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*Special Feature On
glass*

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Planet 3 Studios

Le Royal Monceau Hotel

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LEED Landscape

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THE CULTURE connect

PLANET 3 STUDIOS CREATES A CONFLUENCE OF CULTURES IN THE REFURBISHED, THREE-DECADE OLD CEAT MAHAL, THE HEADQUARTERS OF RPG GROUP IN MUMBAI.



Three distinct requirements addressed by three distinct designs – this is what makes the refurbishment of RPG Group headquarters at Mumbai unusual! Located along Dr Annie Besant Road, Ceat Mahal is an iconic structure that stands out in Mumbai's concrete jungle with its red stone cladding and Jaipuri arches. **Santha and Kalhan Mattoo, Principal Architects, Planet 3 Studios** recently refurbished three main areas of the building – the reception, training and recreation areas – and moulded them to suit contemporary needs and tastes.

FIRST STEPS

"It was important that the design language of the reception area follow that of the architecture of the building. The client – industrialist **Harsh Goenka** – had specified that the entrance to the office must not contrast starkly with the outside," informs Santha. The building's architecture thus became a design inspiration for the revamped look.

A column-strewn parking area was cleared out and divided into two distinct spaces to house a parking lot and lobby, respectively. Similarly, the existing dark and dingy training area was torn down and redone. A recreation zone was created in a former godown – this part of the project came without any specific brief, and the architects' imagination got free rein here. Designed to cater to a wide age group of 25 to 60 years, the Mykonos-Santorini style of Greek architecture was adopted for the recreation zone.

A stark white, roughly textured plywood partition flows seamlessly from the ceiling to floor to section off a small meeting room.



The air conditioned lounge – the only built space in the reception – is created using glass reinforced concrete.

MODERN REGALIA

The only built space in the reception area with its distinct Rajasthani character is an air conditioned lounge; a lot of space is left open otherwise. With its *jharokhas*, large *jaali* screens, a quaint balcony overlooking the lobby and a lotus-shaped water cascade, the design evokes the stylistic exuberance of Indian palaces. The reception area is further adorned with some priceless artwork from the client's personal collection.

Recreating the 'palace' look posed unique challenges, the major one being finding material that was durable and easy to maintain, and that would withstand heavy rain and harsh sunlight. The architects thought glass reinforced concrete (GRC) was best suited for the purpose. Their process involved designing the *jaalis*, moulding them using plaster of Paris, casting them in

The metallic grey ventilation pipe in the recreation space is representative of its original godown *avatar*.



The large *jaali* screens evoke the stylistic exuberance of Rajasthani palaces.

the concrete and finally installing them on site. “GRC could be moulded and etched upon; it was also strong enough to hold the weight of the 20-foot *jaali* screens,” explains Santha. Jaipur and Jaisalmer stone were used along with matching vitrified tiles for the floor.

CLEAN CUT

Another area in need of an overhaul was the training area. A dark and cramped place with no ventilation or natural light, it hardly offered an inspiring ambience for training sessions.

With the intention of brightening the space, the Mattoos opted for a minimalistic design: stark white, with various textures on the walls. This also produced a good backdrop to display the client’s artwork. The training area has a lot of tactile surfaces, except for the floor, which is covered with a dark carpet. The smaller meeting rooms are defined by seamless forms, where part of the ceiling flows down to the wall, either forming a space for a television screen or becoming a window area.

MEDITERRANEAN FLAVOURS

The Greek style adopted for the recreation area is an intentional and sharp diversion from the Indian theme. “We did not want exact replicas of Greek architecture; we wanted a more contemporised interpretation, where

Meet the Architect

Santha Mattoo

FIRM: Planet 3 Studios Architecture established in 1998.

FIRM SPECIALISATION: Architecture, Interior and Product Design.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY: The essence of our way is to address the fundamentals through intense programming, offer solutions that balance wit and wisdom, keep it fresh and never lose the visual appeal.

PHILOSOPHY TOWARDS LIFE: Follow your instinct.

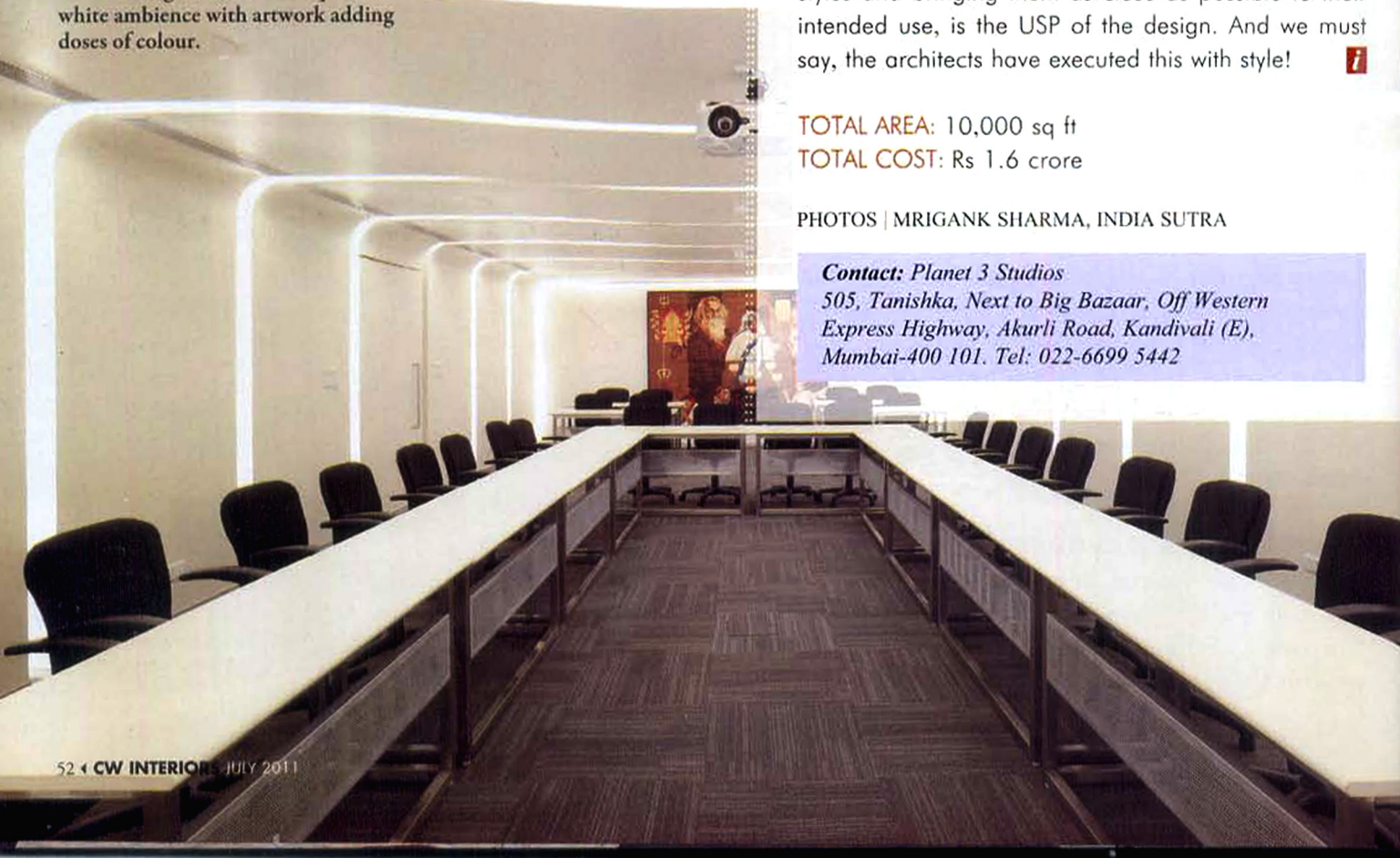
FAVOURITE DESIGNER/ARCHITECT: Will Alsop, Frank Gehry, Phillipe Starck, Karim Rashid, Charles Correa and Hafeez Contractor (for the sheer quantum of work produced).





The architects have used vitrified tiles to match the Jaisalmer and Jaipur stones in the reception area.

The training room reflects a pure white ambience with artwork adding doses of colour.



the colour, texture and flooring would evoke the charm of Santorini," enthuses Santha.

The recreation area is divided into various activity zones where employees can read, listen to music or play football, pool and table tennis. There is also a stage for impromptu performances. Greek-inspired tables, chairs and artificial vine-shaded recliners invite employees to do some reflective lounging. The cosy beanbag strewn library is a partially enclosed space made of plywood. Across the library, a stark white, roughly textured plywood partition flows seamlessly from the ceiling to floor to section off a small meeting room. The flooring here resembles the cobbled pavements of Europe.

LIGHTING IT UP

Planet 3 Studios has mainly used indirect light throughout the three spaces, since it spreads evenly and is softer on the eye. The up-lights that highlight the columns in the reception area are mainly metal halides. The reception is used only in the day and therefore utilises a lot of natural light. The artificial light comes in use only after dark.

At the RPG Group headquarters, none of the refurbished areas are connected by design or location – hence there was no need to blend the diverse designs. According to Mattoo, translating the different functions of the designated areas into distinct individualistic styles and bringing them as close as possible to their intended use, is the USP of the design. And we must say, the architects have executed this with style! **i**

TOTAL AREA: 10,000 sq ft

TOTAL COST: Rs 1.6 crore

PHOTOS | MRIGANK SHARMA, INDIA SUTRA

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The recreation area is divided into various activity zones for reading or playing foosball, pool or table tennis.



MATERIALS CHART

AREA	MATERIAL	COST	SOURCED FROM
Reception	Jodhpur stone	Rs 50/sq ft	Salasar Enterprises (Website: www.salasarindia.in)
	Jaisalmer stone	Rs 50/sq ft	Salasar Enterprises (Website: www.salasarindia.in)
	Glass reinforced concrete		Yogi GRC Products (Tel: 022-2645 8282/3216 8282)
Training	Glass		Saint Gobain (Website: www.saint-gobain.co.in)
	Vitrified tiles	Rs 80/sq ft	Nitco Tiles (Website: www.nitcotiles.com)
	Gypsum ceiling	Rs 50/sq ft	Salasar Enterprises (Website: www.salasarindia.in)
	Carpet		Armstrong (Website: www.armstrong.co.in)
Recreation	Kadappa stone	Rs 90/sq ft	Salasar Enterprises (Website: www.salasarindia.in)
	Luster, plastic, duco paints		Asian Paints (Tel: 022-3981 8000)
All three areas	Sofas and chairs		Essenza Designer Furniture (Tel: 022-3242 0622)
	Sanitary fittings		Jaquar (Website: www.jaquar.com)
			Hindware (Website: www.hindware.com)
	Light fixtures		Belleza Lighting (Website: www.bellezadecor.com)