

A WHITE HOUSE


Arch. Harsha Fernando

This house is the architect's solution to create a pleasant environment in the chaotic neighbourhood by the appropriate use of the modernist simplicity.

Modern architecture and urban planning derived inspiration from the machine to house an industrial society. Many reactions to modernism since the 60's have sought inspiration from pre industrial townscapes. The success of the urban architecture can be argued in both ways, either it is Venturi's complexity or Jane Jacobs social and 'mixuse' or Camillio Sitte's medieval townscapes or the new-urbanist cultures against the modernist's designs. But the issue we face in our towns is the neighbourhood and the social level which governs the values







and attitudes of our neighbours. It is evident that Colombo has a very limited pleasant neighbourhoods compared to the developed world.

The modern lines of the exterior gives this building an order in the chaotic context which yet sits without an overriding character but one could count this as a design landmark. The sides to the roads is a plain wall façade, impermeable and exclusive, and the entrance to the by road is the only feature which protrudes from the plain wall façade. Its pure symmetrical forms can be read simply as the result of functional responses but appears to have deeper significance.





This inverted house consists of many garden courtyards between the façade walls and creates an open house internally confirming to the recurring theme of duality of openness and closeness, including the wanted and excluding the unwanted, in an ideal urban concept in the tropics. Ideally this is a place of retreat or refuge from the increasingly chaotic and polluted Colombo's urban environment.

Duality in the planning arrangement gives openness and direct access to garden courtyards internally with a closed and exclusive appearance presented on its public face. Functionally, the house form and the garden courtyards keeps away the noise, pollution, dust and the heat generated from the busy urban roads.

The house form and details is a significant example of a globalisation approach to tropical architecture beyond tiled pitched roofs and sun shades ●

