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Cocoa Concoction

Warm chocolate hues flood this clean-lined Pune-based home that architects Ashwin and Anjali Lovekar designed for the Mordes.

Text: Monisha Naik-Singh
Photographs: Madhukar Temgire

ON A SUNNY AFTERNOON I make my way to the Morde residence. The Mordes are famous for their brand of cooking chocolates, which I confess I always thought, were French or Swiss! Now that I know otherwise, I'm eager to visit their home to check if their exquisite chocolates are any indication of what their home is like!

Soon I am at the door, being greeted warmly by Leena Morde, who leads me into the small foyer. Hues of chocolate cascade over me, beginning in the lobby where the warm tones of wenge veneer add to the shades of brown that pervade the area. The tiny lobby appears neat with a sleek seating slab and the large mirror-fronted wall-to-wall cabinet that conceals a shoe rack. "The Mordes left everything to us. We even shopped on their behalf to make their dream home come true," claim architects Ashwin and Anjali Lovekar, who conceptualized and designed the residence.

"The design concept involved creating a chic look with an interesting mix of artefacts that would complement the overall colour scheme. We decided on using beige, white

and dark browns to enhance the space within. Coincidentally, these are the colours of chocolate and give the entire place a warm and luxurious feel," states Anjali as she reflects on the initial design plan. The foyer leads to a rather large dining-cum-living area, on the left and right respectively. The living area is minimalistic, with a combination of fixed seating along one side and a large sofa on the other. Soft tones of beige and brown enhance the clean-lined design.

While wood forms the base for the fixed sitting counter, the backrest is composed of a painted partition. A veneer-finished counter that extends on both sides of this seating, results in a side table on one side and a corner table on the other. "We deliberately created a backrest that would be of multiple use. Besides subtly dividing the living and the dining areas, it has a niche carved into it that is perfect for placing curios," explains Ashwin.

The long sofa along the other arm extends into a corner, lit by tall floor lights in rice paper. Dark African vases present a bold contrast to the silver radial clock that stands out against a coloured wall.

◀ The no-frills compact kitchen is finished in ribbed steel laminate. Horizontal glass shutters finished in dark wood-laminate break the monotony of steel. The black granite on the counter climbs on to the walls forming a dado. Lights are embedded in the ceiling of textured acrylic sheets

▼ The dining partition with niches and a light box transforms into the glass breakfast counter, which divides the passage and the open kitchen. Two droplights suspended from veneer-finished slits in the ceiling add an element of interest





The living room opens into a sit-out that overlooks a forest. "The forest is natural and serene. We decided to exploit the view by retaining the sit-out..."

The living room opens into a sit-out that overlooks a forest. "The forest is natural and serene. We decided to exploit the view by retaining the sit-out," explains Ashwin. Chicks frame the glass doors that lead into the sit-out. "We had to keep the glare of the sun out and regular curtains would detract from the no-fuss, no frill look. The blinds contributed to the look and added to the warm feel of the space", adds Ashwin.



The dining area has a large window which is flanked by niches that are ideal for stacking crockery. Covered by shutters of frosted glass they are framed in wood. The centrepiece of the dining area is a glass and brushed-steel dining table surrounded by six dark wood chairs that complement the tones of veneer used. A partition that divides the dining space and the kitchen has lit niches which hold curios. A vertical 'light-box' forms a panel behind the niche wall and lights up the dining area. "We did not want the regular suspended lights and ornate chandeliers here, as we wanted the design to look chic and classy. The light-box illuminates the area in an unusual manner. We also created a common false ceiling with continuous recessed lighting for the dining and the living areas," elaborates Ashwin.

- 1 Fixed seating in the living room has a veneer-finished counter that extends on both sides to work as side tables
- 2 The family room cum study is an informal space
- 3 The backrest of the fixed seat of the living area forms the partition that separates it from the dining area
- 4 The partition with a niche for a welcome bouquet divides the lobby from the family space cum study



The breakfast counter starts from the edge of the partition between the dining area and the kitchen. "We wanted to create a counter that would subtly divide the open kitchen from the passage leading into the three bedrooms. This way we were able to retain the open feel that has been incorporated all over the house, whilst keeping the passage from appearing dark and dingy," clarifies Ashwin. Droplights suspended above the counter through veneer finished slits add an element of interest.

"The Mordes wanted the kitchen to reflect the design of the rest of the house," explains Anjali as she takes me around the kitchen. Sleek and smart, the kitchen is done up in ribbed-steel laminate, which contrasts well with the wood

cabinets have modular fittings. A sleek, black granite counter climbs the wall to form the dado. The ceiling here has a wood frame with textured acrylic sheets that help conceal the lights above. "This adds a glow to the kitchen and keeps it well lit," remarks Anjali. A large window allows for fresh air and light, while a small utility space adjacent to the kitchen houses the dishwasher and provides a covered space for the washing machine.

The passage then leads to the bedrooms. "As the master bedroom overlooks the forest we were keen that the design element incorporate this view." The planar interplay of light and dark shades of eucalyptus veneer creates a strong sense of geometry and intersection. Restful and soothing, the room is strangely dramatic at the same time. A simple double-bed with a glass backrest forms the focal point of the room. Bedside lamps from Ikea add to the appeal. A set of miniature paintings hung on the wall behind the backrest complement the interior, as chiks from Mizoram lend it an earthy feel. "To create an illusion of space, we merged the dressing area and the wardrobes at a right angle," claim the duo.

Turning right from the master bedroom, the passage enters the son's room. This room reflects the clean lines of the rest of the home. A bold backrest for the beds done in zebrano veneer is complemented by tall vases of the same wood and forms an interesting contrast to the coloured walls even as mirrors arrayed in a rectangle give relief to the wall. "We thought that this would form a different kind of artwork as it reflected light and added to the dramatic appeal," reveals Anjali. The study area is functional and practical.

The guest room is self-sufficient, with a queen-sized double bed tucked into a corner framed by coloured walls. Being a small room, a lighter shade of veneer has been used here. A rectangular cut-out in the backrest falls in line with the colours of the walls as it adds to a feeling of cheer and comfort.

"The Mordes wanted a kitchen that would be 'no-fuss, no-frills'. So, we decided to give this space a clean and contemporary look..."



5 Light and dark veneer finishes clad the mirror and dressing table that merge with the wardrobe at a right angle to create an illusion of space. Notice the blinds from Mizoram on the window

6 A soothing green is the colour palette and it combines well with the veneer finishes

concept & materials

Concept

To create a chic look with an interesting mix of beautiful artefacts that would complement the no-fuss, no-frill look.

Materials

Floor: Vitrified tiles

Walls: Premium acrylic emulsion

Veneer: Wenge, zebrano, eucalyptus

Laminate: Brush-finished SS laminate





1 & 2 The son's room, too, has clean lines for the furniture. The zebrano veneer headrest stands out against the coloured wall

Like everywhere else in the house, the large picture window has been retained. "It always helps to bring the outdoors within," add the Lovekars in unison.

Moving back to the living room and towards the foyer, we step into a study, which merges into the family space. Tones of brown dominate the spaces once again. A sequence of family photographs in sepia, framed in white, offset the dark tones of the wall, adding a personal dimension to the room.

Low and comfortable seating arrangements bring in the element of informality as indirect lights create a soft haze. An unconventional *pooja* space (it is marked only by a plain image of Sai Baba sans any votives or flower adornment) completes the picture of harmony.

A smooth flow, rich warm colour and that comforting feel of contentment... that's what defines the Morde home... 

fact file

Project: The Morde residence

Location: Pune

Area: 1,800 sq ft

Architects and consultant designers:

Anjali and Ashwin Lovekar

Duration of construction: Five months

Date of completion: May 2005