

Designing a Summer Home Taking It Back to Basics

By Ramzi Makram-Ebeid

I'm a firm believer in a durable, functional and laid-back summer home. With my humble point of view in mind, here are some tips on what you should focus on.



DURABILITY

People sometimes get so caught up in what their space looks like, that they ignore the importance of the basics. This is especially a bad move when one is designing a home they can rarely check up on in harsh weather, aka Sahel in the winter.

Firstly, you begin with the basics – plumbing, electricity, windows and so forth – items that are not easy to fix without causing damage. Secondly, you go into finishes. For example, you should pick flooring that is easy to clean, non-slippery (for those near beaches or who have a pool), can take a punch and don't require yearly refurbishment.

Lastly, we go into furniture. Yes, this is probably the most fun aspect, but it can only be done once all the above is done. Imagine furnishing the entire space, having the space flood because of bad plumbing and then having to fix both space and furniture. Furniture also has to be tough and not require too much maintenance. (I always opt for natural materials, so I would get a wooden table that would require oiling every year over a synthetic material).

FUNCTIONALITY

One of the most irritating things that happen in the design world is shameless copying and/or repetition. You can literally see the domino effect happen, x does a big bar in their house, then y gets an even bigger bar but then I stop tolerating them and visiting them, so I don't know what happens next. But, I do know, for certain, that there are countless homes in Sahel in general that do not take the realistic functional needs of a household into consideration. If you have one big hoorah in your house every year, do not design your entire house around it. You'll need to use the space the rest of the time for very different things.

What you need – Remember, one of the reasons you're in Sahel is to enjoy the good weather and less toxin air. Unless you plan on sitting indoors all day, create an awesome outdoor place. For television lovers, create a space for it outside that will keep it safe and keep you in the fresh air. This goes along for everything else, from the size of your bedrooms to the size of the dining table. In the past 40 summers, I think I've eaten indoors only when extremely hungover and suicidal.



BATHROOM LOCATIONS

Especially when you come directly from the pool or beach to your house, you want to clean up without messing up your entire space. If you can't do that, make space for a small outdoor shower or even a small foot-cleaning tub near the entrance door you'll use, including a dedicated and reachable space for towels.

STORAGE

Between all the toys and the Coleman's and barrels of beer, summer homes are usually chaotic. To avoid this, dedicate certain areas (like under the stairs or in the outdoor mastaba seating) for quick access. Also, if you don't need something, don't keep it and certainly, don't store it.

CLEANING

This goes from walls to furniture. Washable slip covers, for example, are a great way to cover the mess and are one of the few ways you can do a different "look" on a budget.

TRENDS

Being on trend is way more important for commercial spaces than homes. Homes should reflect you and not Kim Kardashians latest philosophies on summer homes. That being said, the simpler you make the basics, the easier it is to add some trendy items like pillows, artwork or rugs that can be changed easily. For instance, go for a color scheme that allows for splashes of different colors.

CONCEPT

The beach is a dead giveaway that your house is on the beach. Let's put an end to the sailor and shell inspirations. Furthermore, functionality should never be ignored because of a concept, if it is, you might have to revisit your so-called concept. So, here's a free one – Mid-Century Agami Home. This gives you a lot of materials to play with, an overall laid-back feel and a style that is in tune with the natural world.

INVEST SMARTLY

Again, go to the basics and spend wisely. Once you start buying furniture, or making furniture, spend on items that will last for many summers. **TL**



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