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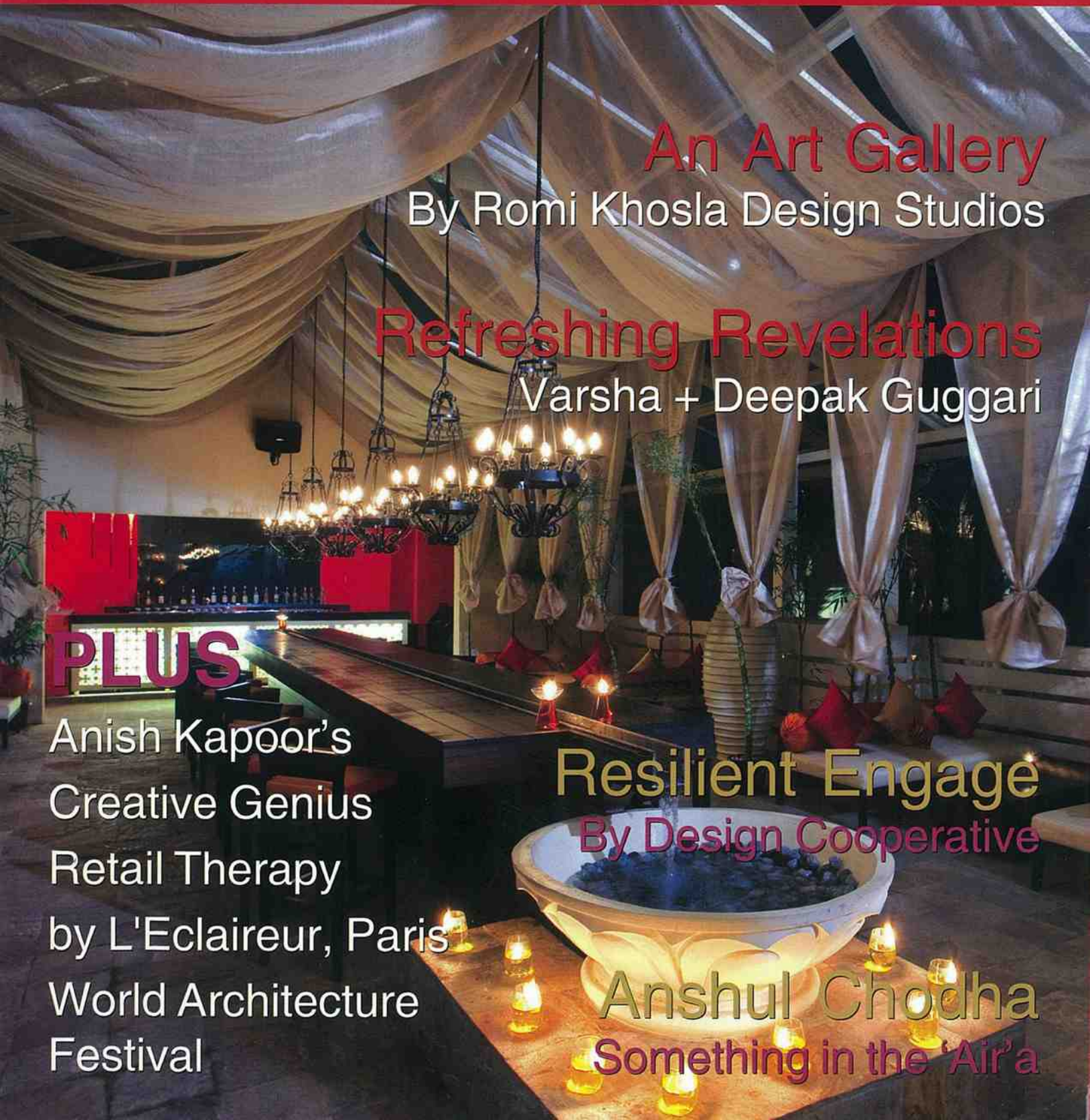
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Something in the 'Air'a

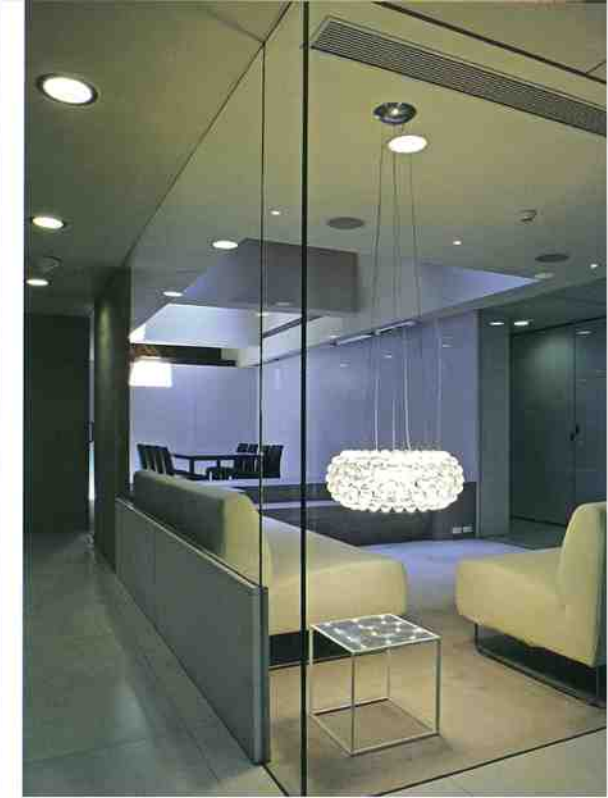




RESILIENT ENGAGE

DCOOP explores minimalist functional design ideas to chisel two contemporary offices as an epitome to a progressive work culture.

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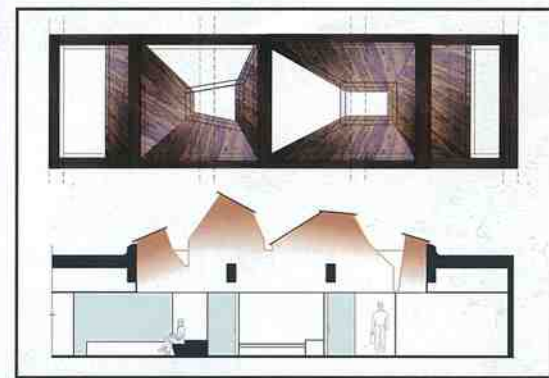


The passion for an aesthetically culled environment often goes beyond the designated parameters of 'needs' to indulge in the realm of 'wants'. The built environment is then truly rejuvenating and works on a reverse principle by enhancing the mindset of its inhabitants. With corporate culture continually witnessing makeovers that are designed to effect progression and mitigate competitive trauma, corporate interior design per se seems to be formulating novel inroads to make the twain meet.

Juxtaposed at the two extreme ends on a scale of size, economics and aesthetics, the Mehta Group Headquarters and the Indigo Consulting Office are two projects that ground an identity in their physicality. Located in Mumbai and designed by Design Cooperative (DCOOP) headed by principal architects Quaid Doongerwala and Shilpa Ranade, the former is an expansive 10,000 sq. ft. continuous flat space sandwiched between slabs and punctuated with large circular columns, while the latter is a 2000 sq. ft. typically confined gala in an industrial estate.

Situated in an old building in South Mumbai, the Mehta office, which sported a 1970's aesthetic in two separate holdings in the ▶

MEHTA OFFICE THIS SPREAD The formal conference room with Naos tables and the classic Eames Chairs. **TOP** Designer furniture and light fittings add an inimitable aura to the VIP lounge.



building, is now relocated on a single floor plate and designates an open-plan with executive offices towards the periphery and staff pool in the centre. The use of glass and the colour white introduce transparency and a formal feel; and low partitions encourage interactivity whilst maintaining the requisite privacy. Above all, the layout opens up to the exterior greenery visible through the large glass windows, ushering in natural light and enhancing the spacious feel.

The interior is straight-lined, subtle and experiential in its make-up. Department-wise organisation sets the tone with workstations and glass-enclosed cubicles in the open pool, peripheral cabins, and a few pro ▶

MEHTA OFFICE THIS PAGE TOP The Jean Nouvel desk. **BOTTOM** The linear skylight advantageously augments the VIP waiting lounge, and an exclusive dining room. It is fitted out with a glass partition that can be frosted for privacy. **OPPOSITE PAGE TOP LEFT** Custom made light fixture. **RIGHT** Made of dynamic trapezoidal forms, the fragmented aspects of the skylight present a play of glass and opacity. Plan and Section of the skylight



MEHTA OFFICE THIS PAGE BOTTOM The Chairman's cabin is aesthetically resplendent with an enveloping skin partly in steel and partly veneered that emphasises the area. The furniture is discerningly hand-picked.

INDIGO CONSULTING

THIS PAGE The reception area is a cocooned and rather glamorous space where the metal ribs of the existing ceiling become the framework for a lighting experience.

BOTTOM SPREAD The vocabulary of laminate, particle board and perforated metal sheet is sustained throughout, maintaining uniformity; while its strategic juxtaposition inhibits monotony.

OPPOSITE PAGE Aluminium chequered plates in the staircase create the perfect cost-effective foil in the metal-wood combo.

tem meeting areas apart from the formal conference room and the chairman's chamber with anti-rooms for personal meetings, personal assistant and receptionist. Marking the most dramatic statement, however, is a skylight in the centre of the office - a chance discovery when the older false-ceiling was opened up. The linear skylight advantageously augments the VIP waiting lounge, an exclusive dining room, and the staff lunch area, thus making the most of its presence. Made of dynamic trapezoidal forms, the fragmented aspects present a play of glass and opacity, creating chiaroscuro elements that lend subtle mood lighting to these areas.

All along, a pattern of de-cluttering is established with low height storage units and movable credenzas that hold the requisite paperwork, leaving desktops and the areas under the worktops relatively bare. In fact, the onus of the design comes across in its details: chamfered edges, clean surfaces, unmarred joinery or even small but thoughtful elements like the laser-cut traditionally-patterned film on glass or the design of a free-standing stainless steel post that holds the switch and is conveniently placed near the entrance of a cabin, anoint the office interiors with a stand-apart aura.

Augmenting this charismatic air are strategic designer accents via furniture and light fittings, like the Jean Nouvel Chairman's table, Naos tables for the formal conference room with old classic Eames Chairs. Designer paper lamps - "mama nouchie" series ▶





INDIGO CONSULTING

THIS SPREAD Well balanced interlaces of vertical and horizontal planes in the form of light fittings, cladding, even camouflage, break the linearity of the space.

THIS PAGE BOTTOM Engineered use of material garners an unprecedented work environment.

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM The simple materials like laminate and particle board appear fascinating under play of light and shadow.

room and break-out zone is cosmetically made up to achieve a more spacious and contemporary feel. Using a discerning restraint in the choice of material and careful detailing, particle board is revisited as paneling on the walls and as the base material in the workstations. Taking a cue from the slats of the M. S. sections and the beams above, two types of patterned laminates, both with linear components are selected as surface finishes. Carefully juxtaposed they form continuous skins that at places rise up to the walls and at others turn down over the sides of the workstation, creating a visual aesthetic of fragmented planes that pull down the lines of the ceiling and slice the box-like space into dynamic slivers. Perforated metal sheet partitions mounted on powder-coated mild steel frames constitute the workstation partitions.

Simple cost effective material and an indigenous application fashions an ambience that is well defined in a pristine milieu that dictates minimum fuss, maximises spaciousness and chic style. A well balanced interlace of vertical and horizontal planes in the form of light fittings, cladding, even camouflage, contravene the linearity and limited confines of the space to create a self-possessed modern envelop, formal yet supple; where metal meets wood in a simple palette of finishes, with a bit of colour and accented detailing, minimalist in design, easy to maintain and high on comfort. In fact, both projects, absolutely dissimilar in treatment but synchronised in principle, depict an individualistic design programmatic to cull the same result. ■



designed by German lighting designer Ingo Maurer and a suspended lamp, which is an old classic designed by famous Italian designer, the late Achille Castiglioni are cognisant of good taste and a passion for great design. The client's passionate and discerning taste and the designer's acumen combine to make this subtle and finely calibrated interior space a notch above a mere contemporary look-n-feel; it is a transformation of its work culture.

Drawing a parallel in principle, but situated at the extreme end of the scale is the Indigo Consulting Office located in the typical mould of an industrial estate. Offering an enhanced aesthetic in tune with comfortable work spaces, the firm occupies a small, linear floor with a structural steel mezzanine at a ceiling height of merely 6'9". The RCC slab above sports a ceiling height of a mere 7'10" at its beam bottom. This tight two-tier working space with exceptionally low and uniquely ribbed ceilings called for a design program that correlated two distinct ambiances.

"The design idea evolved out of the exploration of one material - laminate, and its depth-less, paste-on, veneer-like 'superficial' qualities", says Quaid. Working with popular material by transforming it into a functional aesthetic (a la pop-art), the straight-forward designation of workstations, cubicles, meeting

