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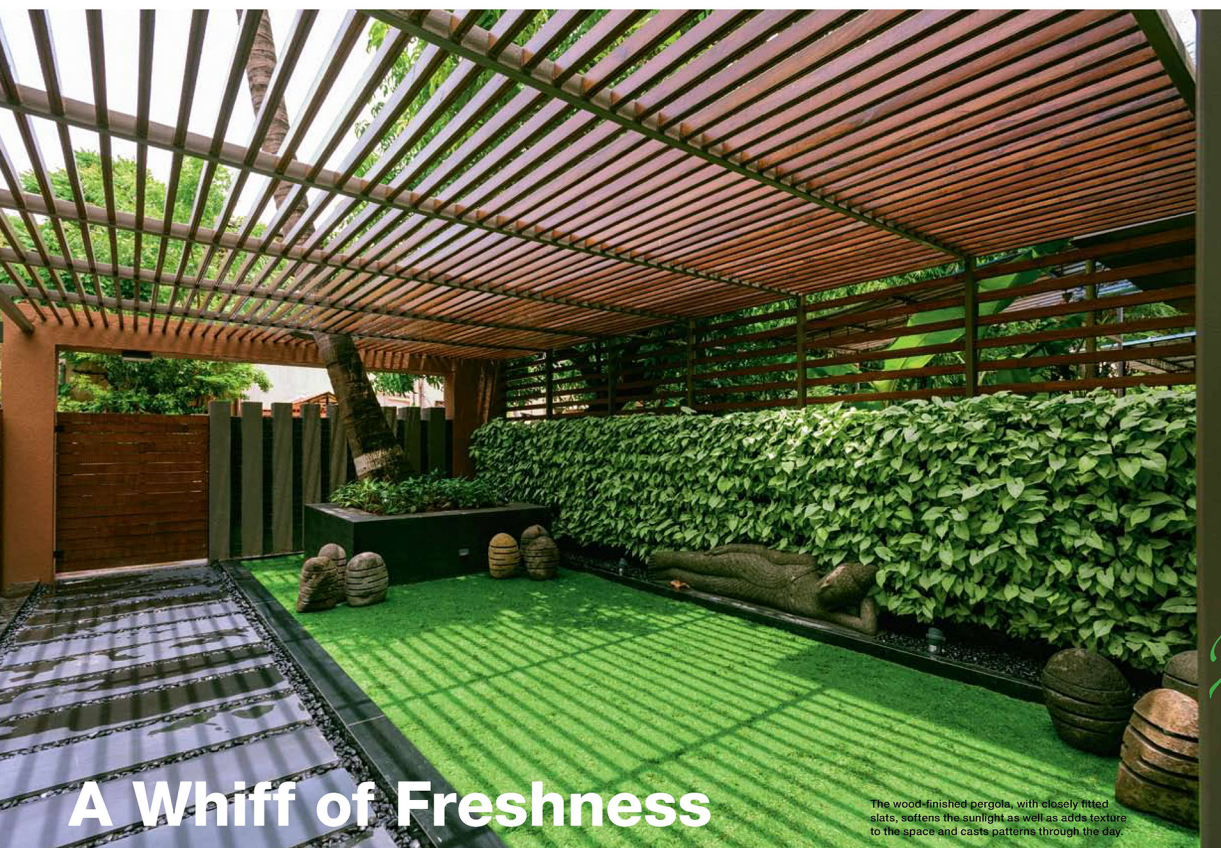
AUGUST 2015

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**A villa in Nashik
designed by
architect Behzad Kharas**





A Whiff of Freshness

The wood-finished pergola, with closely fitted slats, softens the sunlight as well as adds texture to the space and casts patterns through the day.



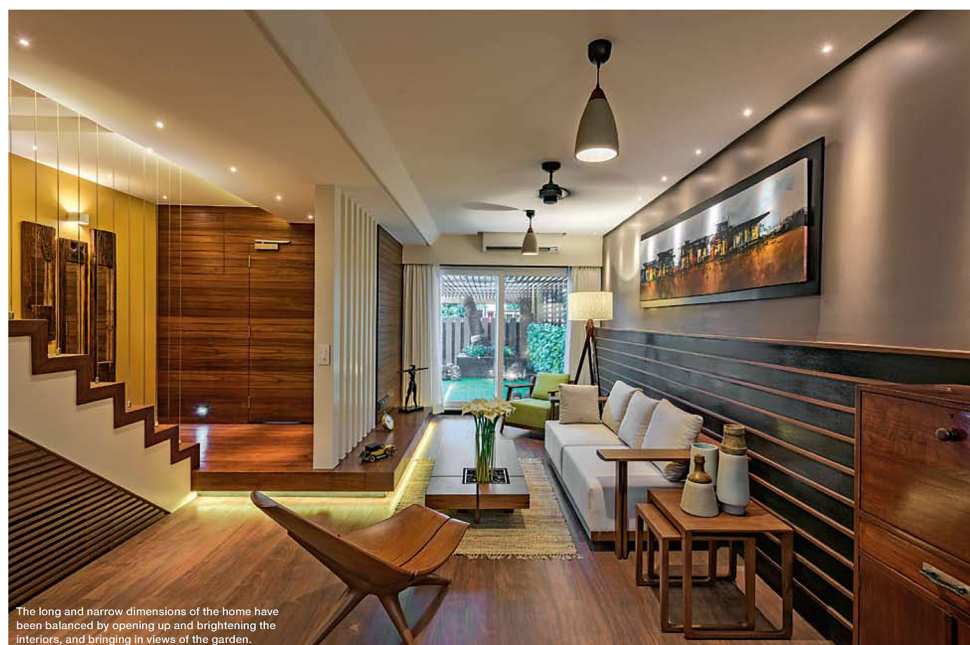
Stone planters add an earthy touch to the rooftop terrace.

TEXT: BRINDA GILL

PHOTOGRAPHS: HEMANT PATIL, COURTESY THE ARCHITECTS

With a play of light and shadow, Pune-based architects Anjali and Ashwin Lovekar along with associate designers Sonia Bhat and Mrunalini Dusange of Lovekar Design Associates transform a closed-in row house into a cosy home.

A home should have a feeling of warmth and be a liveable space without feeling like a museum or a hotel. Each space within it should have its own identity and charm, yet connect with adjoining spaces', say Pune based architects Anjali and Ashwin Lovekar. Employing this approach, the architect couple designed Lipakshi and Ashish Rai's row house in Sector 6 of the planned township of Vashi, Navi Mumbai, infusing it with freshness and flowing spaces.



The long and narrow dimensions of the home have been balanced by opening up and brightening the interiors, and bringing in views of the garden.

Site Constraints

While given a free hand to design the row house, the project also came with a set of constraints. Built over three decades ago, the home had changed owners over the years and was in need of an overhaul. Ashish had purchased two adjoining row houses – one for his mother and one for his family – and wished to have his reworked. The home had the living, dining, kitchen and a utility area on the ground level with a vertical central opening; two bedrooms – the master bedroom and a guest bedroom with an adjoining balcony with steps going to the terrace – on the

first floor and an open to sky terrace.

With Vashi having been developed on land reclaimed from the sea, the possibility of water seepage was real. The long and narrow dimensions of the home – 41 ft by 17 ft with a low ceiling and 4 ft being taken away by the staircase – required to be balanced. The dimensions led to a linear layout of living and dining areas and made a part of the latter dark due to the lack of natural light. The terrace, common to both row houses, was spacious and open to the sky, and yet, due to pipes, wires, water tanks and a duct conduit, was unused and uninviting.

'Instead of viewing an obstacle as a deterrent, we work it out or work around it to create something of interest out of it whilst addressing the problem.'



The unsightly central duct area has been transformed into a compact double-height atrium-like court with a frangipani tree and ledge for seating.



Ashwin and Anjali Lovekar



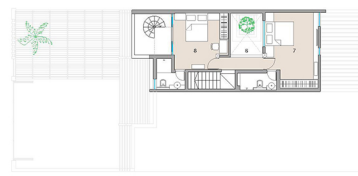
Mrunalini Dusage



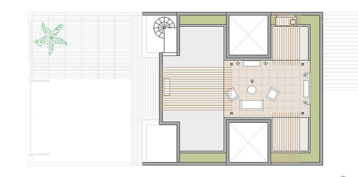
Sonia Bhat



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



TERRACE FLOOR PLAN



SECTION



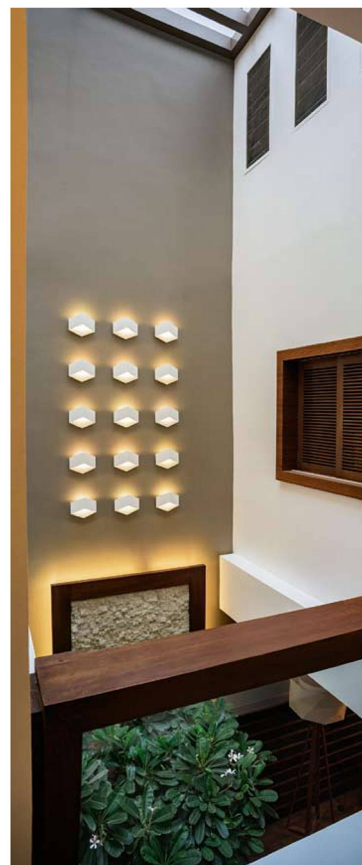
Light streams into the court from its glass-topped pergola on the terrace filling both the levels with light and freshness. The cluster of lights on the court's vertical wall gives it a life of its own.

Infusing Freshness

With a focus of creating an interesting ambience, the architects decided on a composite external appearance for the two adjoining row houses. This was achieved by designing similar entrances, wood finished railings for the upper level balconies of the two homes, a common steel frame panel between these two balconies, a large common steel panel (of an MS frame, aluminium slats and polycarbonate sheets) on the terrace and paving the common forecourt with grey stone tiles.

The outdoor section of the Rai house was landscaped with a vertical green wall, an artificial lawn, a walkway and a wood finished pergola with closely fitted slats to soften the sunlight as well as add texture to the space and cast patterns. A tall coconut tree in the lawn was retained; a ledge was placed around it and the pergola designed in such a manner that its trunk goes through it. A large reclining Buddha stone statue and slatted stone lamps, with light holders inside from Bali, added another charming touch to the landscaping.

The interiors were opened up and brightened by removing unnecessary walls, designing formal and informal seating, using flooring of wood and vitrified tiles akin to wood, and selectively using colours like orange and yellow to highlight a couple of walls. Large sliding glass panels fitted in

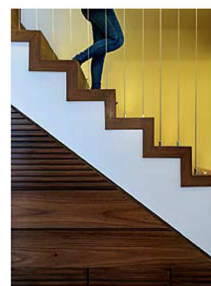
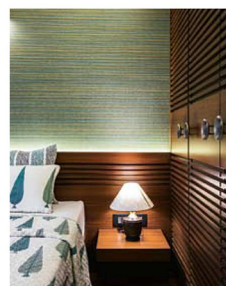


The dining room is a cosy space with natural light from the court, pendant lamps and artwork.

the living room draw the eyes to the landscaped garden and bring in outdoor views, while the window at the dining area (that opens into the utility area) has wooden blinds to bring in subdued light without the views. The bedrooms are designed with wooden flooring, cupboards with slats, low functional ledges, fresh coloured upholstery, textured wallpaper and walls painted in soft colours. Specially commissioned art works – an eight ft by two ft painting by architect Ketan Javdekar above the sofa in the living room, three works by Anjali Lovekar in the dining area, and one by Anjali Moghe in the aboriginal dot painting style – add an artistic touch.

Deterrent into Design

"If we cannot avoid an obstacle, we convert it into a design element. Instead of viewing the issue as a deterrent, we work it out or work around it to create something of interest out of it whilst addressing the problem," says Ashwin. The unsightly central duct area underwent a complete transformation to emerge as a compact double-height atrium-like court complete with a rough stone-finished wall set in a wood frame, a wall studded with lights and a ledge for seating around it. A flowering frangipani tree in the court along with light streaming in from the glass-topped pergola on the terrace level, casting a play of shadow lines, instantly fills the room with freshness and energy.



The water seepage issue was worked out by waterproofing the living and dining room wall to a height of four feet. The wall was clad with black stone (of a thickness of three inches) with horizontal wooden insets to create an eye-catching backdrop; the cladding also doubles up as a narrow ledge for displaying artefacts. Beams in the low ceiling (that detracted from the flow of the ceiling) were addressed by chamfering them to make a smooth transition between the ceilings of different areas.

The common rooftop terrace was transformed by bringing in a wrought-iron perforated screen to conceal the vertical pipes in the utility area; designing a platform to

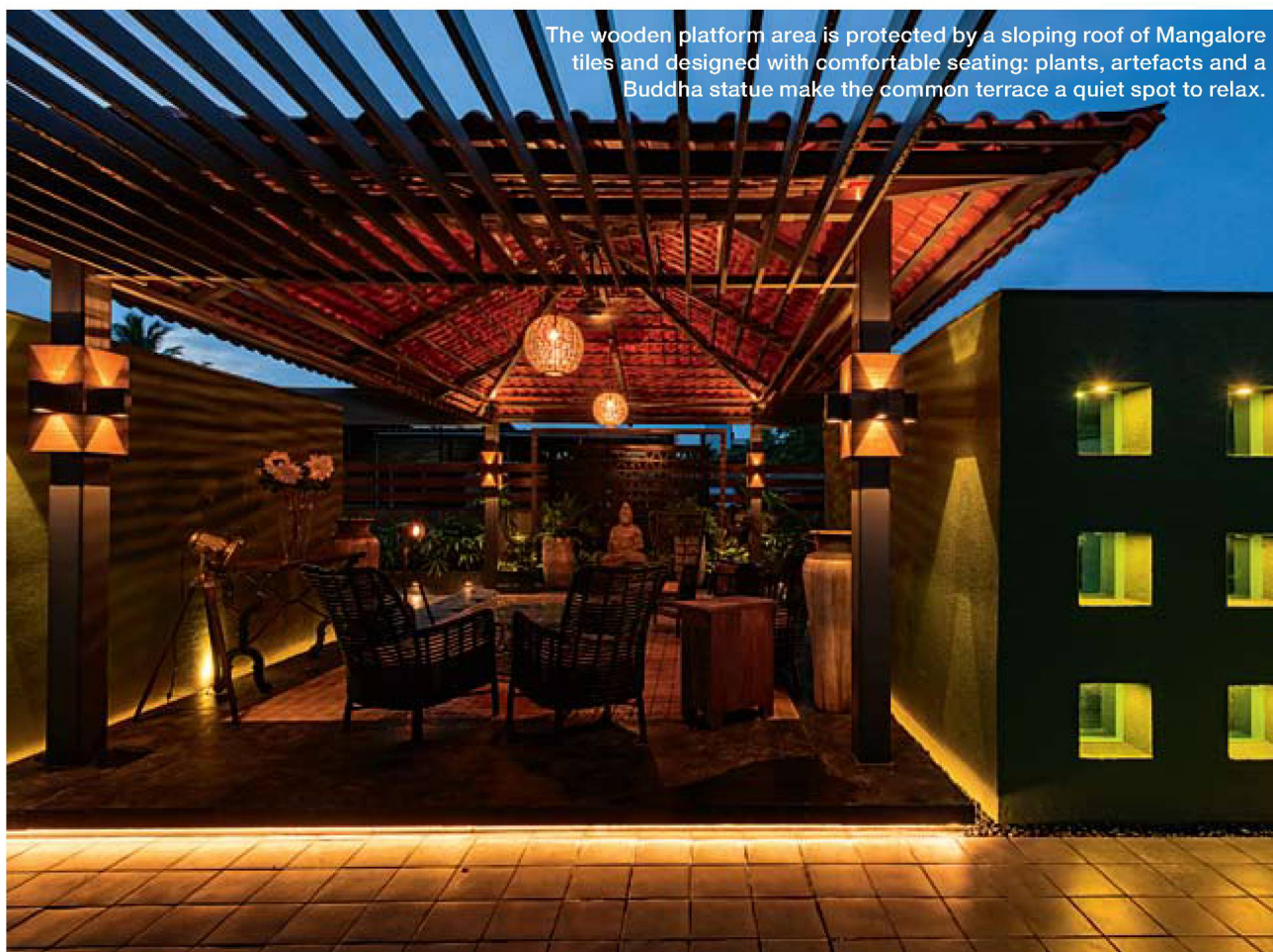
conceal the floor pipes; and raising the walls of the courts of both homes and fitting them with glass panes. A section of the terrace was tiled, while the platform area was covered with a sloping roof of Mangalore tiles; seating, plants, artefacts and a Buddha statue were placed here to make it a quiet spot to relax.

Small Details

Charming details, that blend function and design, add interest and lightness. A set of fins near the entrance offers privacy to the living room; the staircase has a series of stainless steel cables in place of a wall on one side; storage has been designed

A play of lines adds interest throughout the home: (clockwise) the pergola of the court, slats of storage below the staircase, stainless steel cables of the staircase; and slats of bedroom cupboards

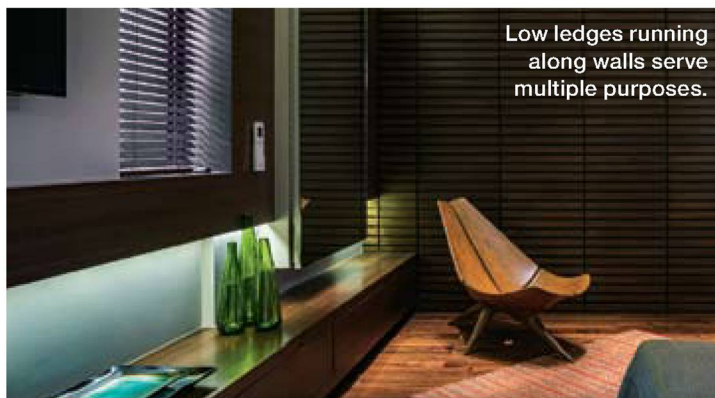
row house



The wooden platform area is protected by a sloping roof of Mangalore tiles and designed with comfortable seating: plants, artefacts and a Buddha statue make the common terrace a quiet spot to relax.

below the staircase including a wine rack; and the railing of the landing on the first floor has a glass panel instead of a wall. Doors to the powder room and bathrooms are flush with the woodwork with only a discreet panel, doubling up as a handle, indicating their presence.

Whilst the glass panels, court and windows assure ample natural light, the lighting scheme adds to the charm of home and garden. A blend of pendant lamps, floor lamps, spotlights, wall lights and recessed lights brings warmth after sunset. Spotlights on the steps cast muted arcs on the wall, recessed lights in the entrance platform make it appear as if afloat, and the cluster of lights on the court's vertical wall give it a life of its own. In the garden, the Buddha reclines in gentle response highlighted by the soft light of the lamps, bringing a sense of calm to the home that is treasured and enjoyed. 



Low ledges running along walls serve multiple purposes.

FACT FILE

CLIENT	Lipakshi and Ashish Rai
LOCATION	Vashi, New Mumbai.
AREA	3,400 sq ft
YEAR OF COMPLETION	May 2015
ARCHITECT	Lovekar Design Associates
HORTICULTURE CONSULTANTS AND CONTRACTORS	Apama and Mukul Bandiwadekar Greenometric Solutions, Mumbai