

# Inside Outside

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Artist Bose  
Krishnamachari's  
vibrant home.

Offices around the  
world — different  
and fun!

Zaha Hadid's award winning project.





# inventive interiors

Planet 3 Studios, a young architectural firm from Mumbai is making waves for its out of the box and experimental approach to design. We select three offices in Mumbai done by them to show their versatility, says Ruchi Sawhney.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY THE ARCHITECTS

The three offices designed by Planet 3 Studios could not be more different from each other. Dawnay Day is chic and sophisticated, IQN is fun and quirky and Axis Bank is conventional, with a twist. But looking more closely, one can see a strong graphic design element running through all three, threading them together. That's because Kalhan Mattoo and Santha Gour Mattoo have a very strong design philosophy that they follow at their architectural firm.

'We founded the firm in 1988 and started by doing small projects, but today the studio has evolved into a multi-disciplinary practice with a rapidly growing eclectic portfolio of projects comprising institutional buildings, mixed use developments, corporate offices, spas, resorts, lounges and even industrial products,' says a very articulate Kalhan. They've bagged so many projects over the years and grown so rapidly (they employ over 25 people now) because they are light on ideology and heavy on creativity and innovation. Each project is approached with an open mind to let fresh ideas grow, and they work very closely with the client as they believe in co-creation, where the client is a partner in the whole process.

Kalhan puts it all together succinctly, 'We don't subscribe to any "isms", we flirt with varied ideas before settling for one with the most relevance.' They take pride in being trend-setters rather than following trends and their projects have won international awards. The three offices that we feature reflect a stylistic representation of the ideas, best suited for the situation.

The fun and flamboyant personality of the client comes across in the design of the sculptural table which reaches up to the 14 ft ceiling and is inspired by a totem pole.



## IQN

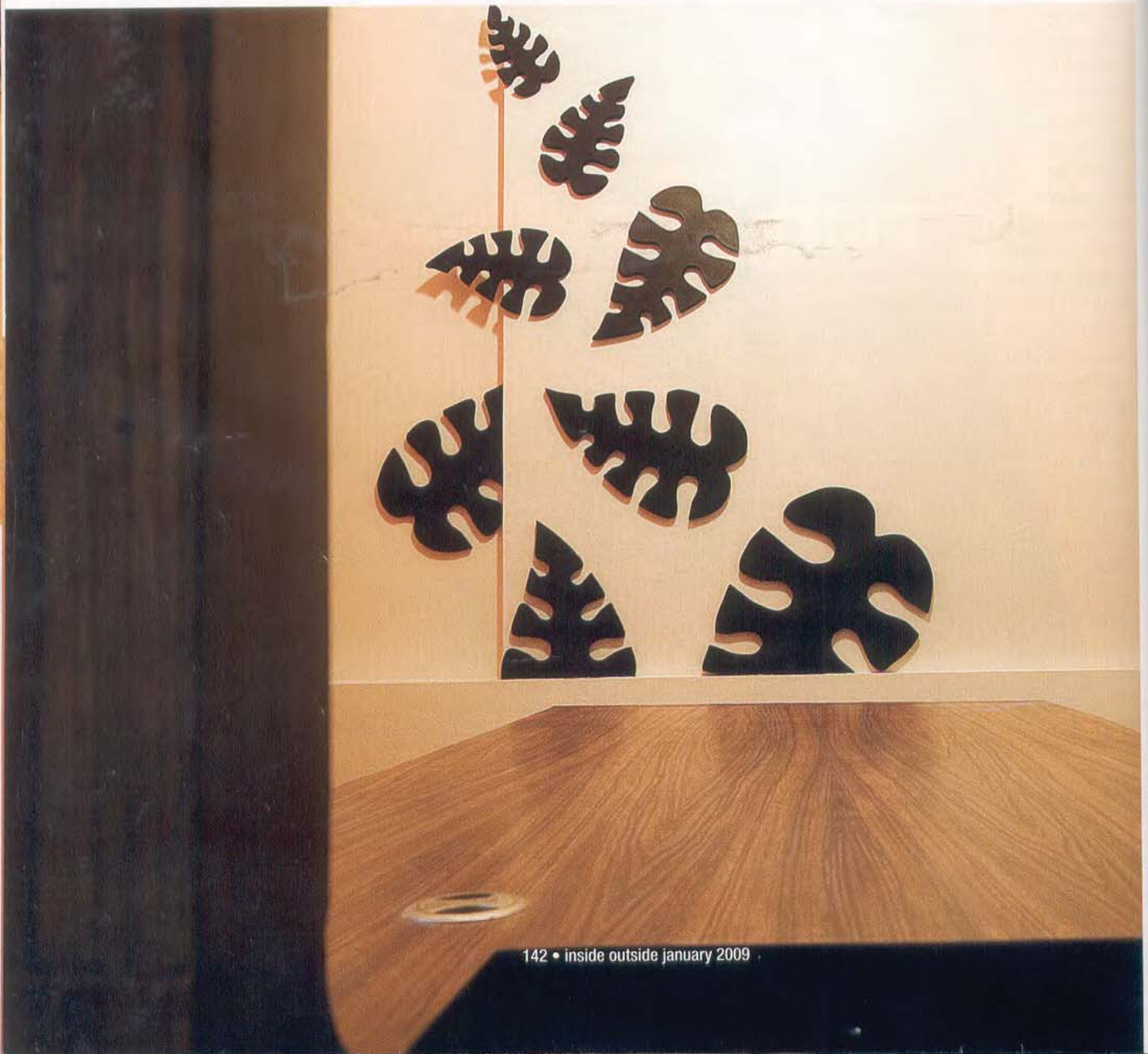
**W**hat does one do when a flamboyant client who is into businesses as varied as film, investment, etc, wants an office that is an extension of his personality? Well, one creates something that is fun and quirky and becomes a conversation piece! That's exactly what Planet 3 Studios has done at the IQN office. 'The MD's cabin is 14 ft high with a mezzanine for the executive assistant. While brain-

storming with the client, we drew a totem pole which found its way as the design for his table,' says Kalhan. The sculptural table with a veneer finish reaches up all the way to the ceiling, and is definitely an ice breaker with clients that he meets for the first time. It looks exceedingly dramatic placed as it is in front of a bright ochre painted wall. Adding to the drama are cut-outs of leaves fanning out on an adjacent wall.

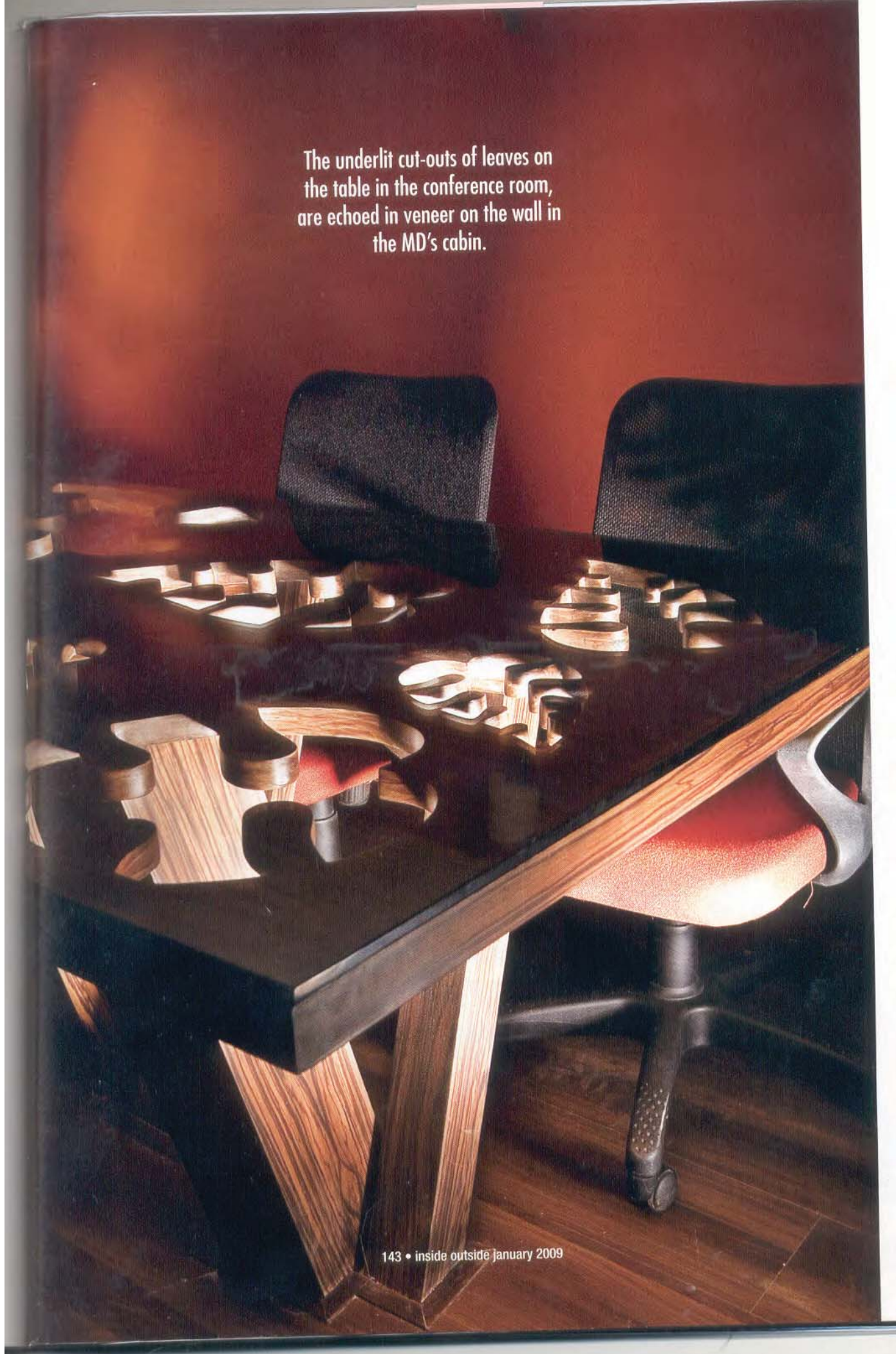
The executive assistant on the mezzanine floor looks onto the

MD's cabin. While discussing the design, she said that if she could be seen then she should be framed well, and that led to a picture window framing her on the mezzanine!

The conference table has cut-outs of leaves that are dramatically lit, similar to the ones on the wall in the MD's cabin. This unusual design element lends a special touch to the space. It's a very small office, but it is infused with fun design and graphic elements, with an impressive identity akin to its owner.



The underlit cut-outs of leaves on the table in the conference room, are echoed in veneer on the wall in the MD's cabin.



## Axis Bank-WTC

Bank offices are either stodgy or so opulent that they are intimidating. The office of Axis Bank, a nationalised bank, strikes just the right note on more counts than one. It is a young bank that has embraced technology to its advantage and it combines traditional values with the glamour of a new age bank. The office at the World Trade Centre reflects its corporate image through its interiors that span 10,000 sq ft of prime property.

To convey the dynamism and energy of this bank, Planet 3 Studios has used a strong graphic visual throughout the space. The reception has bold signage behind the receptionist's desk and bands of white running horizontally on the wall panelling and across the glass partitions. Once you step inside, a 'morse code' graphic in lime green and yellow bands runs horizontally and vertically through the entire space. The bands are of gypsum painted in different colours and stuck on the wall. 'It's a very simple interior but very design intensive,' says Kalhan. The materials used are simple but the strong graphic element gives it a vibrant feel. Apart from these colourful strips, bands of white run across the glass partitions in the conference room. Opaque strips in different widths lend an interesting design element and a variety of textures.

Large squares in blue and maroon look Daliesque in the cafeteria. 'It's a break-out space and these squares create a sense of difference,' says Kalhan. Axis bank has a modern shell that is infused with energy and a youthful exuberance, just like its designers.





Strong graphic elements are the hallmark of the design at Axis bank in Mumbai. Vertical bands in different widths, 'morse code' strips in shades of green, and multi-colour squares, are the visual tools that convey the young and dynamic image of this nationalised bank.





The office of Dawnay Day makes an impression with its chic and sophisticated interiors that have a modern museum-like ambience, forming the ideal backdrop for displaying art.





## Dawnay Day

Plush, chic and minimalist are the words that best describe this 2,600 sq ft office in the heart of the business district of Nariman Point in Mumbai. Dawnay Day is a firm dealing in investment banking and real estate and many MDs and CEOs of corporate houses visit this office. The interiors are an extension of their corporate culture and are meant to enhance their brand value.

'We worked very closely with the client here. He wanted a minimalist look that would have a modern museum-like ambience to display his art works. The colour palette comprises only whites and greys, and we used

high-end materials in fashion so that the sophisticated character,' says Kalhan.

Well thought out and creative use of lighting creates a 'Wow' effect. At the reception, highlighted by illumination from blue lights. A very interesting feature of this reception area is a cosy conference nook that Planet 3 Studios has created with a fabric partition stretched on a steel frame. 'The clients needed a space for a huddle, for small interactions that didn't call for total privacy so we made this curved partition with a synthetic porous fabric on a white stainless steel frame. It is a very cost effective and good looking idea

defined very interior-

for partitioning space,' says a proud Kalhan.

Fabric has again been creatively used in the conference room where translucent parasol fabric hides the LED lights. 'Usually the reflection of the lights on the glass table top distracts visually and so we concealed it and also enhanced our minimalist look,' says Kalhan. The rest of the office has cove lighting and the cubicles have glass partitions with a frosted glass band to provide privacy. A charcoal coloured carpet offsets the stark walls and ceiling and the high-backed grey chairs have been made on site by good local carpenters. Picture windows bring in the view of the sea and greenery. A visit to Dawnay Day definitely makes an impression. 