HOUSES
on difficult sites
structure
This house is located on a rock bluff seventy-five meters above the Pacific Ocean in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, one of the few places in the world where the desert meets the sea. Given the special nature of the site, the project focussed on the relationship between the building and the landscape.

By displacing the structure to the perimeter of the site and configuring the design around an irregular courtyard, the interior was allowed to remain open, framing found topography and native plants.

The house is approached from above, and virtually all the roofs of the house are below street level. A gate adjacent to the carport leads through natural boulders and a stair carved from the rocks to a ramp and an open outdoor entrance pavilion.

The building calibrates a series of experiences, from excavated, cave-like rooms through to seemingly suspended, promontory-like spaces at the edge of the cliff.

Two retaining walls made from local stone establish the north and south boundaries of the site, while a private wing to the east and a public wing to the west provide privacy from adjacent properties.

The public and private areas of the house both open out courtyards, with the austere geometry of the structures creating an interplay between sunlight, water, outdoor living areas and spectacular views. The reinforced concrete structure and the use of high-strength laminated glass with an extremely sophisticated system of custom made anchor points allowed for much larger expanses of glazing than would otherwise be possible, creating the floating effect that characterizes the upper levels of the house.

Uphill from the north stone wall, a series of underground spaces accommodate a study, media room and guest accommodation, using skylights to provide natural light and illuminate the exterior at night. Passages carved from stone link the different areas of the house and the pool terrace area.
The many skylights and openings provide natural light to the underground sections of the house, and subtly illuminate the exterior at night.
The uneven terrain sloping down towards the sea created a series of irregular outdoor spaces. Exterior stairs are carved from rock and underlit, and courtyard areas alternate between concealing and revealing the sea.
The building and the interiors were designed by the same architects, creating a harmonious whole. Large windows in the suspended part of the house create the illusion of floating above the sea, and make the most of the spectacular views. Placing the house on the perimeter of the site allowed the architects to maximize the potential of the views, while minimizing its impact on the landscape.