

LEISURE AMIDST WILDERNESS

JAYANATH SILVA - GENESIS DESIGN, SRI LANKA

A place to relax in the unparalleled beauty of Somawathie, the Circuit Bungalows for State Bank of Sri Lanka designed by Genesis Design sit high on the rugged terrain and the splendid landscape as buoyant stilted structures providing spaces for rejuvenation and cherishment of the surroundings.

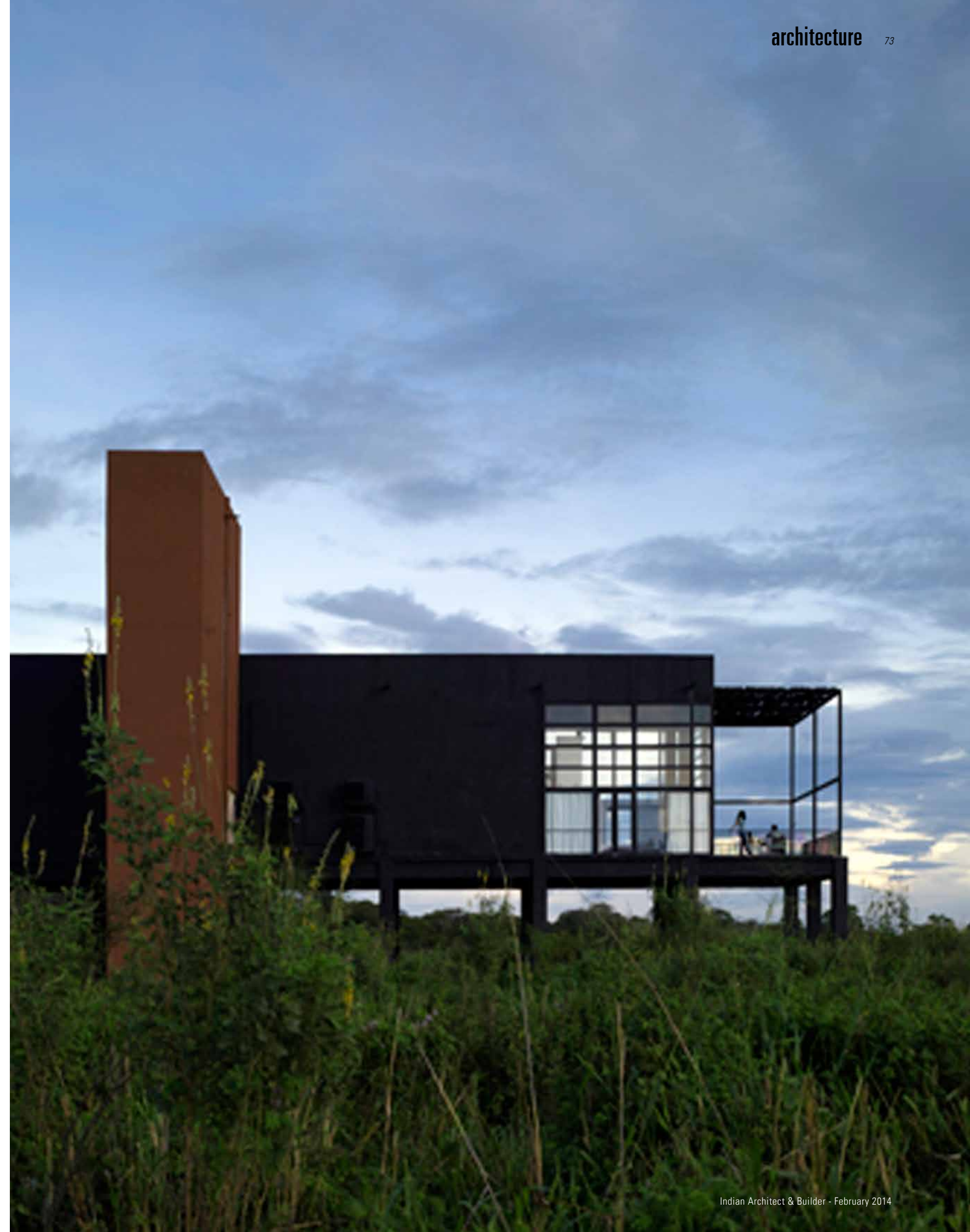
Text: Anusha Narayanan | Images & Drawings: courtesy Jayanath Silva and Eresh Weerasooriya

*The landscape was magical...
It was a vast sea of wild growth, water and infinite blue skies
My main task was to create something but with least harm...
Man's intervention had to be minimal and masterly
I only wanted a single; neat; black; geometric box...
placed delicately on site,
the straight lines and planes
Contrasting with the wild....*

Somawathie was a time of reincarnation and of retrospect; of ultimate satisfaction and immense joy. It was like counting days for my next trip and sadly the sojourn ended and I captured a last shot with my mobile device with falling light and a heavy heart. The shot of the gate...how it was the day I first stepped in and how I hope it will always be. I hope with time my interventions in Somawathie will be bleak. I hope I have done justice to a magnificent site that gave food for a tired mind, and the magnificent beasts who frequented us at many times keeping our tired senses alive.

-Jayanath Silva

Jayanath Silva, after working with Asian Master Architect and Guru Geoffrey Bawa for several years and in several other noteworthy practices, established his practice Genesis Design together with his architect wife Madumali Sumanadasa at Battaramulla, Sri Lanka. They treat each of their commissions, be it a small holistic dwelling or a large mega project, with sensitivity and reverence and have won several awards by the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects among other competitions. They also are involved in teaching architecture whenever time permits.



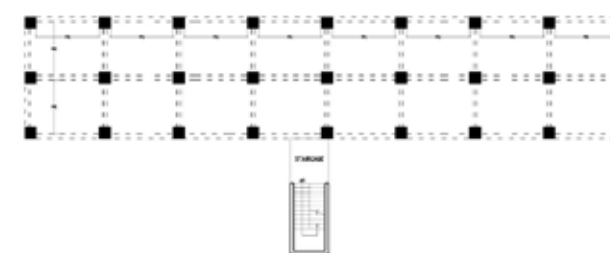


In Somawathie, it is imaginable to get lost in the surroundings framed in such breath-taking views. The natural hues of green and blue engulf one's senses and drain their mundane worries away. Building a Circuit Bungalow for the Governor and the VIP cadre, within the context of such an outback, which would be inclusive of the related service facilities for the staff and the security personnel, the architecture is a statement of camaraderie rather than dominance, of subtlety rather than imposition. As an architectural intervention, what has been built on these grounds is a quiet intonation of Cartesian geometry, enclosing a space that stands on shrubs yet provides a sense of spectacle.

The buildings have been separated into two blocks – one for the VIP's residence and the other as a service block for the support staff. The VIP Bungalow is a double floored structure with a tilted base of a single floor. It has two double height rooms at the ends and two smaller rooms for larger families with attached kitchens and open decks, and common living, lobby and play areas in the center. It is also equipped with a pantry and a service room. A space with a balance of mass and voids, the VIP Bungalow sets a stage to gaze into the landscape from the viewing deck. The Service Block has a dormitory for the staff and security, dining and additional rooms for other executives of the bank.



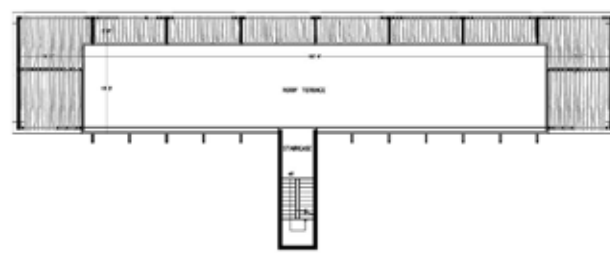
SITE PLAN
Scale 1:1000



VIP BUNGALOW GROUND LEVEL PLAN



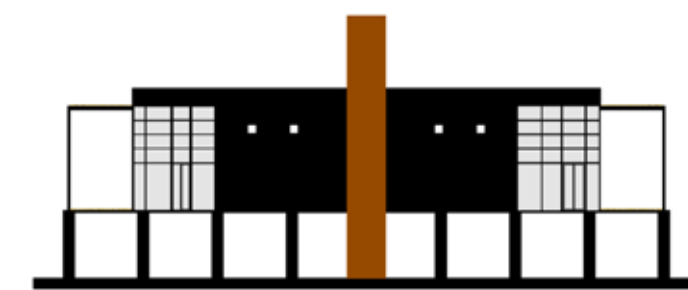
VIP BUNGALOW SECOND LEVEL PLAN



VIP BUNGALOW ROOF LEVEL PLAN



VIP BUNGALOW FRONT ELEVATION



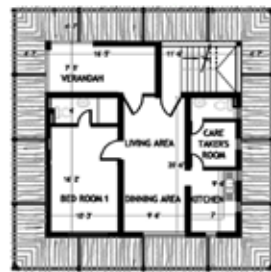
VIP BUNGALOW REAR ELEVATION

A
Circuit Bungalows for Central





SEVICE BLOCK
FIRST LEVEL



SEVICE BLOCK
SECOND LEVEL



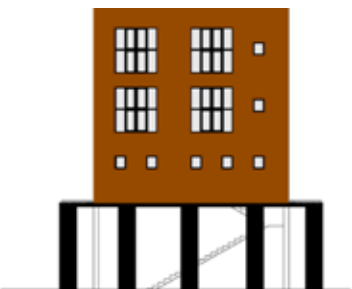
SEVICE BLOCK SECTION



SEVICE BLOCK
FIRST LEVEL



SEVICE BLOCK
THIRD LEVEL



SEVICE BLOCK
ELEVATION





The building has been raised on RCC stilts primarily as a response to the seasonal floods that hit the lands once every year and the elephants that roam about the vicinity of the site. The construction is in RCC frames and slabs that can stand the test of time against natural factors. The roofs are thermally insulated reducing direct heat gain from the sun. Sun burnt bricks have been used in the structures, and sun shades covering the glazing have been made of cinnamon twigs from the nearby shrubs, adding coarseness to the ambience.

The massing of the structures has been intentionally minimized for smaller footprints, to increase the ventilation and to invite larger all round panoramas from the decks. As an end note to an architecture that stands tall against its surroundings and justifies its aptness in not so much as theorization but in its reality, the buildings provide the outlet for visitors to marvel at Somawathie.



Placed lightly on the flood plain amongst the vegetation, the two structures designed by Jayanath Silva of Genesis complement and contrast the landscape of Somawathie. With a heavy base that counters the eroding effect of water, the house becomes lighter as it progresses towards the sky. Composed finely, the balance between solids and voids becomes a theme of the house. The design balances opposites finely and takes chances with conflicting ideas on the same palette. Materials are used with due respect and restraint all the while making bold statements.

Amongst many merits of the project, is the way in which the design responds to the landscape. With a seeming ease, the built form assumes a natural presence all the while standing as a counterpoint to the unique vegetation and topography of the place. The house sets a point of reference in the field and there is great command in its graphic composition. The façade is a reflection of the interior space. There is an element of surprise in the encounter.

FACT FILE:

Project: Circuit Bungalows for Central Bank of Sri Lanka
 Location: Somawathie, Sri Lanka
 Principal Architect: Jayanath Silva, FIA (SL), Genesis Design
 Senior Project Architecture: Sameera Jayasooriya, AIA (SL)
 Client: Governor, Central Bank of Sri Lanka
 Client Representative: Engineering and Premises Division, CBSL
 Structural Design Engineer: Thilak Silva
 Services Engineer: Kapila Epa
 Electrical and Green Energy: Kosala Siribaddana
 Main Civil Contractor: Kemyo Pvt Ltd
 Furniture and Furnishings: Woodman Lanka Pvt Ltd
 Area - VIP Bungalow: 445.93sqm
 Area - Service Bungalow: 247.12sqm
 Initiation of Project: September 2009
 Completion of Project: March 2010
 Total Project Cost: SLRs 50.3 million (USD 384,000)

