

HOME MUMBAI

The living room is a canvas for personal touches, with artworks and artefacts reflecting the tastes, travels, and stories of its owners (OPPOSITE PAGE) Throughout the home, walls and millwork echo one another, unified by the consistent use of a single Bolivar veneer





DESIGNING IN THE DARK

Inside a Mumbai apartment by SHROFFLEÓN where one meeting and infinite creative freedom gave rise to a 3,400 sq ft dreamscape

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The call came from Hong Kong. The clients – well travelled, assured, with homes across multiple cities – wanted their Mumbai apartment designed by SHROFFLEÓN and handed back to them fully complete. There would be no extended back-and-forth, no iterative reviews, no site visits. A single phone conversation would set the course; after that, the architects would be left to their own devices. In fact, the first time Kayzad Shroff and María León would meet the homeowners in person would be on the day the project was finished.

“We were kind of working in the dark,” says Kayzad. The clients’ trust was as expansive as their brief was concise: a luxuriously warm, neutral home that could serve as a backdrop to their collection of artworks and artefacts. Beyond a programme-led request to rework the original three-bedroom layout – sacrificing portions of the living area and master bedroom to carve out a den – the aesthetic decisions were left entirely to the architects.

What emerged is a 3,400 sq ft refuge in Worli, calibrated to mute the city’s relentless pace. SHROFFLEÓN set out to create a sense of tranquillity through restraint, working with a deliberately limited material palette anchored by a single Bolivar veneer that flows continuously through the apartment. Each room, however, introduces one distinctive material gesture, adding character without disrupting the overall calm. Artworks and collected objects – markers of the homeowners’ travels – are layered in as punctuation, animating the spaces without overwhelming them.

In the living area, a signature SHROFFLEÓN floor-to-ceiling shelving screen mediates between the lounge and dining spaces. Semi-transparent and spatially assertive, it allows glimpses through from either side. For this intervention, the studio experimented with burnt wood panels for the first time, custom-making a single thick plank that runs the full height of the room – its depth of burn and curved edge carefully controlled. The flooring, too, is treated as a stitched surface: wooden tiles laid like carpets within rooms, bordered by planks along the periphery and separated by precise brass infills.

Warmth is amplified in the den through ageing copper panels lining the walls, while one bedroom, defined by two walls of floor-to-ceiling glazing, anchors itself with an oversized, deeply coloured bed back that acts as a counterweight to the lightness of the envelope. Elsewhere, joinery and detailing carry the complexity of the project, particularly in the living–dining screen, which cleverly absorbs an existing structural column into its design, masking what would otherwise have been an interruption.

Designing without ongoing client dialogue, Kayzad and María admit, proved to be both liberating and daunting. “It was a double-edged sword,” María reflects. “On one level, it was easy. On another, the responsibility weighed heavily.” That pressure extended into execution as well. With a fixed handover date requested by the clients, the studio made the rare decision to change contractors midway through the project – juggling budgets, site handovers, and timelines with little margin for delay.

The gamble proved worthwhile. When the homeowners finally arrived, the apartment met them with immediate ease and familiarity. For SHROFFLEÓN, it was a reaffirmation of instinct – proof that sometimes, courage in design lies not in pushing a brief, but in trusting oneself when there barely is one. ♦ shroffleon.com



In the dining room, windows stand in for walls, framing panoramic vistas of the glittering cityscape (OPPOSITE PAGE) The bar is a haven of Bolivar veneer cabinetry, where millwork masquerades as furniture

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Mirror, stone and sky weave through the home, appearing and reappearing to create a sense of continuity and reflection (OPPOSITE PAGE)

From left: The den, formed by carving out sections from the living room and primary bedroom, basks in a play of light and shadow. An oversized sage bed back anchors one of the bedrooms, counterbalancing two walls of floor-to-ceiling glass





SHROFFLEÓN is a Mumbai-based architecture, landscape, and interior design studio led by Kayzad Shroff and Maria Isabel Jimenez León. The practice develops intelligent, bespoke strategies, consistently prioritising design quality over volume. Leveraging its boutique scale, SHROFFLEÓN ensures each project receives the personal attention of one – or both – principals, undertaking only a select number of commissions that offer scope for creative exploration and working exclusively with clients who value and understand thoughtful, considered design.

THE FIRST DESIGN DECISION YOU LOCKED IN FOR THE HOUSE?

A light grey marble for the bathroom, which was later changed to white.

THE CORNER THAT TOOK THE LONGEST TO GET “JUST RIGHT”?

The screen between the living and dining areas. The workability of the burnt wood panels, geometry, sizing restrictions, and on-site fabrication – including a diagonal element piercing the ceiling – took time to resolve.

DID ANY MATERIAL BEHAVE DIFFERENTLY IN REAL LIFE THAN ON PAPER?

The burnt wood for the screen was something we had to experiment with extensively, as this treatment normally leaves a residue when touched by hand – and we wanted to avoid that.

