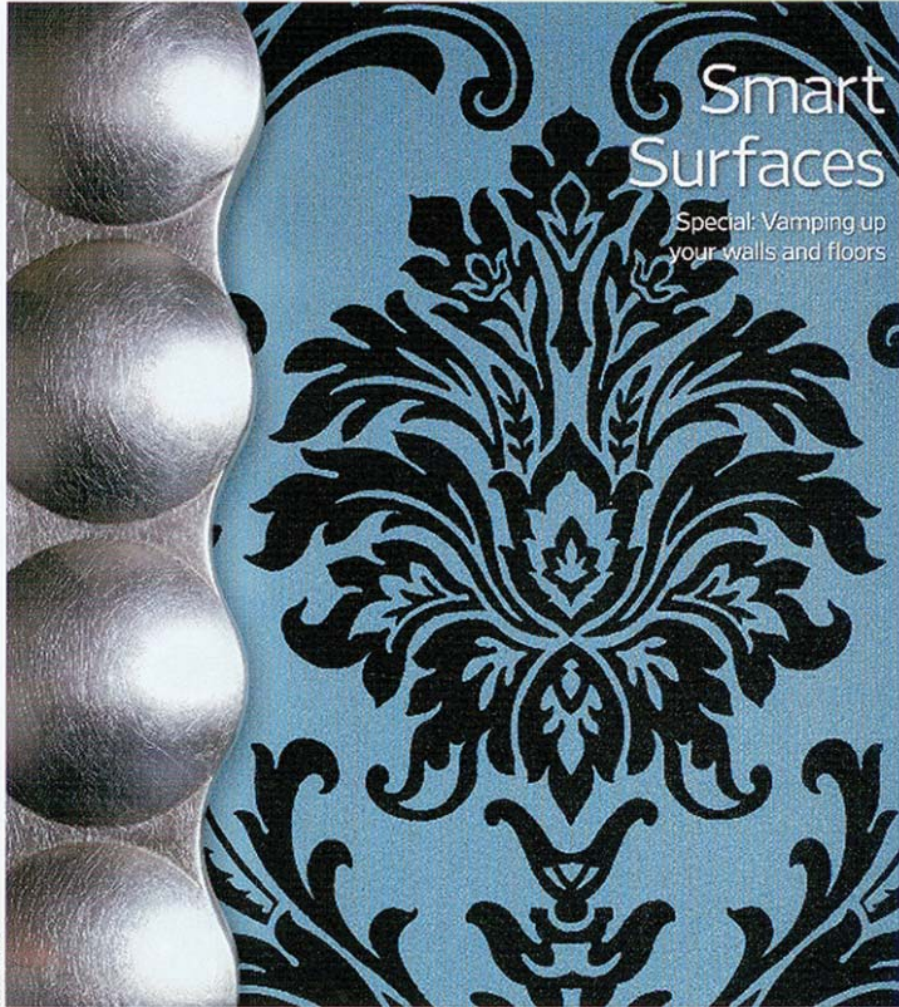


InsideOut

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Ethnic Minimalism

The Anand House in India can be summed up in just three words – elegance, sophistication and simplicity – not because it doesn't warrant a lengthier, verbose description, but because these were the words the owners had in mind when they approached architectural firm DGA to redesign it.

Text: Erin McCallerty, Freelance Writer; Photos: Courtesy DGA



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Just two years ago this villa in Gujarat state near Baroda, India, was in what DGA architect Dipen Gada describes as a "raw condition". "When the clients approached us, the house was complete at the architectural level, but only the walls with basic plaster were still intact," he explains. "The structure had quite a modern form and some really fantastic spaces, and so it was the perfect canvas for us to explore our ideas on."

The two brothers, Mehul and Sanket Patel, who, along with their father Mr DC Patel, run an electronics goods business in the town of Anand, planned to live in the house with their families and wanted it not only to be modernised, but also to be comfortable as well as visually pleasing.

They discussed their ideas with the firm in detail and it was decided that a number of drastic changes would be made. Another architectural firm had already gutted the

building, leaving just the basic structure. "After a few initial meetings they trusted us and then they gave us the freedom to do whatever we thought was necessary," explains Gada. "It was a real challenge for us to do the interior of this home because of its size and the different areas involved. Maintaining the underlying character of the house was important, but equally important was ensuring that things didn't get repetitive. And I think we've been quite successful in achieving this." The result, which took a year and a half to complete, is breathtaking. An elegant white villa, the 13,000 square foot home sits elegantly amidst finely manicured lawns, surrounded by stately mango trees.

The spaciousness of the foyer hits you as you cross the threshold and an elegant Italian marble floor further adds to the airy and cool interior, making the space the perfect antidote to the hot Indian summers. In fact, the architects had to persuade the brothers to choose this type of flooring, but it was

Above left and right: In the centre of the atrium is a raised platform with greenery that acts as an inner courtyard; **Facing page:** The bar's double-height ceiling consists of an open section that works as a cooling system and a amazing skylight



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Above: The living and dining area makes use of highly finished materials - Italian marble, dark veneers and leather - to create a sophisticated space



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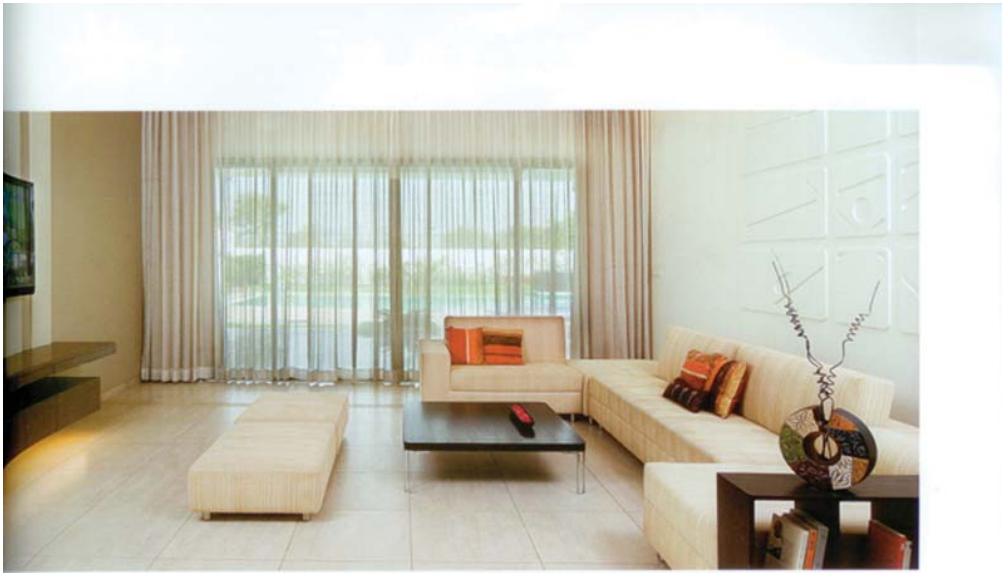
Maintaining the underlying character was important, but equally important was ensuring that things didn't get repetitive

a decision that paid off. "Originally they'd selected small two by two tiles, but we convinced them to use bigger slabs of Italian white marble in order to achieve a seamless feeling on the floor," says Gada, adding that the same flooring continues throughout most of the ground level. "It also tends to balance out the rich dark walnut veneers used in the furniture."

Clean lines are a signature feature of the architectural firm and these are obvious throughout the simple but effectively designed living and dining spaces. Carefully selected artefacts add beauty to the otherwise stark area. The custom-built dining table is minimalist in design with a steel bowl for floating flowers built into it.

Off the dining room is the bar, which is undoubtedly the most dramatic space in the house and both brothers agree it is their favourite room. With its beautiful high ceilings and glass facade this room is spectacular. The bar itself is an elegant combination of glass and silver Travertine marble and the double-height wall clad with rustic grey tiles provides a dramatic backdrop, while the red leather retro-style chairs give it a modern and fun twist. A view of the garden as well as the sky above allows light to flood the room and as the day progresses and the light changes, the atmosphere shifts from bright and energetic to soft and calming.

While some buildings ignore their outside surroundings, one obvious aspect of the Anand



Above: The family area with its high ceiling and neutral colour palette is a relaxing place for the entire family. The mural, designed by a DGA staff member, forms an interesting piece of the artwork



house is its symbiotic relationship with the garden. Large windows throughout and a number of French doors seem to draw the elegant gardens into the home and add to the cool and calming atmosphere. For example a bay window in the sitting room area overlooks a pretty lily pond in the garden outside.

"This really is a great place to sit and unwind after a hard day's work. There's an almost meditative feel to the alcove," comments

Sanket Patel with enthusiasm. "I love to sit here in the evenings and watch the sky change as the sun sets." A family room with a retractable roof has also been added to the downstairs area. This transforms the space into a courtyard that funnels warm air out of the house and separates the bar from the family room. While the same muted tones and clean lines are continued here, a more casual and less formal approach was taken when designing it. ♪

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Above: The second bedroom has a stark minimalist and underlying masculine feel with clean lines, dark finishes and concealed storage; Right and far right: The focal point of the master bedroom is a delicate tree-shaped mural cut from Nu-Wood. It complements the platform bed which is finished in a dark-toned veneer.



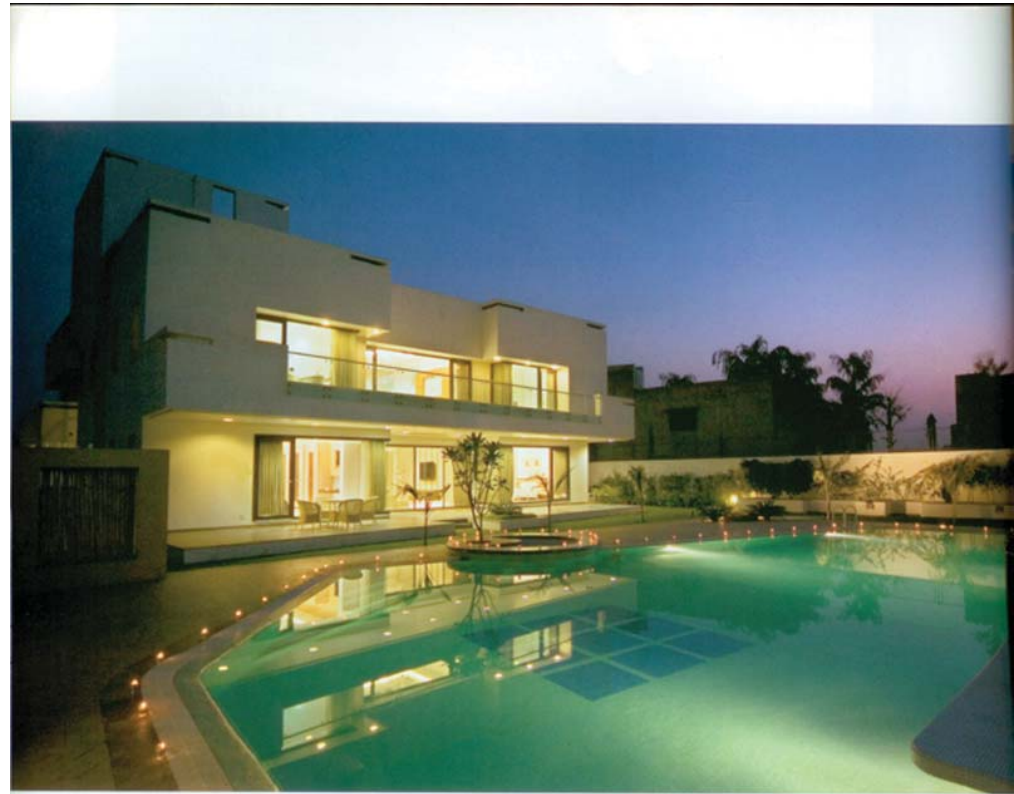


Above: The bathroom for the gym has leather-finished grey tiles and soft lighting, creating a meditative feel that is punctuated with a few carefully selected black and white photos placed above the mirror.

Rustic off-white tiles were used in the flooring and a mushroom colour was introduced on one of the walls. A wooden mural designed by the DGA team adds detail to the space. Sheer curtains provide shade, but also allow a muted view out over the swimming pool area in the courtyard. This too has been remodelled to look more up-to-date and its location changed.

As one moves from the outer living spaces to the bedrooms, a subtle shift in ambience is noticed. The stark minimalism of the common spaces gives way to a more personal and slightly ostentatious feel. And yet this change is gradual.

There are five bedrooms in the Anand house and each has a distinctive atmosphere. Warm brown tones characterize the rich romantic ambience of the master bedroom. A carved tree motif in Nu-Wood forms an arresting backdrop to the bed. Another bedroom, in stark contrast, exudes a decidedly masculine personality with the use of black laminate, dark wooden flooring and dark accessories. The other double bedroom and the guest



Above: The swimming pool area has a built-in bar just outside the family room, which is ideal for entertaining.
Right: The bay window overlooks a lily pond and creates a bridge between the outdoor and indoor spaces.



room employ a more neutral colour palette in combination with dark veneers, while the children's bedroom is a complete departure from the rest of the house. Here, the dominant colour is white. The mirror terrazzo detail in the headboard adds an element of interest and the monochromatic colour scheme is broken by the colourful wardrobe shutters which are arranged in a combination of white, burgundy, pink and green.

Both brothers are clearly proud of their new home. There is no doubt that the Anand House stands out by a mile in comparison to some of the other homes in the area. "The reaction of everyone who comes here has been pure amazement," says Sanket. "Everyone says it is a tranquil and happy home. There are six people living in it now and we are delighted with the result." ■