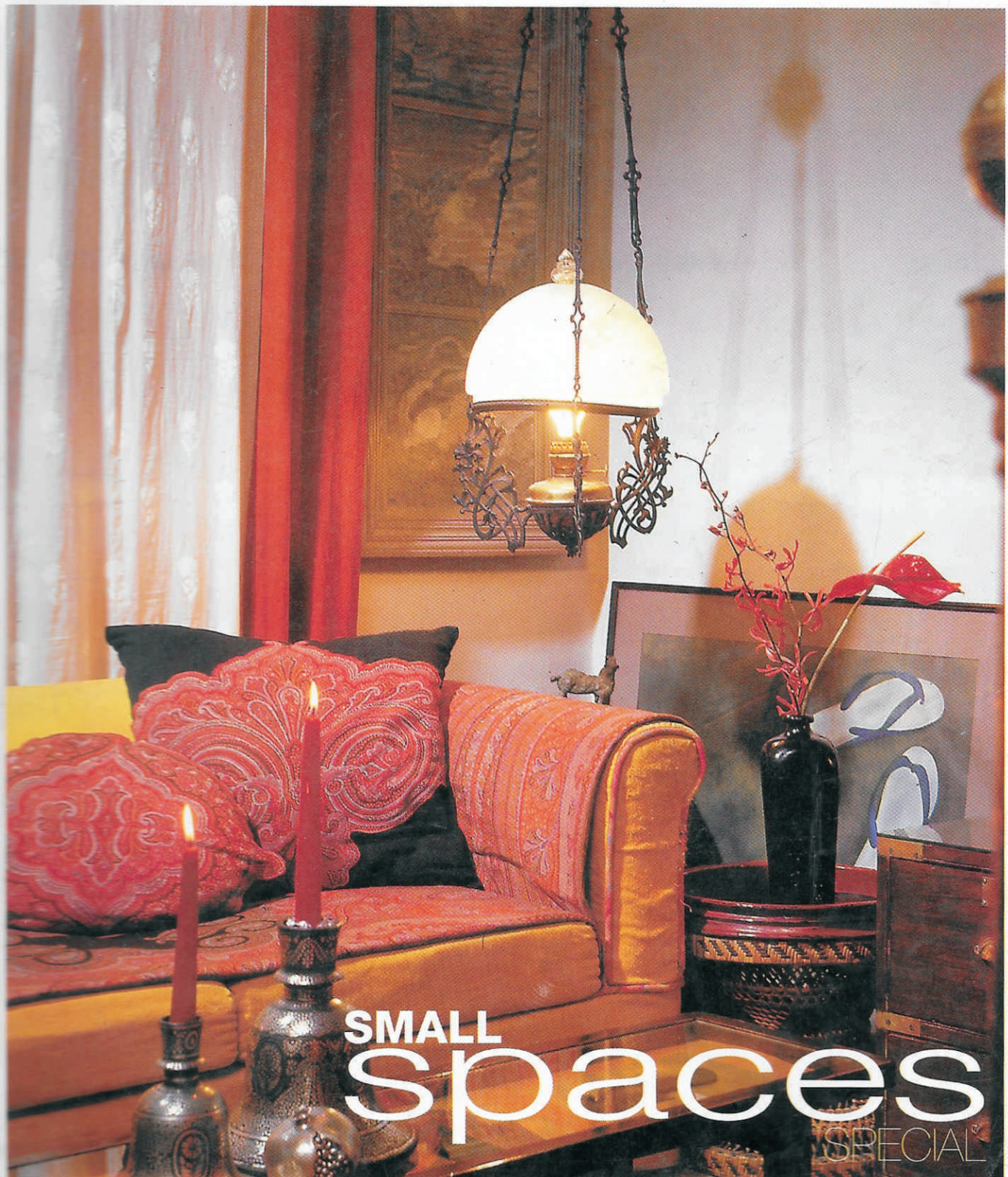


INSIDE OUTSIDE

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SMALL
spaces

SPECIAL



ENHANCING

A TOTAL BUILT-UP AREA OF JUST 520 SQ FT, DESIGNED BY ARCHITECTS ANJALI AND ASHWIN LOVEKAR FOR THEMSELVES, HAS RECEIVED THE IIDD YOUNG DESIGN PRACTICE AWARD FOR 1998, IN THE RESIDENTIAL CATEGORY. BUILT AT A COST OF ONLY RS 2 LAKH, THE WORK WAS COMPLETED IN JUST 2 MONTHS!

TEXT: SUNANDA MEHTA PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY ANJALI & ASHWIN LOVEKAR





SPACE

Handling small spaces is an art. Anyone who believes that the 'Best things in life come in small packages,' needs only to get in touch with Anjali and Ashwin Lovekar to get a first hand account of the tribulations involved in working out an equitable distribution of space that is also aesthetic! What is needed, they will tell you, is a great deal of imagination, preferably a degree in architecture, and a lot of practical good sense.

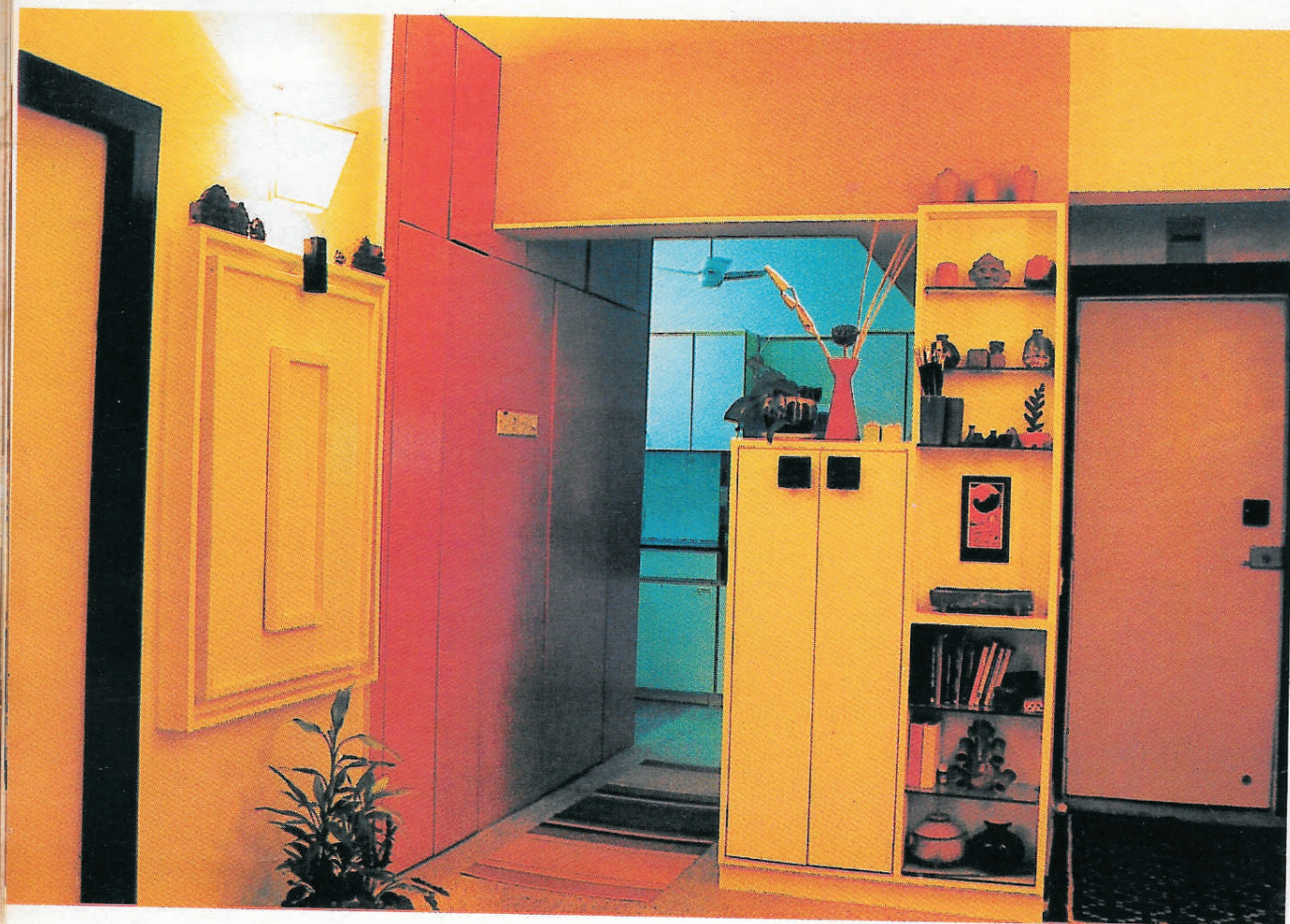
The Lovekars' flat is in a building that looks like any other in the area, drab and routine. The entrance is innocuous. But as you turn into the corridor to approach the apartment, you are met with a profusion of plants lining the walls, a door painted differently from the ones you passed and you are already beginning to expect something different.

'What we needed,' says Ashwin, 'was a modern apartment, designed on clean lines,

easy to maintain and aesthetically appealing. The apartment had to cater to being our den, formal entertaining space, family space and yet feel comfortable to live in.' A tall order! But, Anjali and Ashwin set to it with a will.

Opposite Above & Above: The living room, casual and comfortable with low seating. Instead of the conventional sofa, are foam blocks which when opened out, double up as beds when needed!

Opposite Below: Anjali and Ashwin Lovekar, a dynamic duo.



Luckily they were able to incorporate civil changes at the construction stage itself. 'Our requirement was a modestly comfortable living room which had to double up as a sleeping area when required, with an accessible toilet, one kitchen with a lot of storage capacity, and one bedroom with an attached toilet,' say the Lovekars.

Most of one wall in the living room is taken up by a window that has become a focal point of interest in this room. 'There is not much provision for ventilation in the apartment as visualised by the builder. We decided to

lower the window sill from the customary three feet to eighteen inches more, to give it a French window style,' explains Ashwin Lovekar, who with wife Anjali has been responsible for the space-saving ideas in the apartment. This also had the added advantage of counteracting the cramped up feel of this small area.

The space enhancing exercise is evident right from the living room seating arrangement. The living room is casual, and the furnishings are in varying shades of beige, brown, rust and green. 'We have done away with a formal sofa set and have used high

density, folded foam blocks which double up as low-level beds when opened out,' says Anjali. 'We rarely have formal guests. Most are friends who do not mind spreading the cushions out to form beds, and if all of them are spread out they can accommodate almost five people, converting the living room into a guest room overnight.'

The walls have been kept white, but are offset with beige and red to give an effect of depth, and the ceiling is a 'sunshine yellow'. 'If I told any of my clients that I wanted to paint their roofs yellow they would



probably pass out! So I experimented with it in our place,' smiles Ashwin. The result has been interesting, especially where the three colours, cream, beige and yellow meet at a corner. Even the plywood panels enclosing the various storage spaces in the passage are coloured rust.

Dhurries on the floor, leather light fittings from Andhra Pradesh, three colourful frames of handmade paper to bring out their texture created by Anju, a bookshelf, dried flowers arrangements, a collection of Ganapati figurines and the earthy

'chik' covering the large window, add colour to this charming area while the variety and colour of the decorative Indian handicrafts add a bright and cheery character.

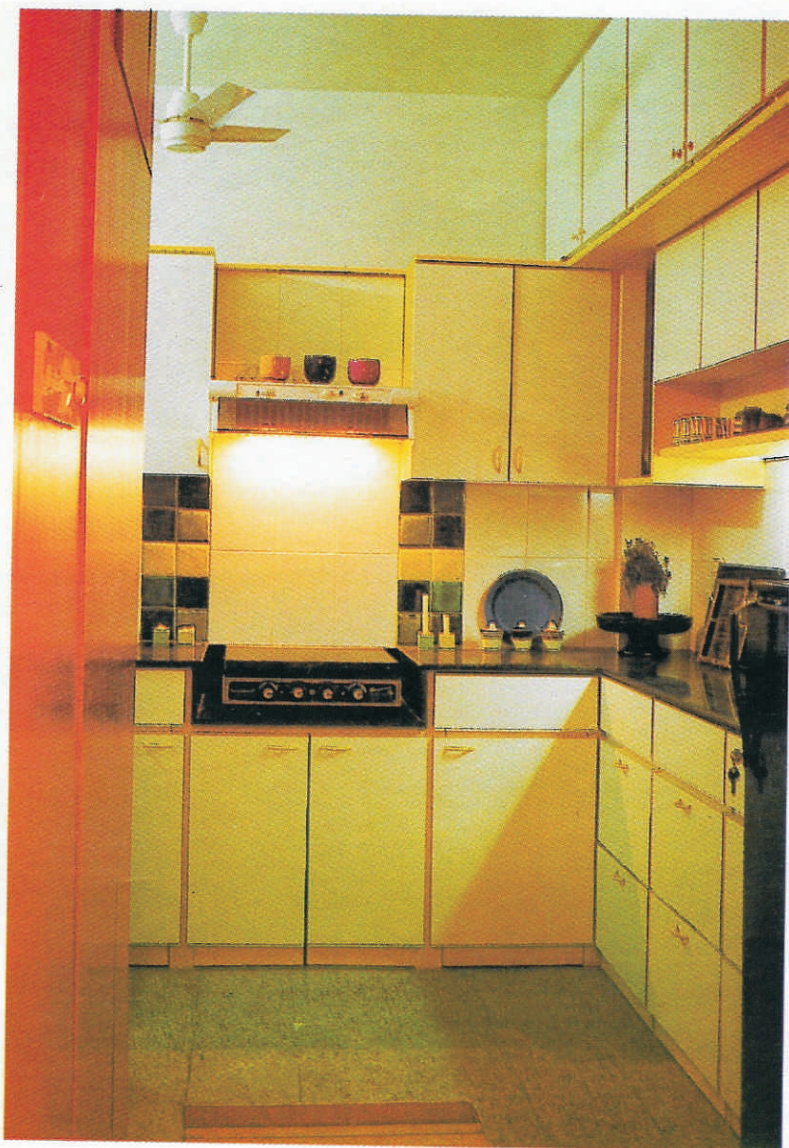
The dining area is a foldaway table held in its folded position against the wall with an old printing block from Jaipur. 'On weekends it is used as a makeshift studio table since both my wife and I love to paint during that time,' adds Ashwin.

The living room extends along a red wall into the kitchen. Why, you may ask. 'For visual continuity and a feeling of openness, as

there is no full height here. And it acts as a barrier between the kitchen and the living room.' The red wall has other ingenious attributes. It encloses a washing machine, linen storage, loft tank,

Opposite & Above Left: At one end of the living room is a table folded on the wall, that can function as a dining table or a studio shelf, as required. The kitchen is in the background.

Above Right: The passage that was converted into the storage area. On the left are wooden panels concealing the washing machine, boiler, linen storage and even the entrance to a toilet.



boiler and a toilet. A wood panel opens up to reveal the small toilet, about six feet by three feet in size, that was made by a little encroachment of the kitchen space. The enclosed loft above this panel holds the boiler that supplies hot water to both the bathrooms and kitchen.

The passage thus converted leads into the kitchen that despite its tiny size is extremely conve-

nient. A granite platform on three sides, deep sunken drawers that roll out easily for storage of bottles and the bigger cans, and the white and yellow colour scheme make for a visually appealing and functional area. More colour comes in the form of a few handmade tiles in deep blue and green arranged abstractly on one wall that Ashwin informs have only lately come

into the market. 'We got these as samples and they seemed ideal to liven up this wall of white tiles.' There being no provision for space for a window, the Lovekars opted for a fibre hood over the cooking range to keep the kitchen free of smoke.

A door off the living area opens to reveal the master bedroom. A small room with diffused light, courtesy the painted leather shades, it is an admirable balance of the functional aspects with aesthetics.

The most striking aspect of the room is the black painted wall behind the bed, offset by beige walls. 'Actually there was a concrete column at the back of the bed on one side. So we made an identical one in plywood on the other side for symmetry, and created this inset panel. On top of the panel was this beam which we complemented by a similar panel lower down, so that it works as an ideal backrest,' explains Ashwin. The two panels painted a terracotta red, make an interesting visual impact. A triangular mirror bordered with a wrought-iron frame and three terracotta masks acquired in Goa are the other highlights of the bedroom.

The attached bathroom here has a built-in tub positioned on a side and plain white tiles on the wall to enhance the space. A square area with concealed lighting on the roof gives the impression of a skylight. The relative spaciousness of the bathroom is because of the structural changes

Above: The compact and functional kitchen, livened with vibrant colours.

Opposite: The bedroom with the dramatic inset panel behind the bed — simple yet eye-catching.

the Lovekars effected in the flat while it was under construction. 'The tub area was actually the part of the passage that we completely knocked out. Half of the passage was added to the bathroom and other the half used was used for storage space.'

The innovative and irreverent use of colours seems to have played a major role into making the Lovekars' apartment what it is. While most of the walls are cream in keeping with the need to give the impression of space, creative touches here and there make all the difference. Like the darker shade of beige on one wall in the living room. 'This is the first wall one views when walking in and so we decided that the black granite sill border would show off better against the darker beige background, and also lend depth to the wall.'

'The bottom-line about everything in the apartment, be it colour scheme or the furnishings-

is, flexibility. Anything can be changed if we start getting bored of the same old decor and that will maintain the interest in the house,' elaborates Anjali. 'Actually we did not start work with many pre-conceived plans because a place evolves as you start staying there. That is what makes a house a home. I think this apartment is ideal for a working couple like us and suits us very well,' says Anju. 'It is a wrong notion amongst people that small apartments need not be done up or that it doesn't require planned interiors. With this apartment what we really wanted to prove is that whatever the size of your place it is your home and it deserves to be done up in a style that would make you want to spend time there. In fact, a 500 square foot apartment, if properly done up can many times look better and be more comfortable than a 2000 square foot one,' states Ashwin. ❶

