

IT'S NOT JUST CRICKET



• Mumbai

Suite 52 at the chambers wing of the Cricket Club of India features arched portals that echo the restrained art deco building of the main club. The living room features a 'Crown' dining table and 'Recess' coffee table, both by Studio Hinge. The 'Gordon' chairs in teak finish are from Urban Ladder, while the 'Monte' sofa-cum-bed is by Red Blue & Yellow.

Studio Hinge, a young Mumbai-based architecture and interior design firm, makes a mark with newly refurbished rooms at the historic Cricket Club of India

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There's more to membership in a private club than just prestige and exclusivity. And architect Pravir Sethi describes it best as he walks us through the colonnade—with pristine white, art deco columns—that encircles the grounds of Mumbai's Cricket Club of India (CCI), where he admittedly spends more time than at his own Marine Drive home: "Working with CCI feels like you're doing it not just for yourself, but for your extended family too."

Sethi, principal architect and founder of interiors and architecture firm Studio Hinge, and interior designer Chintan Zalavadiya give free rein to nostalgia, and let it flow into the studio's newly commissioned designs for the CCI's chambers wing. In those refurbished spaces—comprising seven suites, and one two-bedroom apartment—it is easy to see a narrative that is not only a nod to the past, but also a detail-oriented solution to contemporize and upgrade. "There's a very strong sense of community among the people in the club, which has been one of the things that makes this a bit of a tightrope walk; it's very hard to keep 7,000-odd members happy all the time. And when you're living across the road, there's no escaping if things go wrong!" says the architect.

It's hard to miss the whimsy and playfulness in the work of the now-three-year-old practice. Sethi, who has over 12 years of experience working with top firms such as Marks Barfield and David Chipperfield Architects, allows his intimacy with the space to dictate his designs. With CCI, it was seamless, because: "Growing up in south Bombay [sic] meant coming here straight from school, playing badminton, sitting by the pool, looking at girls, that sort of thing," he says, laughing, "It's like a second home to me."

MODERNIZING TRADITION

In early 2016, appointed through an invited competition organized by the CCI, Studio Hinge was to work on what were originally nine rooms; seven became deluxe suites, junior suites and suites, while two rooms were converted into a two-bedroom apartment. "I was dealing with a client who was very reluctant to break from tradition. However, even though the members of the committee I was pitching to were expecting a >

Studio Hinge custom-built the 'J' study desk finished in walnut veneer with melamine polish, and tapered brass legs, to mirror the aesthetic of the clubhouse. Their 'Nodding-off' lamp has a truncated cone base, in Burma teak, and an adjustable brass hood. **Right:** The 'Sweep' beds, also by the firm, were created to resolve the single- and double-bed formats. Linen and cushions are by Cottons and Satins. **Below right:** The swivel screen, designed by the firm, features pivoting fins finished in distressed polish, leather and brass cladding. **Below:** The wardrobe and luggage rack are by Studio Hinge.



Studio Hinge creates an illusion of layers—from the living room right through to the bedroom—with the ‘Stucco’ textured wall paint by Asian Paints inside, and the muted blue in the outer area. The rooms can be separated with doorways that slide into recesses in the walls.



“very traditional, maybe even panelled, Victorian or Georgian style of design, that’s not what I gave them,” he says. What he gave them instead was familiar enough, but also contemporary: “It sat with them really well.”

A tour of the new rooms reveals the basic philosophy of the firm. It is clear that the redesign is not just cosmetic, but functional as well. Doorways that slide into recesses in the walls diversify smaller rooms, while in bigger suites, they neatly separate the living rooms from the bedrooms. The colour palette borders on monochrome, keeping a muted blue as its primary tone, as opposed to a darker blue, which is the “CCI colour”. The studio’s trademark sophistication is evident here in the customized furniture, and floor and table lamps, created on site to carry forward the theme of old-world warmth. This also includes the palette of materials such as brass, leather, and two types of veneer—dark and light. A combination of both is seen in the pivoting screens, placed in smaller rooms to block a direct view of the beds. The panels of the screen, in brass, wood and leather, add further context to the designs. “The idea was to design everything from scratch,” says Sethi.

SOFT SKILLS

Apart from the structural upgrade—including waterproofing, and creating panels for the air conditioners, fire alarms, and access cards—a defining feature of the redesign is the arches that act as “gateways” to the rooms. And for that, Sethi takes us back to the club’s main building, where the towering facade is softened by gently curving balconies. “You see, there are no hard corners or sharp edges here. We’ve abstracted that soft edge for our work; it’s such a direct reference, it’s unmissable,” says Sethi.

As the young studio builds on its reputation, Sethi affirms the Studio Hinge school of thought: “I am comfortable with spaces that I am more intimate with, which I can control, down to the last bolt and screw head. That comes through in our products too,” he says. Studio Hinge furniture, therefore, adheres to the non-linearity of the design palette, experimenting with materiality and form within the context they are placed in. In the CCI chambers wing rooms, his customized designs curve and twist in response to the underlying art deco aesthetic of the club’s 80-year-old structure. “I would say that our designs are contemporary, and tend to be clutter-free, but they’re not minimalistic. There has to be a sense of delight in what we do,” Sethi says. As Studio Hinge gets ready to redesign the CCI’s yoga room—a 1,400-square-foot space with a high ceiling and a view of the historic cricket lawns—members can be sure of one thing; the resulting space will be elegant, contextual *and* downward-dog-friendly. ❖