

SICILIAN 'DOLCEVITA'

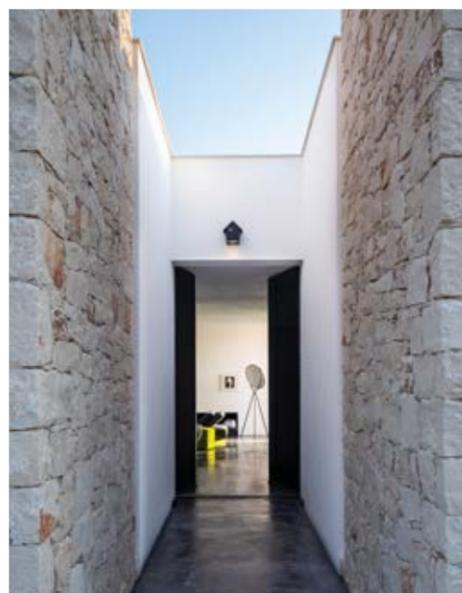
A **setting for living** of dry masonry walls and pure volumes in a citrus grove, in dialogue with the Mediterranean brush, the horizon open to the sea, the **lights** and **shadows** of **Vendicari**

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The infinity pool made with volcanic stone, the brise-soleil canopy in white coated steel, and the orange trees of the domestic garden. Amidst the trees, a Farniente hammock by Paola Lenti. Lights by iGuzzini emphasize the volumes of the house in relation to the garden and the citrus grove.



Above, the path from the parking area to the entrance of the villa, surrounded by age-old Mediterranean brush. Marco Merendi has inserted the greenery into the project, thanks to the precious contribution of landscape designer Ivan Gallo. Right, detail of the entrance: other stone walls, in dry masonry, and the white stucco walls of the villa. Over the custom door in black sheet metal, the Imu lamp by **Daide Groppi**.



An open, luminous, organized vacation home, made with simple architectural features deployed in a complex manner, drawing maximum benefit from the parts woven horizontally and vertically, inside and outside, between light and shadow, rugged and smooth. A house conceived in terms of contrasts, an alternation of openings, glimpses and views towards the landscape of Vedicari, enclosed by massive stone walls like a bastion of a fortified citadel: the white, precise construction of the villa.

Oppositions, but also illusions, because the enclosure wall, which marks an abrupt, continuous margin towards the arrival zone, is broken into fragments on the other sides, like the forceful remains of an archaeological dig, allowing the boundary between garden and countryside to become blurred and almost vanish. The rugged walls, in dry masonry of local stone, face the brushland of age-old mastics, typical Mediterranean shrubs, which the new architecture has conserved. The horizons open to the countryside are a poetic pause, which in the short curved route between the parking area and the house offer a compendium of the smells and colors of Sicilian nature. Along this short pathway one reaches the entrance: a deep breach, almost a vague Mycenaean remnant, that pierces the thickness of the walls bent in an 'L' towards the inside, leading into the pleasantly shady space of the house. From a setting dominated by the ochre

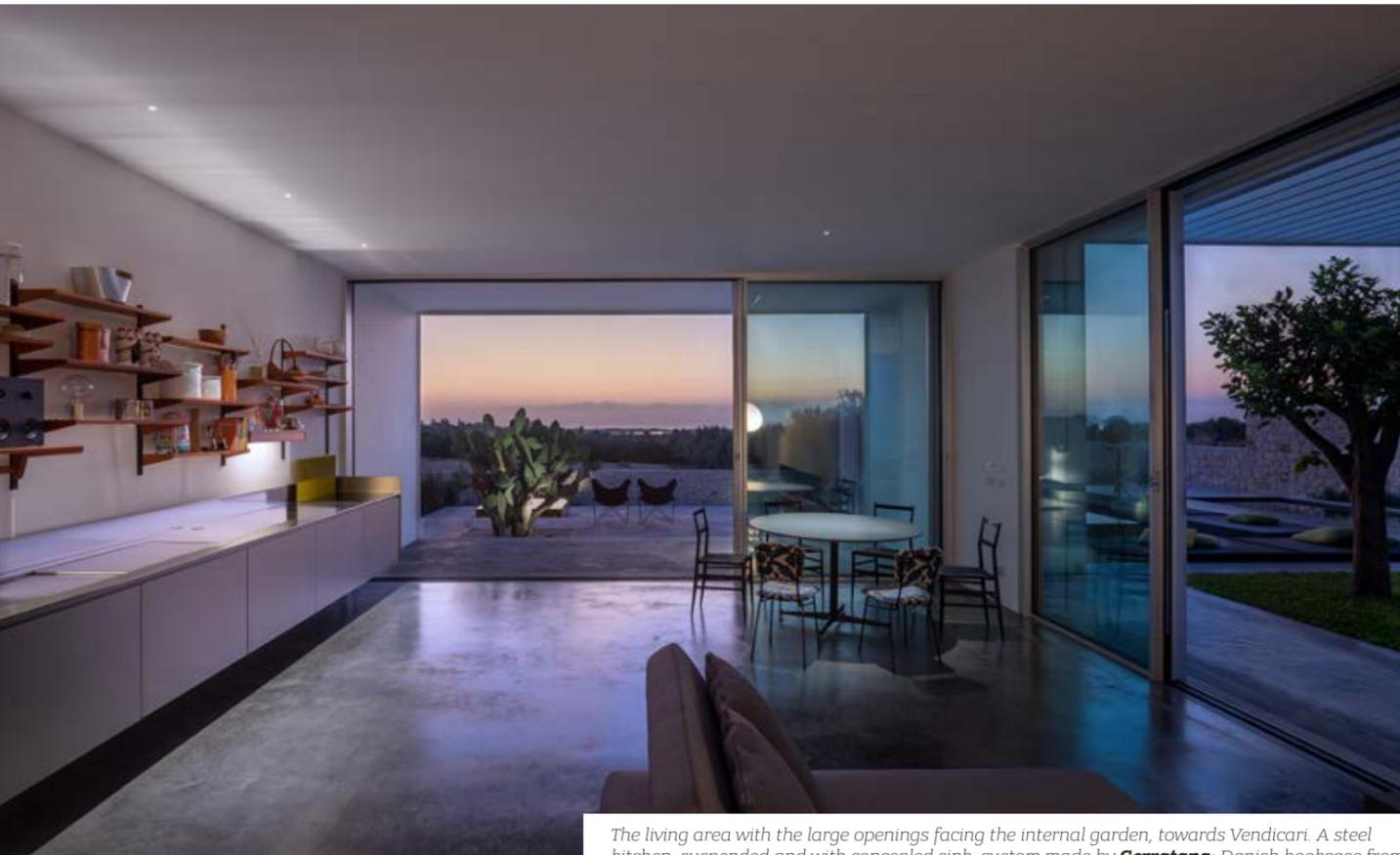
tones of the arid soil and the dark green of the brush, one passes in a ritual atmosphere underlined by the narrowness of the opening to a place of white light, of polished concrete floors, where the full-height openings frame images of the 'courtyard' garden border by the local stone walls: the brilliant green of the orange grove, the vibrant shadow cast on the lawn by the brise-soleil awning, the reflexes of light from the infinity pool and – in the background – the full, spreading luminosity of the nature reserve and sea of Vedicari. "The project stems from my family's passion for Sicily and Vedicari," says the architect Marco Merendi: "the light, the aromas, the view of the sea are the elements that made us fall in love with this place and convinced us to build this house here for ourselves, to enjoy the



The villa incorporates a 'courtyard' garden bordered by local stone walls. The outdoor spaces develop in convivial area for various activities throughout the day: the living area, the sunbathing zone, the orange grove in the shadow, the kitchen counter for aperitifs and dinners with friends. Industrial lamp, custom sofa with colored cushions by **Paola Lenti**, vintage cord chairs and coffee table in **Cementoskin**, made to measure by **Gypsum**. The volume is covered in glazed volcanic stone tiles by **Made a Mano**.

To the side, in the view from above the double structure is visible, composed of the rugged stone wall and the rigorous volume of the white architecture; in the background, the Vedicari Nature Reserve, at a distance of slightly more than a kilometer.





The living area with the large openings facing the internal garden, towards Venticari. A steel kitchen, suspended and with concealed sink, custom made by **Gerratana**, Danish bookcase from the 1950s, purchased from **Mauro Bolognesi**, Milan; vintage table in volcanic stone and Superleggera chairs by Gio Ponti, **Cassina**. Nulla ceiling lamps by **Davide Groppi**. Below, the corner of the living area organized around a fireplace in lavic stone, with the Agio sofa and pouf by **Paola Lenti**, and the Superloon floor lamp by **Flos**.

Sicily we love." Though with a professional practice based in Milan, in recent years Merendi has done another project in Venticari, in 2015, where he already had a chance to experiment with the presence of hewn stone walls and white surfaces. In this new project, "the challenge – Merendi explains – was to build a villa of little more than 100 square meters that would seem larger, with an ample space for the living area and the kitchen as the core of the house, including the outdoors in the domestic setting." Sicily, then, where the decisive presence of nature requires the architect to make a specific commitment, to convert the force of the landscape into beauty, energy and comfort. Hence the control of solar radiation, which for many hours in the summer can be far too strong, becomes a theme behind all the design choices: the form of the rooms, the arrangement of the openings, the transition between outdoors and indoors. The most telling example, in this battle



The 'courtyard' garden with the small domestic citrus grove and the sunscreen canopy that extends from the living area to the swimming pool. The level shift of the terrain offers a view of the landscape towards the sea. Custom swing in steel tubing and woven cord, to dangle over the water.



Detail of one of the two twin bathrooms design to both have an outdoor zone, shaded by a tall stone wall, with a shower in the open air. Petra counter, washstand, shower platform and pipe housing in Cementoskin by **Agape**, with glazed volcanic stone trays by **Made a Mano**, faucets in brushed steel by **Equa** and Aim ceiling lamps by **Flos**.



Above, one of the two bedrooms, with a custom bed and Danish system of desk and shelves from the 1950s; ceramic vases by **Antonino Piscitello**, Superleggera chair by Gio Ponti for **Cassina**. Nulla ceiling lamps by **Davide Groppi** and Parentesi lamp by **Flos**, outside, with Round chairs by **Emu**. To the side, detail of the open-air bathroom with custom volcanic stone bench and - in the background - Petra shower and pipe housing in Cementoskin by **Agape**.



between the architect and the sun's rays, is the canopy extending from the living area towards the outdoor space, which Merendi calls the "Arabian garden," which in effect combines all its essential parts, almost in miniature: the lively, light shadows projected by the canopy, the water, the long pool in volcanic stone, the plants. Like the "date palm," Merendi explains, "which is the symbol of the house. It links back to the tradition of Sicilian estates, where one was always planted, a single specimen, to make it possible to identify the house from a distance. We wanted to continue this tradition, transporting it into a work of contemporary architecture." Another example of the environmental focus on sunlight and temperature can be found in the two bathrooms that also extend outside, protected by a high wall in local stone to create a relaxation zone with an outdoor shower. Beyond the glass door, an intermediate setting is thus created, protected but open to the sky, for a shower or just to sit in the shade in an isolated, intimate spot that encourages contemplation of the landscape. ■