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EXCLUSIVE
MOHIT GUJRAL
ON HIS FATHER,
THE POLYMATH

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MARQUETRY
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WALLCOVERINGS
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LIVING AT LARGE

Homes in Alibag, Bengaluru, Mumbai & Pune

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ELLE DECOR brings you in-depth articles and insights into design, architecture, decor and culture. Introducing our special contributors



SACHIN BANDUKWALA

FOUNDING PARTNER
BANDUKSMITH STUDIO

Sachin holds a B.Arch from CEPT University. Before founding BandukSmith Studio, he worked as an architect in Ahmedabad, documenting significant Indian temple complexes and stepwells.

Comfort is... Sitting on a river rock

The best conversations happen over... The cooking counter

A luxury money can't buy... Being free at twilight

In this issue, they open doors to their Ahmedabad studio, housed in a restored Art Deco mansion from 1932, **Pg 70**



MELISSA K SMITH

FOUNDING PARTNER
BANDUKSMITH STUDIO

Melissa is an architect and urban designer based in Ahmedabad. At CEPT University, she served as the founding Program Chair to establish the first Bachelor in Urban Design program in India.

I'm inspired by... Lina Bo Bardi

My current obsession... Late Romantic Period classical piano

A luxury money can't buy... The shade of an old tree



FARAH AHMED MATHIAS

CO-FOUNDER
FADD STUDIO

Farah is a mom of two rascals named Luca and Leah. She lives in Bengaluru with her family in an apartment with a wild tropical garden. In her non-existent free time, she reads books on how to raise non-maniac kids.

Luxury is... No WhatsApp messages

The best conversations happen over... Wine and nowhere to be

A luxury money can't buy... Time, and the people you want to spend it with

In this issue, she along with Dhaval makes space for memories within her restored childhood home in Bengaluru, **Pg 194**



DHAVAL SHELLUGAR

CO-FOUNDER
FADD STUDIO

In 2019, Dhaval was awarded the EDIDA Interior Designer of the Year trophy with Farah. He excels at creating interiors that feel timeless yet personal.

I'm inspired by... Architecture, travel and the way people live

My current obsession... Materials that become more beautiful with time

The best conversations happen over... A long dinner, preferably somewhere outdoors

In this issue, he and Farah restore the latter's childhood home in Bengaluru, making space for memories, **Pg 194**



CYRUS PATELL

PARTNER
COLLECTIVEPROJECT

Cyrus holds an M.Arch from Yale University and a B.Arch from RV School of Architecture. He worked with RMA Architects and KPF, before moving to Bengaluru in 2013.

I'm inspired by... Everything. I'm always curious

Comfort is... My dogs

Home is incomplete without... My dogs :)

My current obsession... How many times can my response be "my dogs"?

In this issue, they design the interiors of a home in Alibag, weaving landscape and light with everyday life, **Pg 180**



ELIZA HIGGINS

PARTNER
COLLECTIVEPROJECT

She grew up in the United States and is now based in Bengaluru. She holds a B.Arch from Roger Williams University and an M.Arch from Yale University where she also served as a visiting critic alongside Parsons School of Design and more.

I'm inspired by... Always learning

Luxury is... Personalisation

Home is incomplete without... Dogs

My current obsession... Listening to music on a rainy day

HOMES THAT BECKON YOU TO LINGER A LITTLE LONGER

ELLE DECOR STYLE

Page 180 RESTRAINT, ABUNDANCE, EASE, CONTINUUM is a vibrant home in Alibag, featuring Rahul Mehrotra's architecture and interiors by CollectiveProject **Page 194** GROWING UP, AGAIN within Farah Ahmed Mathias of FADD Studio's renovated childhood residence in Bengaluru **Page 206** HOUSEFUL OF HUGS welcomes you inside a cosy apartment in Mumbai by Amoeba Design **Page 216** A SPANISH REMINISCENCE ensues at a flamboyant Spanish villa in Pune, steered by Studio VDGA



A home in Bengaluru by FADD Studio Photograph by Gokul Rao Kodam Page 194

GROWING UP, AGAIN

In Bengaluru, Farah Ahmed Mathias restores the house that raised her family, lovingly preserving its memories while making room for the lives it holds today

TEXT BY **VAISHNAVI NAYEL TALAWADEKAR**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GOKULL RAO KADAM**



A knife painting by Farah’s mother, Asma Ahmed, created at the young age of 14, adorns the foyer. Candle holders from The Purple Turtles and a ceramic vase sit atop an antique Chinese console from studio vi
FACING PAGE Monumental mirror panels and hand-painted mosaic bands by Venkatesh adorn the living room. A Balinese daybed and lamps with bespoke Sabyasachi shades, an Edra sofa, centre tables from Chairs And Company, and an ornate Carpet Kingdom rug complete the space



HOME BENGALURU

A cast-glass console from Beyond Designs marks the transition from the passageway to the living room, leading the eye past an enormous terracotta urn and Home Stories drapes to the sculptural Klove Studio chandelier above. The burgundy armchairs are from Bali FACING PAGE The living room's artwork is a study in memory. At its centre hangs a large floral painting by Asma Ahmed, framed by smaller works from her long-stowed collection, lending the wall an evocative archival quality





FROM LEFT The foyer sets the tone for the home's handcrafted spirit. An old table wearing a Viya Home top sits beneath a pearlescent bespoke chandelier from The Purple Turtles, flanked by sculptural urns from studio vi; A bean-shaped table crafted by Farah's great-grandfather, the celebrated furniture maker Saleh Ahmed, takes pride of place beneath the staircase, alongside striking crimson urns from studio vi **FACING PAGE** The living room's double-height volume reveals itself in layers — from an ornate Carpet Kingdom rug and charcoal Edra sofa to Venkatesh's hand-painted botanical band, before culminating in a sculptural Klove Studio chandelier set against the first-floor gallery

very renovation has an origin story, but few begin as unglamorously as this one: a leaking terrace roof. That was the entire brief, at first. But for interior designer Farah Ahmed Mathias — co-founder, with Dhaval Shellugar, of Bengaluru's FADD Studio — a leaky roof is rarely just a leaky roof. More often than not, it's a Trojan horse, and this one snuck its way straight into her childhood. One suggestion led to another, until Farah wasn't just fixing a house — she was reckoning with everything that had happened inside it.

Because to her, and by extension her parents, this was never merely a project. It was the house her grandfather had built, on a plot bought beside his best friend's, a decision that must have seemed ordinary enough at the time and ended up shaping the cadence of three generations since. Farah's father, Nadeem Ahmed, grew up within these walls. Decades later, so did Farah and her older brother, sharing a first-floor bedroom and spending summer afternoons climbing out the window onto the adjoining terrace to frolic, one eye ever trained on their mother's gloriously overgrown garden below. Then, at fourteen, her room was requisitioned and repurposed into a music room, a shift the renovation would, years later and rather sweetly, choose to honour instead of erase.

If there's a single instinct that guided Farah through this project, it's that erasing was never really the plan. The marble flooring stayed, as did the living and dining rooms' proportions. She let the house's bones set the terms, and negotiated everything else around her parents, who no longer needed five bedrooms now that Farah and her brother had long since moved out. Five became three — and each one, in its way, tells you something about who lives there now, or who once did. Her parents sleep upstairs in a terracotta dream, limewashed and hand-painted with oversized blooms. Downstairs, her grandfather's old room has become the guest bedroom, all warm whites and painterly palm wallpaper. And when Farah's and her brother's children come to stay, they claim a third room entirely — an English-inspired retreat of blue stripes and Tiffany lamps, with a dramatic black backlit marble vanity that turns their bathroom routine into something faintly theatrical. It's a small joke of a detail, but Farah can't resist pointing out that every bedroom, even in her grandfather's original 1960s design, comes with its own ensuite dressing room. "The architect was ahead of his time," she says. >>



FROM LEFT The ceiling brings together the work of five different ateliers, transforming the dining room into a fantasia of craft; The Ahmeds' own dining table is a reminder that the home's most meaningful pieces are the ones that have always belonged **FACING PAGE** In the dining room, the eye is drawn up to a richly festooned ceiling, where mirror panels from Beyond Designs, a pink cement finish by Wall&decò, Sabyasachi for Nilaya wallpaper, ceramic flowers by Pretty Potter Studio and hand-painted gilded leaves converge in a regal composition

It's Farah's vision, though, that you feel most in the paint – the thread she used to stitch her parents' house back into a single, coherent world. Long before FADD Studio, her mother had her own life in fashion design, and Farah still remembers tagging along as a child to watch the karigars at work – dazzling borders taking shape under their hands, wondrous fabrics being dyed from plain white into layered, shaded colours. Those afternoons never really left her, and they resurface now in the house's motifs: black-and-white patterning in the living room gives way to painterly triangles along the rafters; oversized florals spill from her parents' bedroom into delicate botanicals lining the upstairs passage; vintage blooms turn up again in her kids' room; brushwork trails outside the old music room, now reinvented as her mother's yoga space. Walk through it and the house starts to feel like one continuous canvas, commissioned by a daughter for the people who raised her.

Just outside her parents' bedroom sits an anteroom where the family once gathered for TV nights – now fully annexed by their three cats, who clearly won that particular renovation. Below it, though, lies Farah's boldest move: her own teenage bedroom, reimagined as her mother's dressing room, now connects directly to the primary bedroom above via a circular glass capsule lift. "We'd always joked about puncturing the ceiling," Farah says, "but nobody really thought about it seriously." Until she did – for her mother, who now descends into a room with a black-and-white Indochine mood, elegant balustered railings, a glass-enclosed toilet and shower, and a calming corner reserved just for her massages. Farah shifted an old foyer arch to make the layout work, careful not to disturb the entry sequence her grandfather had set decades before.

That same refusal to take no for an answer runs through the ground floor. When the living and dining rooms' flooring couldn't budge, Farah simply sent the eye skyward instead – rafters and a hand-painted floral band pulling attention up toward the first-floor gallery, while pocket vaults in the dining passage lend the corridor an airy lift. >>

HOME BENGALURU

Enveloped in limewash and hand-painted botanicals, the parents' bedroom reflects Farah's instinct to treat every surface as a canvas. A vintage nightstand nods to the home's past

FACING PAGE Once Farah's teenage bedroom, the walk-in closet was reimagined as her mother's dressing room — an elegant Indochine retreat with a theatrical circular glass capsule lift connecting it to the primary suite above



Walk through it and the house starts to feel like one continuous canvas, commissioned by a daughter for the people who raised her



FROM LEFT The powder room is a jewel-box retreat, where stone inlay walls and a pedestal sink from Bali create a striking focal point; The room where Farah's grandfather once slept has been gently reinterpreted through warm whites, soothing palm wallpaper and custom furniture by Magari
FACING PAGE A gabled timber ceiling, maroon tufted slipper chairs and a Jaipur Rugs wall-to-wall carpet create an atmosphere of old-world intimacy in the music room. A wall of glass-fronted cupboards houses the family's meticulously catalogued CD collection

Above the dining table, a ceiling shaped by five separate hands layers mirror panels, Sabyasachi For Nilaya wallpaper, pink cement, ceramic flowers by New Delhi-based Pretty Potter Studio, and hand-drawn gilded leaves into a collage that feels less like decor and more like a family archive rendered in materials.

Because that, in many ways, is what this house has become. On its walls hangs artwork by Farah's mother, Asma Ahmed, much of it only recently rescued from decades in storage – a magnificent bouquet in the living room, and in the foyer, a portrait of a gaunt man with haunting eyes, slightly worn from its years away. Mother and daughter disagreed on what to do with the damage. "My mom insisted on restoring it. I was adamant it should be left as is," Farah says. Her instinct won. It wears its age beautifully – much like the house itself.

Upstairs, past the door of what was once Farah's bedroom, time seems to have simply stopped. The music room is a capsule now: gabled timber ceiling, vintage glass chandelier, maroon tufted slipper chairs, a wall-to-wall Jaipur Rugs carpet, fanlight windows onto the terrace. Its real centrepiece, though, is a wall of glass-fronted cupboards holding the family's CD collection, digitised and catalogued so thoroughly by Farah's father that, in her words, "you can look up a song and know immediately which cupboard it's in, on what shelf, between which other CDs." A few steps beyond, through the terrace doors, is her mother's art and design studio – a former storeroom turned sunroom out of a storybook, its trellis walls and sunburst windows feeling lifted straight off a page.

Even the house's stray pieces feel like family: an Edra sofa and furniture ferried over from other chapters of their lives, an unplaceable Chinese console painted with figures who have no eyes, a bean-shaped table tucked under the staircase, crafted by Farah's great-grandfather, the well-known furniture maker Saleh Ahmed. Nothing here was bought to match. It was bought, or made, or inherited, to mean something – and Farah's real feat wasn't styling a house at all. It was making sure that everyone in it, across three generations, still had a place to be exactly who they'd always been. ♦