



CUBE ROUTE

Inspired by geometric forms, Dipen Gada & Associates sculpt an open, minimalist home that embraces the elements.

TEXT: KAREN MENEZES | PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY DIPEN GADA & ASSOCIATES

[Left] Custom-made aluminium grills screen the courtyard and entry foyer from prying eyes. Note the RCC wall with a crane motif and kota stone planter with a petite water body.

[Right] Like a Cubist painting, the space has been reduced to geometric forms using specific materials and shapes.



Rare is the client that wants to veer away from the norm.

When Dipen Gada & Associates (DGA) was approached by the Shah's to create a home unlike any other, they leapt at the opportunity to avow the firm's tenets of minimalism and a 'back to basics' design sensibility. DGA's projects are generally typified by clean lines and basic forms, with interlinks between the architecture and the interiors. What ensues is a timeless look that coalesces modern architecture and design with traditional sensibility.



DESIGNER **DIPEN GADA**

For the Shahs' house, the form of the cube provided the inspiration. To the naked

eye, the two-storey structure resembles blocks that fit perfectly into each other to create the whole. The neutral palette and restrained use of materials give 'The Cube', as the project is known, an almost austere look. The open floor plan that invites air and light in, creates a sense of boundlessness, which also generated a need to demarcate different living areas. This was achieved through the use of differing heights, materials and partitions with cut-outs. The diverse kota stone that is quarried in Rajasthan, formed a large part of the building materials and was used in all its diversity of colours and textures to segregate areas. Exposed concrete and white plastered walls reiterated the stripped-down appearance of the residence. However,

a discerning use of motifs, strategically placed art pieces, and carefully chosen plants and cut flowers added a layer of sophistication.

The Cube follows certain ecological principles. Keeping the Indian climate in mind, environmental transparencies were created through courtyards and large openings to passively cool the internal spaces. Openings were placed to maximize the inflow of breezes, while reducing direct sunlight. CFLs were fit and green-rated air-conditioning systems were installed to reduce the energy consumption.

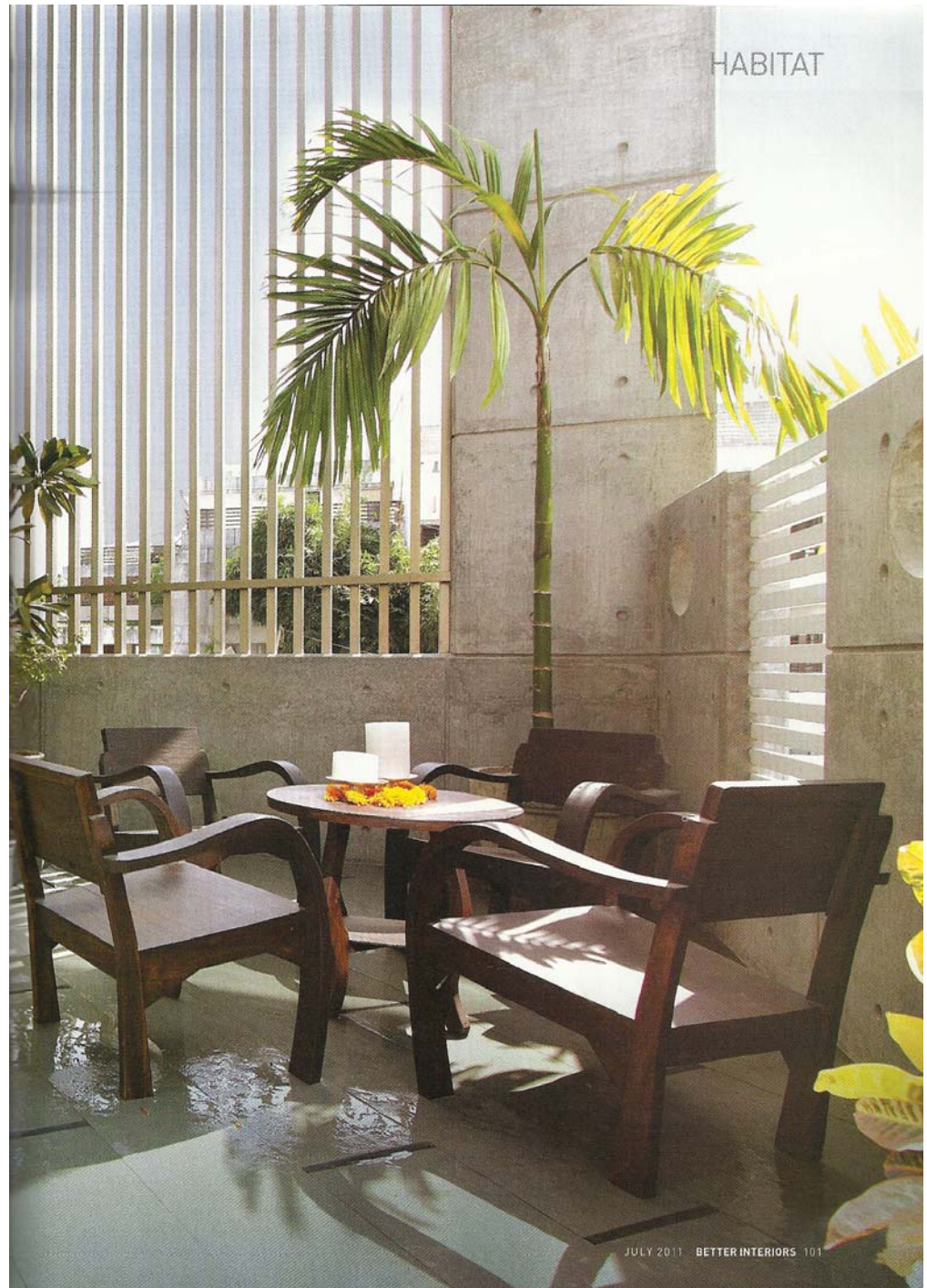
The raised entry threshold is absolutely stellar. The flooring here, is of kota tiles. Using a custom-made grill cast out of

CENTRE STAGE



Slender aluminium fins partially conceal the view, whilst rendering powerful plays of light and shadow. Selective plants bring in the memory of nature into the courtyard. Floating marigolds and white, beaten metal doors make for an appropriate entryway to the puja room.

HABITAT



CENTRE STAGE

HABITAT



aluminium, the entry foyer and small courtyard adjoining it are concealed from outsiders. The courtyard collects beams of diffused light and directs them into the house.

The dining room overlooks an additional double-height, semi-covered courtyard, with a water body where freshly-cut flowers float blissfully. Pergolas in the double-height slab, coupled with a screen of aluminium fins, create patterns of light with an almost tactile dimension. Like much of the house, the courtyard is a contemplative space that is free of clutter. Facing the east, it filters the

morning sunlight and creates a rapturous ambience, perfect for a cup of tea. It is one of the most cherished rooms of the family.

On the ground floor, the liberal use of highly mirror-polished kota stone lends a contemporary and tasteful appearance, that is supplemented by the exposed RCC used in the slab of the living and dining areas. Black-stained IPS walls are used in the living room as well as the master bedroom as a backdrop for paintings.

The first and second floors have a more intimate vibe with the use

[Above] A painting of Shreenathji adorns the black-stained IPS wall, juxtaposed by white sofas. The stunning staircase is revealed through a cut-out in the white partition, while a bronze sculpture by Ashish Das sits atop a veneered cabinet.

CONCEPT: Seeking inspiration from the structure of a cube, a distinctive house was created using an open floor plan with minimalist interiors.

CENTRE STAGE

HABITAT

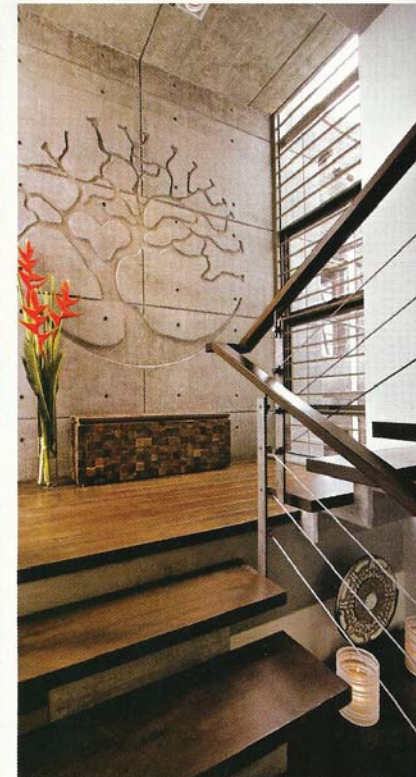


of rich, dark hardwood flooring in the home theatre room, master bedroom and TV room. The staircase, a piece of art in its own right, opens out into a central space on the first floor, which is used as a TV room as well as a dance hall for the client's younger daughter, a classical dancer.

In the master bedroom suite, veneered furniture and a custom-designed four-poster bed adhere to the functionality and simplicity of the space. The daughters' bedrooms are white, richly contrasted by highly polished kota stone flooring. In the elder daughter's room, the starkness is broken

by aquamarine Bisazza tiles, while the younger one's room has flamboyantly hued bed linen and furnishings. During the construction phase, Dipen organized a shoot of the younger daughter performing and framed the images in her bedroom. Photography is his ardent passion and he has a flair for shooting clients in candid moments and framing those images in the house, to add soul to a room.

On the second floor, the terrace has a small room that breaks free of the bareness of the other spaces. The room doubles as an entertainment hub for



[Left to right] The dining area is connected to the drawing room, kitchen and courtyard, thus collecting light from all angles.

The staircase exemplifies the reserved use and creative mingling of materials. Metal, wood and exposed RCC (with a tree motif cast into it) create drama without demanding every ounce of attention.

MATERIALS: WALLS Exposed concrete and white-plastered brick wall. **FLOORING** Kota stone and hardwood. **CEILING** Exposed concrete and plaster of paris (false ceiling). **FURNITURE** Good Earth, Abaca, Red Blue & Yellow and select pieces custom-made on site. **FURNISHINGS** Aavaran, Vadodara.

CENTRE STAGE



(Clockwise, from top left) The recreation area on the terrace flows out onto a landscaped garden with a gazebo and an exposed concrete low seating area, which also serves to hold the soil and prevent it from being washed away.

The powder room is an enchanting array of spheres and cubes... from the multi-coloured kota stone flooring and textured wall tiles at the base, to a beautiful marble washbasin and a globular paper lamp from Fabindia.

Doubling as a classical dance rehearsal space, the TV room employs a wooden floor and an exposed RCC slab. A motif cut from nu-wood and finished in white paint creates a subtle pattern that enhances, rather than deviates from, the geometry of the room.

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[Top to bottom] Light is definitely a priority in the master bedroom. Large windows, sheers and a slit in the ceiling above the IPS wall, flood the room with light. The abstract painting does not diminish the sombreness.

The all-white room seeks respite in the beige PU-coated furniture. A floral motif adorns the headboard. There are no distracting elements whatsoever; this is the perfect sanctuary for a restful sleep.

A low-height cabinet double as seating. Vibrant furnishings interrupt the monochrome. The black and white photographs of the younger daughter, a classical dancer, form an art wall and are lit indirectly from an overhead pelmet.



family and friends with a home theatre system, gymnasium and garden. The informal nature of this area makes it the most vibrant room in the house — with painted exposed brick, IPS walls and colourful furnishings.

Dipen, with his characteristic humility, reiterates, "A good house is a collaborative effort that goes beyond what the architect and designer conceive. It is the combination of an open-minded client, efficient project coordinator and visionary designer. The hidden efforts of labour breathe life into what was once a drawing. Solid teamwork is the only way to achieve results." ■

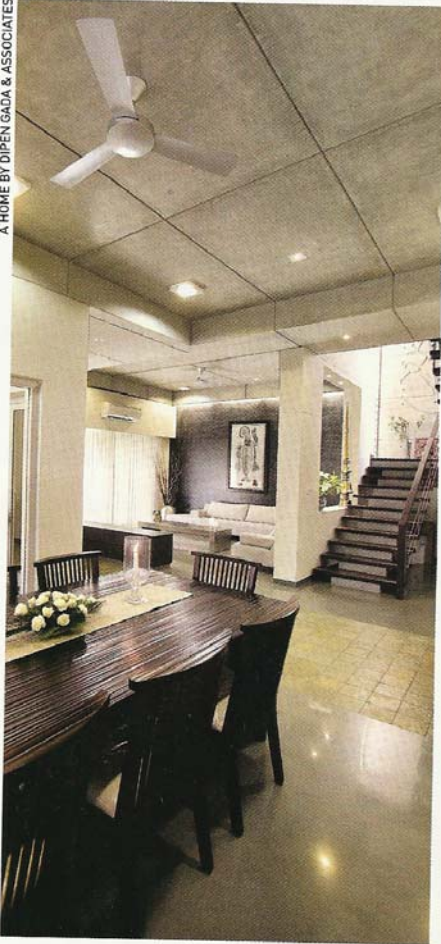


FACT FILE: CLIENT NAME The Shah's. PROJECT NAME The Cube. LOCATION Vadodara, Gujarat. AREA (BUILT-UP) 4,000 sq ft. PRINCIPAL DESIGNER Dipen Gada. DESIGN TEAM Hardik Tamboli, Aditi Dave, Shalini Pereira and Dolly Shah. CONTRACTORS Rajesh Patel, Rahi Constructions. PROJECT DURATION 18 months. YEAR OF COMPLETION 2010.

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[SMART PICKS]

A HOME BY DIPEN GADA & ASSOCIATES



MATERIAL MANTRA

Small houses benefit from open floor plans. The best way to differentiate spaces is through the use of varying heights as well as materials. The river-polished kota tiles create a division between the living and dining areas and form a sort of passageway between the two. The vertical partitions with cut-outs give a sense of endless space and mystery, while allowing light and air to circulate over a house that is seemingly without borders.



STEP UP

A staircase landing is usually ignored for its potential artistic value. By allowing natural light to flood the landing through slits on either side, the beautiful tree motif in the concrete is highlighted. Break the homogeneity of this often underutilized space with poster art or memorabilia. The wooden chest from Khazana, Ahmedabad, below the motif makes a case in point for displaying heirloom pieces at the landing.



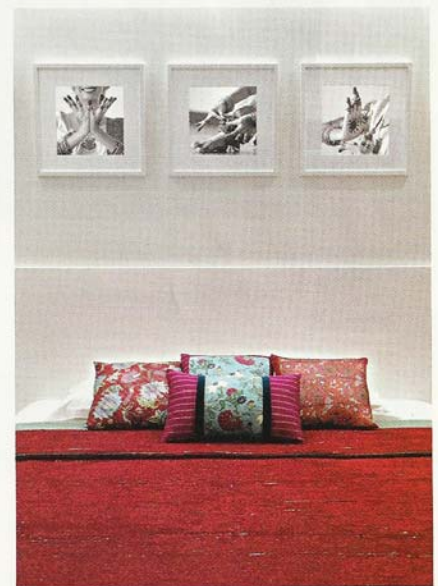
A SPOT OF SUNSHINE

Window blinds and screens are usually functional — for privacy, eliminating unsightly views and harsh light. You can, however, create the most dazzling play of light and shadow by choosing screens and slats that are patterned. These permit slivers of sunlight to create a sense of heightened drama, that morphs with the time of day. Best of all, it's automated by the sun!



AWASH IN STYLE

Observe the use of curves to create a stir amidst the cubed structures of the house. The beaten metal washbasin is a hemisphere of sheer beauty. The custom-made brass-framed mirror neatly aligns with the kota stone mosaic of the wall. Stone mosaics are a perfect addition to any bathroom, especially over the washbasin. Add candles for a spa-like glow.



BLACK & BRIGHT

Black and white photographs evoke a sense of timelessness and reconstruct the past with a delicious feeling of nostalgia, especially in the digital age of oversaturated colours. Think of them as your personal art exhibition, with images that can be replaced at will — printing photographs is easy on the wallet. Bring splashes of colour into the room by choosing furnishings with bright colours and bold patterns.