

Habitat

The formal living room and dining area feature an eclectic mix of custom-designed and remodelled old furniture. The internal environment is in constant dialogue with its surrounding landscape of mature trees.



Canvassing for Style

Ahmedabad-based PVDRS create a compelling design narrative for a private villa on the city's outskirts out of strategies that allow easy modulation of spaces, a striking interior treatment and meticulous attention to detail.

TEXT: RUPALI SEBASTIAN; PHOTOGRAPHS: MONIKA SATHE,
COURTESY PATEL-VADODARIA DESIGN RESEARCH STUDIO (PVDRS)



The library — a set of four 11-foot centrally pivoted ‘doors’ — is the piece de resistance of the design. Initially apprehensive about this element, the clients now consider the library doors as the designers’ signature within the entire project.

“It was a leap of faith for the client,” says architect Keyur Vadodaria of a commission bagged within a couple of months after he and his partner, interior designer Megha Patel-Vadodaria, returned to India after working for a decade in the UK. The project in question was the interior design of an 8,000-square-foot villa on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, which came their way on the recommendation of project architects Modo Designs, led by architect Arpan Shah.

Keyur and Megha’s entry was at a stage when the structural plans were yet to be finalized — and this gave them the opportunity, with the endorsement of the client and the architects, to review the spaces from an interiors perspective. “We carried out a detailed audit of all spaces based on the client’s brief and our interior design space planning. Together, we were able to rework some of the room sizes and got some structural changes done as well where it was possible. All civil changes were accommodated at this initial stage of construction to avoid any changes (and delays!) at a later stage,” disclose Megha and Keyur, who run PVDRS, a bespoke interior design and architecture studio out of Ahmedabad.

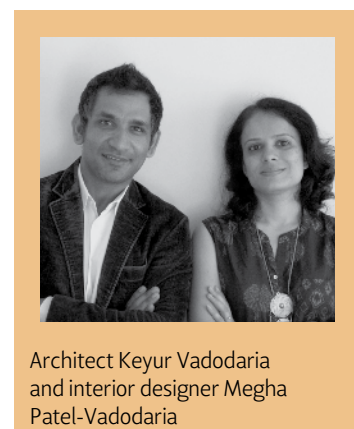
The very first impression of the site — an approximately 20,000-square-yard plot with a ‘matured’ landscape, dense plantation along the edges, a large lotus pond and a farmhouse with a tropical feel about it — was that of being close to nature, recall the founders of PVDRS. “And it was this strong connect to nature that we decided to continue in the new house. Hence the interior layout and spatial connections were worked out accordingly.” The architectural programme itself had been resolved as an L-shaped form. When it came to interiors, the service-related areas such as the kitchen, store and staff quarters were accommodated in one arm and the other zones — living-dining, family room and bedrooms — were housed in the perpendicular, and gently curved, segment. Though the brief from the client was simple and straightforward (“give us a home that is a reflection of our lifestyle and a canvas that accommodates our collection of artefacts”), the diverse nature of this ‘collection’ — artefacts, paintings, Persian rugs, books and ancestral furniture — added a delightful complexity to the execution.

“Responding to this brief, the interior layout focused on keeping the common areas as one unified large space, removing any physical barriers in-between and simultaneously

THIS PAGE Reminiscent of prayer wheels, the Valsadi teak units provide a dynamic backdrop to the living-dining and family areas, and modulate the space depending on the angle at which they are left open. Whilst one face of the door displays books and Japanese pots from the client’s collection, the other face has been expressed in veneer with brass inlays, the geometry of which was carefully worked out after several iterations. Metaphorically, the doors open towards the interior world of the client — the private family room.

offering a flexible spatial configuration to cater to various groups, activities and events in space and time,” elucidates Keyur. The dining and formal drawing room are fluid in nature, and welcome the green surroundings in through the large windows and a deep verandah. Both spaces showcase an eclectic mix of custom-designed new furniture, and objects and artefacts collected by the client over generations. “One of the biggest challenge was to remodel and reuse the existing furniture... and ensure that it blended well with both, the architectural and interior design language of the house,” states Megha. “Majority of the collection was from solid teak wood in combination with various secondary materials. We continued with teak wood as the primary material in all the pieces that we customized, and inserted brass as the complementary material.” While the design highlight of the dining area is a custom-designed pendant, whose constituent circular forms are an abstraction of the Mandala diagram, the tour de force of the public zone, is the library — which isn’t a room, but a set of four 11-foot-high, centrally-pivoted doors, which, while fulfilling their expected functionality, also serve as a versatile space modulator. A partition that controls the degree of connection between the living-dining room and the abutting family room, as well as provides an ever-changing backdrop for the heart of the house.

“The clients had put in a lot of faith in us as we moved along into this project. An interesting example is the library doors. The owners were apprehensive about the scale as it was a design feature in the overall scheme of things,” reminisces Megha. While detailed



Architect Keyur Vadodaria and interior designer Megha Patel-Vadodaria

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The internal areas spill outdoors — or vice versa — with the kota flooring providing a further uniting element between the enclosed living spaces and the verandah.



CONCEPT: To design a modern, elegant home that would be attentive to detail and tailored to reflect the identity and lifestyle of the users.



The ten-seater dining table is anchored, visually speaking, by a customized pendant conceived as a counter balance to the library doors. The circular geometry was derived from an abstraction of the Mandala diagram. The series of domes are made from transparent blown glass specifically customized for this project. A simplified suspension system was used, comprising of painted mild steel hollow pipes for each dome, containing the power cables, and connected to the ceiling through a solid wood plate.



drawings and 3D renderings were shared with the client, it was only when they saw the full-scale mock-up of a door at the carpenter's workshop did they realize their grandness and enormity — and eventually understood their designers' vision. The private family living that lies on the other side of this dynamic unit is characterized by a laser-cut Corten steel world map which serves as an interactive chart for trips taken abroad. The central spine that segregates the living, dining, library and master bedrooms functions as a gallery for the client's expensive artwork collection.

The bedrooms were designed and fitted out keeping in mind the pragmatic needs and emotional associations of each occupant, and are therefore quite distinct. The client's mother's bedroom is characterized by a



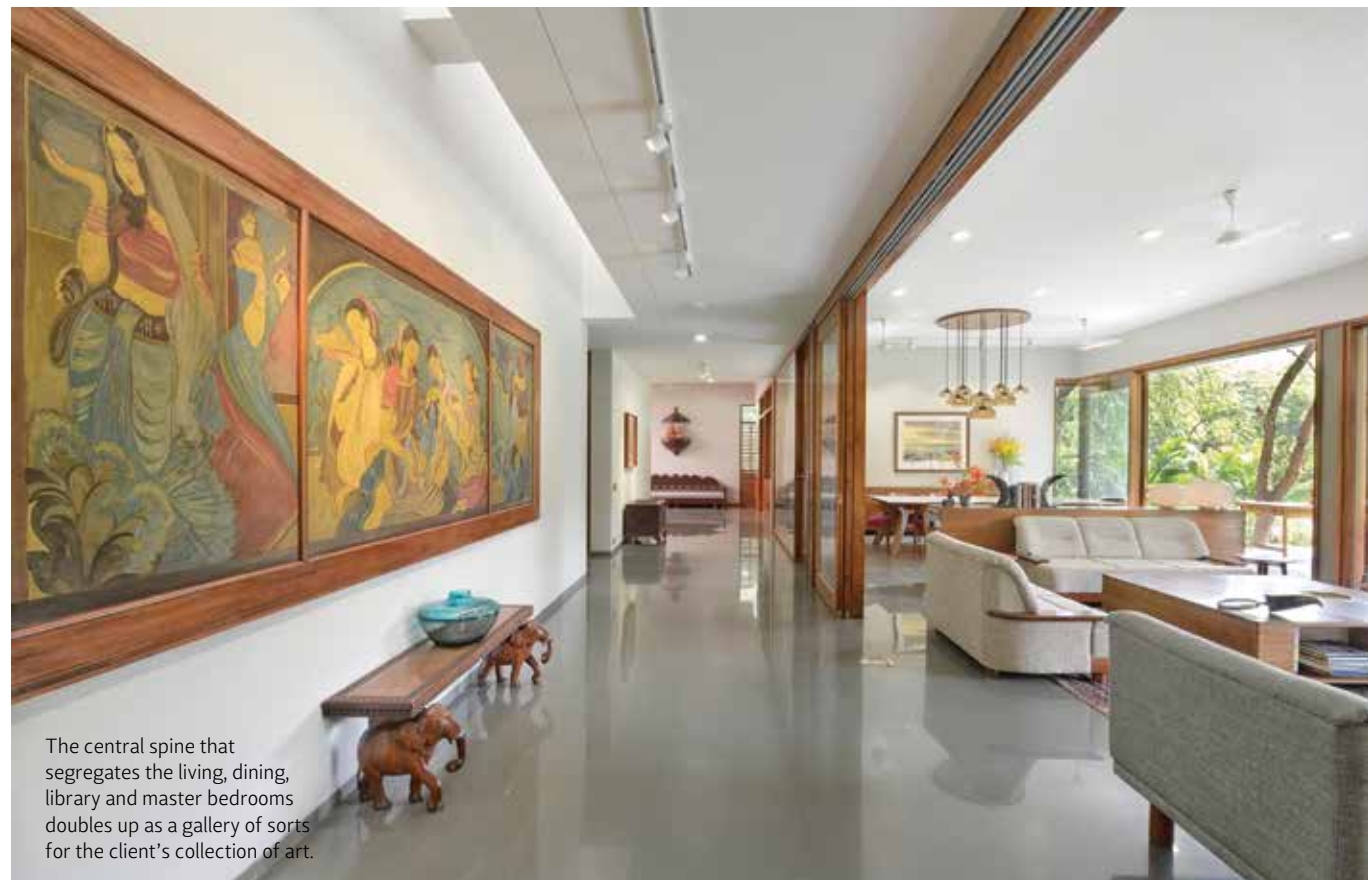
THIS PAGE The library doors are a versatile element, and allow the adjacent functionalities — the living-dining area and family room — to maintain various degrees of connectedness. The doors also serve as a display point for the family's impressive collection of objets d'art.

MATERIALS

Flooring Mirror-polished green kota (dry areas) and porcelain tiles (wet areas)
Ceiling Painted gypsum board ceiling (in all internal areas)
Furniture Primarily Valsadi teak wood with brass accents and soft furnishings
Paneling and planters Solid teak wood and veneers



The private family living space is characterized by a laser-cut Corten steel world map on which the home-owners mark trips taken abroad.



The central spine that segregates the living, dining, library and master bedrooms doubles up as a gallery of sorts for the client's collection of art.

renovated poster bed to which she was strongly connected, and opens onto a private courtyard with a *hichko* (swing), a staple in an Amdavadi home. The master bedroom focused on comfort — a requirement fulfilled by a high cushioned headboard, and two armchairs overlooking the verandah space as an extension of their bedroom. The daughter's bed features two elements — the round bed and the elevated study alcove. Whilst the round bed was a clear brief from the daughter, the study alcove was the designers' interpretation, albeit on a grander scale, of *jharokas* typically seen in traditional Indian architecture.

The overall material palette is polished kota stone floor, white ceiling, light grey walls (paints used are low VOC) and furniture in Valsadi teak wood with lacquer polish. "The palette was chosen so that we could strike the right balance between the old and the new." The materials as well as the focus on reusing and remodelling of old furniture, are also aligned to PVRDS's steadfast belief in being gentle on the earth — as can be expected from a practice co-founded by a PhD-holder in energy-efficient architecture.

The design team's penchant for customization can be seen in the use of



TOP A curved passage leads to the master bedroom and the daughter's room, via a small flight of stairs. The private space of the client's mother was pragmatically located just before the steps to negate constant level negotiation.

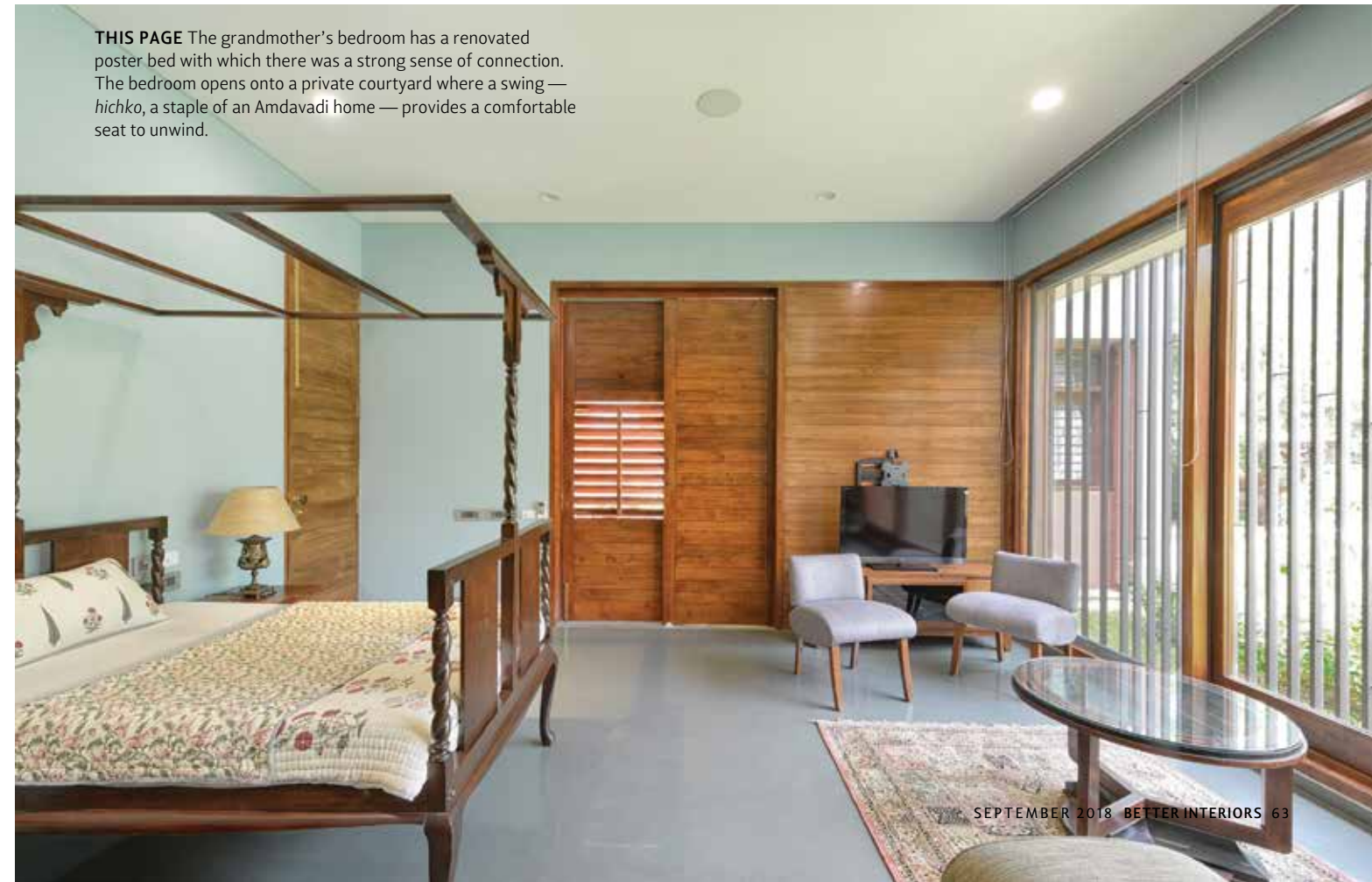
ABOVE The entrance vestibule: the connection to greens is maintained through a small landscaped enclosure.



The daughter's bedroom features two prominent design elements: the round bed and the elevated study alcove.



Whilst the round bed was a clear brief from the young occupant, the study alcove was the designer's interpretation, albeit on a grander scale, of the *jharkhas* typically seen in traditional Indian architecture.




THIS PAGE The grandmother's bedroom has a renovated poster bed with which there was a strong sense of connection. The bedroom opens onto a private courtyard where a swing — *hichko*, a staple of an Amdavadi home — provides a comfortable seat to unwind.



THIS PAGE The master bedroom is focused on comfort, a requirement that the client had particularly outlined. Hence, the bed was designed with a cushioned high enveloping headboard, complemented with two armchairs overlooking the verandah space as an extension of their bedroom. The attendant dressing area is well-appointed and spacious.

laser-cut wooden door knobs, beaten brass handles for console units, brass inlays in library doors to semi-precious stone dining table. Similarly, music, which was integral to the clients' daily routine, was ensured via requisite hardware, with zone-wise controls, managed by smart phone. The lighting strategy sees track lights for highlighting design elements like the library doors as well as artefacts; general lighting effected through recessed ceiling downlighters; and mood/ambient lighting achieved through table and floor lamps as well as recessed LED strips integrated within furniture.

And what has all this led to? Greatly satisfied clients. An outstanding response from guests. And a project which, according to the designers, is the "talk of the town"! 

FACT FILE: Project The Munshaw Home **Location** Ahmedabad **Area** 8,000 sq ft **Interior design firm** Patel-Vadodaria Design Research Studio (PVDRS) **Interior design team** Megha Patel-Vadodaria and Keyur Vadodaria **Architecture** Modo Designs **Carpenters** Kanti bhai, Vishnu bhai, Dinesh Mistry and Hiralal Mistry