

ARCHITECT & INTERIORS INDIA

Ideas, inspiration and insight for architects and interior designers

Volume 01 | Issue 05 | July 2009 | Rs 50

An ITF Publishing India Publication

planet cool

HOW DESIGN CAN CREATE A CHILLED-OUT ATMOSPHERE

AROMA OF THE PAST
The Tea Bungalow in Kochi

GREEN LADDER
How far up is India?

ARCHITECTURE SCHOOLS
Building the future

SMART HOMES
An idea whose time has come



COOL AS ICE

AN OFFICE FOR AN AIR-CONDITIONING SOLUTIONS COMPANY CAN TURN INTO A BRANDING EXERCISE IN 'COOL'. SANTHA GOUR-MATTOO AND KALHAN MATTOO OF PLANET 3 STUDIOS TAKE **SHALINI SETH** THROUGH THE PROJECT THAT PUTS ICEBERGS IN MUMBAI.

If you were told the office of an air-conditioning solutions company was 'cool', you might expect it to be in reference to its temperature. But when Mumbai-based Planet 3 Studios was asked to design the space for HTL's 2,300sq ft ground + loft office, it took 'cool' to the next level.

The office is characterised by a design that underlines the relevance of temperature in the space, and these themes are also highly "fashionably attractive", as the dictionary defines the word.

"When we are designing an office, we ensure subtle branding for the company, which is why we thought of bringing the idea of 'cool' to the office space. We did not really have a brief, so we worked on creating a look with as many cool elements as possible," says architect Kalhan Mattoo, one of the directors of Planet 3 Studios.

Santha Gour-Mattoo, the other director of Planet 3 Studios, lists the elements: from the table which is themed around melting ice, to frosting which looks like a broken iceberg and a table with shards of mirror. The material used the most is glass – whether mirrored, frosted or plain – on the reception table, meeting-room partition, entrance door. The meeting-table with a printed thermostat dial does its bit to communicate the theme.

As you enter, a wall that appears like snow takes up one side of the office area. The uneven wall, made up of white precision-joined panels, faces the frosted glass partition which echoes the iceberg pattern on a flat surface. "The iceberg look on the frosting was created by simply cutting the frosting material randomly in a zigzag style," says Gour-Mattoo.

The uneven wall also conceals structural elements that came with the property. Gour-Mattoo says: "The challenge in designing this was that the space already had too many structural elements, such as beams and pillars, which we could not touch. So we worked around that and this whole wall is covering up beams."

The glass partition with its zigzag pattern conceals two cabins. In the director's cabin, the table which melts on to the floor forms the centrepiece. Created with thin plywood, covered with a film, the puddle pattern on the table is somewhat replicated on the soft-board material in the office space. Both areas are lit by translucent ceiling panels with diffused light. The walls are all white, and the bookcase is constructed to look like the skyline of a city. Glass, a recurrent material, makes its way to the transparent tabletops that rest on specially-fabricated hardware that anchors them to the pedestals below.



JUST CHILL

As the office for a leading air-conditioning solutions company, the space had to communicate the essential brand qualities of quality, economy and innovation. It also needed to respond to the nature of business and creatively evoke the whole aspect of 'Cool' as a metaphor laden with meaning and promise.

A faceted feature wall formed of precision joined panels leads in from the entrance. Painted white, its effect is reminiscent of carved snow banks. This wall descends into the floor revealing a frosted glass partition with transparent slits that carry the graphic quality of the conjoined wall.

The iced glass partition conceals two cabins, each with a distinct design identity. An exuberant seamless tabletop rendered in tones of blue flows right into ground, much like glacial melt. ...with the rest of the space staying neutral in deference. Translucent ceiling panels offer diffused light into the space.

In the main office area, a dramatic staircase enables connect with the level above. Fabricated in steel, glass and wood, this object is the centrepiece around which the whole space is oriented. Deprived of a skin, a skeletal form similar to the nearby faceted wall envelops the steel staircase rising with it to the upper level. For a fragile-looking construct, this framework of wooden members lends some solidity.

In the office space, tabletops in glass are supported on specially fabricated hardware that anchors them to pedestals below. The reception table, meeting-room partition and entrance door are all rendered in frosted glass. Quirky bits like a meeting-table with a printed thermostat dial help communicate the theme.

Appropriately, it gets warmer on the upper level with wood tones, warm colours, a richer and more varied palette. A games room with a caricature wall, an interesting screen created out of plastic balls, an unusual serving counter in the pantry, a warped and twisted open bookcase – all contribute to the vibe. In the conference room, a shattered mirror sits below a glass tabletop.

An identifying feature of projects handled by Planet 3 Studios (which include Vidyalkar Institute in Mumbai and the Ville Chaumiere trio of restaurants in Bangalore) is the absence of bulky, looming structural 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.

This was not possible in this case. For example, there were pillars to hold the loft created by the previous tenant, and the loft itself was on two levels."

While the contoured wall covered up the pillars, the challenges in space shaped the creation of the Y-shaped staircase as a centrepiece to the office. The staircase, designed with the thought of a skeleton of an iceberg, has been fabricated in steel, glass and wood. Located between the

1. The staircase forms the centrepiece. It is flanked by a partition made of frosted glass with an iceberg pattern and a faceted wall which is themed on snow banks

2. These shards carry forward the theme from the office to the recreation zone



3. Rounded furniture has been chosen for the recreation zone done in warm reds and yellows. A whole wall of caricatures of everyone in the office makes it a fun space

SUPPLIER DETAILS

Furniture:

Pukhraj Interior Contractors.

Pukhraj Suthar 9322690011

Lighting: Powertech Electricals

Mohammed Laik 9322345786

Painting Contractor:

Rameshwar Prasad 9820195719

Photographer: India Sutra

Mrigank Sharma 9820224666

AC vendor: Daikin

Lavinder Duggal 9820073753

contoured wall and the frosted partition, the staircase echoes the theme of icebergs. "We used light colour wood for the structure and kept the steps in glass. The whole structure is bolted on the ground and rests on a steel cover," says Gour-Mattoo.

Upstairs, the loft has been constructed on two levels – so the staircase evolved into a Y-shape to cater to both levels. "It would have cost too much money to change these elements, so we let them define the design," says Mattoo.

This is where the iced look ends. The loft area is a social zone. "When we were working on an educational project, we realised that learning or productivity does not only happen in formal spaces. One needs casual spaces to transmit cultural ideas – a third space. You see this when you see people congregating next to a water cooler. Offices do not have social spaces, with the exception of four men standing and smoking in the open."

In the HTL office, the pantry and the recreational area are noticeable for the warmth they exude. While the office space is angular and white, the loft zone is celebratory in red, blue and yellow. Tables and chairs with rounded contours complete the look, which is enhanced by a partition made up of plastic balls framed between two layers of glass. An asymmetrical bookcase in a vignette of

colours from blue to red adds to the effect. In the games room, a wall comprising caricatures completes the social space. Says Gour-Mattoo: "We worked with an artist to create caricatures of everyone in the office – the owner, Lavinder Duggal, his secretary, the office staff and everyone else can be seen on that wall."

The connecting element between the cool and warm is a table with a top made of shards resting on a mat. "We fixed the mirror on the surface of the table, broke it with a hammer and then spread it up. After that we covered it with a plain glass," says Mattoo. **AS**

PROJECT DETAILS

HTL Aircon

Location

Andheri, Mumbai

Construction time

August '07 to October '07

Area

2,400 sq ft

Cost of Construction

Rs2,010 per sq ft

Delivery

Design Consultancy

Design Team

Kalhan Mattoo

Santha Gour Mattoo

Prashanta Kumar Ghosh

Kingshuk Datta