

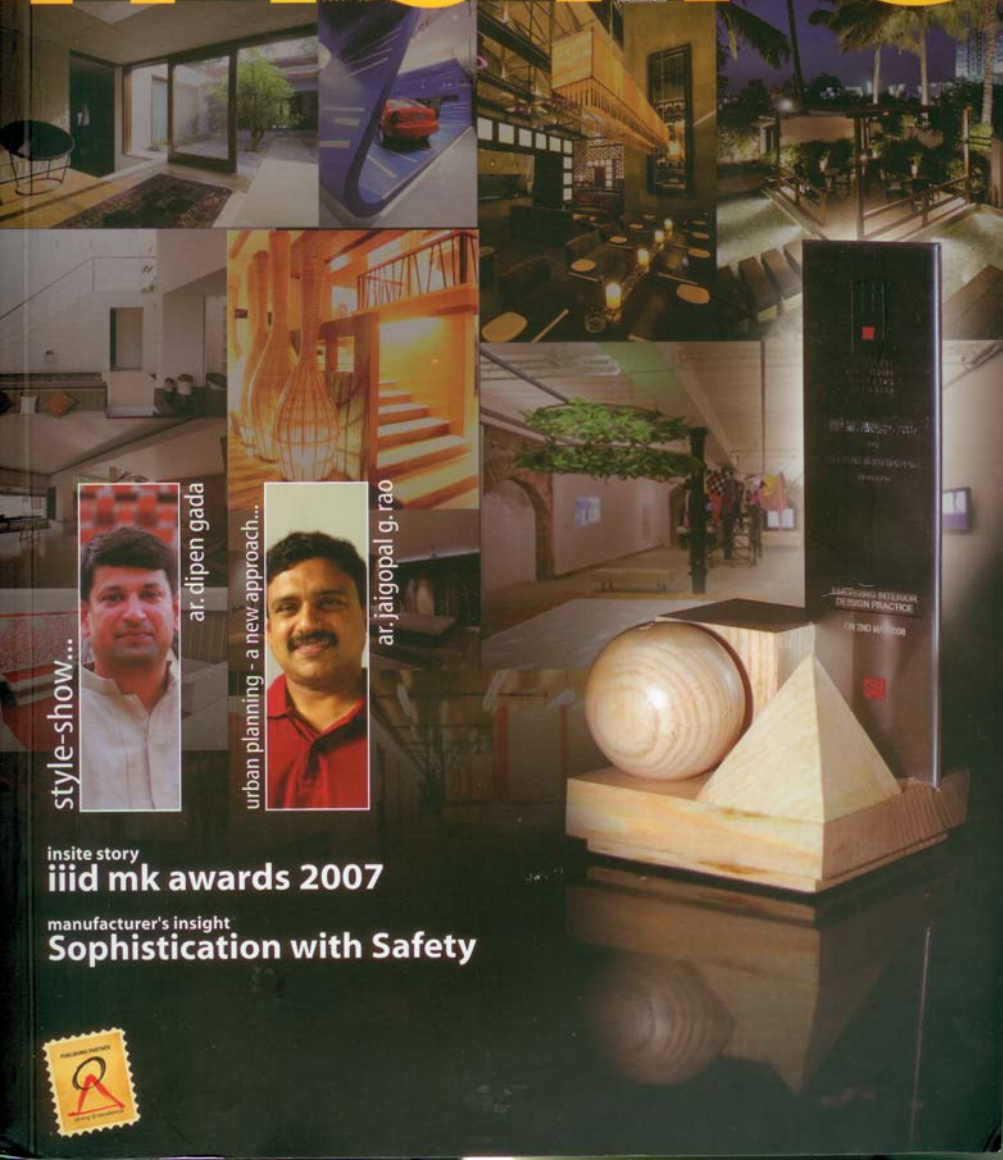
A WALK THROUGH THE WORLD OF IIID AND BEYOND

JULY - AUGUST 2008 | RS. 100

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Earthen tones and ambient lighting create a meditative environment for the customer. The designers believe that this will be an ideal environment for customers to properly study and appreciate the product, and help their purchase decision.

Text: Architect-Design Critic Roopa Sabnis Pinge
Kohler Bath Lounge Inputs: Shalini Pereira



Style-Show

Lifestyle – the word has taken the collective fancy of Indians; across the length and breadth of the country. Baroda-based interior designer Dipen Gada's scheme for Kohler's Bath lounge in Baroda is a product of the same trend. Incidentally, Dipen is also the current IIID Baroda Chapter Chairperson.

Lifestyle...? Baroda...? Whoever heard of a bath lounge in Baroda?? "Over the past one or two years, the change has happened; people are certainly more aware now. The ads on television, an increased exposure to international products and décor trends – are the causes of that change. So, there is certainly a huge market for such high-end products in Baroda now," avers Dipen. The Kohler Bath Lounge, though not housed in one of the many malls in the city, is located in one of the prime commercial hubs of Baroda. "It made more sense to have it in a posh locality, so that it gets better visibility for the clients for those types of products."

The property was already there, it was earlier a sanitary-ware store, and the interior design of that was also done by Dipen. "They shifted that store elsewhere, when the clients decided to make this a Kohler showroom. So, I was automatically selected for both the jobs," Dipen smiles. "And I am very happy with the way this one has shaped up."

The Kohler Bath Lounge in Baroda exemplifies the fact that everyone, in cities, whether big or small, has jumped on to



Displays have been worked out so that the customers get a feel for how the product would work in a live setting.

the 'lifestyle' bandwagon..... The word may vary a bit in its connotations and interpretations, but the disparity is not all that great. In fact, post independence, we have killed in the name of love, honour, mercy, God, religion, even cricket, but we stand united today in our pursuit of 'lifestyle'.

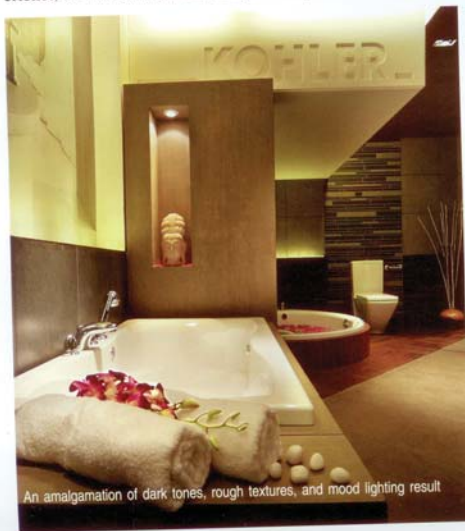
The Bath Lounge: Kohler

The 1025 sq ft showroom called "The Bath Lounge" is Kohler's first retail outlet in the city of Baroda. Keeping this in mind, along with the fact that Kohler is a premium brand, the design team was determined to ensure that this retail and display space for sanitary-ware and faucets would be completely different from the run-of-the-mill showrooms with bright lights and rows upon rows of products. So a raw, warm, and almost meditative environment was considered ideal to offset what is often considered as dull, cold, and uninteresting products.

The Concept- The two extreme forms of mud

The inspiration for the design came from 'mud' which is the basic material that goes into the production of sanitary-ware products. The use of raw finishes and an earthy colour palette heightens the contrast between the highly finished ceramic products on display and the base material of 'mud'. In a nutshell, the design aims to focus on the two extreme forms of clay.

To carry this 'raw' theme through into the design, use of a false ceiling was avoided. Additionally walls were not finished with POP - instead they were finished directly with paint on textured plaster. Besides maintaining the underlying 'raw' theme, this also helped to tide over budgetary constraints.



An amalgamation of dark tones, rough textures, and mood lighting result



The Kohler showroom is the first of its kind in Baroda where customers can experience a live display so they can really get a feel of how the product works.

Cement sheet was experimented with as a wall cladding and as a finishing material, and warm earthy colours like terracotta and coffee browns were used. The client also has a tile showroom called 'Bathworld' and so some of the exclusive tiles that are available there were used for the flooring.

Planning

When it came to planning, spaces were defined for specific products. This is important so that the customer is able to



Vertical windows at the entry of the showroom act as light slits. They result in subtle changes in light patterns as the day progresses. To emphasize the 'raw' theme the walls were treated with rough plaster and paint was directly applied to this.

make a comparison of products. Level differences and flooring tiles were used to demarcate different display zones. While a great number of products have been displayed, it does not come off as too crowded, and this is a very strong aspect of the planning.



One of the highlights of the design is the graphic panels that can be seen after entering. These glass panels with film scripting, tell the customer about Kohler, its history and its corporate philosophy. Another innovative part of the design was the creation of live display zones such as the live shower display and Jacuzzi display. This is the first of its kind in Baroda.

Lighting

Lighting was one of the most crucial aspects of the design. Very little general lighting was used. Instead lights were focused on the product. Along with the use of yellow lights, this gives a very dramatic effect to the interior environment and helps in creating a 'spa' effect. This meditative ambience will have a positive influence on the customer psychology and will hopefully lead to increased sales.

One of the biggest restrictions of this site was that it was located in the basement. As a result of this the amount of natural light was restricted. This was however used as an advantage. Instead of taking a huge glass window near the entrance, everything was closed and two vertical windows were introduced. These 'light slits' create a dramatic effect resulting from the subtle play of light that changes as the day progresses. □