

ARCHITECT & INTERIORS INDIA



Ideas, inspiration and insight for architects and interior designers

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VERTICAL GARDENS

The growing trend of living walls

VAAYU SKY LOUNGE

Rooftop rendezvous in Bengaluru

THE DUBAI METRO

Q&A with John Carolan of KCA

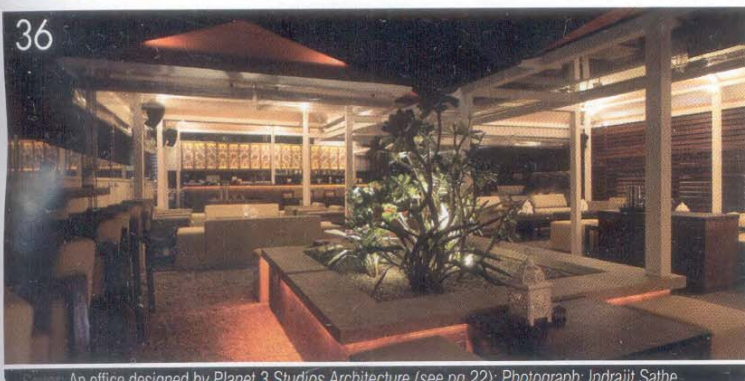
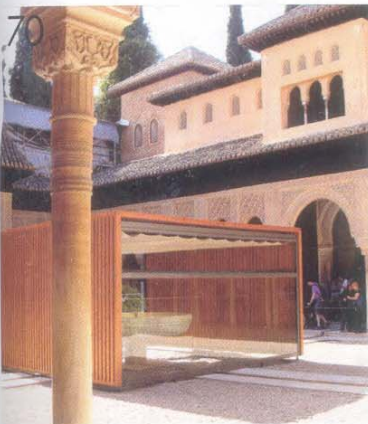
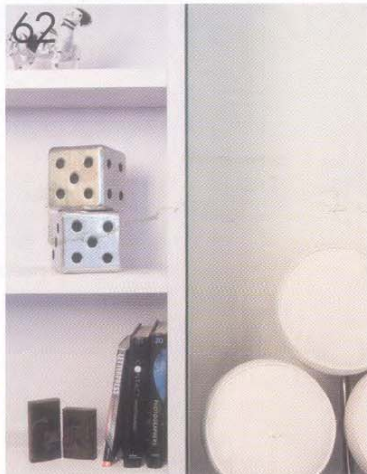
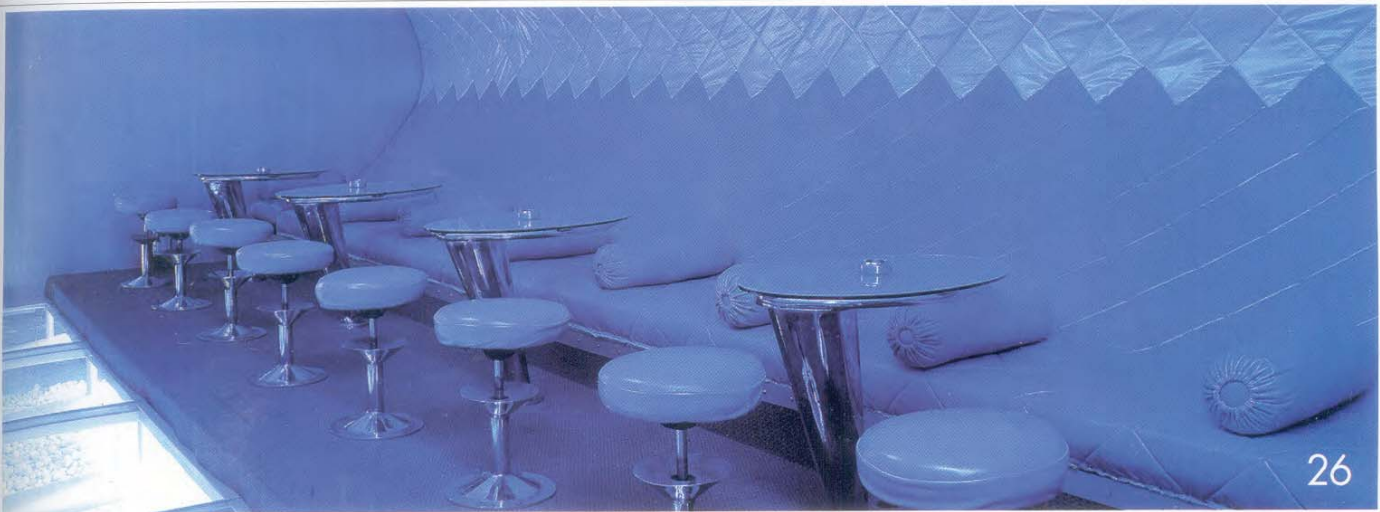
LAMINATES & VENEERS

The best solution for dramatic spaces

out of the box

THAT'S HOW PLANET 3 STUDIOS ARCHITECTURE THINKS... AND IT SHOWS IN THEIR WORK

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An office designed by Planet 3 Studios Architecture (see pg 22). Photograph: Indrajit Sathe

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A TWIST OF FATE



PLANET 3 STUDIOS SHUNS FASHIONABLE ISMS AND FOCUSES INSTEAD ON USER-FRIENDLINESS AND FUN DESIGNS, OFTEN INCORPORATING RANDOM EVENTS INTO THE DÉCOR. THIS HAS LED TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR THE MUMBAI-BASED FIRM, AS SHALINI SETH RECOUNTS

When a tree turns up in the middle of a 20,000 sqft retail space, architects Kalhan Mattoo and Santha Gour Mattoo, founders of Planet 3 Studios Architecture, make friends with it. When a client wants to have a centre table double up as a conversation piece and breaks his leg during the project, they create a totem pole commemorating the moment. When local laws do not allow for anything other than dismantlable structures in a space, they create a fine dining restaurant with walls that are evocative of crushed paper. And even go on to win an award for it.

Planet 3 Studios Architecture uses happenstance as a design principle. "A lot of random acts of God turn out to be directions for a design. We believe in happenstance," says Kalhan Mattoo, explaining one of the 20 things that design school did not teach him.

Given that the company won the Innovation in Stainless Steel, Jindal Award 2006 for Bengaluru's hospitality destination, Crossover, for their creative application of steel in interior design, the philosophy seems to find many happy takers. Recognised with more than 20 prestigious international and national awards, Planet 3 Studios' work has been displayed at museums and galleries in New York, Barcelona and Singapore.

The duo can invoke happenstance to any of their 60-odd projects. The brief for Crossover was to create four different dining experiences, while being seen as dismantlable to be approved for construction. "At one time, someone reached into the dustbin and pulled out one of our discarded designs. The design revealed itself, not in the content of the sketches — but in the form of the paper! We evoked that crushed paper feel in a different material," says Gour Mattoo.



In another example, at the Sea Horse Building Products mall in Mumbai's Reay Road, the challenge was to convert 20,000 sqft of warehouses into fresh retail space for building material without bringing down the original structure. One of the warehouses was based on a modular theme, with task lighting, electrical power and even mechanical ventilation flowing from free-standing steel columns anchored on the floor. The second warehouse hinged on a tree growing along the front facade.

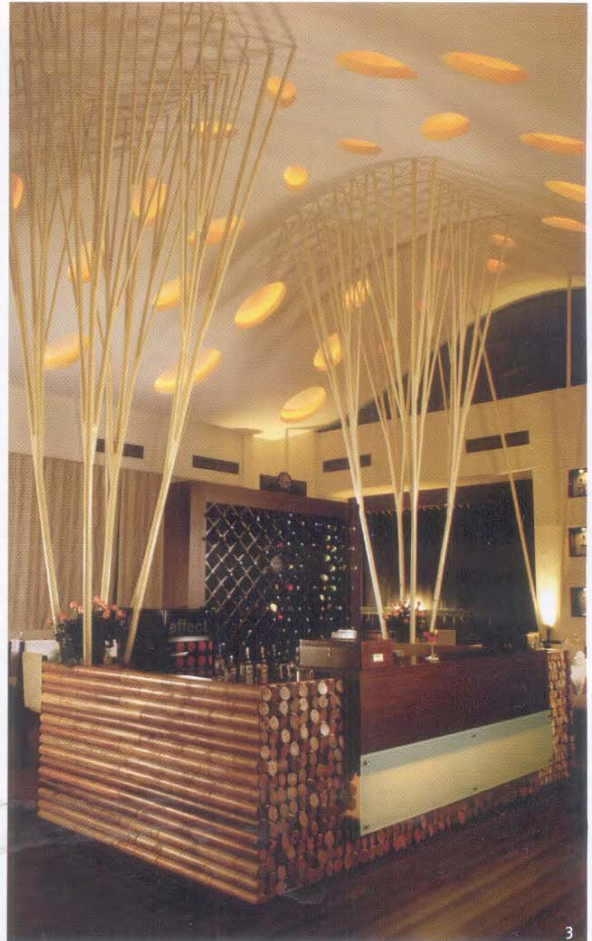
Including it in their design, the architects created plywood tree cut-outs that line the ceiling and walls. Painted red, the trees stand out against the monochrome background of the space. "Someone came up with the idea of leaves, and we added cut-outs of leaves on the walls. Then autumn came, and we painted some leaves on the floors," recalls Gour Mattoo.

An identifying feature of projects handled by Planet 3 Studios is the absence of bulky, looming structural

RECENT AWARDS:

- Honor Award from DesignShare, USA, 2007
- Multiplicity's International Product Design Award, USA 2008
- World Architecture Festival Awards, Shortlist, Learning, Spain 2008
- World Architecture Community Awards 2008
- Young Designer of the Year 2007, Better Interiors Excellence Award
- Indian Institute of Architects Award for Excellence in Design of Public Spaces 2007
- Excellence in Design of Public Spaces, 2007, Better Interiors
- A+D Spectrum Foundation Award 2007
- Institute of Indian Interior Designers (IIID) National Award 2007
- Institute of Indian Interior Designers Regional Award 2007
- Godrej IIID Workstation Design Competition 2007

1&2. The Tube is constructed out of tubular steel. The inside is clad in faux leather.



elements. Mattoo says: "As a design principle, we negotiate the structure. We never let structural issues dazzle us. We love to arm-wrestle engineers into creating structures that are not only solid but design-friendly as well."

The duo graduated from Sir JJ College of Architecture in 1996 and founded Planet 3 Studios in late 1998 out of their home. Today, there is a team of 26 working together across projects

as varied as designing coffee houses, educational institutes, homes, offices, product design and retail spaces. "We have always worked on the format of being a multi-disciplinary firm – retail design, hospitality and offices. We are not into niche designing," says Mattoo.

Their multi-disciplinary approach means that Planet 3 Studios will routinely apply lessons from one field to another. "When we designed Vidyalankar

Institute, we realised that learning does not only happen in formal spaces. Casual spaces transmit cultural ideas. There is a need to develop third spaces. In Vidyalankar Institute, this was created by something called The Street or the 'chaupal'. "When we were working with Gunnebo's office, we brought that inside. Offices do not have any social spaces like that, with the exception of four men standing and smoking in the open. So in

3. The columns spread like branches of a tree.

4. An educational village built within an industrial container.

5. Crumpled paper inspired this wall.

WORKS

INSTITUTIONAL

Vidyalankar Institute
Gemological
Institute
Vidyalankar Annexe

CORPORATE

Gunnebo India
Dawray Day India
Mapfre Asistencia

RESTAURANTS

Crossover
Ville Chaumiere
Hunan

LOUNGE/BAR

MochaMojo
Waves
Silver Tube

RESORT/HOTEL

Karnala Resort
Lonavala Resort
Boutique Hotel

BANKS

Branch at Ulhasnagar
Branch at Goregaon
Branch at Sion

HOUSING

Sky Heights
Royal Heights
Kalyan Housing

RESIDENTIAL

Deshpande Residence
Thales Apartments
Mitra Residence

RETAIL

Building Products Mall
Sakshi Art Gallery
Disturbia

IT/BPO

GTL Call Centre
Distinctive Devices
Gunnebo India

PRODUCT DESIGN

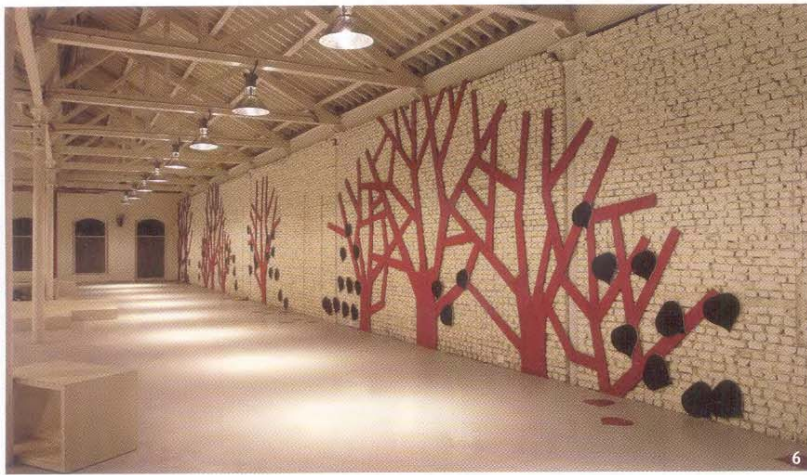
Out-of-the-Box
workstation
Chaise longue
Leaf Table

ECO/GREEN

Amenity Block
Eco Resort
Green Housing

STUDIO WORKS

Sin Lounge
Carapatic Display
Theme Restaurants



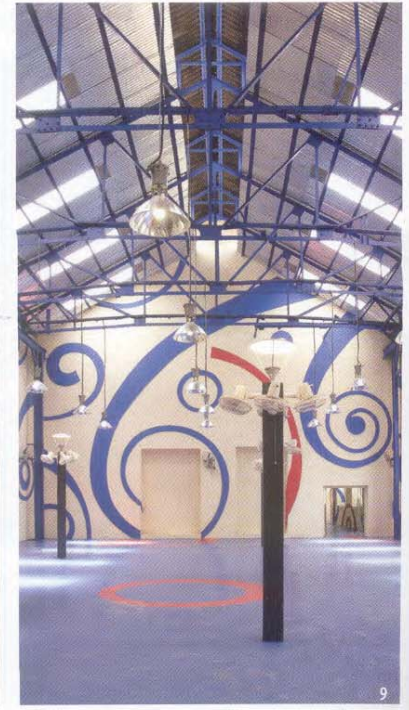
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9

an office, it took the shape of a Wifi zone — so you can take that 15-minute break in a social space,” says Gour-Mattoo.

The latest addition to their award-winning Vidyalankar Institute project is the 35,500sqft annexe located in Wadala, Mumbai. The annexe now features a lotus flower-shaped learning centre along with laboratories and a canteen. Planet 3 is already a hit with the students and faculty thanks to their phenomenal campus architecture for the 1,95,000 sqft higher-educational facility in the heart of central Mumbai. Partitions and elements of lightweight interior materials bend, twist and turn to become large student work displays, graffiti strips, light sources, lotus petal cladding, a couple of Peepul trees with a

hammock to hang in between. “A group of distinct facilities is connected by a self-guiding interior promenade with nooks and alcoves to accommodate student activities. Walls bend, curve and tilt to challenge accepted notions of structural stability,” says Mattoo.

“It’s fun to create spaces that speak to the end users,” he adds. Planet 3 believes in including the client so much so that “by the end of it, he should be a mini architect. We have a very collaborative approach to design. In an office that we were doing, a client wanted to have a table that would be a conversation piece. Soon after leaving us with that thought, he broke a leg and was hospitalised. We ended having a table with a leg protruding out slightly to capture that moment of his

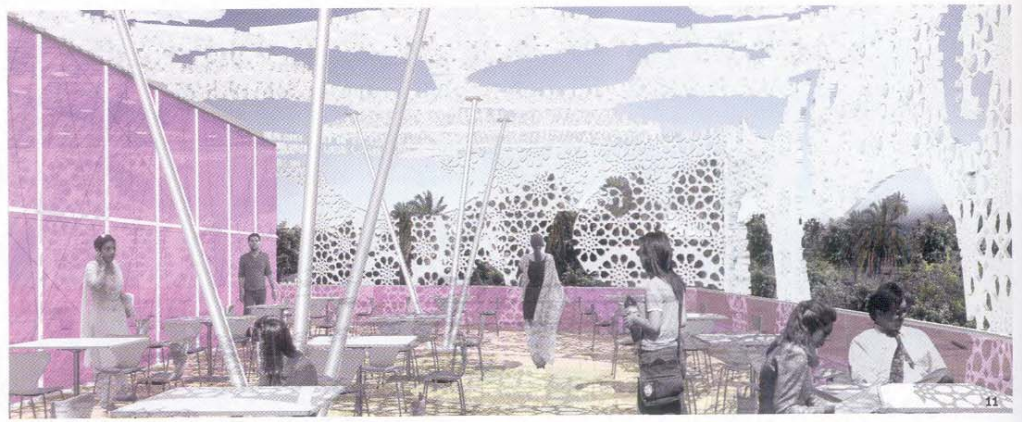
6. In the Seahorse Building Products mall, a tree comes indoors through plywood cutouts.

7. An elevation and a plan block are used. Painted red, they stand out against the monochrome background of the rest of the space.

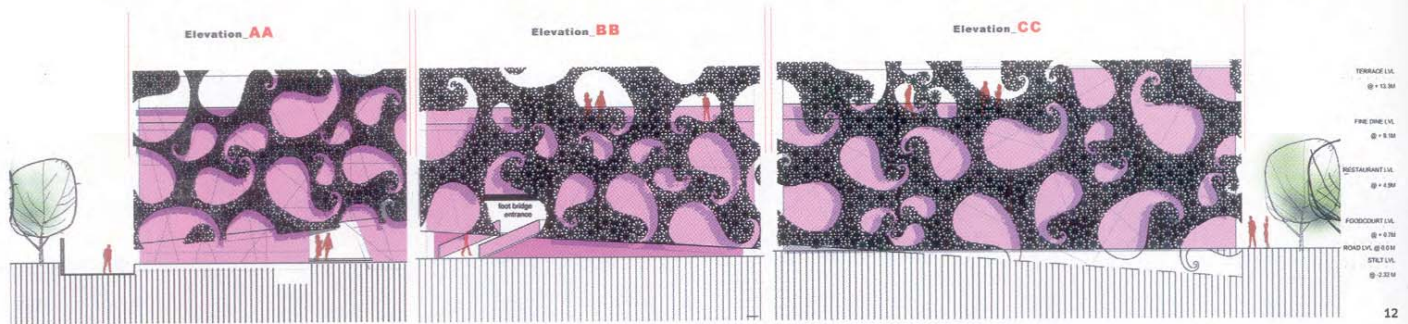
8 & 9. The brand logo, the tail of the sea horse is cut like out-of-scale embroidery patterns in plywood.



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PRODUCT DESIGN- INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Multiplicity: The Art of the Furniture Prototype, was held last year in the USA. The items in the show were chosen from 319 entries in a juried competition that invited studio furniture makers, artists, architects and industrial designers to submit full-scale prototypes of any type of furniture in any kind of material. The third prize was given to Planet 3 Studios, Mumbai, whose Out-of-the-Box Workstation is a mobile office for two, including storage cabinets, keyboard trays, computer compartments and other components that all fold up to become a 48x60x18-inch box. The jurors were impressed by the workstation's portability and its potential use at disaster sites or in temporary offices.

life. The top of the table was like a totem pole. He loved it," discloses Mattoo.

In the offices of Planet 3 Studios located in Mumbai's Kandivali, the immediate sense is of a lot of talented people having lots of fun, including staff with double Masters in Architecture from Sydney and the USA and interns who queue up at the

door having heard of their work. "We like collaborating with non-architects as well. For instance, when we were working on Mocha Mojo we collaborated with a girl whose background was IIT-Mechanical Engineering. Architects are trained to think in a certain fashion. In Mocha Mojo, it particularly helped that we worked with

a non-architect because the brief was that it needed to look not too well-thought-out," explains Mattoo.

Mocha Mojo, located in Bandra in Mumbai, is set in 2,550sqft. The retro theme is everywhere. The bar counter has a red backdrop with frosted acrylic cut-outs and backlighting. Roy Lichtenstein pop art comes up in a collage on a wall, leading to a faux fur-lined alcove. An Ambassador car, with its trunk taking in a seat, becomes another icon in the space where the furniture includes the legendary lip sofa, chrome-edged and Formica-topped dinner tables, flower-power ottomans, Rubik's cube as a corner-table and seating that spells 'Make Love Not War'. All out-of-the-box ideas and all classic Planet 3. **AS**

10,11&12. The design for a mixed-use food court. The glass building was clad with an external skin of patterned 'jali' — an exact reproduction of a local palace window detail.