



THIS SPREAD The exterior of the bungalow has distinct cubist leanings. Large openings and punctuations in the walls allow light and air to play an integral role in the structure.



CUBIST LEANINGS

Varsha and Deepak Guggari refuse to gild the lily. Their work points unswervingly like a compass, to design's True North.

TEXT BY DEVYANI JAYAKAR • PHOTOGRAPHS HEMANT PATIL COURTESY THE ARCHITECT

An entire bungalow in a minimalist style? I viewed with some trepidation the prospect of yet another tired and unimaginative rendition of the flavour of the season. The square white exterior with distinct cubist leanings makes an assertively modern statement. But, as with entrances in all the best stories, something quite unexpected lies inside.

You can make or break any interior by the way you light it. Lighting is most frequently associated with the way a space is transformed at night, but Varsha and Deepak of Guggari Associates have used natural sunlight in an all pervasive way in this Pune bungalow - a way which entirely defines its look. And there is no temptation here to surrender to a Pompeii meets 'Gone With the Wind' look, although the interior feels much larger than it would have,

because of the crisp way in which they have maximized space and light.

Quiet and considered in their approach to design, light performs several functions in Varsha and Deepak's pared down style. It plays a starring role as an architectural feature which replaces pattern and art, and even has the mobility to provide variety. Witness the way in which the light falls on the rough textured walls or the floor, in slats that must move almost undiscernibly across the room as the sun does in the sky, transforming its look at different times of the day. Strategically placed skylights let in natural sunlight in enormous stripes and diagonals, washing walls and floors with swathes of light, in an uncommon display of what the elements can do.

In addition to this quiet drama, the architects have the moxie to use a humble stone like the In-



dian Kota, and elevate it to the level of urban chic. Normally sniffed at in disdain, this ordinary material is used here in a way which is anything but. “Kota is a beautiful stone – it just requires good design to support it,” says Deepak with the kind of conviction that only commitment to the best principles in architecture can evince. Their work is a hybrid of underplayed sophistication and ethnic materials. Isn’t this what great architecture anywhere in the world is all about? The refrain of honest, committed architecture is always local, easily available materials, simple maintenance, practical design and a sensitivity to the climatic conditions of the environment. If you disregard the philosophy of sustainability, using opulent materials is easy, and does not push to the wall the creative ability of the designer, in the way that more unpretentious materials can.

Having to add an extra storey to the existing

THIS PAGE TOP The living - dining area, which uses the subtle contrast between polished and unpolished kota for the flooring. **LEFT** The living area has wenge furniture in straight lines, and a rough textured wall bathed in sunlight from the skylight above. **OPPOSITE PAGE** A direct view of the round skylight above the living area echoing in the flower bowl.





ground floor, Varsha and Deepak chose to add a 3 foot wide staircase bay outside the old bungalow, for access to the new first floor. A 5-foot wide balcony was also added on the upper floor as an extension of the living room. Brilliantly simple, really. But even from the outside, it is obvious to those who had seen the old structure, that it has undergone a carefully planned structural rejuvenation. The existing structural system was one of the major constraints for the architects, as was the budget. Required to work with the footprint of the existing structure, they took it up as a challenge, much to the delight of all those who view the result. And all this within a year.

A bold texture of rough circles, created with Plaster of Paris and putty, articulates the walls of the interiors. The skylights - a staggering total of 12 - are in toughened glass, covered with a grill of mild steel, which is what creates the stripes of sunlight. All but one of them is conical in shape, the one above the staircase bay being a strip. "Varsha

THIS PAGE TOP A view of the open-plan kitchen area. **RIGHT** The master bathroom is a delightful creation in Jaisalmer stone. **OPPOSITE PAGE** The staircase bay with large horizontal wooden louvers and small square cut-outs allow for plenty of light and ventilation. The textured walls become an enormous canvas for the dramatic play of shadows.



Client Prashant Joshi
Principal Designers Deepak Guggari & Varsha Guggari
Understudies Vivek Dixit & Vinod Savalgi
Structural Engineer Sunil Bhutkar
Civil Works Santosh Bendre
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wanted to reduce the number of skylights out of practical considerations, but now they are what define the look of the house. And by being absurdly easy to maintain, they put Varsha's concerns to rest," says Deepak. The feel of the place is almost Mediterranean, till you take a better look. The open plan kitchen is sleek and utilitarian, in keeping with the rest of the house. The master bathroom is in the golden yellow of Jaisalmer stone, another example of using local material in an exemplary manner.

Polished Kota makes up the flooring in this bungalow, subtly relieved by the texture of its unpolished version on the staircase and passageways. Black wenge laminate has been extensively used, and steam beech louvers, which were cheaper than Burma teak, have been polished in dark walnut, to go with the wenge. Roman blinds in fabric from Fab India complete the commitment to Indian materials. The furnishings are strikingly restrained, creating a sense of space and light from simple, straight forward materials.

Sensibly, accent colour has been used only in bedcovers and other easily changeable accessories, so the owners are not restricted to the same colour scheme for life - the look of the place could be easily altered without having to take everything apart.

The architects are quick to point out that all the tropical light beating down into the house doesn't mean that the occupants have to live in temperatures approaching those of an oven, just because there is no fancy central air conditioning. Entire walls of enormous vertical or horizontal louvers which double up as a design feature ventilate the space naturally, inviting cool air in. Turbo ventilators on the roof draw out hot air, reducing thermal gain and keeping the interior comfortable. Deepak is particularly enthused about how economical and eco-friendly the turbo ventilator is, since it does not use any electricity, and was an extremely wallet-friendly purchase to start with.

This bungalow works like a home, feels like a good marriage of style and utility, and looks like a shrine to minimalism. Moreover, the architects have integrity in their convictions, designing with a conscience. The impact of the look is in the bravado of its execution - the determination to adhere to certain principles and make something creative out of it. In this work which is courageous without being contrived, light silently documents the passing of time and the seasons.

THIS PAGE The bedroom flooring combines polished and unpolished kota, with wardrobes in wenge. Red accents and the ever present skylight liven up the look.