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The Perfect Whole

Anju and Ashwin Lovekar's design themes play on the colour palette...

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Pune based architects Anju and Ashwin Lovekar are pleased, but modest about receiving the 1998 IIID - M K INDIA Award for residential interiors in the young design category. "It feels good, especially since the project was our own residence," acknowledges Anju. But then, 'Modesty' for them is a way of life. The only way of designing? Anju says, "We like simple utilitarian furniture and prefer to create interest by using colours in the fabrics, paint and artwork. So it becomes relatively simple to change the look of the

house by changing these three elements. Also making changes here does not have a drastic cost implication." While tackling a project the Lovekars begin with space planning first. The concept, outlook and theme of the design follows as the layout progresses. Favouring stark and simplistic lines in most of their projects, they avoid unnecessary heavy detailing in the furniture.

No ornate false ceilings, an absolutely no frills approach characterise their designs, both for the Mehta residence and their own residence in Pune.

Facing page: An arch, painted ochre yellow, is an effective backdrop for the mantle piece. Accessories in glass and wrought iron add character to this area.

This page: View of the refurbished living room. Note the wrought-iron spiral staircase, large window and minimal furniture.



The large window in the living room wall was retained to keep the riverside view. Note the wide brass metal pipe railing along the window. Ornate cane furniture furnished with silk cushions comprise the seating arrangement here.

The Mehta Residence

This project proved to be an interesting exercise for the Lovekars. One, because it was a temporary accommodation and the clients had to return the flats in its original condition to the owners after a few years. This meant that all structural and civil changes had to be kept at a minimum. The second reason was that the existing furniture of the Mehta family, which was more than 60 years old had to be sorted and reused.

After adjoining two duplex flats of 1500 sq. ft. into a single compact family unit, the Lovekars began with making an exhaustive list of the furniture, deciding how much could be used in the new place. Most of it had to be modified, re-polished and restored. Then

began the task of designing a layout keeping the old furniture in mind.

The common staircase was closed off with the landing now serving as an entrance lobby. Since both the flats had kitchens, the partition wall in one of them was removed and the space was included in the living room. One kitchen platform which could not be demolished was clad in particle board and is now used to house the music system, speakers, and display artifacts. Ashwin remarks, "We experimented by using plain (clear polished) particle board, for cladding the platform and also the skirting, door and window jambs in an effort to keep the cost low." To make the most of the outside (the rooms faced the riverside) the aluminum windows in the living and

dining rooms were replaced with wooden windows without grills. The arched shape of the window, though ugly on the buildings façade, provided a very good frame for the riverside view. The arched window has been replicated on the adjacent wall and painted a deep yellow ochre with an old mantelpiece kept against in. This forms a focal point around which the seating has been planned.

Anju still remembers the tough time they had in bringing the huge old dining table into the house. The original table seated about sixteen people and had to be cut to fit into the relatively smaller dining room in this place. The existing dining chairs which were heavily upholstered had to be modified, made a little less imposing to suit the size of the dining

room. The ceiling painted a dull grey, the walls a stark white and the royal blue of the carpet forms an ideal color combination and blends well with the blue upholstery of the chairs. The rest of the ambience has been created to accentuate the beauty of the old furniture by using appropriate artwork, potted plants, earthen pottery and some of the old candle stands and light fittings. Of the many paintings hanging in the living and dining rooms, a few are by Kavita Mehta's artist brother Ameesh and also by Kavita herself, who likes to dabble in painting. Though used to living in large spaces, the Mehta's now find this home more comfortable to live in. And the clients satisfaction in itself speaks volumes of the success of the designer.

Cane furniture wrought-iron and a variety of plants impart a minimalist feel to this area.





Above: The cherry red colour adds warmth to the room. Ethnic antiquity and some old-fashioned lighting fixtures furnish this cosy corner.

Below: Vibrant colours set the mood in the Mehtas' dining room.

Fact file

Client	:	Kavita and Ajay Mehta.
Area	:	3000 sq. ft
Project Description	:	Residential Interiors.
Project Duration	:	2-3 months excluding flooring and furniture
Project cost	:	6 lakhs (approx.) excluding flooring and furniture
Project execution	:	By the architects in-house team



The Architects Own Residence

A project without client interference — Anju and Ashwin got that freedom when they refurbished their own interiors. When purchased, The 520sq.ft. of space had a conventional layout and had to be modified to suit the needs of the Lovekars. At the construction stage itself, structural changes were incorporated — the intervening wall between living room and the kitchen was knocked off, the toilet was incorporated in the bedroom and niches were made to incorporate the washing machine and other household gadgets. The walls in the living room are mainly white with beige and red in some places to give an illusion of depth. The living room extends along the red wall into the kitchen. In the absence of a full height barrier, a visual continuity and a feeling of openness is transmitted through the two spaces. The red wall encloses a washing



Above: The living room in Lovekars' home exudes a casual air. At night, with the cane blinds down at the low cill window, yellow light filtering from leather shades resonates the warm look of the white, beige and yellow colour scheme.

Below: Below the framed modern art, practical block cushion seats and bolster back rests are cast in various colours. A carved walking stick and indoor plants in the terracotta and glazed clay pots adorn the corner.

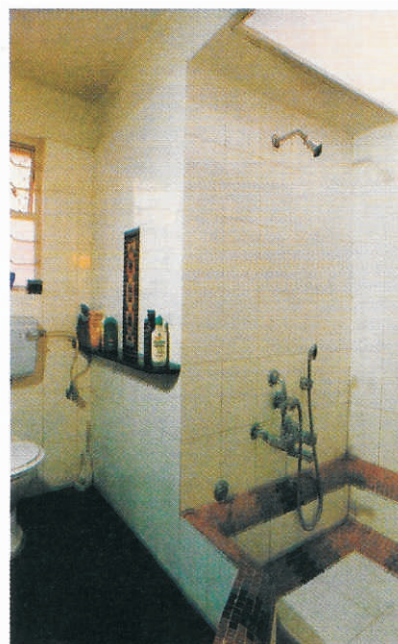


Above: The kitchen area as seen from the living room. The white unit with carved Rajasthani blocks as handles accommodates knick-knacks, a collection of artefacts and a few books. The folding dining table is held in place with an old printing block.

Below left: The seating niche here is flanked by three miniature tables used as shelves for Ganesha sculptures.

Below right: The dining table in open position. The red wall connects the living space to the kitchen area, opening up to show a linen storage, household gadgets and a toilet.





machine, linen storage, loft tank, boiler and a toilet. The ceiling is a sunshine yellow which gives the room its warm look in addition to the bright cushions, handicrafts and artwork. Most of the artwork is done by Anju herself. Ashwin says, "We did away with a formal sofa set and introduced low seating in the form of 12" high foam blocks, upholstered in beige and cream, which could double up as a sleeping arrangement whenever necessary. The living room window which faces the north brings in a very good light quality. The cill has been lowered to match the height of the low seating, thus giving it a picture window effect." Another interesting feature used by the Lovekars are the hand crafted wooden blocks from Rajasthan that make all the door handles.

The kitchen has a white and yellow colour scheme, with an interesting colourful tile dado. Because of the space crunch the dining table is a folding one. It is painted white and an old printing block from Jaipur holds it in the closed position.

The bedroom is warm and cozy with white wardrobes. Since the room is quite small, they

preferred not to draw attention to the wardrobes. In fact, at first glance they are hardly noticeable. The wall behind the bed has been painted black and red. Three terracotta masks from Goa form an interesting frame for this wall. In spite of the tight space, with good planning, the Lovekars have even managed to have a small built-in bathtub, which has been clad in colourful square 1" x 1" mosaic tiles. A wrought iron mirror on the dressing table completes the character of this room.

That this is one of their most exciting projects is evident in the enthusiasm with which they welcomed me into their home. As Ashwin remarks, "This is our smallest project till date and we feel that here we have struck an ideal balance between space utility and aesthetic appeal."

FACT FILE

Client	: Architects themselves
Area	: 520sq.ft
Project description	: Residential interiors
Project duration	: 2-3 months
Project cost	: 2.5 lakhs approx. excluding flooring
Project execution	: Architects inhouse team

Left: The small kitchen accommodates a lot of storage required for a modern living. Home-made tiles and assorted crockery adds colour and character to the predominantly white kitchen with hints of yellow.

Centre: The inset panel behind the bed becomes the focal point with its red and black paint, hand painted leather shade and terracotta masks. The bedroom has a corner bed and white wardrobes on the side. The column on the left was replicated on the right to form a bed back and a red and black inset panel.

Right: Coloured tiles mosaic make an engaging interlude along the bathtub and on walls in the white tiled bathroom. The bathing area is provided with ample white illumination.