



LEFT: K HOUSE DESIGNED IN COLLABORATION WITH AIM ARCHITECTURE.
LOCATED IN SOUTHERN SRI LANKA.

our instincts: natural stimuli such as these slow the heart rate and blood pressure and balance our breathing to reduce anxiety and such places make us feel peaceful, content and focused. Our bodies are at home in nature, and we reach a blissful homeostasis in the presence of natural elements. While we might not realistically exchange the metropolis for the forest, bringing nature into the built environment through biophilic and biomorphic design has a similar, calming effect. We can open living spaces to gardens or listen to the gentle trickle of water sculptures out the window. Amplifying natural light and the transitions of the day is a subtle yet profound way to live with nature. Our instinctual preference for organic shapes can also inspire a softening of the built form. A well-placed curvilinear line may seemingly embrace the body while an overt use of rectilinear lines feels unnaturally rigid.

The palette we choose to live with immensely affects our mood and researchers across disciplines agree that natural materials offer the most meaningful physiological encounters. The powers of association honed over eons have made us attracted to surfaces resembling life-giving elements. A shiny pebble is beautiful because it expresses moisture. Deep brown tones appeal because they suggest fertile soil. Beyond appearances, we also remember the tactility of nature and are drawn to it. Running our hand across stone, brick, wood or linen ignites familiar sensations of the outdoors and floods our minds with pleasing emotions. Their touch also grounds us back to earth. Such natural materials have withstood thousands of years of aesthetic trends for good reason. Despite the invention of practical, affordable and everlasting synthetics,

we return to natural fibers for their evocative power. This timelessness alone gives human-centric designers justification to heed nature's wisdom in the pursuit of beautiful built forms. After all, nature has supported us for an eternity, long before we gave it a name.

We are so familiar with the traits of nature that we have evolved the curious habit of anthropomorphism. Through this phenomenon of the human psyche, we perceive natural forms where there aren't any: a face stares back at us from a doorway with two windows. A four-legged chair could almost grow fur. A row of muscular columns supports a stone slab in an assertion of human strength. It is thought that these animations appear as a result of our hypersensitive pattern recognition that searches for associations everywhere, as well as our egocentrism—we can't resist projecting our image onto the world. In human-centric design, this unique perspective can foster spaces and objects that are familiar to the body—that help it read the world, find it relatable and livable. Powerful connections emerge from the seemingly opposite realms of natural and man-made. Perhaps, when we look at "home," we form a comforting image of a wooden house with roots firmly penetrating the earth like an ancient tree. Through the open door its lungs deeply inhale air—enlivening the internal organs of the living room, kitchen and bedrooms—before finally exhaling through the attic window, blowing leaves and cobwebs into the blue sky. — N.A

NOTATION — At the K House in Sri Lanka, traditional methods are employed via a Scandinavian perspective. Shutters without glass aid ventilation, simple spaces fuse indoor with outdoor and natural materials honor the genius loci.

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