the project, are the terrace pool and the courtyard. One continuous glass wall, spanning over 10 meters, connects the reception area with the pool, the beach, the shimmering waters of the Mediterranean Sea and beyond. The courtyard brings in additional light to the gym on the ground floor," says architect Patrick Mezher of Blankpage Architects.

"The openness to the surrounding landscape was very important for our clients. They wanted a minimal level of obstruction between themselves and the environment. We responded to their requests with an open-plan arrangement for the house with rooms that capitalize on views, sunlight, and wind exposure. You can smell the salt-kissed breeze passing through the rooms," says architect Walid Ghantous of Blankpage Architects. 📍









**Opposite page:**  
Villa entrance: immersion  
in the landscape, water  
features, and projecting  
slabs.

**Left:**  
Framing sea and sky:  
central courtyard  
cascading down towards  
common reception  
area and all the way to  
the sea.

**Below:**  
Roof level close-up:  
external staircase leading  
to roof lounge and  
garden.







**Above:** Second floor master suite B: transparency towards the sea and total fluidity between external terraces and internal spaces.  
**Right:** Volume A entrance close-up: balancing the natural and the mineral. Water-lily pond and greenery versus stratification of volumes.







**Top right:** Framing the Mediterranean sunset at magic hour.

**Right:** A second floor master suite A: interplay between inside/outside and smooth flow of spaces and materials on a white canvas.