

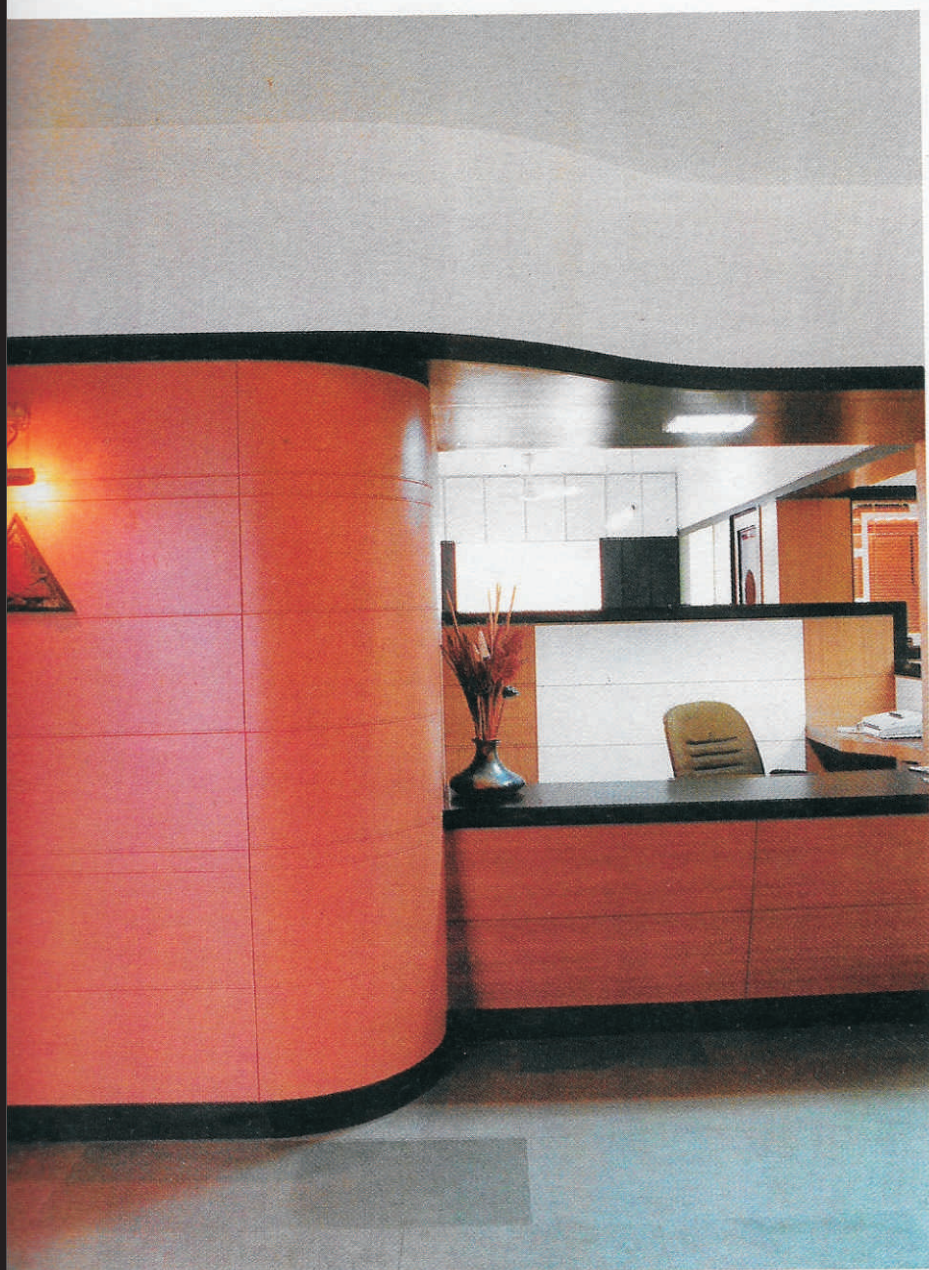
INSIDE OUTSIDE

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It's an oft held notion that interior spaces can be either aesthetic, or practical. That adding a degree of flair and panache to a place invariably takes away from some of its functional value. A myth happily shattered by two young architects from Pune — Anjali and Ashwin Lovekar who have in the short span of their practice specialised in designing places that are practical, yet have that vital touch of drama. We feature three of their projects — an office for which they won an IIID award, and two residences, all in Pune.

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COLOUR, ANGLES AND CURVES



Imaginative use of colour and geometry give each of the spaces the Lovekars' design a distinct and independent identity as can be seen in the office for builders Banned and Co, spread over 2,035 sq ft. 'Our main emphasis here was on creating an office with a simple and elegant look. We decided to use colour and lines, straight, curved and linear to demarcate spaces,' says Anjali.

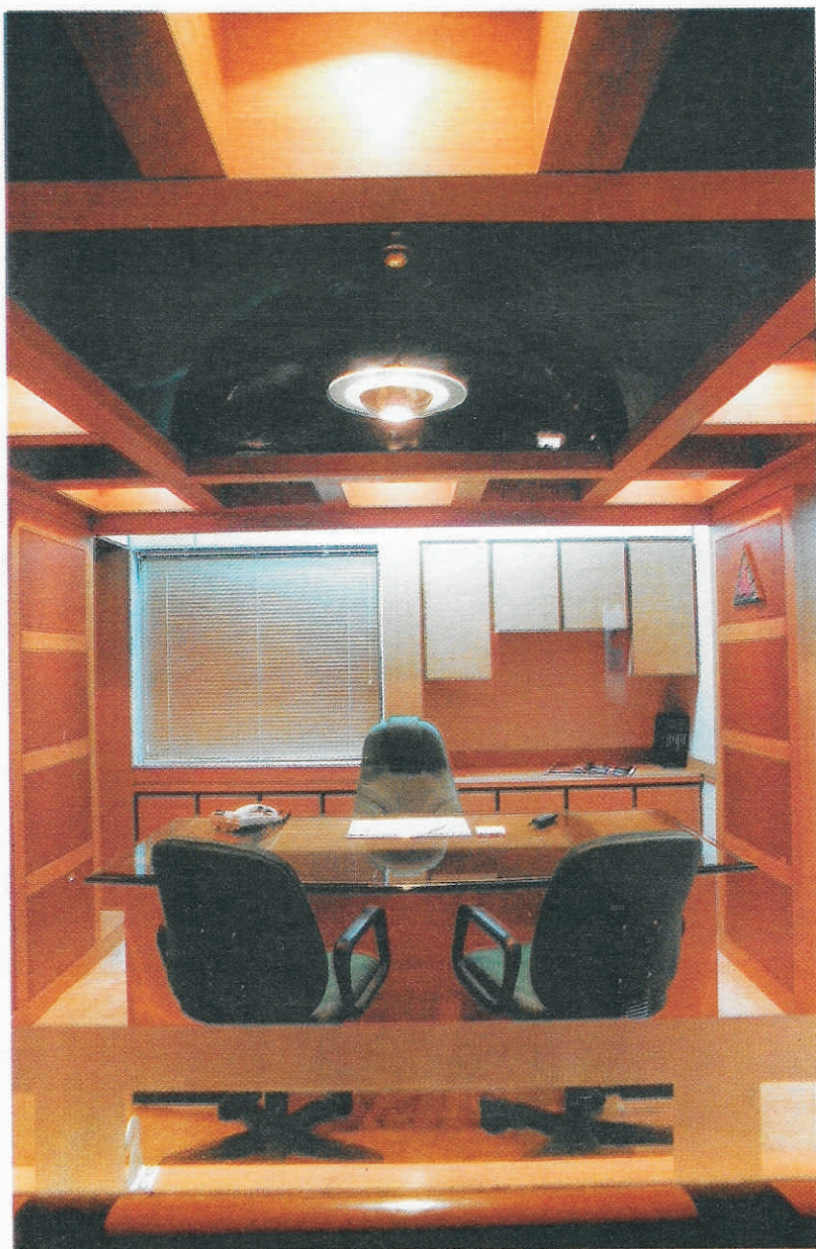
A curved wall greets one at the reception. 'Rather than having a dead wall at the entrance, we decided to create drama by constructing a curved, wooden wall, painted rust,' explains Ashwin. The reception was made the focal



Opposite: A view from the entrance.

Above: A rust-coloured curved wooden wall enlivens the reception area. To avoid monotony, the ceiling above the desk is curved and painted black. The lower part of the reception table has been slanted inwards. The cool minty green sofas, which provide visitor seating, are placed against a low glass and wood partition that runs along one side at the back, creating a private passage that links the offices of the two partners.

Left: Looking into the waiting area from the reception desk.



point, and given its own distinct identity on the basis of the colour scheme. The ceiling above the reception desk was painted black while the rest of it was painted cream. To break the monotony of straight lines, the roof above the reception was curved and the lower part of the table slanted inwards. 'The beams were at dif-

ferent heights — we regularised some, and used others to advantage for distinguishing spaces,' adds Ashwin. This also obviated the need for false ceilings.

The curved wall also works to hide the toilet and other utility areas from the view of the seating area. A wooden column on the other side of the reception

Left: The junior partner's office looks rich in varied coloured woods. Wooden squares embedded with lights, frame the central portion of the false ceiling. Shaped like a pyramid, its concave area is painted black to add depth.

Opposite Above: The staff areas are neat and functional. The tack board with its rust and cream fabric, adds a splash of colour.

Opposite Below: To complement the linear structure of the senior partner's cabin, a barrel vaulted ceiling has been used.

table, painted peach, is given a textured finish. 'Dot' paintings, by Anju Moghe, adorn most of the walls.

The Lovekars deviated from the norm of placing seating for visitors against a wall, and opted instead, for a low, glass and wooden partition that runs all along one side at the back. This also enabled them to create a private passage at the back, linking the offices of the two partners who can access each other without having to pass through the visitors' area. 'In a construction office you have a number of people dropping in at all times, so we decided to make a large waiting area,' says Anjali.

Colour has been used to distinguish activities. While the reception is mainly in hues of rust, cream and beige, the seating area is a cool green. The staff areas with laminated tables and storage cupboards, continue the colour scheme of beige, rust and black.

The two offices of the partners have also received special attention. The junior partner's office, despite its relatively simple decor, has a rich look to it with the use of wood in various



shades. The most distinguishing feature however, is the false ceiling. Wooden squares embedded with lights, frame the central portion, that is constructed in the shape of a pyramid, with its hollow painted a dramatic black. 'The pyramid design was conceived due to the low height of the ceiling and painted black to accentuate the feeling of depth,' explains Ashwin.

The ceiling in the senior partner's office is equally arresting. 'This cabin had linear proportions — $9\frac{1}{2}$ x 16 ft. We opted for a barrel vaulted ceiling which complements the linearity.

The office has been designed as a 'complete whole' with geometric angles, use of wood and earthy colours giving it a sense of uniformity and converting a quotidian office space into a visual delight.



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This Page & Opposite Above: The living area. The wall behind the dining table is painted a bright rust, to add warmth to the room. The sofas and the dining set were designed by the Lovekars, keeping in mind the period look of the artefacts belonging to the Sukhranis. Under the staircase the Lovekars have created a mini study, which houses books and souvenirs from Sanjay's world travels. The wooden drawers fit snugly into the stairwell and provide ample storage.

Opposite Below: The uncluttered bedroom boasts a beautiful antique writing desk, a 100-year-old dresser and a brass bed.



2

Doing up Qaneez and Sanjay Sukhrani's duplex apartment posed a real challenge to the Lovekars, mainly because of the diametrically opposite demands put forth by the husband and wife. While Qaneez, a collector of antiques wanted a period look, her shippie husband was sold on a contemporary style, complete with leather, glass and granite. It was thus with kid gloves that the designers set to work, adding a dash of modernity here and a dab of vintage there, to come up with a look that was not the least bit jarring despite the eclectic collection of antiques, crystal and onyx all over the house.

With Qaneez working all day and her husband away most of the time, the decor had to be necessarily one that would be easy to clean and maintain. The Lovekars designed the sofas and the dining set with the period look. A 100-year-old, glass fronted panel with a wooden border was provided by Qaneez for a showcase, and the rest of it was made to match in wood, and placed on wooden drawers. To give the room warmth, the front wall was painted a bright rust.

The most ingenious and attractive part of their design is the way they have utilised the area below the staircase. The Lovekars have constructed a mini study with shelves for books and some of Sanjay's painstakingly collected souvenirs from around the world. A section on the side comprises wooden drawers that fit snugly into the area below the staircase. The wall overhead is adorned with water-colours from the streets of Odessa, a 1642 replica of the first ever bow and arrow,



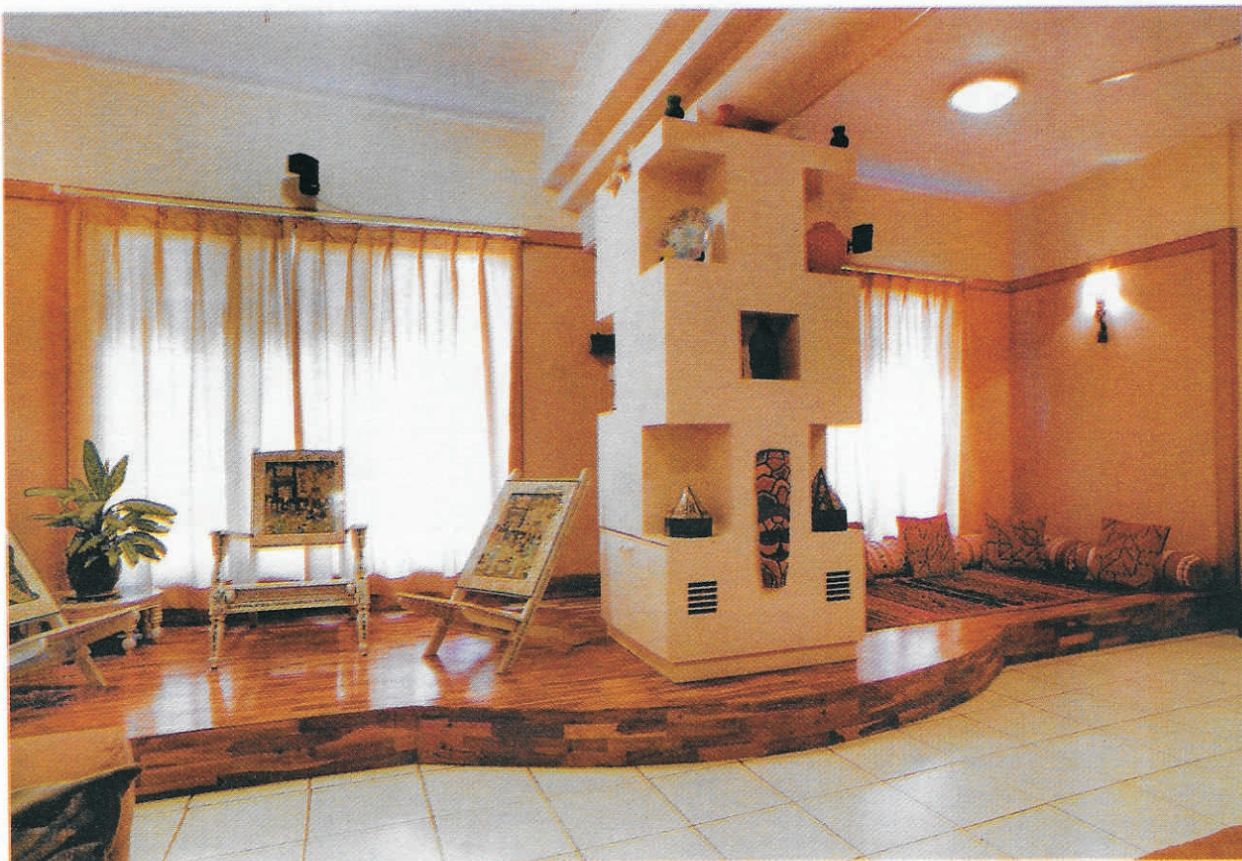
from Pisa, and an antique gun from Oslo. The staircase with its railing design reminiscent of yesteryears and a stained glass on the window overhead, enhance the look.

The master bedroom has a 100-year-old dresser mirror and writing desk inherited by Qaneez. The chair with its panel of wickerwork, and the bed with its brass backrest were added on

by the Lovekars to blend with the original furniture.

'I wanted the house to reflect my personality and to look like a home and not a museum, despite the collection of antiques and artefacts. And that has been accomplished. More than anything, it's the kind of house I like living in,' says Qaneez bestowing on the designers the ultimate compliment.

2



Homes are personal spaces and should grow with the people living there. We feel residents should not be intimidated by their surroundings, and we take care that the design of a home reflects the owner's personality and lifestyle. However, we do try to inculcate a certain discipline that gives the interiors a complete look,' states Ashwin.

'Designing Anju and Avinash Moghe's apartment was easier than most, since we came in at the initial stages of construction. Which is just as well, considering that we were given a list of about 150 points by the Moghes,' smiles Anjali glancing at Anju and Avinash, who have since become their closest friends. They were thus able to make structural



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All the corners of walls in the house are clad with wood to avoid chipping of plaster, or stains, as corners are usually the most 'touched' places.

changes, which was imperative, as the Moghes' flat actually comprises two adjacent apartments.

The wall in between the two flats was broken down and the 1,470 sq ft house divided by placing the public and utility areas like the living, dining and kitchen on the west side and the three bedrooms on the east. 'This was for practical reasons as the western side tends to be warmer during summer. Also since the west-east wind direction would bring in more dust, I wanted a north-south wind flow here and the windows are placed accordingly. The effect has been that this apartment is a good five to seven degrees cooler in summer than the others in the building,' adds Avinash, a captain in the merchant navy.

Combining the living rooms of the two flats gave the Moghes a large area, where the main problem seemed to be the overhead beams. The Lovekars' ability of turning a negative aspect into a positive one came to the fore, and a central pillar was converted



Opposite Page: The living area is large and spacious. Problem areas were an overhead beam and the central pillar, which were both effectively camouflaged. The pillar has become the focal point of the living room, with niches to house artefacts — a testimony to the Lovekars' ability to creatively turn a negative feature to advantage.

Above: The living room flows into the dining area. The table top is black granite, making it easy to maintain.

Below: A handy sink tucked into a niche adjacent to the kitchen and dining area.



The functional yet cheerful kitchen with the dining area in the foreground. There is no wall dividing these areas, only a visual demarcation in the form of flooring. The white tiles of the dining area give way to rust ones in the kitchen.

into a display unit with the help of ecoboard. A repository for artefacts, the pillar became the focal point of the living room. The rear portion was used to house the music system without it being visible. Mini Bose speakers situated above the french windows are not really noticeable, and the strains of music seem to come hauntingly from nowhere.

A wooden platform runs along one side of the living room, the pillar effectively dividing it into two seating arrangements — one essentially Indian with low seating in bright cushions and dhurries, and the other a 'morning area' with wooden chairs and plants. Huge windows let in air and light.

Sofas on the other side are used for more formal entertaining. The colour scheme is muted,

with beige, brown, cream and rust being offset with splashes of brighter shades here and there. A part of the wall is painted in a darker shade and bordered with wood. All the corners of walls in the house are clad with wood to avoid chipping of plaster, or stains, as corners are usually the most 'touched' places.

A wooden partition visually demarcates the living room from the dining and kitchen area. 'Since there was no wall dividing the kitchen and dining room, we demarcated them with the help of flooring,' explains Anjali. Thus the white tiles of the dining area give way to rust ones in the kitchen. Both the kitchen platform and the dining table have been topped by black granite, making them easy to clean and



Above: Wood panelling is the predominant feature in the master bedroom. The panelling above the bed, the wardrobes and the wooden dresser, all lend warmth to the room.

Below: The Moghes' teenage son's room, is a self-sufficient space, with areas demarcated for the computer, music system, books — and all the teenage paraphernalia. The bed has sliding drawers to provide extra storage.

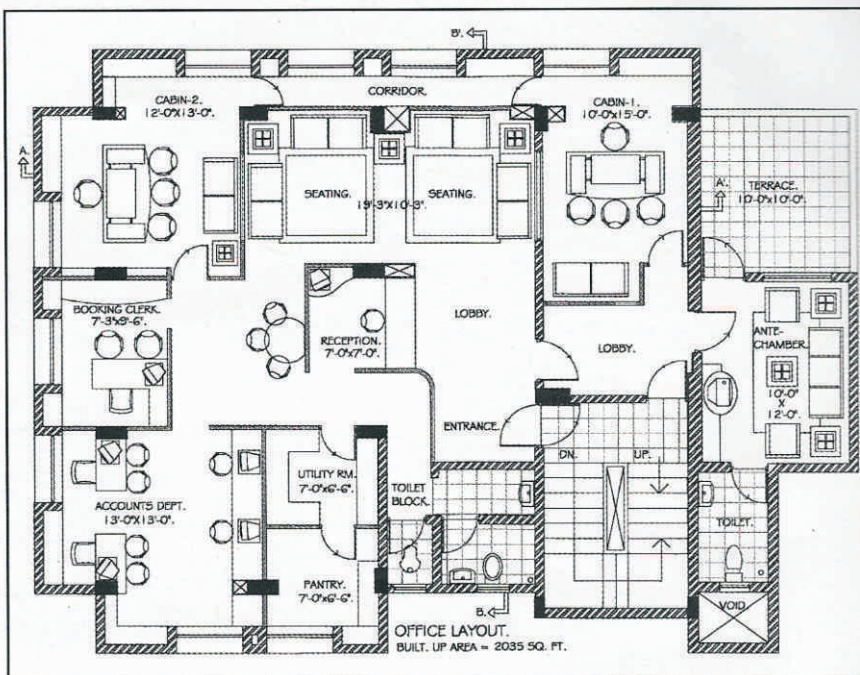


maintain. Everything from the mixer blades, to the chopping board and a handy chair are accommodated under the platform. Other practical touches include sliding drawers, and the cupboard containing utensils opening from the bottom, to let the water drip down from dishes.

The master bedroom is a symphony in brown with use of wood panels. A 'study' in the centre with a wooden table, chair, filing cabinets and drawers, divides the room. An African carved column doubles as a side table, and wood panels behind the bed create a feeling of continuity.

The Moghes' teenage son's bedroom is a self-sufficient space, with areas demarcated by wooden panels for the music system, computer, books, a lit up globe, and a teenager's belongings. A soft board lit by a concealed tubelight is situated above the study table, while a huge round mirror with a wooden border lends a feeling of space to the otherwise average sized room. A bed with sliding drawers beneath, and shelves behind the door, function as effective storage spaces. Here too wooden frames line the windows, walls and cupboard.

'What is really heartening about the design is the way the Lovekars have handled space. No inch has been wasted. There is even a passage running behind the living room, connecting the bedrooms to the kitchen and dining room through the utility areas, making it possible for us to enter either area without going through the drawing room. Every room has a clock made particularly for it in wood. All this gives a feeling of unity and warmth to the house,' smiles a well satisfied Avinash Moghe. ❶



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