

DESIGN DESTINATION: HAVANA

SPECIALIST: MADE IN HAPPY

DESIGN QUEST: MATERIAL IMMATERIAL

HOME REVIEW

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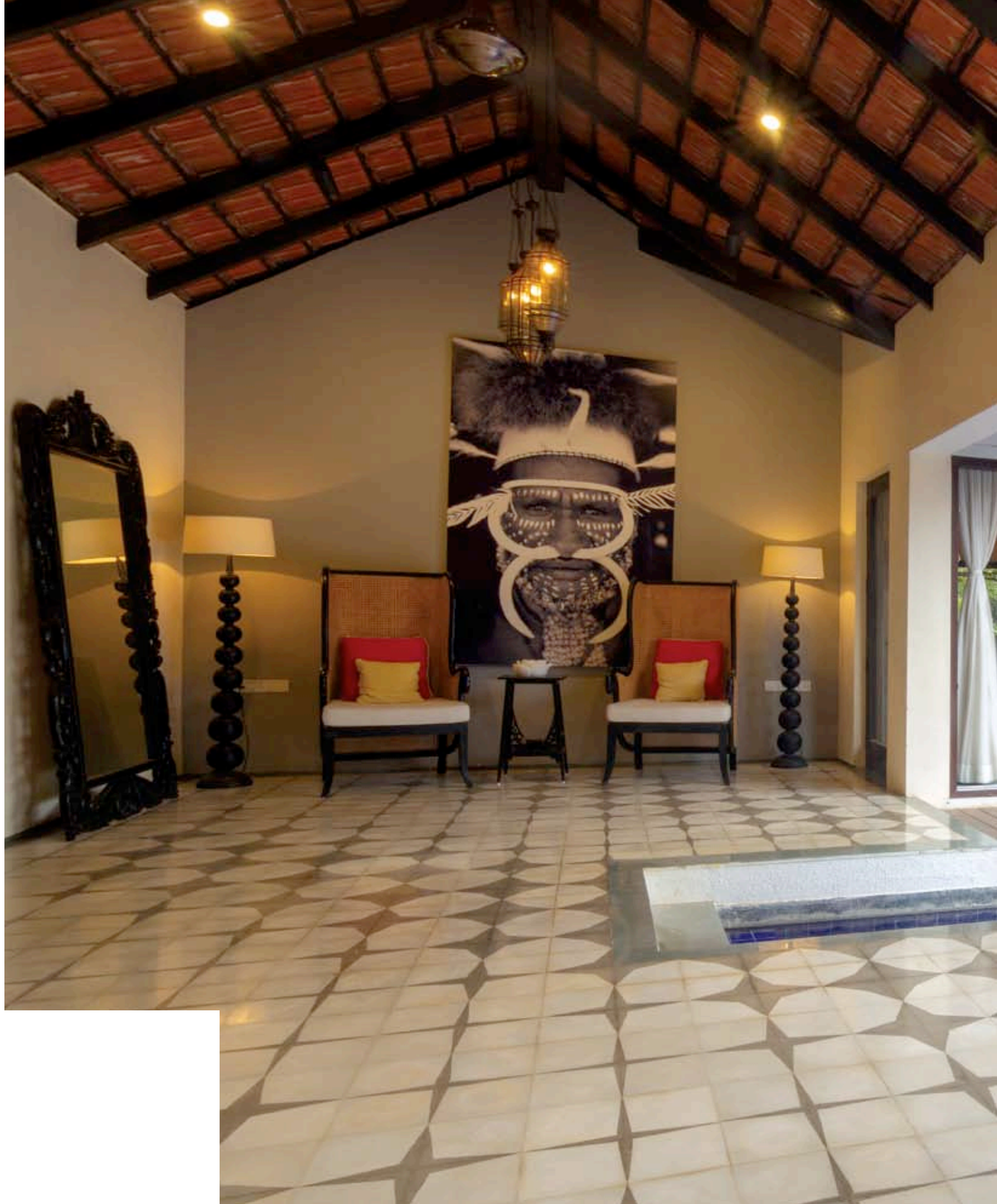
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MALIK ARCHITECTURE
HAVING IT ALL
ATELIER DESIGN N DOMAIN
GREEN AND GORGEOUS
PROJECT CO.

PRESERVING THE OLD EMBRACING THE NEW

SICIDI ARCHITECTURE BREATHES NEW CHARACTER
INTO A CHARMING OLD FAMILY BUNGALOW IN ALIBAUG





Mumbai-based firm SiCiDi Architecture breathes new character into a charming old family bungalow in Alibaug.

The speed boat skims over the grey waters of the Arabian Sea and within minutes the fishing trawlers and the ferry boats have shrunk to toy-sized proportions. The South Mumbai skyline fades away and Alibaug appears on the horizon. The drive from the jetty towards Alibaug town is dotted with squat bungalows, orchards and fields.

Text By Himali Kothari
Photographs Courtesy Tanuj Bhatia

**PRESERVING THE OLD
EMBRACING THE NEW**

Towering palms in the distance mark the pristine beaches that lure Mumbai folks here over the weekend. When SiCiDi Architecture were roped in to redo an old bungalow in prime Alibaug, they were keen that the visual construct of the house reflect the beach vibe of the weekend getaway location.

Located amidst a sprawling 5-acre piece of land, the original bungalow was oozing with charm but lacking in character. The entire space was laid with drab gray Kota stone and lack of planning had created small pockets that made the house look shrunken. Muninder Chowdhry and Vishakha Dholakia, the principal architects of SiCiDi Architecture could immediately spot the possibilities that were waiting to be uncovered.

“We went to the drawing board intent on maintaining the charm, while redirecting the flow of energy through the house. It was also important that the space have a farmhouse feel, distinctly different from the client’s city apartment.” Muninder elaborates on the design process.





A key aspect of SiCiDi Architecture's design philosophy is to ensure a synergy between the space and its site. Another key element is their commitment to make sure that no two projects look the same, which is achieved by integrating the client's personality into the project.

The first step was to strip the house down to its bare bones and next was to restructure it from the ground up. All the walls enclosing the verandahs were done away with. This opened the house up to the lush, green landscape on one side and the pool on the other side. The new cement floor, in a contemporary pattern, which starts inside the house and extends to the outdoors, further blurs the inside-outside divide and gives one the sense of being both indoors and outdoors at the same time.

The client wanted the house to serve the purpose of entertaining as well be a venue for the family and extended family to gather in. Thus, the common spaces have been designed like pockets that serve specific purposes but at the same time blend into each other seamlessly. Vishakha explains, "Here, a lot of people can do a lot of different things and yet be together and still occupy individual and unique spaces."

The original bedrooms had been fitted with false ceilings which cut off the height that the pitched roof provided. By replacing the original windows with ones that slid outside the walls, one more boundary between the inside and the outside was eliminated. A splash of colour, different flooring materials and distinctive statement furniture pieces and adornments lent a unique character to each of the bedrooms.

A herringbone brick flooring, a tessellated pattern on the stone on the bar, Brazilian Ipe on the pool deck, lightly distressed cement sheet wall panels, wooden roofing rafters and corrugated sheets in light pastels on the columns - all come together to add texture to the space and infuse it with an element of fun and surprise.



SiCiDi removed the false ceilings and used a LIGHTLY DISTRESSED WOOD underside TO HIGHLIGHT the scale, HEIGHT AND ANGLES of the original roof and ADD TO THE ROOMS VOLUME.



All the art and sculptures that occupy the walls and different corners were carefully selected after considering their relevance to that space as well as the house as a whole. The size of the house allowed the designers to choose larger than life statement pieces and create a dramatic impact. With every niche and corner, painstakingly deliberated upon and designed, it may be difficult to pick a favourite but for Vishakha it is the indoor bar. She says, "It serves the functional purpose of a bar but its artistic appearance sets it apart and creates a broader visual impact."





Most of the furniture and accessories were sourced from Bali while the contractors for the civil work and textural finishes were sourced from Mumbai. Muninder stressed on working on a strict deadline to complete the project, "We had to make sure that the work was completed before the onset of the monsoons while the speed boats were still operational. It would have been an arduous task to make a 3-hour road trip to get to the site." He adds, "Despite the fact that we were working away from Mumbai, it was smooth-sailing and thorough because of the client's unwavering trust in us."

This trust combined with a clear vision for the project has resulted in a comfortable home that in equal parts reflects both old world charm and modern day elegance.

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