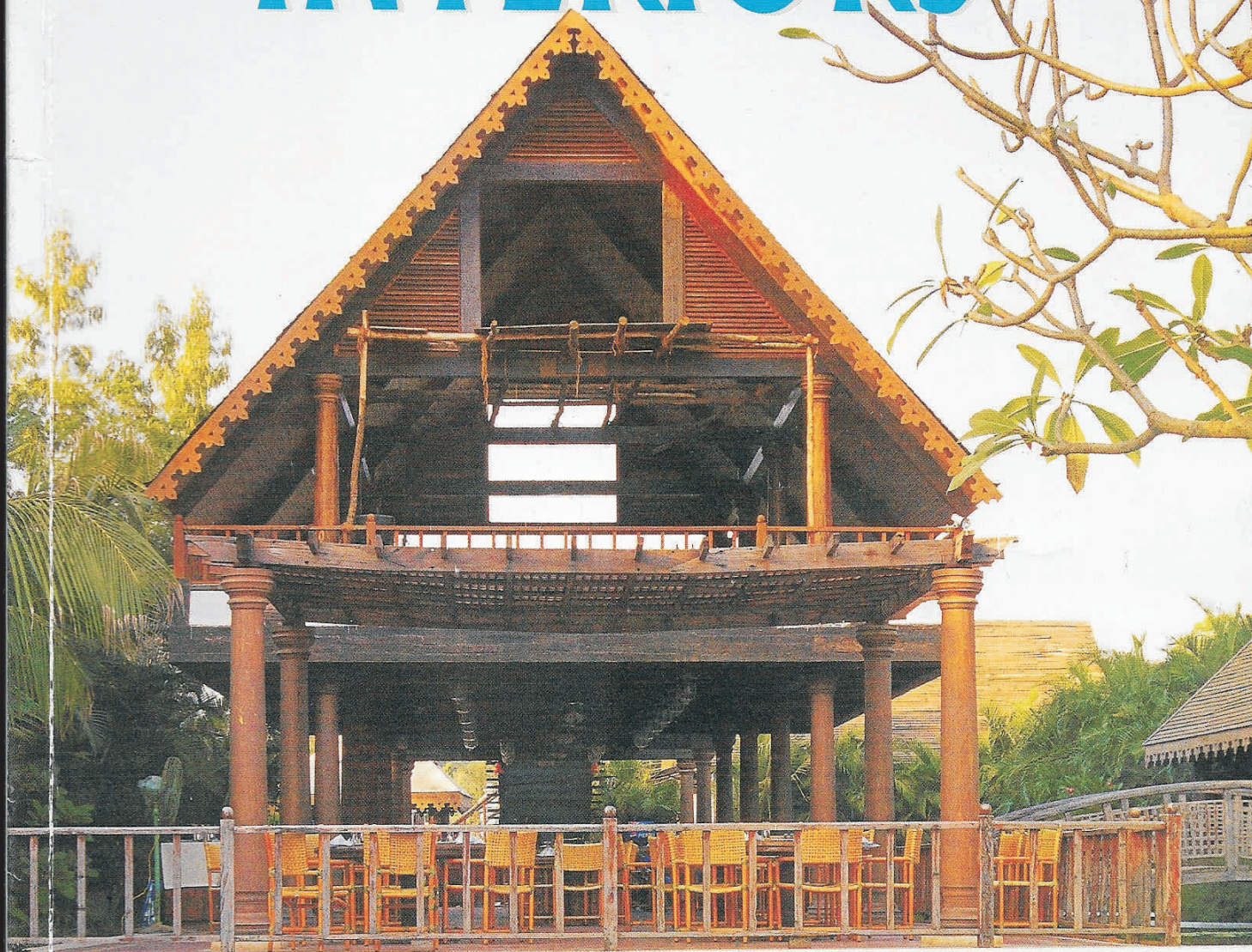


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SOCIETY

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INTERIORS



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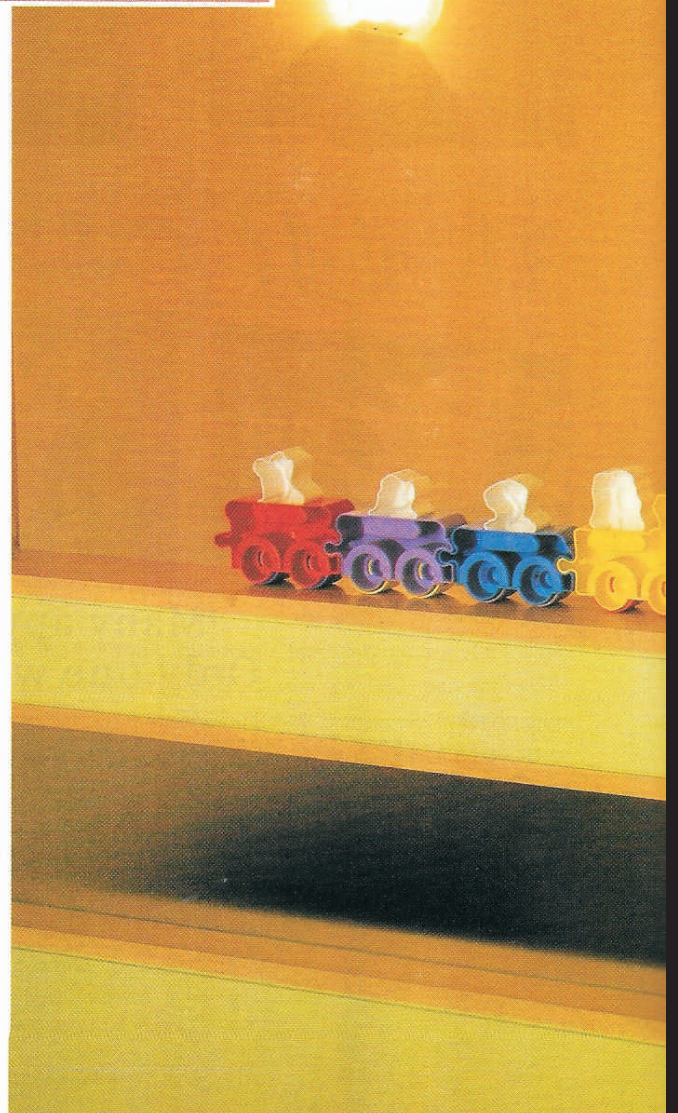
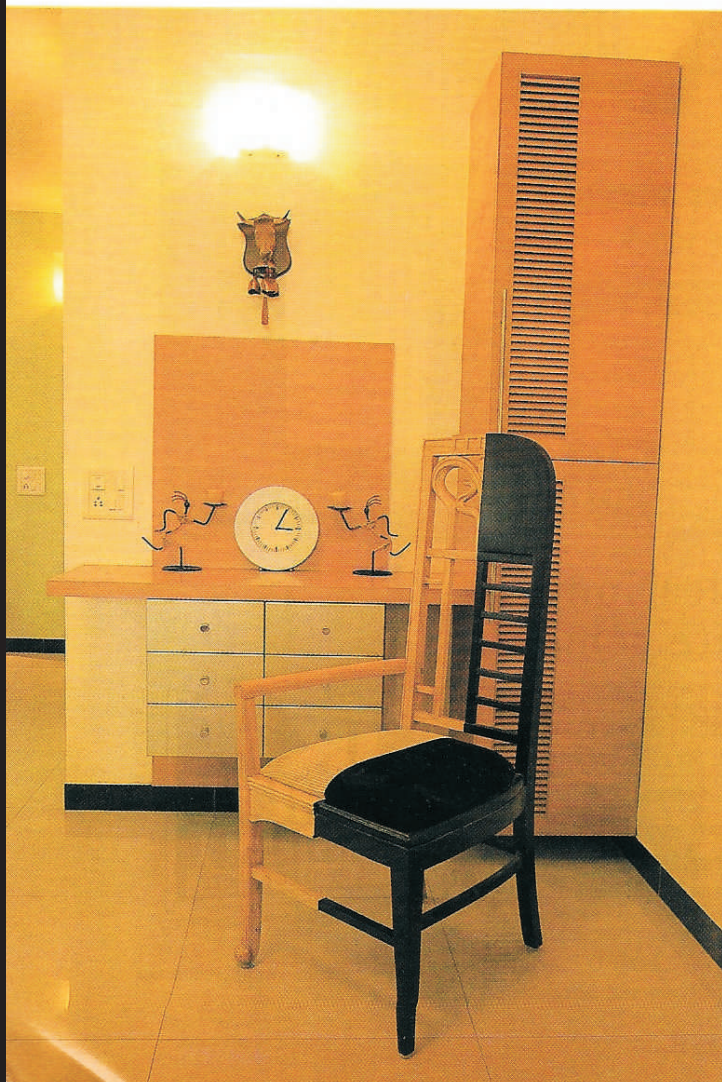
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The private lounge has a lime green partition interspersed with glass and cut-outs allowing visual demarcation.

Wooden flooring adds to the feeling of warmth and comfort. (inset) The simple yet stylish living area.

Black leather sofas strike a contrast against the white granamite floor. An unusual table in glass forms a focal point here. (below) The high-backed chair is a visual comment on the character of the house.



LIFESTYLE

Personal Zone

Simple yet elegant, the MEHENDALE residence at Pune celebrates style and functionality.



WHEN Avanti and Tushar Mehendale moved into their new three-bedroom apartment, they were clear that they wanted a place that would retain itself as a unit and yet be functional and aesthetic. A fact that registers itself even before you enter their home, thanks to the creative genius of Anju and Ashwin Lovekar, the dynamic architect and interior designer couple.

An initial meeting led to subsequent brainstorming sessions between the Lovekars and the Mehendales. From the client's point of view the brief was clear and concise — they needed youthful interiors. They were keen on a neutral colour scheme as they felt it would lend a light and modern look. "It is very essential," explains Anju, "to be able to understand and relate to your client, for only then can you truly personalize their home."

The starting point was the treatment of light and space. As Ashwin points out, "There wasn't enough natural light coming in, so we decided to paint certain wall sections in bright yellow and green as this would create lightness in the area." Fond of working with white, Anju and Ashwin felt that the contrasting wall shades would, in addition, also provide an element of interest to the otherwise subtle and stark interiors.

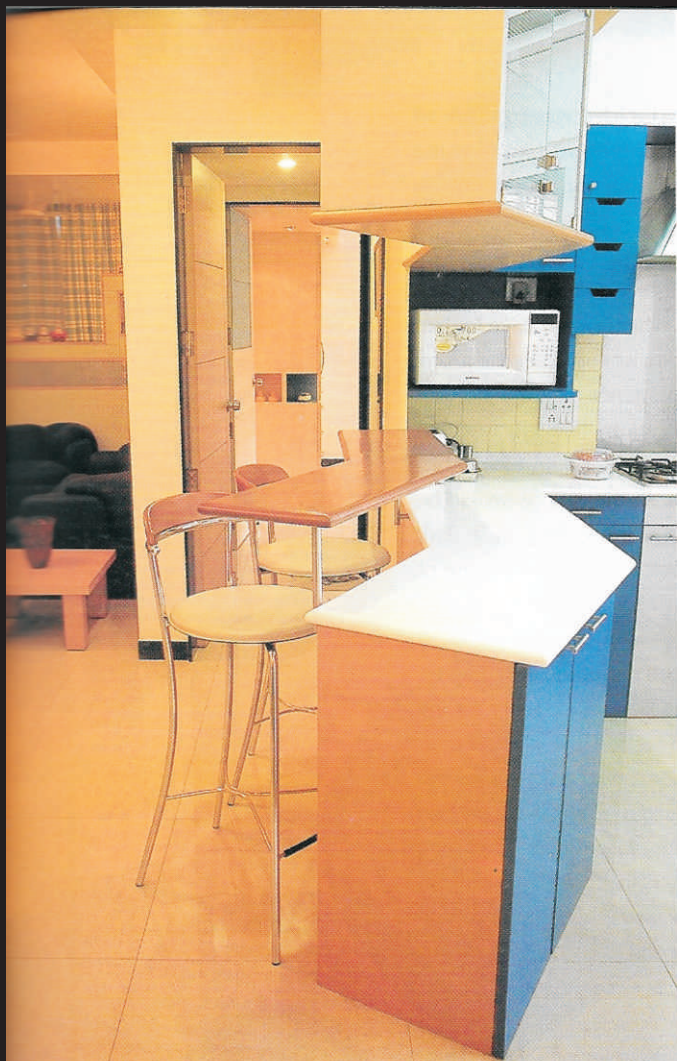
A brightly-lit expanse of the living, dining, and kitchen areas greets you first when you enter the Mehendale abode. Barriers between these areas were deliberately removed to give a sense of continuous space. The false ceiling is plain with a cut-out above the dining table and deliberately runs low above the private TV lounge, the breakfast counter and the passage for visual separation.

The tastefully done living area flows into the rest of the home with an easy grace. Sparkling white granamite flooring complements the black granite skirting. White walls merge with vibrant hues of golden yellow, even as paintings along another wall length complement the colour scheme without shouting for attention.

The living area on one end extends into a family lounge. "The idea was to create a space where the family could sit and watch TV in relative privacy even with guests in the living area." Ashwin deliberately raised the floor here to allow visual demarcation and added a lime green partition interspersed with glass and cut-outs. "This caters for privacy yet

The brightly-lit open space comprises of the kitchen and the dining area. Also seen is the bar area. The cut-out in the ceiling above the dining table adds interest.





allows it to remain connected with the rest of the house," he elaborates. Wooden flooring adds warmth. Comfortable low seating faces the TV, the music system and glass racks that sport a collection of CDs on the other end. The cabinet done in wood and composite aluminium panels with concealed lighting (that helps brighten up the ceiling), reflects style and subtle élan.

On moving away from the living area, you notice a neat veneer cabinet to store shoes ideally placed besides the main door. An unusual high-backed chair, purchased from Mumbai, that sits alongside has classical yet modern form and is a visual comment on the character of the home. An adjoining counter with drawers, handy to place odd bills and dairies, has been mounted on the wall to save floor space.

The dining area is simple with a rectangular glass-topped table and leather and matt-finished steel dining chairs. What is especially interesting here is the manner in which Ashwin and Anju have 'carved' a bar area. "As the walls were redesigned and relocated, we thought of carving a niche for the bar," explains Ashwin. The design of the bar makes a deliberate effort at avoiding the customary arrangement of liquor bottles. But what really catches the eye is the dramatic effect achieved through concealed lighting that bathes each shelf in a golden glow as the adjoining wall length in bold green lends a mystifying feel to the area.

The dining area narrows itself into a small lobby leading to Tushar and Avanti's study. A vertical painting that suits the narrow length of the lobby complements the surrounding hues of white, green and blue. For the study, the Lovekars decided on

(left) The breakfast counter along the kitchen area is convenient for a quick bite. The counter doubles up as a service counter when the Mehendaies are entertaining. Glass shutters overhead neatly conceal storage. (right) The kitchen is an open space done in blue, aluminium panels, yellow and white. Racks and niches cater for easily accessible storage, while the Corian counters provide hygienic working surfaces.

a yellow, rust and green colour scheme for the drapes. "The idea was to liven up the space. As this was to be a room that both would use, the decor had to make them feel comfortable. At the same time, it had to look functional and not be distracting," Anju elaborates.

The master bedroom is equally arresting in its simplicity and elegance. It looks neat and uncluttered due to the clever planning of spaces and use of colours (dull green, yellow and blue) and materials. A dark ceiling in royal blue, which would have looked oppressive but for the white canopy, catches your eye as soon as you enter the room.

"A large beam ran across the width of the ceiling in the centre, hence we came up with

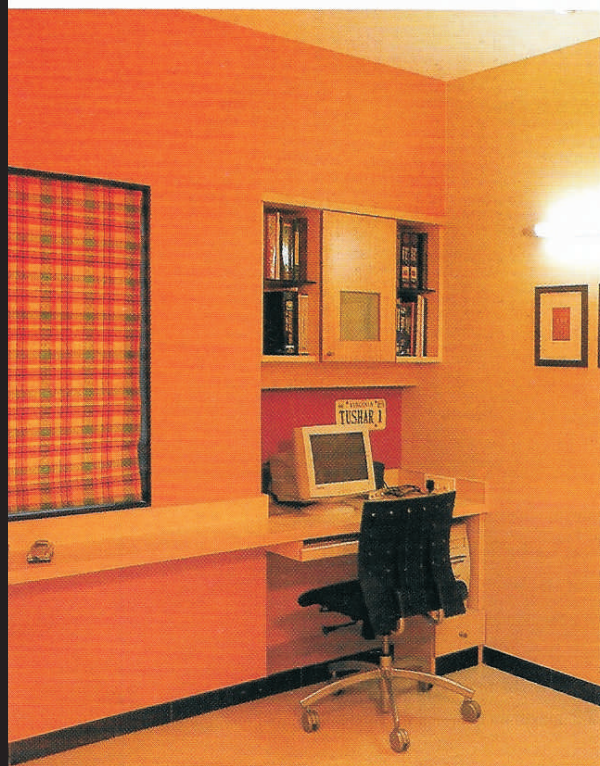
this idea of a canopy-like structure that would conceal yet lend an element of visual interest. As the canopy would be white, we took the ceiling in a dark color to offset it and provide a sense of visual interest and adventure," clarifies Anju. A cabinet along the dressing area holds an array of perfumes and colognes and other knick-knacks. The charming design embossed on the glass shutter draws attention here. Anju points out the same design embossed on the laminate of the closet doors. "We have given the closets the look of a collage in a fine mix of steel, glass, veneer and laminate to avoid monotony."

The designer couple's special and thoughtful touches come through strongly in little Anousha's room. Here they have created a space to suit the two-year-old's personality. The walls maintain a sense of uniformity with

(left) The white canopy on the ceiling which conceals a large beam, sets off the dark coloured ceiling. (below) The closets form an interesting collage in a fine mix of steel, glass, veneer and laminate.



(right) The oval mirror along with a low shelf that is currently used by Anousha to sit on, marks the little one's room. The bright colour scheme imbues this space with cheer. (below) Done in shades of yellow, rust and green, the study is spacious and functional. Neat areas have been provided for Avanti's microscope and Tushar's computer.



niches to stack a variety of soft toys and books. Care has been taken to ensure that these niches are easily accessible to the young occupant. The bed has been deliberately kept low and a colorful headrest ensures that the little one doesn't hurt herself while sleeping or playing around. The wardrobes have MDF panels painted in a bright shade of blue to add cheer to the area. "We have taken care to see that Anousha can relate to the interiors and colour scheme as she grows up. It is flexible and could be changed as she grows up. In the dressing area there is a large oval mirror and a low shelf that could be used to sit around now and later could stack her combs and brushes," explains Anju.

In keeping with the basic mood, the kitchen too maintains the principles of design. Done in blue, aluminium panels, yellow and white, it reflects a charming organized style. Racks and niches cater for easily accessible storage most essential in a kitchen. The Lovekars decided to use Corian rather than the traditional marble or granite for the worktops. They realized that white would suit the look they wanted to create and make the dimensions of the kitchen appear larger. The adjoining balcony has been retained as part of the kitchen and is used as a washing and drying area. "As we wanted an open kitchen we decided on separating the washing from the main kitchen. Also, this is the only part from where natural light comes in and so we were keen on retaining it," explains Ashwin. A small room on the side

forms a store, which also caters for the ironing board and the essential inverter (a necessity in the face of Pune's alarming power cuts).

Creating a beautiful and functional design within the Less Is More parameter is easier said than done. However, the Lovekars, with their penchant for turning neat, straightforward lines into classy, understated designs have created an incredible living space that stands out for its sheer simplicity — and if you don't believe us, just ask the Mehendales!

Text: Monish Naik-Singh

Photographs: Madhukar Temgire