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# home review

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**CLEMENT ZONES**

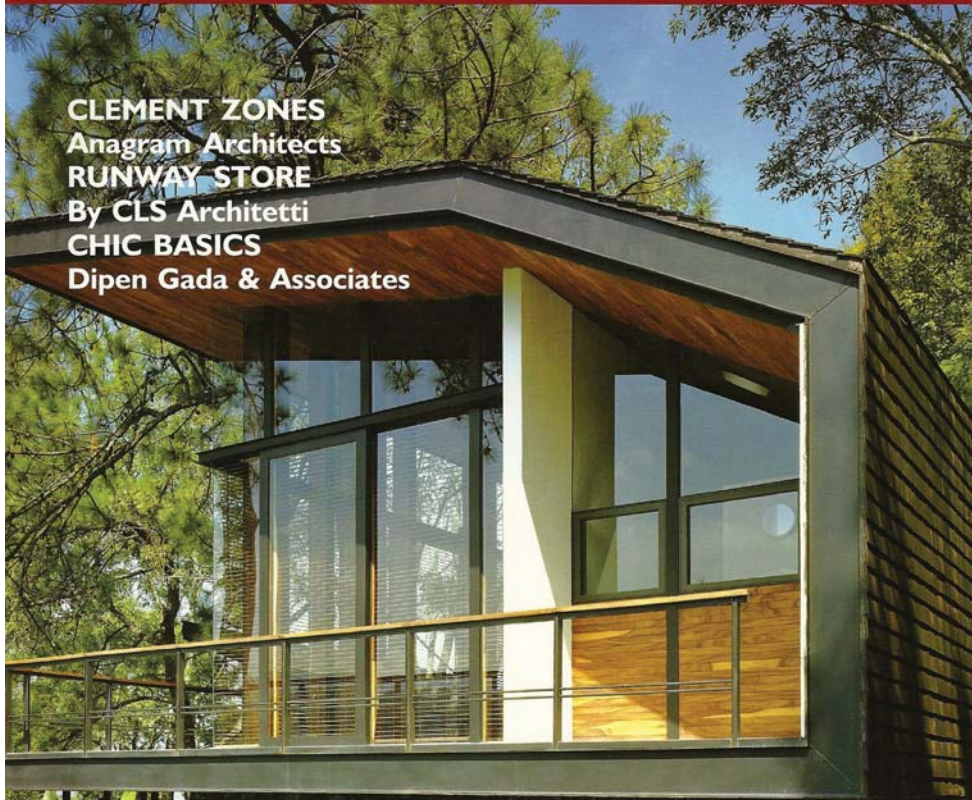
Anagram Architects

**RUNWAY STORE**

By CLS Architetti

**CHIC BASICS**

Dipen Gada & Associates



## Forest Homestead

By Parque Humano

★ Axor Bouroullec | Feel Seating System | Simone Carena's 'Hanok' | Langham Hotel



# CHIC BASICS

An architectural line-up that believes in blending innovation with timeless design, strives continually for harmonizing practical themes with building aesthetics and shrugs off even the slightest hint for singular project credits - that's DGA for you!

TEXT BY DEEPANJOLIE SONYA FIGG • PHOTOGRAPHS BY MR. TEJAS SHET



## THIS SPREAD

Reception area highlights: rough black slate flooring, a BW staff photographic collage spanning 12 ft. in length, the full height mirror next to it, framed using polished sleeper wood pattas with painted lokas on it. Together, they lend a sense of gracious serenity to the area.



The DGA office has recently been completely revamped to reflect the core team's evolving sensibility for minimal, chic but modern interiors that are Indian at heart though speaking an international language in terms of enhanced efficiency, green building practices combined seamlessly with contemporary looks.

Regarded as top names among contemporary stylists by the nation's architectural fraternity in the large business community in Gujarat, principal architect, Dipen Gada and his hand-picked team of 15 designers have been increasingly linked with living up to their motto - 'Providing a stylish, comfortable and better living' (environment) - a succinct and successful philosophy.

After he was awarded a B.E. (Civil Engineering degree) from Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara (Gujarat), Dipen, influenced early on in his career by modernist design concepts, was quick to define himself as a co-creator of spaces that represented an innately Indian feel so they would always stay in context of the larger environment they were contained in, when he established DGA in 1993.

This reigning principle for designing in an Indian context held DGA in good stead as their office project in question emphasizes the necessity for achieving a 'timelessness of design' in order for a design to remain forever unaffected by rapidly changing trends.

Candidly terming their office remodeling venture as the outcome of DGA having undergone 'a transition phase' wherein they 're-examined design ideas,' Dipen reveals he strives to integrate ideas and techniques that can 'simplify our design and come back to the basics through the use of basic materials in new and innovative ways that show our firm's maturity.'

With a dedicated group comprising architects, interior designers and engineers besides carefully selected specialist consultants with whom DGA teams up from time to time, the combination of a ▶

**THIS SPREAD** The designers zone; custom made tags adorn the two main décor accents here, namely, the black granite top and ply table, which has an architectural plan etched into it and the white glass wall clock with stainless steel hands, which occupies place of pride in the office's special discussion area. Buzzwords at DGA are clearly high functionality, minimalist and contemporary décor that afford energy efficiency a big high, tool **OPPOSITE PAGE** The observer's eye is drawn inwards from the narrow opening that extends up to the slab, continuing on a horizontal plane of a slab cutout, which has a glass base extending into a water body. A singular bronze sculpture resides at its base.



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multifaceted design team (captured in a photographic collage at the entrance of the office) empowers them to draw in many more satisfied clients to the DGA office.

However, it is not just high functionality that is the main design element here, but also a studied exploration of minimalist and contemporary styles that are exemplified by the choices of raw and basic building materials used here. These include proactive selection of smart building materials like exposed concrete, IPS, recycled materials like scrap metal and natural materials such as slate, kota, granite and wood contributing to the collective delineation of a practical office design.

Aiming at integrating maximum efficiency of space with minimum energy consumption in a truly green workplace, the DGA team effectively manages to convert what was initially a 3-bedroom apartment into an open plan designer office.

The green design elements of the new DGA office include the team's deliberate step towards greater energy efficiency standards courtesy use of special cool coat paints manufactured with neon technology that reflect UV and IR rays, an abundant play of natural light integrated with CFL lamps, electronic ballast, reuse of existing flooring from the old office structure and the use of building materials in their basic form.

The last choice enabled the DGA team to emphasize the utility of basic materials so major artificial treatments could be avoided; these include limited false ceiling area of 20%, essentially fitted

in for incorporating cassette A/C units (the Diakin and Mitsubishi bands used here are known for their power efficiency) besides the integration of a direct exposed slab casting presented as a design element so as to avoid the false ceiling design element.

UPVC Window placements fitted with double-glazed reflective glass have also been made intelligently to ensure maximum daylight and minimal heat penetration, especially useful in preventing UV and IR rays from entering the office space.

Wood has been used sparingly while popular decorative accents like laminate and veneer have been completely done away with in a bid to

**THIS SPREAD** Discussion area of the DGA office - in view 3 walls with three different textures complementing one another, river polish kota flooring and the unique custom made lamp created using a frame of 'I' sections hanging over the discussion table. A black granite top conference table proves to be the fascinating choice for the designer to leave an impression - (thumb impression etched on its surface). **OPPOSITE PAGE** Inner studio: floor continues the mirror polish kota theme of the discussion area's flooring while the ceiling emulates the material similarity of jute textured exposed slab used in the reception area.





**THIS PAGE**

Sleek black granite worktops, flat screen monitors, disciplined use of natural wood, only 20% false ceiling area for incorporating power efficient A/Cs.

**OPPOSITE PAGE TOP**

**LEFT** A retrospective of the strategic use of basic building materials along with materials such as wood, granite, slate and kota - from the still eyes of the bronze sculpture.

**RIGHT** The terrace scene at the DGA office reveals gazebos constructed out of an M.S frame structure. The exposed concrete wall is perfect as the immaculate canvas for Rabindranath Tagore's profile which is cast into it.

**BOTTOM LEFT** Two completely disparate design elements composed of materials - shlokas on mirror finish teamed with sleeper wood patts and log bench designed from mild steel. **RIGHT** The IPS wall comprises of a collage of black and white photographs of the DGA staff and associates to highlight the value of teamwork.

keep the project cost-effective and avoid an artificial look. The recycling mantra has also been applied to the granite worktops, which have been salvaged from the old office scheme and effectively integrated into the design of the new upgraded version of the DGA office. The exterior office walls have been kept to a 14" thickness on the south and west sides for achieving minimum heat transfer to the interiors.

The quaint addition of a terrace garden with a soothing water body adorned with rose petals and a ▶





**THIS PAGE TOP** The Swing bears Dipen's designer touch with friendly expertise in S fabrication lent to the unique outdoor furniture accent by Manish.  
**BOTTOM** Office Elevation plan.

and workspace segregation according to personal research based needs for the designer's own office.

Therefore, the reception area sets the tone for the physical space that follows and is of prime importance as far as clean modern workspace aesthetics are concerned; it leads to two studio areas, connected to a cabin/conference zone for the lead designer and the plan also includes adequate storage space for materials, a pantry and toilet facilities.

Considering the apartment undergoing the cosmetic makeover was lodged in a 37-year-old building, it took the renovation rather well and visionary design planning made up for the lack of it in the previous office (i.e. lead designer's cabin had initially been cut-off from the main workspace and lay too exposed to the reception area etc.)

In its place came a completely transparent and free-flowing new workspace entity that bore structural changes well with a new slab cast 2 ft higher to provide a terrace garden above and served as a design element below. This new and improved slab work formed the main focus of the revamped office design since it required a high level of precision in attaining the clean finish; a job that was scripted efficiently by the experienced structural consultants ensured desired results.

As Dipen loves to say, 'less is more' - and his new office design echoes the quote in glowing form - it seems chic basics is the trend to watch out for when classic minimalism in an Indian context is discussed in the future! ■

wall-embedded casting of 'kobiraj' Rabindara Tagore on it allows for some peaceful brain storming sessions or simply provides busy DGA executives with a serene space to unwind in, after a particularly challenging workday, or alternately interact with select clients in nature's harmonizing comfort.

Another advantage of including the terrace garden is the heat insulation it offers the design studio placed below it, which also reduces the a/c consumption. It also accommodates a whimsical swing (suspended from a pergola-like structure built out of railway sleeper wood members) facing the water body and creates a functional, welcoming and liberating office space for its staff of 20.

Thus, as a design consultancy, DGA has developed an ethos all its own even as its team acknowledges design inspirations from architectural greats like Tadao Ando, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier...minimal, highly functional, simple and efficient - in intent and form. This integrated principle of clean, modern design is applied by them in a number of projects.

Admitting 'a dramatic shift in design' from previous renderings, Dipen says budget, time restrictions, and client preferences etc. usually govern treatments; however, since this was an in-house makeover, it was easy to go with the natural free-flowing straight lines, clear vision

