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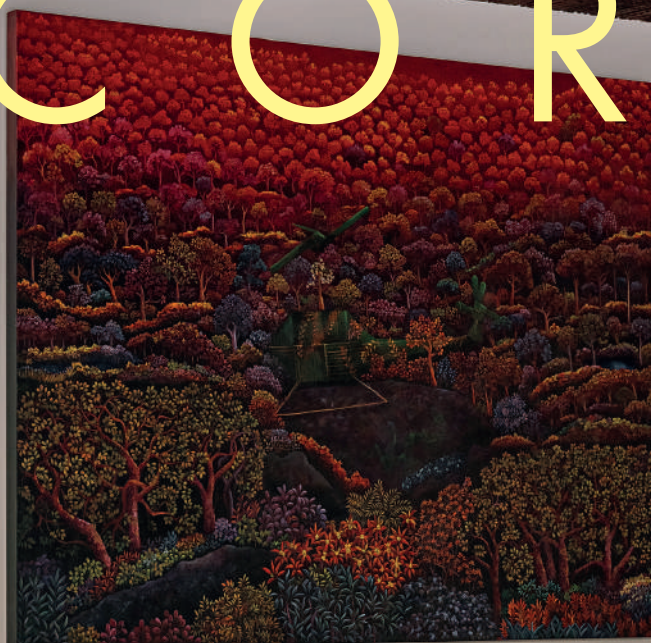
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ELLE DECOR brings you in-depth articles and insights into design, architecture, decor and culture. Introducing our special contributors



KUNAL BHATIA

PHOTOGRAPHER, WRITER & ARCHITECT
STUDIO KUNAL BHATIA

A spatial photographer, travel and design writer, and architect based in Mumbai, Kunal finds inspiration in cities around the world, in the people that he meets and in encounters that are often fleeting. He is passionate about design, photography and travel; and strives to explore the many intersections between them with his practice. When not behind the camera or at his desk, he's likely to be flaneuring in some corner of the world.

A fictional person I want to call for dinner...

The Dowager Countess from Downton Abbey

A meal I can eat on repeat... Miso soup and sushi

A hobby I'd like to pick up... Tap dancing

I'm currently reading... I prefer podcasts. Currently listening to The Guardian's The Audio Long Read

On my bucket list... Going back to Japan for a few months, again

In this issue, he photographs and writes about a filmmaker's dream residence in Goa designed by Ini Chatterji and designVAN, **Pg 88**



VRITIMA WADHWA

FOUNDER
PROJECT 810

A graduate of the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, with a specialisation in furniture design, Vritima's practice spans retail, hospitality and residential sectors, with a focus on interior architecture. She has served as visiting faculty at NID and CEPT, Ahmedabad. Her studio has been recognised on national and international platforms.

A meal I can eat on repeat... Vietnamese pho

A hobby I'd like to pick up... Pottery and pickleball

I'm currently reading... Peter Zumthor's Atmospheres

A movie that changed my perspective... Jojo Rabbit

On my bucket list... A trip to Peru

In this issue, she takes us through this New Delhi bungalow designed alongside Abhimanyu Dalal that hinges on two helixes and distinct cinematic experiences, **Pg 188**



ABHIMANYU DALAL

PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT
ABHIMANYU DALAL ARCHITECTS

One of India's leading architects and urban designers, his expertise spans various domains, including residential, institutional and commercial projects. Abhimanyu also specialises in restoration and repurposing of historic buildings, comprehensive street-scaping, conservation and urban design. With a strong educational foundation, academic practice and extensive experience, he brings a unique blend of skills to his architectural explorations.

A fictional person I want to call for dinner... Hercule Poirot

I'm currently reading... At Home by Bill Bryson

On my bucket list... Follow the Silk Route

A piece of technology I couldn't live without... mobile phone

A contemporary I look up to... Medha Patkar

In this issue, he takes us through this New Delhi bungalow designed alongside Vritima Wadhwa of Project 810 that hinges on two helixes and distinct cinematic experiences, **Pg 188**



SHONAN TREHAN

PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT AND FOUNDER
LANGUAGE.ARCHITECTURE.BODY

Her work focuses on the construction of relationships between narrative, environment and habitation. Shonan's studio has worked extensively on healthcare, education and residential projects. In addition to her practice, Shonan has also been an academician and published in numerous books.

I'm currently reading... The Overstory by Richard Powers

A movie that changed my perspective... The Automat: a documentary on Horn & Hardart

A piece of technology I couldn't live without... The Blackwing 602 Pencil

A place I feel most at peace... At my drawing desk

In this issue, she crafts a home out of the earth in Vadodara that appears one with the landscape, **Pg 202**

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

By coalescing this Kolkata duplex into the surrounding landscape, Abin Design Studio created an oasis of light that appears invisible from the outside

TEXT BY **VAISHNAVI NAYEL TALAWADEKAR** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **ISHITA SITWALA**

The thing about designing a house that lets the elements in and everything else out is knowing where to draw the line. Ace architect Abin Chaudhuri of Kolkata-based Abin Design Studio is no stranger to such predicaments, having made a career out of drawing lines – literally and figuratively. In 2022, when he took up the reins for a 20,500 sq ft home for a family of five in Kolkata's plush New Alipur, the first thing he did was draw a line to distinguish the indoors from the outdoors. Or, as he puts a finer point on the subject, "Find a way to ensure ample natural light and ventilation, while ensuring privacy from prying eyes." The solution, it seemed, was simple: if he couldn't take the indoors out, at least he could bring the outdoors in. By keeping the home at one with the landscape, maybe he could camouflage the interior to make it seem invisible from the outside.

So that's what he did, not just with grounding materials such as wood, stone and water, but also through the considered use of highlight and shadow. Ask him what his vision was and he doesn't take a moment's pause. "To seamlessly integrate the indoor and outdoor areas and create a serene and cohesive living environment that is both spiritually resonant and naturally enriching," he notes. He segregated the spaces into functional realms, reserving the ground floor for the living and dining areas and designating the eight bedrooms to the upper level, although as he explains, the distinction between upstairs and downstairs is but a matter of perspective. Maybe it is, if the foyer is anything to go by. The arrival experience draws you at once inward and upward, by way of a wondrous wooden ceiling that holds a mirror to the exterior. But what lies beyond is a double-height volume that serves as the home's centrepiece that Abin considers the real tour de force. It is an informal gathering area as well as an interlude between the upper and lower levels, while also beautifully echoing, in scale and signature, the terrace garden beyond. >>



A sweep of the living room in this Kolkata abode by Abin Chaudhuri reveals novelties tucked in every corner. Levitate chairs from Hands&Minds, an El Dorado console by Viya Home and a painting by Smitha G.S. are crowned by a Bocci chandelier and underpinned by hand-tufted carpet from Jaipur Rugs Styling by Samir Wadekar



Whether the tour de force of the ground floor dining room is the Gulab Kapadiya painting from People of the Homeland or the trifecta of Kumud lights from Shailesh Rajput Studio is up for discussion. The dining table and chairs are by Hands&Minds and black Sumo vases from 101 Copenhagen dazzle atop the console FACING PAGE Viewing from the living room with artworks by Joydip Acharjee on the left, the entrance foyer appears as an otherworldly sanctum. Intricate brass handles by Viya Home are inlaid on the bespoke Hands&Minds main doors. The Balaji mural is from Viya Home

The ground floor lounge is quite the Aladdin's cave of treasures with a Saint-Germain white sofa from Poliform, artworks on the wall by Joydip Acharjee collectively titled The Eclipsed Land and Tacchini's Five to Nine daybed. A reclaimed wood ceiling by Hands&Minds draws the line of vision skyward



A black-and-white forest takes root in the powder room with bespoke wallpaper by Abin Design Studio and a bespoke basin in Jaipur green marble FACING PAGE The first-floor dining area could easily belong on a tropical island. Arte's Valle de Viñales wallpaper holds a mirror to the 0414 chairs from Gallotti&Radice. Sliding shutters from Glas Italia lend to the relaxed ambience

The guest bedroom is a sanctuary that embraces the harmony of wood and white. The bed and side tables from Hands&Minds emerge from the floor, elegantly complemented by a Jaipur Rugs hand-tufted carpet. Adding a touch of nature, a Luminaire Fungo table lamp from And Creation evokes a miniature tree

"The essence of our design philosophy was to create a retreat from the urban clamour, allowing residents to enjoy tranquillity while remaining connected to the surrounding environment. The resulting abode stands as a peaceful haven, blending serenity with the vibrancy of urban living"

It's like a shapeshifting chequerboard, the sun — it's here but not there — present one moment and absent the next. By no coincidence, mind you. "The deliberate use of highlights and shadows in the design was a crucial aspect of our vision," Abin explains. Muting the interior didn't mean minimising it. If anything, it meant making room for the things that mattered — sculptural furniture, otherworldly artworks and sumptuous rugs. The approach was echoed along the facade, where Abin incorporated three different types of sandstone — ribbed cladding along the top storeys, narrower fluting at the base and smooth horizontal slabs on the balconies to weave in layers of visual interest and coalesce the home into the landscape. "By harnessing the interaction between the sunlight and the sandstone facade, we created a dynamic experience that evolves with the passage of time and changing seasons," he mentions.

If there's anything the home has in spades, it is its spirit of asymmetry. Skewed furniture. Oddly placed sculptures. Paintings that feel simultaneously in and out of order. "The deliberate sense of asymmetry in the interior design contrasts with the symmetry of the architecture, creating a visually stimulating living environment," reflects Abin. "While the architectural layout maintains balance and order, the asymmetrical design brings a bit of drama." What he did with asymmetry, he undid with colour. He counterbalanced the outré flourishes with muted colours and minimalist forms, to create an expansive oasis of light.

For the many things that went right, there were some things that didn't. Minor constraints, as Abin calls them. "Designing the home near a bustling thoroughfare presented inherent challenges. The plot was small and the requirements many," he shares. "However, in the face of these obstacles, our objective remained resolute: to craft a layout that optimally utilised space, brought in natural light and ensured privacy." It's a vision he admits exceeding. "The essence of our design philosophy was to create a retreat from the urban clamour, allowing residents to enjoy tranquillity while remaining connected to the surrounding environment. The resulting abode stands as a peaceful haven, blending serenity with the vibrancy of urban living," he signs off. ♦