

better interiors

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IDEAS AND DESIGN FOR BETTER LIVING

WORK IT

From contemporary, elegant spaces to vibrant spots that inspire creativity, we round up 12 of the country's most innovative offices — each with their own distinct personality

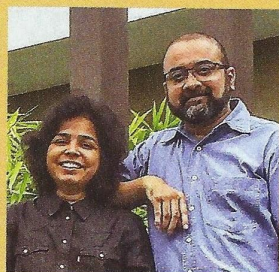




IMPRESSIONS

Rising above the limitations posed by a tight budget and time-frame, Lovekar Design Associates transform an unused factory complex into an award-winning contemporary studio for a young photographer in Pune.

TEXT: RUPALI SEBASTIAN; PHOTOGRAPHS: HEMANT PATIL, COURTESY LOVEKAR DESIGN ASSOCIATES



ARCHITECTS

Anjali Lovekar and
Ashwin Lovekar



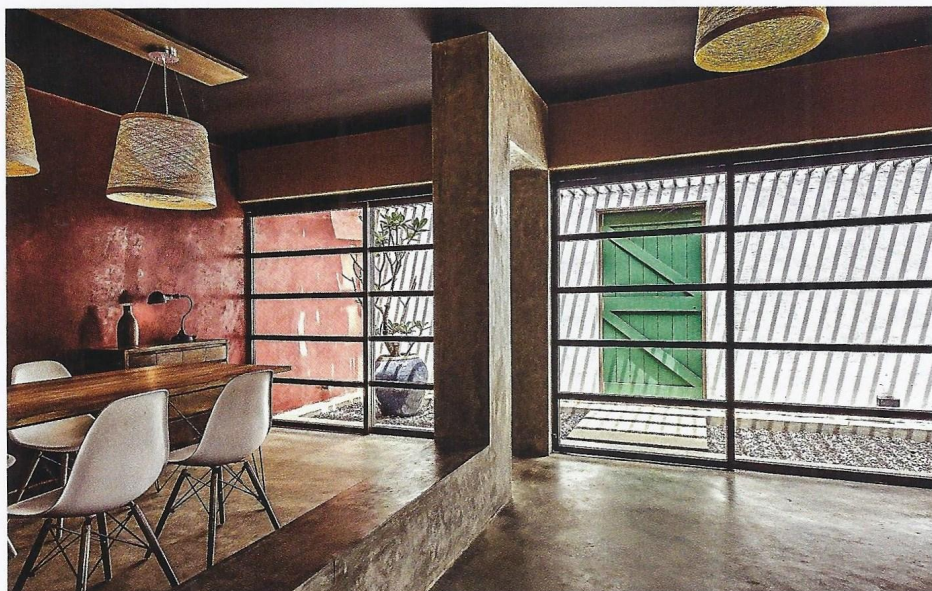
Hand-applied plaster and quintessentially Indian colours speak of a rustic, rooted design language. The slim, bright windows over the paved entrance court. The L-shaped free-standing gives a sense of enclosure to the entrance, which is further highlighted by the MS pergola. The doors and windows are simply detailed and made out of an economically priced Indian hardwood.

There is always a sense of positivity when old, defunct spaces are rejuvenated. There's a new purpose. A new vigour. A new path. A new beginning. A dilapidated factory complex of about 5,000 sq ft in Pune, neglected and unused for many years, too, became the recipient of such good energies when a young photographer, just embarking on his professional journey, identified it as the site for his studio. The firm entrusted with the overhaul was Lovekar Design Associates, headed by architects Anjali Lovekar and Ashwin Lovekar, since they enjoyed a good rapport with the young professional's family, having worked on their residence a couple of years ago. "The brief was simple," says Ashwin. "A huge studio where the client could shoot his photo-assignments, mainly automobile and fashion, and an office. The premises would also be probably rented to

other photographers for their assignments as such a facility does not currently exist in Pune."

The complex comprised of a 14-foot-tall factory shed, a small servants' quarters structure and a tiny watchman's room. The design program was largely governed by the site and its attendant limitations. The site was in a no-development zone, which meant the architects could not break down the existing structures and re-build. "We had to build only within the parameters and the footprint of the existing structures and adapt it to our requirements," discloses Anjali. Hence the program was to analyze the site and its existing structures, identify the positive and negative points, and arrive at the best possible adaptive re-use solution for the same.

Thus, the factory shed became the studio — "owing to its expanse and height" — the

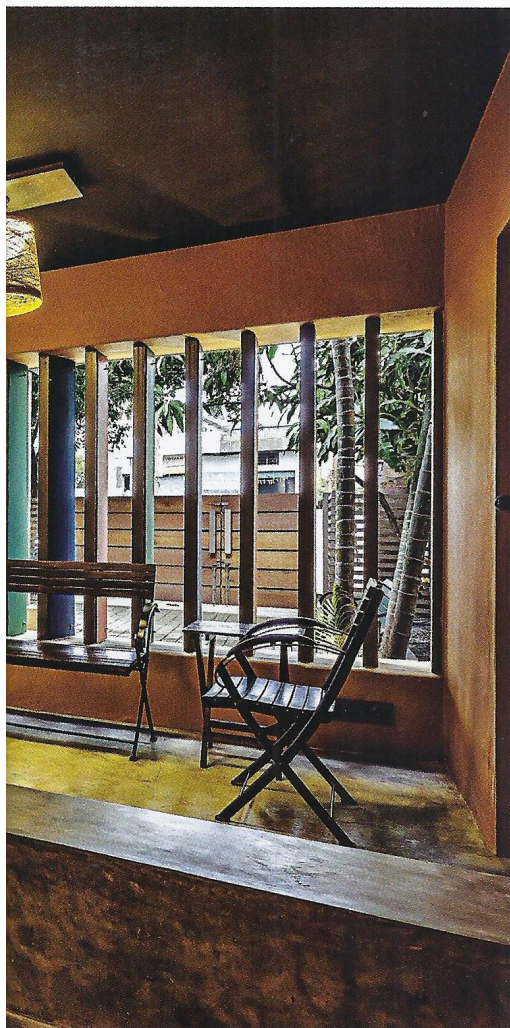


TOP The graphical composition rendered by the vertical windows, the MS pergola and the shadows is tempered by the rusticity of the facade finish and the IPS floor. The window along the front and the glazed opening overlooking the space between the office and the studio (on the left) ensure plenty of natural light.

ABOVE The window that opens into the abutting court, is secured by sliding windows.

servant's quarters became the main office — “by virtue of its frontal, direct access” — and the watchman's cabin became the image processing unit. The wasted spaces between the structures became connecting courts and spill-over spaces for the young crowd that would use the premises. “Budget was another factor that had to be constantly kept in mind; photographer was young and had just started working. The scale of the project was kept low to connect to the human scale and give a comfortable feel,” reveals Ashwin.

The restriction on increasing the size of the structure necessitated the creation of light wraparounds that would augment usable space without adding to the footprint. In case of the erstwhile servants' quarters', this strategy was embodied by two L-shaped, free-standing walls: one of which delineated the entrance to the office and provided a sense of enclosure; and the other, parallel to the first, which helped in including some of the wasted interstitial space into the precinct of the office space. An MS L-shaped pergola, nestled in the void of the first wall, further highlights the entrance to the office.



On the other side of the plot was the main access to the factory shed with a watchman's cabin and an outdoor toilet. Here, the elevational retailing entailed re-designing the toilet, by the addition of a wall that hid the toilet door and creating a brickwork frame that endow this space with an identity of its own. This frame houses a bamboo pergola with a potted frangipani and a yellow bench, creating an enclosure for outdoor seating.

The whole complex had to achieve a casual look and feel with minimal expenditure. Hence rough, un-finished materials were used to achieve the same. The material palette was simple and totally rooted. The internal floors and walls were in IPS (Indian Patent Stone) while the external walls were finished in

MATERIALS

External walls Hand-applied plaster
Internal walls IPS **Flooring** IPS **Window and doors** Salwood, painted in bright acrylic emulsion **Semi-covered areas** MS pergolas and bamboo



CONCEPT: To create a state-of-the-art studio with a smart, functional, casual and comfortable office. The open areas had to be interesting spill-over spaces for the young crowd that would use the premises.



TOP LEFT Dearth of time and a small budget stopped the architects from customizing furniture. However, the few pieces that were picked from across lifestyle stores were vetted for an earthy aesthetic. The internal areas are finished in simple materials such as IPS of the walls and floor, and matte paint and polish on the wooden elements. The ceiling is painted black, adding to the intimate feeling of the space.

TOP RIGHT The office is open: a low-height, IPS-finished wall is a token gesture towards a partition. The environment is casual, friendly and relaxing.

ABOVE Generous amount of natural light, meant minimal presence of fixtures.



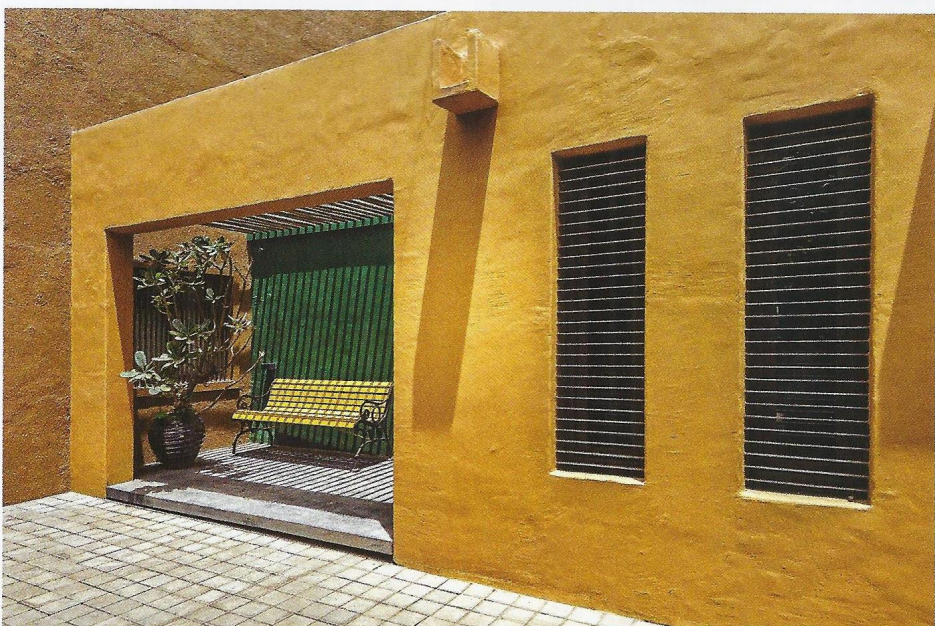
An unused space of about seven feet between the erstwhile servants' quarters (now office) and the factory shed (now studio) was converted into a transition court, which is secured with an MS pergola. The court provides light and ventilation to the office.



LEFT The green door marks the entrance to the studio.

CENTRE The portion with the watchman's cabin and an outdoor toilet was resolved by adding a wall to shield the door to the toilet and creating a frame in brickwork that gave an identity to the space. The frame houses a bamboo pergola with a potted frangipani and a yellow bench, creating an enclosure for outdoor seating.

BELOW An additional requirement of a bright background for fashion photography was also met with a green wall.



hand-applied plaster. Painted MS pergolas and bamboo were used for the semi-covered areas. The windows and doors were made using inexpensive Indian hardwood from sal trees, painted in bright colours. "These colours are the colours of India; ones we are used to since generations," emphasizes Anjali. "The design character, too, is minimal, with almost no decoration. Natural elements such as light and air along with architectural characters and colours that are local to the tropical climate of India form the design language."

The hot Indian climate didn't allow for large openings and use of glass. The structure, therefore, was given minimal windows, and obtained light and ventilation only through the coloured windows along the front face and the ones on the side court, which is open to sky. "Natural light was derived by interconnecting the court and the front slit windows," say the architects. "Which is why there was minimal need for artificial light inside the office. Hanging and pedestal light fixtures were used for this purpose, and floor washers and plant uplighters were used in the landscape areas."

Limitations. Restrictions. Constraints. These can either weigh you down, or set those creative cogs turning. In the case of Lovekar Design Associates, it is obviously the latter. Doubting Thomases may visit the office of The Photo Company. **BI**



FACT FILE: Project Photographer's studio **Location** Talawade, Pune **Area** 5,000 sq ft **Principal architects** Ashwin Lovekar, Anjali Lovekar **Design Team** Mrunalini Dusange, Nishita Joshi **Interior Contractor** Ajey Deodhar, Shivkumar Ranbhor **Woodwork** Swarooparam Mistry **Painting contractor** Sriram Maurya **Graphics and Creatives** Rohini Metals