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# A & B



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# God and Beyond

interiors



*The overall visual theme is rustic with black slate flooring, dark wine painted ceiling and gloomy backdrops highlighting the illuminated products.*



*The long passageway reveals a single transparent shower cubicle at its rear end.*

Elevating the importance of detail on par with, and even above, its very architectural casket, The Bath World designed by Dipen Gada & Associates presents an apt interpretation of the aphorism, "God is in the details".

*Text: Shalmali Waqle  
Photographs: courtesy Tejas Shah*

The dependence of the final architectural expression on minuscule details that compose its entirety was predicted back in the 1900s when Mies van der Rohe acknowledged that "God is in the details". For decades since, the aphorism has been recurrently used in design and is almost sacrosanct to contemporary architects. Whatever the construal or polemical use of the statement in architecture today, its relevance to interior design is undeniably obvious, with every aesthetic aspect requiring exclusive attention and every line on the design board crafting very specific real-time experiences. The Bath World designed by Dipen Gada and Associates in Vadodara is one such interpretation of the saying that promotes detail to the same level as, and to an extent, even above its architectural casket.

As a fabric, Vadodara displays a rather hybrid picture with modern façades clumsily fitting themselves into the royal frame of the Indo-Saracenic architecture from the city's golden period. Along mundane dusty roads, one casually observes awkward mixed-use complexes and unexciting residential towers attempting to match shoulders with the majestic heritage bungalows and sprawling university campuses adorned with cusped arches, domes and minarets. On one such unassuming road perches a humdrum commercial complex like any other in the city.

One hardly expects to discover a wonder within while climbing the unsteady off-centred entrance stairway. Soon, however, a long passageway is revealed, almost like an apprehensive access of a mysterious cave. A quick gaze into this immediately transforms the apprehension into curiosity as a single transparent shower cubicle reveals itself at the rear end of the corridor. This uncomplicated introductory element bears multiple symbolisms which carry themselves to the space within. Its functioning rain-shower unit establishes the purpose of the design; a showroom intended for the display of sanitary fixtures and fittings. The installed mood-lighting depicts the

The rectangular showroom has been conceptualised assuming sanitary products as base modules with other details then worked around them.



*The introductory element bears multiple symbolisms, of purpose, of experience and of the relation between the two.*

clarity in approach; an acknowledgement of the inseparable relation between design and user experience. The displayed products being components of a spatial monologue very private to each customer, at the simplest, the assemblage, detailed with its pebbled flooring and single minimalist seat, welcomes the visitor with the promise of a satisfactory experience.

**Of Art...**

Robert Fellowes Chisholm is a name fondly remembered in the history of Vadodara owing to his immense contribution in reinventing its architectural scene in the early 1900s. A vehement supporter of the Indian craftsmen, he believed in the strength of "the men who will actually leave the impress of their hands on the material". In its own humble manner, keeping the essence of those beliefs alive, The Bath World perceptively displays a number of sculptures and artefacts to patronise and promote the local art community. The entrance of the main 3500sqft sanitary showroom displays a large dominating metal sculpture of a man that appears as though emerging from a water body below. The rectangular showroom has been conceptualised assuming sanitary products as base modules with other details, like display niches, live shower counters, artefacts and furnishings, then worked around them. The visual theme is rustic with rugged black slate flooring, dark wine painted ceiling and gloomy backdrops subtly highlighting the illuminated chrome and white products. Instantaneously, a stark contrast is rendered and the importance of the products on display gets accentuated. The setting is appropriate in more ways than one as The Bath World also doubles up as an exhibition gallery for the display and sale of art and sculptures.

**Of Experience...**

As is expected of any such arbitrary commercial complex, the showroom interior is studded with inevitable structural columns. The design simply manipulates them to its advantage by cladding them with CRC metal and creating niches for the display of products. These niches, supplemented

In terms of detailing, 'experience' takes the driver's seat and 'function' assumes the role of a pillion, the latter mutely following the first to promote bath spaces as bearers of very private experiences.



*The rectangular showroom has been conceptualised with products as base modules and other details worked around them.*



*A metal sculpture of a man that appears as though emerging from the water body below.*



*The design manipulates structural columns by cladding them with CRC metal and creating niches for the display of products.*



The niches and the central raised display platform create a circulation pattern similar to that of a gallery.



Delicate metal screens form sophisticated translucent partitions.



The niches are clad with tiles to be exhibited as a part of the product range, thereby serving a dual purpose, of cladding and of display.



The interiors perceptively display a number of sculptures and artefacts to promote the local art community.

with a central raised display platform, in turn create a circulation pattern similar to that of a gallery or a museum. The niches are ingeniously clad with tiles that are to be exhibited as a part of the product range, thereby serving a dual purpose, of cladding and of display. Consequently, there is an interesting variety of settings presented and the visitor enjoys a sophisticated palette of options and combinations in terms of bath space design. The approach assumed in detailing is appreciably unique, with 'experience' taking the driver's seat and 'function' assuming the role of a pillion; the latter mutely following the former. The refined bath settings displayed promote bath spaces from mere utility services to those that can be personalised to create private experiences. The design takes the liberty of depicting how the 'function' can be manipulated with focus on the 'experience' with a special bar area announcing itself with colourful mosaic tiles and playful bar stools. Seductively transparent and warmly inviting, the live shower cubicles provide visitors with imaginary moments that he can effortlessly envision as his own, thereby allowing a more appropriate choice for purchase. An exposed brick wall with 'khaki' paint finish flanks the west wall of the showroom and is adorned by paintings of renowned artists. Indirect light from the clerestory window filters in mischievously through scriptures cut in thin ply. Delicate metal screens form sophisticated translucent partitions. To sum up, the experience, polished with tasteful artefacts, bathroom accessories and exceptional detailing together operate as three-dimensional life-size module catalogues that aid the visitor's bath space design decisions.

What really defines the design of an interior space? Are aesthetics more important than experiences or are both to assume equivalent positions



There is an interesting variety of settings presented and the visitor enjoys a palette of options and combinations for bath space design.

Transparent and inviting, the live shower cubicles provide imaginary experiences.

in design? What really creates moments? What prompts memories? As the eternal combat between function and concept continues, should experience deteriorate? Or is experience merely a sum total of function and concept? Either way, small artistic details go a long way in creating the 'wow' moments that one associates with a space. And what goes beyond this is the subtle memory of an experience. ■

Project	:	The Bath World
Location	:	Vadodara, Gujarat
Architect	:	DGA (Dipen Gada & Associates)
Design Team	:	Dipen Gada, Uday Amin
Client	:	M. Vinit Shah
Duration	:	1 Year