

On the Rocks

Karim Nader Studio

PHOTO: Dia Mrad

CULTIVAR

FOR

Karim Nader Studio

PHOTOS BY

Dia Mrad



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Press office
Cultivar
tel +39 055 4684 187

Director
Paola Giaconia
paola.giaconia@cultivar.agency

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Press release

4 | October
2021

ON THE ROCKS BY KARIM NADER STUDIO IS COMPLETED. THE HOUSE SEEKS A TOTAL IMMERSION IN NATURE, ON A UNIQUELY BEAUTIFUL – BUT CHALLENGING SITE IN LEBANON.

On The Rocks is a spectacular concrete and glass retreat designed by Karim Nader Studio. The house sits on the limestone bedrock of Faqra, Lebanon, at 1,700 meters above sea level as a sort of extension of the inspiring local natural condition: a lunar landscape of rock formations carved by millennia of rain and snow, with panoramic views to the club, the surrounding rock park, the valleys and Beirut beyond.

In the midst of a limestone landscape.

The small town of Faqra might be most famous for its majestic archaeological site, the most extensive of all Mount Lebanon

with Roman and Byzantine ruins, and its skiing facilities. Once there, one cannot but be amazed by its landscape, with scenic rock formations known under the popular name of “houses of ghosts,” about 1-hour drive north-east of Beirut

It is here that Karim Nader Studio has designed a new, spectacular retreat residence, deeply inspired by its sublime surroundings. By carefully referencing the light grayness and raw jaggedness of the rocks, the house expands the canvas of the natural context into man-made fair-faced concrete volumes that accommodate the intimate functions of the house.

A house built upon nature.

The house is accessed by a stunning floating staircase that, cascading between the built volumes and meandering around the rocks, seems to be almost emerging

from the limestone formations surrounding the house.

The thickness and the overall sense of compactness offered by the concrete enclosures is counterbalanced by a careful use of glass in a dynamic relationship that characterizes all rooms in the house. A zinc roof hovers above those apparently dispersed boxes, creating a seeming enclosure.

“But where roof happens, enclosure disappears, and where enclosure happens, roof disappears. The intimacy of enclosure is here opposed to the openness of an extreme transparency as they do not happen at once in this atypical house,” says Karim Nader.

Each of the three bedrooms, fully clad in wood to offer a warm environment, opens up to a small patio with a tree, a rock and a selected perspective to the outside.

The living rooms sit under the bridging roof (18m in length) and are bounded by fully operable facades to the north and south,

allowing its inhabitants to enjoy sheltered outdoors space in the warmer months.

“Nature builds us and we build upon Nature,” as Karim Nader points out. “I seek to always listen. To the site of course, and the voices of nature, but also to the human context.”

An entire chapter of his recent book *For a Novel Architecture. Ciné-roman 2000-2020*, published by LetteraVentidue a few months ago, is dedicated to “Homes upon Nature”, in a compelling narrative that manifests Karim’s relentless passion for the architectural practice and his sentimental relationship with every site, every client, in every situation.

Karim Nader.

Karim Nader is one of the most prominent figures in the new Lebanese movement working to uncover the national architectural treasures, whose memories were first erased by civil war and now

endangered by the common practice of demolition, in the rush towards modernizing the city. Born during the civil war, Nader is one of the leading exponents of the new cosmopolitan generation eager to create a new conversation between heritage and modernity, hoping to change the attitude towards the past and inspiring a new attitude towards a new golden age for architecture.

Emblematic to this approach is his ongoing renovation project for *Immeuble de l'Union*, located nearby the *Banque du Liban CMA* building: a modernist gem built in 1952, Karim Nader decided to preserve its sheer elegance and architectural historical value, avoiding nostalgia, through mixed-use re-programming, combining commercial ambition with a cultural and historical drive. The same attitude is readable in the project Karim Nader carried out, in collaboration with Ivana Nestorovic, for the repair of ten public schools in Beirut: an initiative promoted by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in coordination with the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education in an emergency swift action following the devastating explosion that shattered Beirut in August 2020.

For a Novel Architecture, his first retrospective book covering the years 2000 to 2020, was published in December 2020 by LetteraVentidue.



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The project

as described by Karim Nader Studio

It is on a spectacular canvas of grays that he desires to retreat. He chooses an inspiring site in Faqra where rock formations carved by millennia of rain and snow compose a natural inviting cradle with panoramic views to the club, the surrounding rock park, the valleys and Beirut beyond.

Seeking a total immersion in nature, we expand the existing grey canvas into man-made fair-faced concrete volumes that contain the intimate functions of the house. Bridging across those apparently dispersed boxes, a zinc roof floats to create a seeming enclosure. But where roof happens, enclosure disappears, and where enclosure happens, roof disappears. The intimacy of enclosure is here opposed to the openness of an extreme transparency as they do not happen at once in this atypical house.

The boxes contain three 'punctured' bedrooms, where every entrance at the turn of an angle opens up to a small patio with a tree, a rock and a selected perspective to the outside. The rooms are warm worlds, fully clad in wood to create the needed double wall without exceeding a contemporary standard of thickness. The reception area is the absence of enclosure to an extreme. Sitting under a bridging roof 18m in length, its fully operable facade to the north and south creates an unusual setup for such an environment where the possibility of living outside during the spring, summer and fall becomes the natural invitation. The house is entered from the west side via a cascading staircase that meanders around the rocks, reaching to the reception platform/terrace where a long pool juts out towards the view and cascades down towards the street. The southeast corner with its existing circular rock formation becomes the receptacle for a sundeck with a fire and an extended reception terrace with lavender, scattered smaller rocks and pebbles in the zen tradition.

The overall composition - a multitude of grey volumes surmounted by a roof - do reiterate the elements of a house iconography. But it is as if nature has taken over, and in the numerous gaps where light seeps at varying angles, it is more of a garden folly that emerges this time.

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Data and credits

of the project

Project name	On the Rocks
Project location	Faqra, Lebanon
Client	Private
Architect	Karim Nader Studio www.karimnader.com
Project partner	Roula Assaf
Project team	Karim Nader with Roula Assaf, Elie Christian Naameh, Yasmina Baladi, Omar Faress Darwish, Elias el Hage
Consultants	Structural engineering: Elie Turk MEP engineering: EAK Signature
Construction	MAK Builders Rami Kassem and Walid Sader
Project status	Built (summer 2021)
Photographs	Dia Mrad unless otherwise noted
Press office	Cultivar www.cultivar.agency



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Karim Nader

Karim Nader is an architect, teacher and yogi. Born in 1976 in Lebanon, he studied at the American University of Beirut (Bachelor of Architecture with distinction, 1999) and at Rice University in Houston, in the United States of America (Master of Architecture, 2003).

He has been practicing architecture for the last 20 years with work designed and built in Lebanon and the world. He is currently running Karim Nader Studio, an architecture and design practice based in Beirut. He has been also teaching architectural studios and theoretical electives at universities in Lebanon since the year 2000. Firm believer in the power of architecture to transcend the limiting vision of the global market as well as the psychological hurdles that are often self-imposed, he practices an architectural middle-way that seeks to explore the potential of every site and situation through a novel spatial expression that finds its roots in the narratives of the place both humane and historical. The architectural project seeks to extend the narratives into the 'natural' next chapter of their own unfolding stories through the act of designing and building. His references vary from Zen Buddhism to Western philosophy in a liberty to quote from the hybrid roots that make the Lebanese subject. The work of his studio as well as the fruit of previous collaborations has been widely published in the international press with notable acclaim and recognition both on built work and competitions.

For a Novel Architecture, his first retrospective book covering the years 2000 to 2020, was published in December 2020 by LetteraVentidue.

www.karimnader.com



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Images for the press

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Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in
Faqra, Lebanon. Photo: Dia Mrad.





(above) File name: On the Rocks - PH KNS-TKF-MAIN
Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in Faqra, Lebanon. Photo: Christopher Antaki.

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Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in Faqra, Lebanon. Photo: Dia Mrad.



File name: On the Rocks - PH DSCF4569
Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in Faqra, Lebanon. Photo: Dia Mrad.

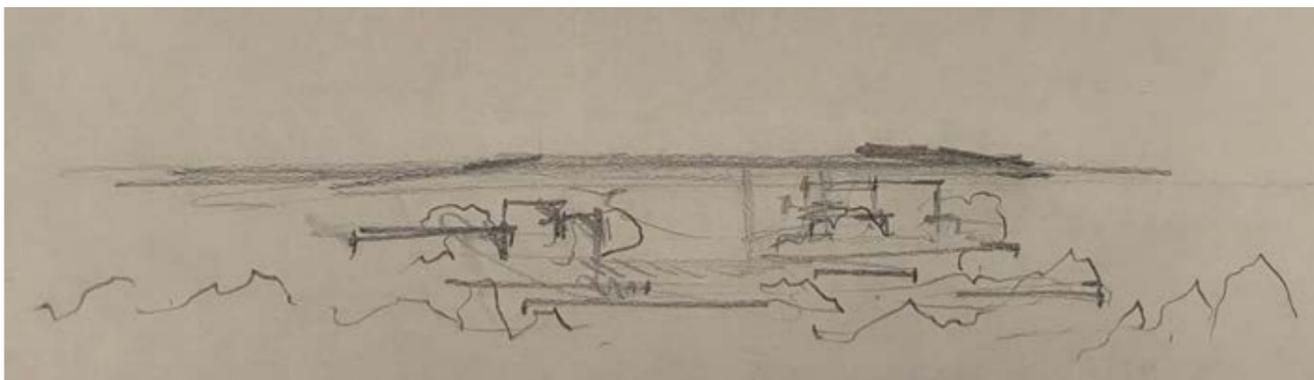


File name: On the Rocks - PH DSCF4549
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(above) File name: On the Rocks - mod Q4A3157 and mod Q4A3234
Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in Faqra, Lebanon. The model in concrete. Photo: Marwan Harmouche.

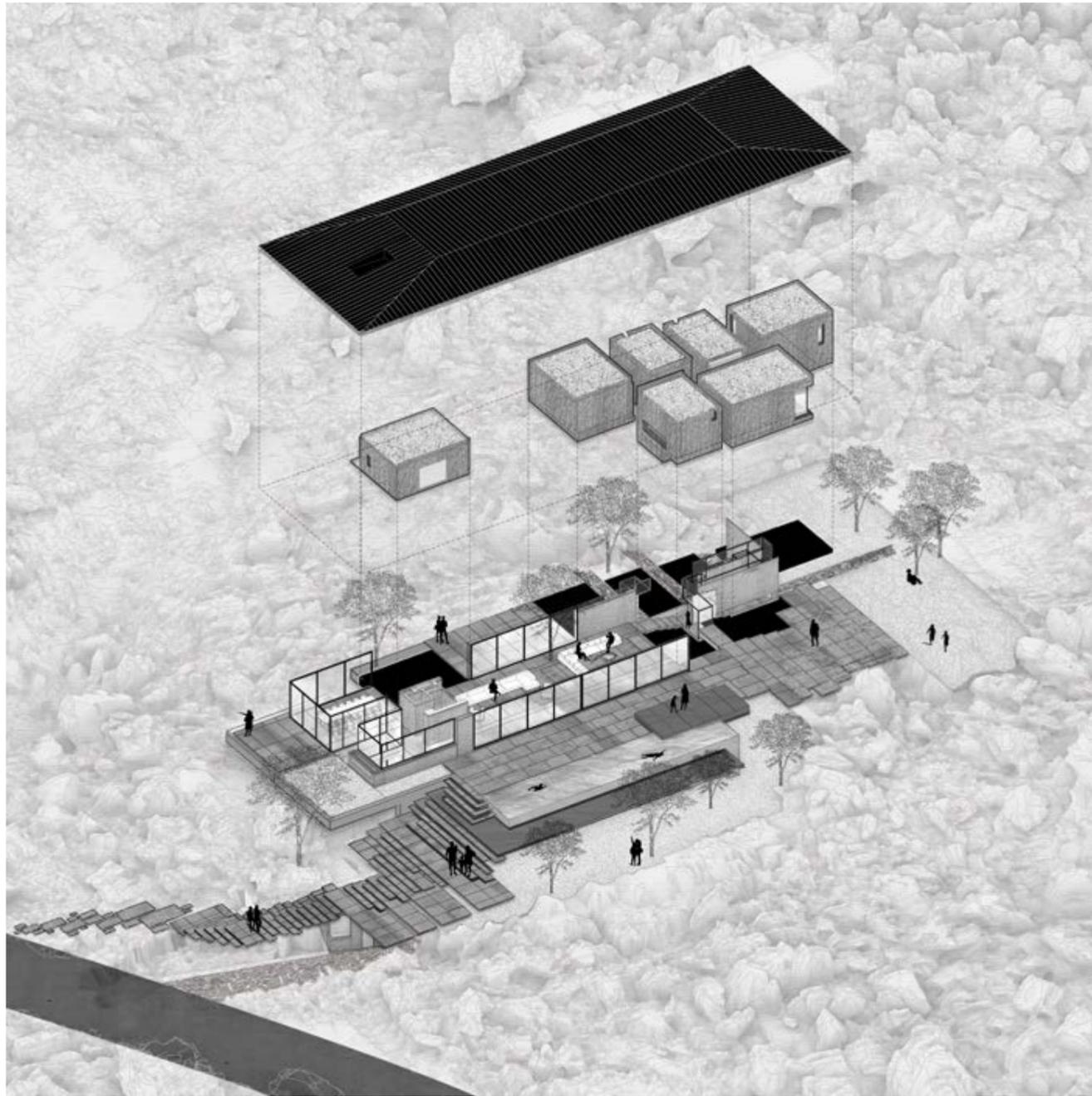
(below) File name: On the Rocks - SK 01
Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in Faqra, Lebanon. Sketch by Karim Nader.



File name: On the Rocks - mod Q4A3179
Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in Faqra, Lebanon. The model in concrete. Photo: Marwan Harmouche.

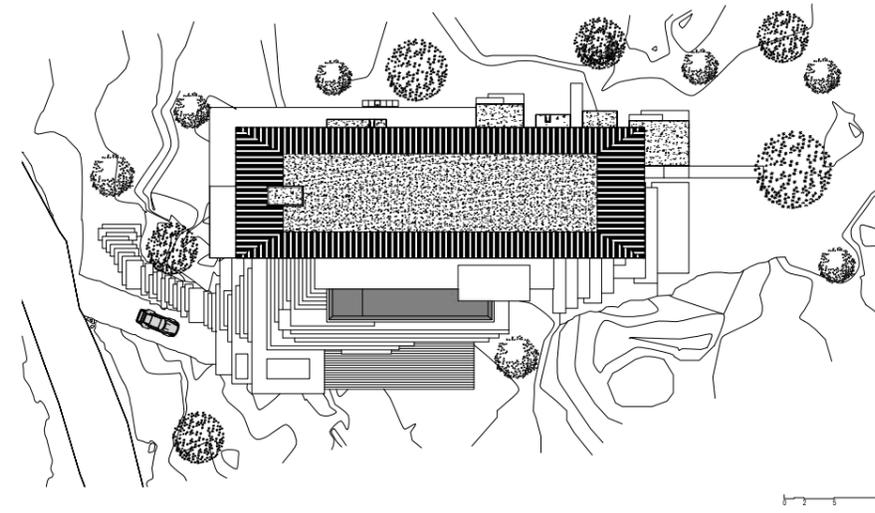


File name: On the Rocks - mod Q4A3186
Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in Faqra, Lebanon. The model in concrete. Photo: Marwan Harmouche.



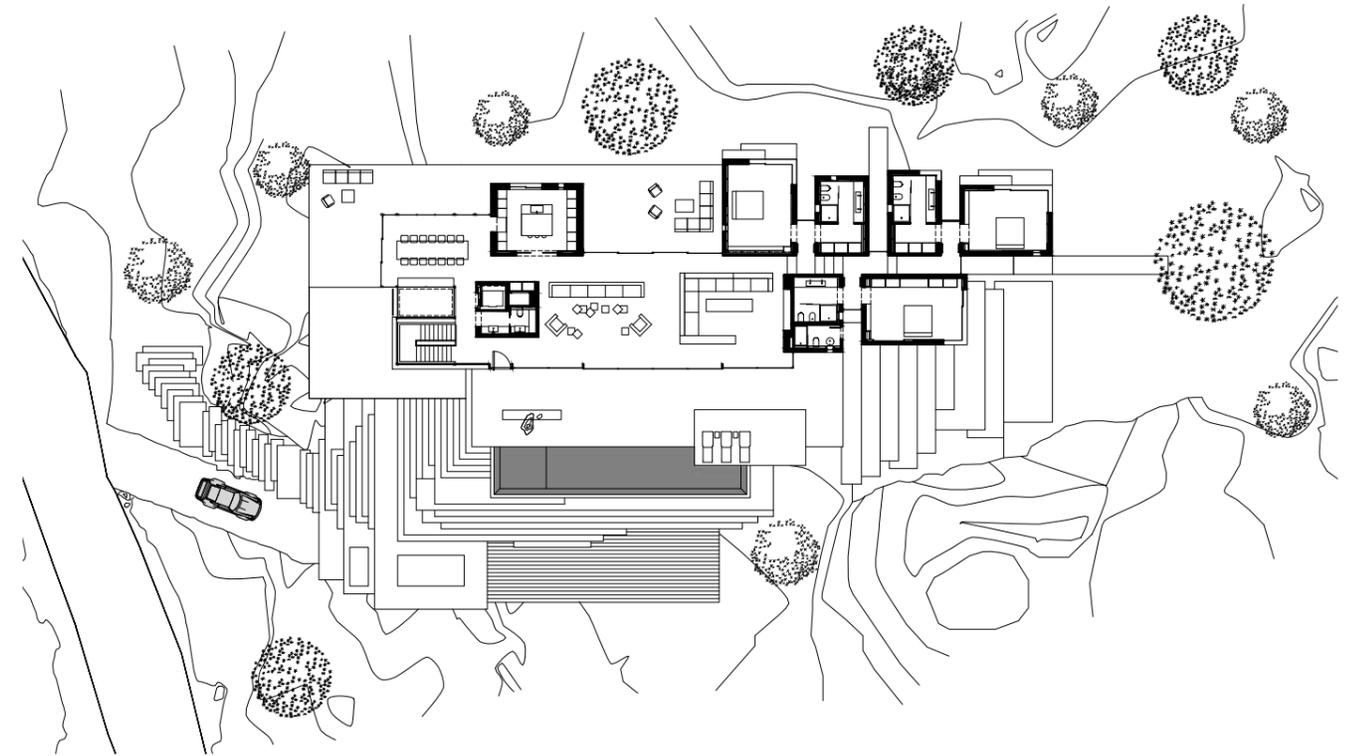
File name: On the Rocks - DW 00

Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in Faqra, Lebanon. Axonometric.



File name: On the Rocks - DW 03

Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in Faqra, Lebanon. Roof plan.



File name: On the Rocks - DW 01

Caption: Karim Nader Studio, On the Rocks in Faqra, Lebanon. Ground floor plan.

Press office

For additional information, to receive high resolution images and to set up an interview with the architect you may contact:

Cultivar
c/o Image
via Venti Settembre 84
50129 Firenze, Italy
press@cultivar.agency

tel +39 055 4684 187