

better interiors

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IDEAS AND DESIGN FOR BETTER LIVING

CULINARY THEATRE

Renesa Architecture Design Interiors Studio brings filmmaker Wes Anderson's famed aesthetic to the unlikely location of Kanpur. Pastels, geometric designs and pop art converge at to form a quirky new dining space — The Feast India Company, aka The Pink Zebra



BEST BUYS

60 eco-friendly furniture, furnishings and accessories to showcase your love for both design and the environment

HABITAT

SAK Designs build a simple, minimal Ahmedabad home where nature's brilliance takes centrestage

Also featuring: Essajees Atelier, Hiral Jobalia Studio, JTCPL Designs, Studio Hinge, Studio-M Design and This Is It Designs

Network 18

Habitat

This stunning installation, featuring 274 hand-blown glass stems with brass inserts and programmable fibre optic lighting, remains the main hero of the lobby. It was designed and detailed by Studio Hinge in close consultation with Klove Studio, who was selected to fabricate it. The original double-height proposed by Atkins, who did the master-planning and worked on the project to the schematic stage, was increased to a triple-height to maximize the impact of the installation. In the far corner is a waterbody, involving a film of water flowing down an inclined polished marble face where the floor itself seems to fold up, interspersed with custom brass overflow channels.



Paradigm Shift

Pravir Sethi-headed Studio Hinge's interior design for 219 Boat Club, an uber-luxe boutique residential complex in Pune, sets a new benchmark for the rest of its ilk by tackling luxury at a more fundamental level rather than employing it as a cosmetic overlay.

TEXT: RUPALI SEBASTIAN; PHOTOGRAPHS: FABIEN CHARUAU, COURTESY STUDIO HINGE



ARCHITECT

Pravir Sethi

Setting benchmarks, upping the ante, creating precedents... are always that much more challenging for those spearheading the change. This was also true in the case of Merint Developers — part of Merint Group with its diverse business verticals and a presence in over 15 countries — when it sought to redefine the concept of luxury apartment living for Pune, and indeed, for the entire country. By getting international firm Atkins — of the Burj Al Arab fame — for master-planning and schematic design, they made their intent clear right at the outset. When it comes to full

All other lights in the lobby are secondary to the main lighting installation, and have been designed to provide ambient lighting as discreetly as possible. The recesses in the lobby ceiling are covered in stretched fabric which is backlit to provide a gentle diffused light via a glowing surface. Further, linear cove lights are provided at the junctions of materials and surfaces, the jambs around doors and lift entrances.



ABOVE LEFT The lift lobby of the apartment shows the incredible attention to detail that pervades the entire project. The wall is clad in undulating walnut veneer with LED strips as cove lighting. Overhead, a circular cove lighting detail in gypsum functions as ambient lighting. The fluted doors are rendered from solid teakwood strips.

ABOVE RIGHT A view from the living area to the lobby. The series of brass fins that divide the dining and living rooms and the white distress-polished teakwood wrap overhead create a striking visual texture.

design services (concept to completion) for all interior areas, Merint started by inviting proposals for the lobby interior. That's how Mumbai-based Studio Hinge entered the picture. "As the building was just coming above ground with the superstructure, we were invited along with others to pitch for this work by showing a proposal for the lobby interior. Upon successfully winning this pitch, we were awarded the work for all interior areas. As time progressed and we won the client's confidence, we were also entrusted with the design of exterior areas. Eventually, therefore, Studio Hinge controlled design and finishes across the entire property, and steered the project to completion," says its principal architect Pravir Sethi.

The project — subsequently named 219 Boat Club — was unique in terms of its positioning at the highest end of luxury residences. Everything from its location on the prestigious Boat Club Road, to the size of the apartments (8,000 square feet of sale area each), to the boutique nature of the project (only 10 apartments) sets it apart from anything else. The brief for the



architects was to use design to re-interpret luxury living, and deliver a product that would become the benchmark for ultra high-end apartment living in this country. "The most perfunctory research reveals that in the Indian property market, the word luxury is bandied around rather loosely. With most so-called luxury developer apartments found in our country, the luxury is... attempted to be conveyed through bolt-ons such as premium finishes (think Italian marble and gold taps!), or amenities (dog spas and concierge services), but more often than not the essentials are not in place. This building is designed from the inside out with luxury in mind, and not as an afterthought," elucidates Pravir.

The proposal which won Studio Hinge the pitch originally included a large kinetic installation straddling the line between art, architecture and lighting. But pragmatic considerations — being a residential building, the maintenance and running costs had to be rationalized — eventually directed the architect to create a sense of movement, without actually using any



moving parts. Consequently, the installation, which remains the hero of the space, features 274 hand-blown glass stems with brass inserts and programmable fibre optic lighting.

"It was designed and detailed by us in close consultation with Klove Studio, who was selected to fabricate it," reveals Pravir. "We also convinced the client to 'carve' out further areas from the back of the building and include these in the lobby, so that the reception desk and a new proposed waterbody could be within these chamfered scoops and the main double-height space remained an uncluttered square. Atkins' design had allowed for a double height here, but we convinced the client to increase a part of this to be triple height to maximize the impact of the lighting installation." All other lights in the lobby are subservient to this piece de resistance, and have been designed to provide ambient lighting as discreetly as possible. The ceiling continues the study in chamfers — with chiselled recesses covered in stretched fabric which is backlit to provide a gentle diffused light. Linear

cove lights are provided at the junctions of materials and surfaces, the jambs around doors and lift entrances. The wall and floor of this monolithic space are also treated monolithically, by cladding it in a single material — a beige marble called Danish Cream. To one side is a waterbody — just a film of water — which flows down an inclined polished marble face where the floor itself seems to fold up, interspersed with custom brass overflow channels. Other brass accents are inlay strips in the floor and the reception desk, and the tubes that are sleeved within the hand blown glass.

The idea of privacy formed a strong part of the design, with one flat per floor ensuring residents have private lift lobbies for the flats. Additionally, a custom-designed pattern on the frameless glass lift doors obscures visibility of the lobby from those passing the floor in the lift. Further, a glass screen separating the apartment's entrance lobby from its lift lobby turns from frosted to clear at the touch of a button. When it comes to the show flat itself, research showed potential buyers



ABOVE LEFT Lush, green vistas infuse their own charm into the spatial experience. To enjoy the scenic surroundings fully, the floor-to-ceiling windows can be parked inside a pocket, away from sight, providing a 100 per cent clear opening.

ABOVE RIGHT The 22-foot floor height can be fully appreciated in this photograph. A band of teakwood strips forms a stunning element near the ceiling, from which seems to emerge the 'claw' space divider cum chandelier — featuring teakwood, brass and custom-made LED pendants — that was jointly developed with Atelier DADA and its principals Nirmith Jhaveri and Maria Ikram. Both, the dining and living area are oriented to their own decks, and enjoy satiating views of the surrounding verdure.

Habitat

Rather than a veneer of luxury — as seen in other ‘premium’ developments — this apartment and the building itself has been designed from the inside out with luxury in mind. The dining area spills into a squarish deck — which, in turn, overlooks the leafy surroundings of Boat Club Road.



ABOVE The family lounge is tucked away in a corner, and presents a cosy, intimate picture.

LEFT The long deck with a private pool abutting the living room. The apartment is on the 4th floor, which makes the foliage almost like a natural screen.

CONCEPT: Use design to re-interpret luxury living. Create a product that would set the benchmark for uber-luxe apartment developments.

would appreciate the generous volumes provided by double-height spaces, but did not care for split-level apartments, so the building section was developed to have interlocking double-height spaces, by using staggered volumes and alternating the orientation of living rooms. Luxury was woven into the very fabric of the space by paying attention to fundamentals such as space, proportion, orientation, natural light and ventilation. “For example, the master bedroom suite (bedroom, dresser and toilet areas) covers 660 square feet — which is about the size of an average two-bedroom flat in Mumbai. And that’s without the 10-foot-deep attached verandah,” says Pravir. “The bedroom itself is generously proportioned at 23’ x 17’ with windows and verandahs to two full sides... The floor height in the living room and verandahs is 22’.”

There were two challenges in the assignment, says the architect. The first was meeting the almost obsessively high standards and





The sunken jacuzzi was a directive of the chairman of the Merint Group. He was very clear that he wanted a jacuzzi in both master bathrooms, but not one that you had to climb into by stepping over. As a result the entire bathroom slab is sunk by 2' to allow a fully recessed jacuzzi to be flush with the floor. The jacuzzi and the shower enclosure is separated by an expanse of ceramic fritted glass.



expectations of a client who lived abroad, travelled extensively, knew luxury, and would not compromise in the pursuit of it. The second was understanding and interpreting the requirements of a potential buyer who was multifarious and hypothetical. "It was challenging to have a brief to design a residence to appeal to the maximum number of people, without actually ever meeting any of them," admits the architect. "Also as so much of what we were doing was bespoke..."

Mindful of the fact that the interiors could not be restricted to a single aesthetic, there is no single palette of materials that flows through the apartment. But some that recur are brass, copper, carved or fluted teak wood and beige marble. While the interior treatment is cohesive and firmly contemporary in outlook, there is definitely playfulness at work. This is particularly true of the bathrooms, which range from a study in poured concrete where walls, counters and floors turn seamlessly into each other in a cave-like room, to the intricately detailed super-luxe copper panelling on the walls with a free-standing basin carved from a solid block of white marble.

Pravir's client Fazal Manekia, the chairman of the Merint Group, was instrumental in bringing several innovative ideas to the table.



TOP AND ABOVE The twin master bedrooms are enveloped by greenery. This one, Bedroom 1, features a free-standing commodious bed, behind which is a small study table and seating area. The wooden floor, which spills over to the deck as well, binds all the spaces — interior and exterior — together, creating a spacious, sprawling, extended feel.



LEFT Bedroom 2 features a sweep of concrete-textured wrap that forms a canopy of sorts over the bed. The master spaces are developed along the lines of suites rather than rooms. In this one, the doors on either side of the bed can be opened to create one homogenous space.

BELOW Bathroom 2 has an intricately-detailed uber-luxe copper panelling on the walls with a free-standing washbasin carved from a solid block of white marble. Beyond the basin unit lies the walk-in wardrobe.

The sunken jacuzzi in both the master bathrooms and the outdoor kitchen, for instance, are his ideas. "He was very clear that he wanted a jacuzzi in both master bathrooms, but not one that you had to climb into by stepping over. As a result, the entire bathroom slab is sunk by 2' to allow a fully recessed jacuzzi to be flush with the floor," informs Pravir. "Taking clues from this helped us understand how enhanced utility

MATERIALS

Lobby floor Danish Cream marble, brass inlay **Lobby ceiling** Stretched fabrics in coves **Show flat flooring** Danish Cream marble, wood and concrete **'Claw' divider** Brass, teakwood and LEDs **Wrap element in living room** Teakwood, distress-finished **Balcony handrails on the facade, compound wall and entrance glazing** Extra clear glass (diamant) from Saint-Gobain **Windows** DGU with low-e glass from Saint-Gobain **Wardrobes and interior furniture** Wood, lacquered glass from Saint-Gobain **Shower enclosure** Ceramic fritted glass from Saint-Gobain **Lift doors** Patterned glass from Saint-Gobain **Shower area and water curtain** Timeless glass from Saint-Gobain

and ease of use can promote luxury. Putting a premium on the time and effort expended by a future user of this space to do something simple like step into a bathtub, and designing solutions to minimize these, do more for luxury in our book than premium wall or floor finishes (though we used these too)." Installing bath faucets that fill the jacuzzi in a matter of minutes; providing additional mechanical ventilation to all the bathrooms and air-conditioning to the two master bedrooms; designing and providing a bespoke, easy-to-use home automation app on the mobile/tablet; and allowing a potential buyer to convert the study into a full-fledged bedroom with an ensuite bathroom are other ideas that reinforce luxury through utility.

While generously proportioned windows ensure plenty of natural light by day, the artificial lighting strategy uses indirect lighting generally with warm white LEDs, largely through coves and backlit surfaces, but also using deep recessed spotlights. "The lighting consultant was Atelier DADA, and with the principals Nirmal Jhaveri and Marie Ikram both being architects, this definitely helped streamline the dialogue, as they were quick to grasp our design intent. There are also several highly detailed bespoke light fixtures such as the 'claw' space divider and chandelier that we designed together," discloses Pravir.

THIS PAGE Bedroom 3 is treated so that it can be converted into a lounge, with a clever system of doors that slide and fold (inspired by those at the architect's studio) to completely open the room into the lounge and bring in further space and natural light. The bed is a drop-down; and the sliding doors feature teakwood and glass.





ABOVE LEFT Bedroom 4, with its twin beds. The flooring here is concrete as opposed to Danish Cream marble seen in most other spaces. The wallpaper behind the bed is Rain Dance, from Asian Paints' Nilaya brand.

ABOVE AND LEFT The pool was located in the north of the rooftop to align its infinity edge to the views of the river. The entire deck area around the pool was raised, and the transition from this to the terrace lower level is gradual, by the provision of deep, amphitheatre-style steps that meander fluidly between lawn below and timber pool deck above. This area was envisioned as a party lawn, and the wide steps would form a natural gathering space, or informal seating for live entertainment.

EXTREME LEFT All bedrooms have private decks. This is the terrace that abuts the dining area and Bedroom 4.

A controlled, meticulous design that is contemporary in outlook; several stunning design interventions; defining luxury through utility and a beautifully-boned space rather than only premium add-ons... 219 Boat Club is a labour of love built with exacting care and attention. A game-changer that will undoubtedly redefine the way we've hitherto looked at upscale apartment living. **B**

FACT FILE: Project 219 Boat Club
Client Merint Developers Pvt Ltd **Type** Luxury residential architecture + interior
Area 1,00,000 sq ft **Masterplanning and schematic design** Atkins **Facade, landscape and interior design** Studio Hinge **Principal architect** Pravir Sethi **Design team**, Aastha Kothari, Shivangi Saxena and Chintan Zalavadiya **Architect of record, structural and MEP engineering design** Fourth Dimension Group **PMC** Gensys **Entrance canopy and security cabin design, and assistance with APARTMENT furniture and accessory selection** Anand Menon, ADND **Lighting Design** Atelier DADA **Contractors** Viraj Contracting (building works); Siddhi Interiors (lobby); R-Evolution (apartment)