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IDEAS AND DESIGN FOR BETTER LIVING

TINY THOUGHTS

10 remarkable projects that illustrate how tight spatial constraints can be turned from a liability to an asset through astute and innovative design

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Poetic Illusion

In Rajkot, a dwelling in an affordable housing complex is breaking stereotypes about small homes and how! Principal architects Shivraj Patel and Shruti Malani of Intrinsic Designs seem to don the hats of both designer and magician as they make a 645-square-foot 2.5BHK apartment look surprisingly spacious and equally gorgeous.

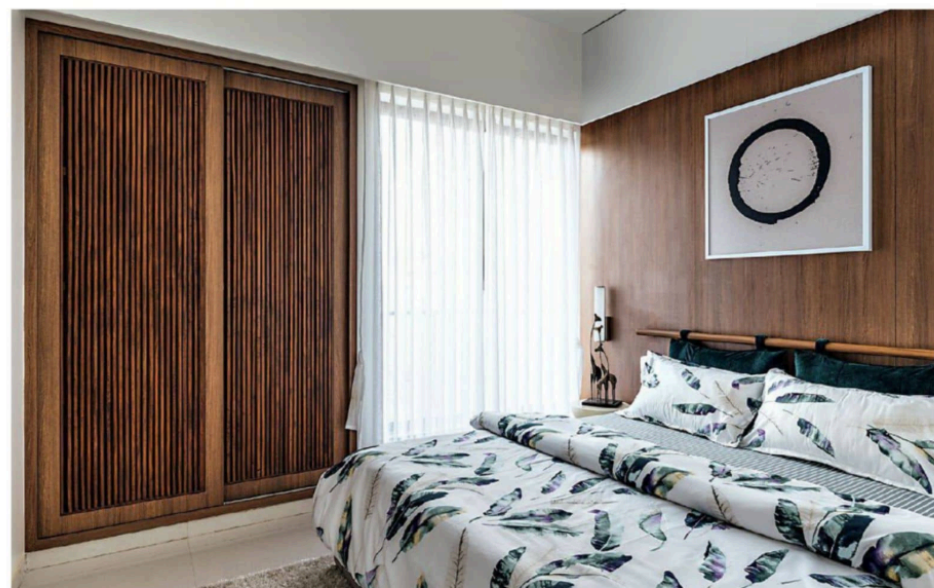
TEXT: CAROL FERRAO, PHOTOGRAPHS: ISHITA SITWALA, COURTESY INTRINSIC DESIGNS



The apartment creates an illusion of space by blending sober colours — mint green and plain white walls, sheer curtains, standard glazed flooring — with bold accents from accessories like a royal blue sofa, accent chairs, breezy Mediterranean-inspired furnishings and an SH Raza painting. All this in a living room of mere 154 sq ft.



Habitat



ARCHITECTS

Shivraj Patel and Shruti Malani

ABOVE LEFT Though compact, the living room is luxurious. The walls are intentionally painted in muted colours, while the furniture and furnishing serve as vibrant accents that pair well with the woodwork around.

ABOVE RIGHT A slim light profile over the floating breakfast counter in the open kitchen cleverly provides an aesthetic as well as a functional touch without crowding the space. The custom-built units are kept minimal in design with hardware from Hettich and Asian Paints PU-finish shutters.

RIGHT A floor plan of the 645-square-foot apartment.



Sometimes a brief can be so challenging that the designer has to double up as a magician to make the impossible possible. Transforming a compact house into an airy, breathable home is a skill few possess, and Shivraj Patel and Shruti Malani, principal architects of Intrinsic Designs, sure have perfected that art. A testimony to their skills is when a long-time client gave them a two-fold challenge — make a 645-square-foot, 2.5BHK flat in an affordable housing complex look spacious and alluring enough to attract others to choose the development over the 2,000 other apartments in the surrounding five-kilometre radius of the site.

It was a big plus that the duo were also architects of this housing project, and knew the space — both its limitations and potential — well. "Whenever designing any architectural project, we keep the interiors and possible furniture layouts strong right from day one, which makes it easier later on while designing the interiors for the same," note Shivraj

CONCEPT: A minimalist design where muted shades impart a breezy vibe to a compact house while materiality and art add character.

ABOVE The architects wanted to accent the bedroom with the richness of teak veneer rather than paint, but due to budget constraints, they chose a laminate finish that closely replicates it instead.

LEFT To heighten the spaciousness of a bedroom that is only 12'4" by 10' in size, the design plays with a white palette in the flooring, ceiling, drapes, bedding and even the artwork, but adds character with vibrant but light prints, a plant and a lounge chair by Urban Ladder.

and Shruti who run their boutique practice in Anand, Ahmedabad and Rajkot. Their work is characterized by the "simple yet bold language of stark minimalism and an amalgamation of architecture, art and design."

This signature style rescues the two-bedroom apartment from its tight dimensions. Structurally, the apartment is as practical and compact as it gets. The drawing room extends into the dining and kitchen, which has a dedicated storage niche and access to the wash area. "It is without any partition thus, the space appears larger even though individually each section is small," explain the architects. A passage leads you to the master, guest and kids' bedroom. A common bathroom is easily accessible from the drawing room, guest room and kids' bedroom, whereas the master bed has an attached bath.

"Commonly it's observed that flats for affordable housing complexes are visually boring because of budget concerns. So, we decided to go for walls with different colours and textures," point out the duo. In the drawing room, a feature wall painted in mint with a matte finish is accented with white ash wood



Habitat



ABOVE In the guest bedroom, a cove light feature has been created by adding wall panelling that matches the column depth. The mirror wardrobe shutters add depth to the 100-square-foot room and a beautiful FN Souza painting provides a burst of colour.

RIGHT Avoiding clichés associated with a kid's bedroom, a custom-designed wallpaper in muted prints and colours adds whimsy to this tiny 45-square-foot space. Sheer blinds and minimal furniture ensure the space doesn't feel claustrophobic.

beading strips applied in a pattern that resembles a barcode. The basic shell is in muted shades — be it the walls, flooring, ceiling — but the room still bursts with colour. The blue cotton velvet-upholstered sofa, patterned rug and the crown jewel, an SH Raza painting, vibrantly accent the room.

Instead of a full-fledged dining unit, the architects have provided a floating breakfast nook that extends from the kitchen counter. A slim, custom-designed light profile gently illuminates the tabletop. Since the kitchen opens up into the drawing room, its design has been kept minimal. The white PU-painted shutters match well with white tile cladding and contrast well with the mint wall. The absence of overhead cabinets ensures the space is roomy with a niche on the opposite wall taking care of storage requirements.

"Materials and surfaces has always been a great strength of ours, hence we know how to manipulate them and achieve the desired frame," inform the architects. One look at the

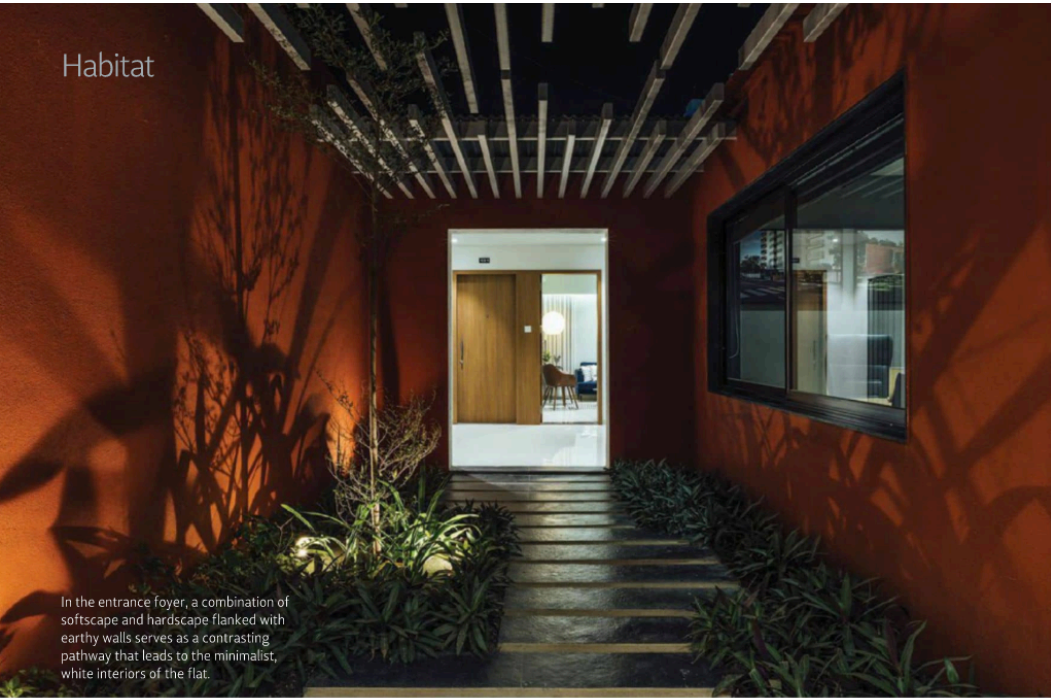
MATERIALS

Floor Double Charged Tiles from AGL Walls Paint Ceiling POP




For the courtyard, which serves as an entrance to the flat, the designers have opted for a wild landscape over a manicured look with river-washed black cuddapah stone laid parallelly.

Habitat



In the entrance foyer, a combination of softscape and hardscape flanked with earthy walls serves as a contrasting pathway that leads to the minimalist, white interiors of the flat.

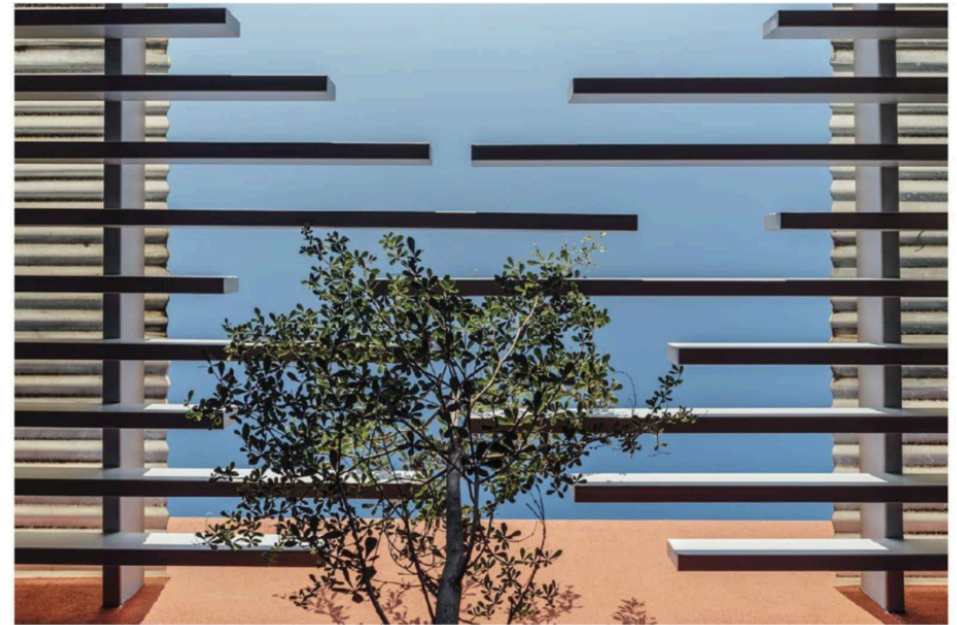


Before the buyer enters the apartment, they walk through the courtyard between the site office and flat. It exemplifies how an affordable project can also be inviting and lush.

bedrooms and we have to agree it is one of their most effective design strategies, especially for a small space. For the master bedroom, a feeling of luxury is introduced with teak-finish wall panelling, with the sliding wardrobe shutters with teak louvers adding texture. The architects chose not to use bright colours but found the solid surfaces becoming monotonous. "Hence we introduced furnishings with busy floral patterns. The enso circle illustration helped to accessorize the back panelling yet kept it minimal," they explain.

Similarly, in the guest bedroom, materiality defines the aesthetics of the space while an impressive FN Souza painting congregates the energy of vibrant colours in a single frame. The partial panelling over the bed matches the depth of the adjacent column and has indirect lights within it that softly highlights the faux concrete texture wall below. For the wardrobe, solid surfaces were eschewed for mirrored sliding shutters. "As evident in the plan, the wardrobe shutters are seen all the way from the passage. The mirror on the shutters gives it depth," points out Shivraj.

If designing bedrooms that are barely 100 sq ft was a challenge, imagine making a space half that size liveable and fun. This room had to show its potential as a study and kids' room. A custom-made wallpaper with mellow prints



ABOVE The MS pergola over the courtyard creates a dramatic shadow throughout the day. The walls are painted red in keeping with the colour scheme of the architecture of the building.

LEFT Instead of lawn grass, the courtyard uses the wild-looking and easy to maintain fountain grass and purple rhoeco compacta plant as ground cover. A hardy terminalia plant stands tall in this courtyard, with the pergola shadows adding to the design narrative.

inspired by nature accents one of the walls. Cliched aesthetics associated with kids' room are not found here and for good reason. Sheer blinds instead of curtains, light-toned furniture and just a hint of art in the form of a metal animal bust ensure the room has character without compromising on its volume. Like the rest of the house, the ceiling is kept white in order to keep the focus directed on the space. Basic COB lights serve as general lighting and the occasional pendant lamp provides mood lighting.

Both Shivraj and Shruti felt that this project reinforced their belief in Mies van der Rohe's evergreen design mantra, 'less is more'. "When initiating a design process, one always has lots of ideas. But it's really important to know where to put a full stop," note the architects who recommend a three-fold design strategy for small spaces: clever colour combinations, right furniture proportions and fewer partitions. ■

FACT FILE: Project Aastha
Aaradhyaam Client Aastha Group
Location Rajkot Area 645 sq ft Principal architects Shivraj Patel and Shruti Malani Consultants Prabahs Engineering Carpenter and site coordinator Radheshyambhai