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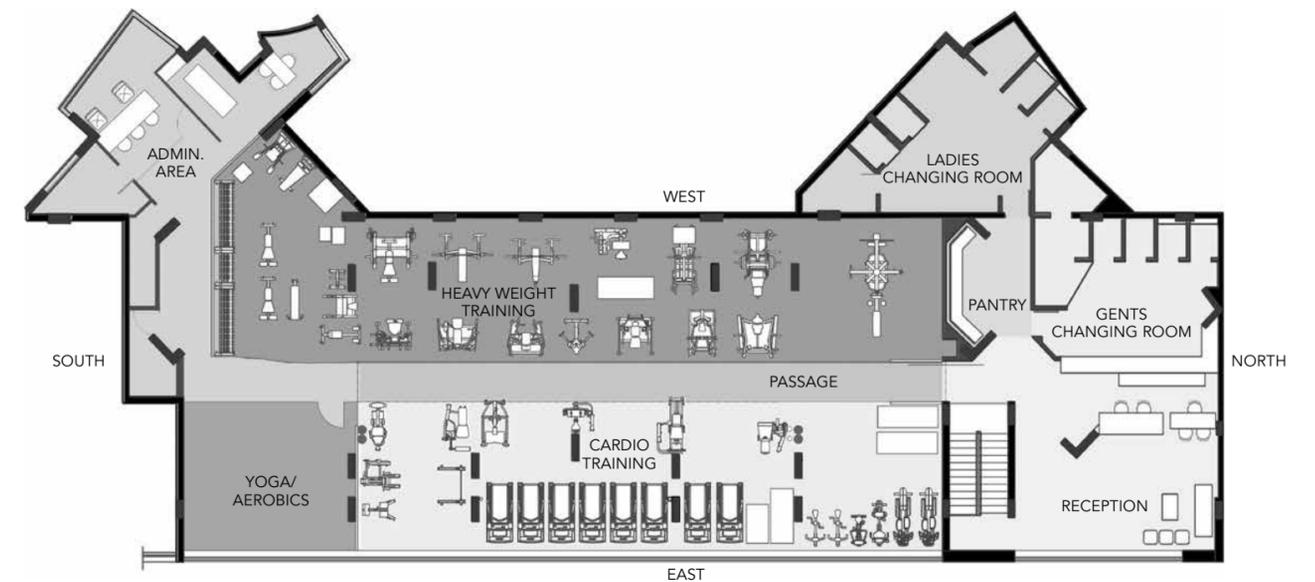
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Pics: Tejas Shah



Drawing: Dipen Gada & Associates

FIT TO BE THERE

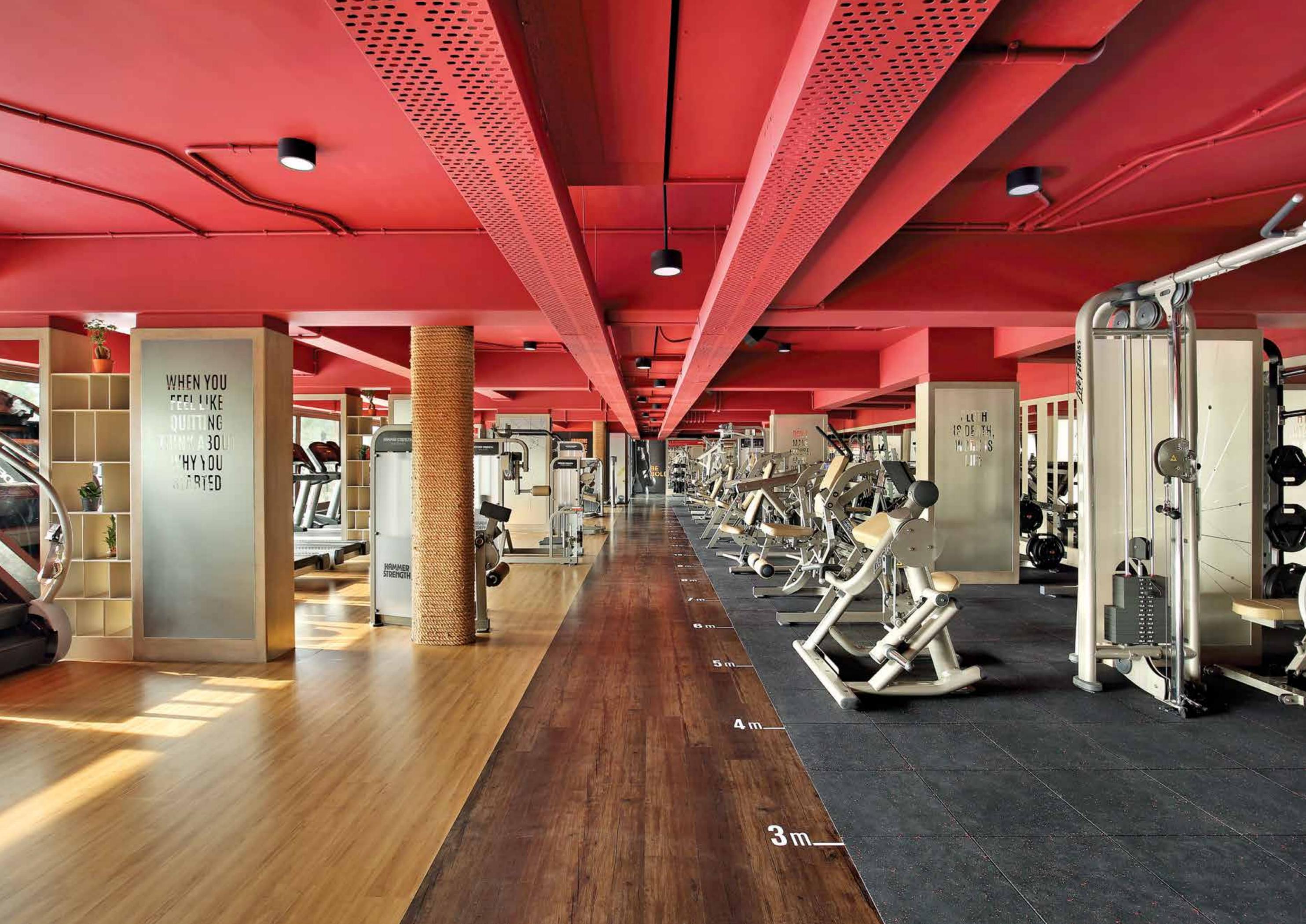
*Rising to the challenge of a unique program in an unexpected locality, and constraint budgets in an unusual setting, **Dipen Gada** delivers a compelling design in an unconventional manner. **Mrinalini Ghadiok** walks through the scheme to unravel the intricacies that make this space fit for use.*

Sometimes small strokes make big waves, and modest gestures present great shakes. Such is a hopeful future for an intriguing new fitness facility located in the heart of Vadodara. The Concept 1 Gym may be situated within an unassuming residential area, but its ambition for nothing short of the best can be seen rather clearly in the infrastructure and space it offers. Dipen Gada pulls out his finest brushes to create an architectural arrangement that responds not to its mediocre surroundings but addresses the aspirations of its vicinity. The 5500 sq.ft. gym was slated to be housed on the first floor of a multistoried commercial

building, previously charted into various small stores. Partition walls were brought down to create a large, narrow and linear volume, supported by an array of peripheral columns. The stunted height posed a curious challenge, as did the network of dropped beams that sprawled across the ceiling slab. Gada worked closely with the client and also graphic designer, Jignesh Goswami of Wolves Crea to conceive of an efficient spatial plan that would accommodate a range of different functions such as a cardio training zone, heavy weight training zone, aerobics/yoga area, changing rooms, administration offices and other

facilities. The budget was skewed towards a top-of-the-line collection of machinery and equipment, while the interiors were to be kept simple and in control. What could have rendered a hindrance in the design process was instead taken as a challenge to rise to. Gada's pocket-friendly iteration of the interior was definitely left of centre, moving away from his comfort of neutral hues and a stark palette. Instead, he opted for vibrant colours, an eclectic mix of textures and a slew of graphic representations. His intention, of course, remained to offer, "A space that does not look extravagant and unapproachable but doesn't seem dowdy either. It was important to strike





WHEN YOU
FEEL LIKE
QUITTING
THINK ABOUT
WHY YOU
STARTED

HAMMER
STRENGTH

PAIN
IS DEATH,
WORK IS LIFE

3m

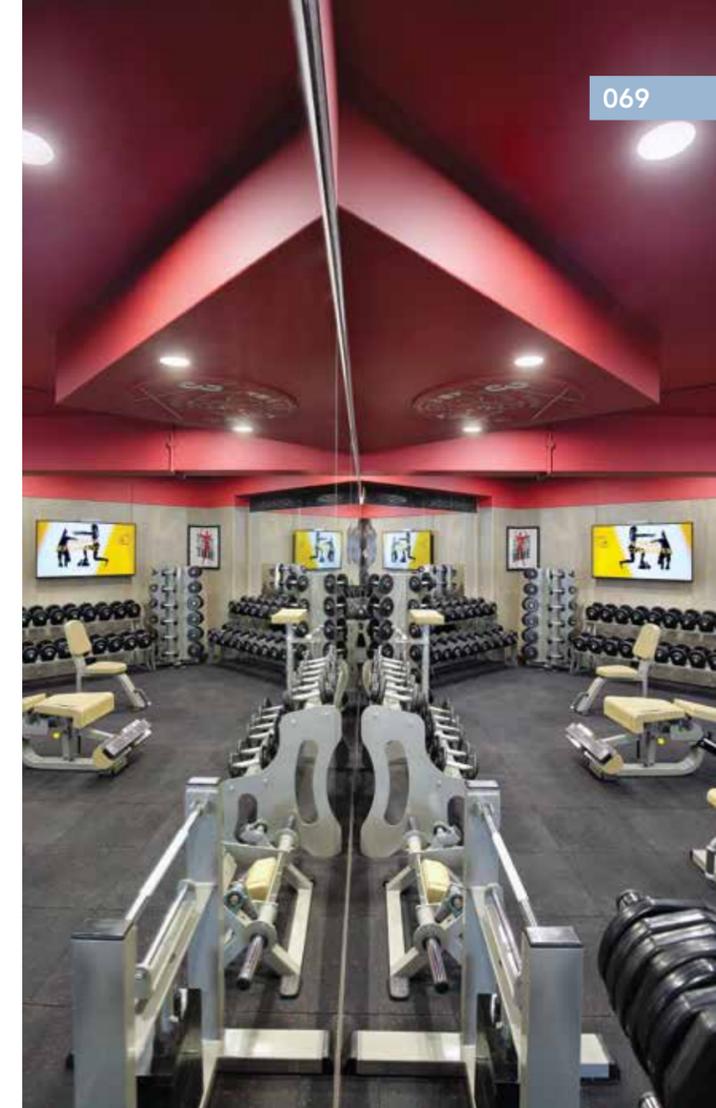
4m

5m

6m

7m

8m



a balance, in the look and feel, as well as the budget.”

Oriented along the north-south axis, one enters the gym from the north end into an inviting reception. This is where we get the first glimpse of the vivid ceiling - exposed to the services, but shrouded in what is officially known as Asian Paint's recent 'Madder Red'. Gada was initially apprehensive about the choice of crimson, which by the way is not restricted to the reception, but stretches right across the gym. "Let's try it," he said, quickly adding, "We can always change it!" One coat of the paint did not really cut it, so they tried more, and then some, till the slab was covered in a thick virile hue. This red is a peculiar shade, but just the right one to create a fun and welcoming element that is also a strong and energising force within. The glazed east-facing facade warrants ample sunlight in the reception area, adding a fresh glow to the warm colour palette of browns and greys. The bare wooden furniture, oxidizing steel panels, tiled flooring and textured walls are held together with a diverse collection of accessories. A pair of

steel frames with embedded LED lamps is carefully suspended over the bar counter, while another set of stylized cylindrical luminaires are placed over the seating area; the geometric language translated from architecture to interior design to decor.

"Concept your world, workout your life," says an angled wall, directing one into the depths of the gym. Passing through a narrowed passage, the main space opens up in all its strapping glory. Divvied into defined zones, the workout area is impressive. The cardio zone abuts the east face, along which continues the large glass facade. Fitted with alternating floor to ceiling windows and metal grills, it inundates the length of the space in mellow sunlight. Gada exclaims pleasantly, "Exercisers can have the best of natural Vitamin-D along with a view of the main road from here."

Treadmills and cycles line the edge of the space like a succession of seasoned soldiers. The pristine vinyl floor gets painted in myriad patterns of daylight and shadows. Columns that find themselves interrupting the flow

of activity are either clad in mirror or firmly wrapped in layers of cordage to soften their edges and almost blend into oblivion. The design treatment of the space is painstakingly painless, read, meticulous yet facile.

The heavyweight-training zone is neatly set apart from the cardio area. Splicing through the two is a precise path of darkened flooring etched with metric markers. Meant merely to measure distances during workouts, the milestones are also reminiscent of poignant yardsticks in the journey of one's own fitness progress. Along the western edge lies an assemblage of weight machines and workout equipment. The intensity and force of the activity are represented in its visual rendering in grey speckled rubber mats that offer adequate resistance to the various contraptions. While natural light fades considerably towards the deeper areas of the space, ceiling mounted downlights take over the role of providing adequate and uniform illumination. The reddened ceiling slab is studded with black cylindrical luminaires casting a web

of conduits behind them, and a prescribed level of light below. The southern end of the volume is capped with an enclosed aerobics and yoga room, administrative offices and nutritional consultation facilities. Being a health club, it was essential for the space to feel fresh and activated, and the environment to be energised and invigorating. This was achieved through conscientious work on part of the architectural team, working in conjunction with the graphic designers. "The motto of the gym is, 'Being Healthy'," says Goswami of Wolves Create, adding, "This is a pro-active fitness centre that caters to the body, mind and soul."

While the colours are devoid of aggression, the graphic decals plastered across window surfaces or quotes of encouragement placed in strategic locations aid in motivating the members to strive further. "Since many materials were used here, we were careful that the graphics do not overpower the architectural intent." The architectural intent along with its visual presentation too was mindful;

of addressing not only an established membership but a community that could be engaged and integrated into the larger idea of fitness. Gada states, "Combining art with rigorous discipline was something that we wanted to achieve." And this they did with a concerted effort of striking delicate balances to deliver a space that is distinct and a facility that is distinguished, marking a presence within the urban fabric of its proximity, and hoping to offer itself as inspiration.

www.dipengada.com
www.wolvescreata.com

PROJECT DETAILS

Concept 1 Gym, Vadodara, Gujarat
Client: Amit Patel
Architects: Dipen Gada and Associates
Design Team: Dipen Gada, Arpit Jain, Prashant Gurjar, Prakash Prajapati
Graphic Design: Jignesh Goswami, Wolves Create

LIGHTING SPECIFIED

TRIX Lighting: Diffused Downlight + Task Light, 12 Watt 4000°K