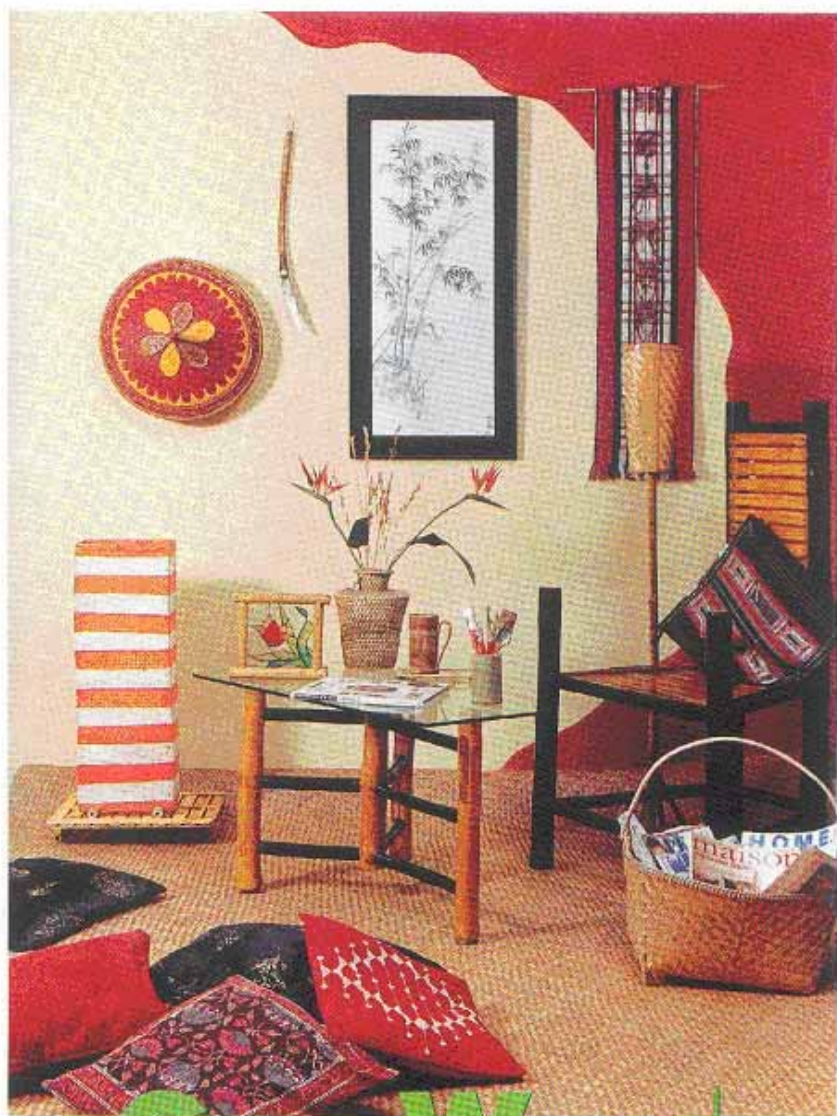


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GrassWood

BAMBOO MAKES A DESIGNER STATEMENT

AT HOME WITH PAYAL JAIN ANITA RATNAM ON HER FAVOURITE 'TALISMAN'

PLEASING Practicality



The earthy tones and strategic lighting go a long way in creating a warm ambience in the reception area of the vCustomer Corporate office in the Capital; (below) Nitin Sharma of 3rd Dimension, architecture



Photographs by I S Dhillon

A multi-dimensional design eye – that's the USP of Delhi-based architecture firm, 3rd Dimension, architecture. Says architect Nitin Sharma: "At 3rd Dimension, we lay a lot of emphasis on creativity and quality, and we interpret the client's vision without compromising on creativity. And that's the real challenge"

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hen vCustomer (short for Virtual Customer), a multinational, \$100m eCRM (Customer Relationship Management) firm approached 3rd Dimension, architecture to design their corporate office in New Delhi's Jangpura, they had a clear brief. The covered area of 25,000 sq. ft. had to incorporate agent workstations, LAB rooms, formal and informal meeting rooms, a reception area, informal cafeterias and a sophisticated server/network facility to support digital internet-based requirements.

The instructions were explicit especially for the reception area – the formal space should elucidate and bring forth the company's strong global IT presence through futuristic visual connotations and symbolic representations while retaining its customer-friendly face of being easily accessible and comprehensible. The 15-year-old firm did not take long to emerge with a singular concept. They decided to use the term 'virtual', which is part of the company's name, as the design metaphor. This found expression, among other aspects, in the 'V' shaped recess in the reception area.

As a solution to the paradoxical thematic requirement, beige Italian marble was used for the flooring and the reception table. This combined well with the textured walls to impart a warm, inviting feel. The Indian red rosewood columns and furniture added a design element that carried forward the inviting ambience.

The 'V'-shaped recess carries the logo of the firm mounted on clear-transparent acrylic which is in turn affixed to a tapering duco-painted base. Concealed computer-controlled coloured halogen lighting at the bottom of the recess adds to the visual enigma by making the logo appear to be "on fire". Signed paintings by veteran artist S. Krishan provide a striking contrast in shades of blue.

The warm-but-business-like mood of the reception area gives way to one of unabashed fun in the cafeteria. The architects invited the agents to give vent to their creativity through graffiti on the walls. At once, the space ceased to be an impersonal work area and became a personalised nook to relax in during breaks. The walls and the ceiling have been dressed up in off-white textured paint to hold up the outburst of brilliant graffiti.

A very different design mood prevails in the 3rd Dimension office off a quiet lane in the Capital's upmarket Panchsheel area. The 1,600 sq. ft. space is a creative blend of ethnicity and contemporary styles. The main office panelled in matt-finish kailwood



The curved contours of the supportive columns add a touch of artistry

A fun area, the cafeteria is anything but official. The graffiti on the walls is executed by the personnel





The metal-coated dome complements the wood panelling. To the right is the tall window which frames the green outdoors. Focussed lighting helps to create a cosy mood

echoes the design nuance of the ubiquitous *havelis* of Gujarat and Rajasthan, where the warm browns and reds are often accentuated with intricate wooden and stone jaalis (trelliswork). Says Nitin: "Though we wanted the plush look imparted by the panelling, we did not want to be perceived as promoters of period styling, ours being a contemporary design firm."

But they need not have worried. The interspersing of contemporary elements created a happening mood. The glazed, arched doorways and curtain walls opening out to the landscaped balcony are nine feet high, imparting enough openness to the room to render it a subset of its landscaped outside. The peculiar dome that overlooks the main table was conceived as the focal point of the office. This is reminiscent of the roofs in traditional Rajasthani architecture, only here it was provided as a visual element

The task-centres are totally self-sufficient nooks designed to make maximum use of space



at a human scale as opposed to its functional use as a roofing component. The dome-surface is of metallic brass matt, in consonance with the sobriety of the wood browns.

The furniture and fixtures cater to functional requirements and house recessed drawings chests, computer networking components and storage areas. The office chairs are done up in brown leather. Flooring is steel grey non-woven carpet, with matching rear sitting and side walls, which provide the necessary relief to the overall monochrome attire of the space.

The workstations are designed as fully functional and completely self-sufficient taskcentres. The partitions are full-height pin-up structures, making best use of the limited studio space. Recessed book-niches are privy to the user while simultaneously opening out from the sides to enable another browser to take his pick. All in all, an office reflecting the best of functional aesthetics.

Compiled by Manjira Dutta