

habitus

LIVING IN DESIGN

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08

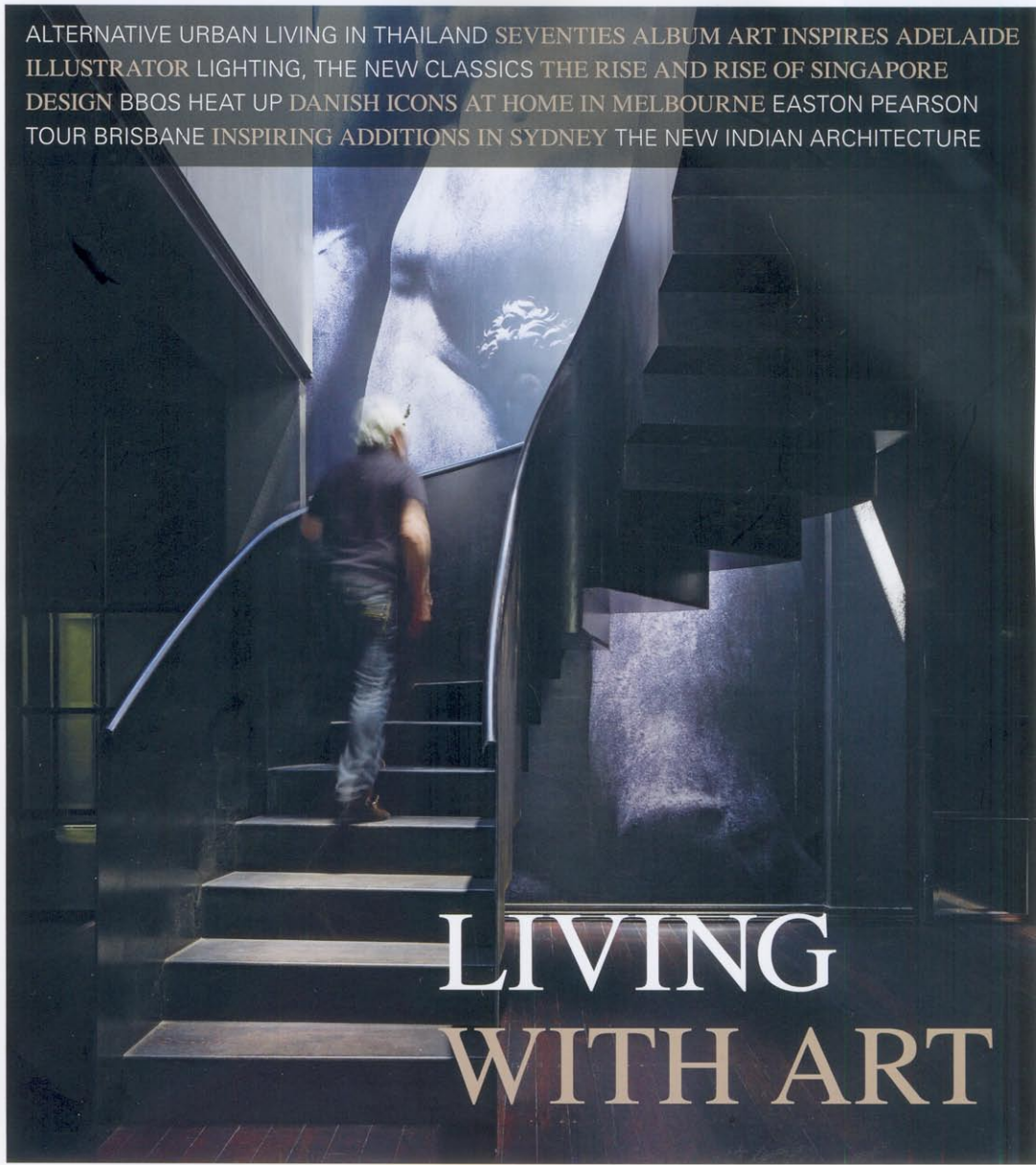
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ALTERNATIVE URBAN LIVING IN THAILAND SEVENTIES ALBUM ART INSPIRES ADELAIDE
ILLUSTRATOR LIGHTING, THE NEW CLASSICS THE RISE AND RISE OF SINGAPORE
DESIGN BBQS HEAT UP DANISH ICONS AT HOME IN MELBOURNE EASTON PEARSON
TOUR BRISBANE INSPIRING ADDITIONS IN SYDNEY THE NEW INDIAN ARCHITECTURE

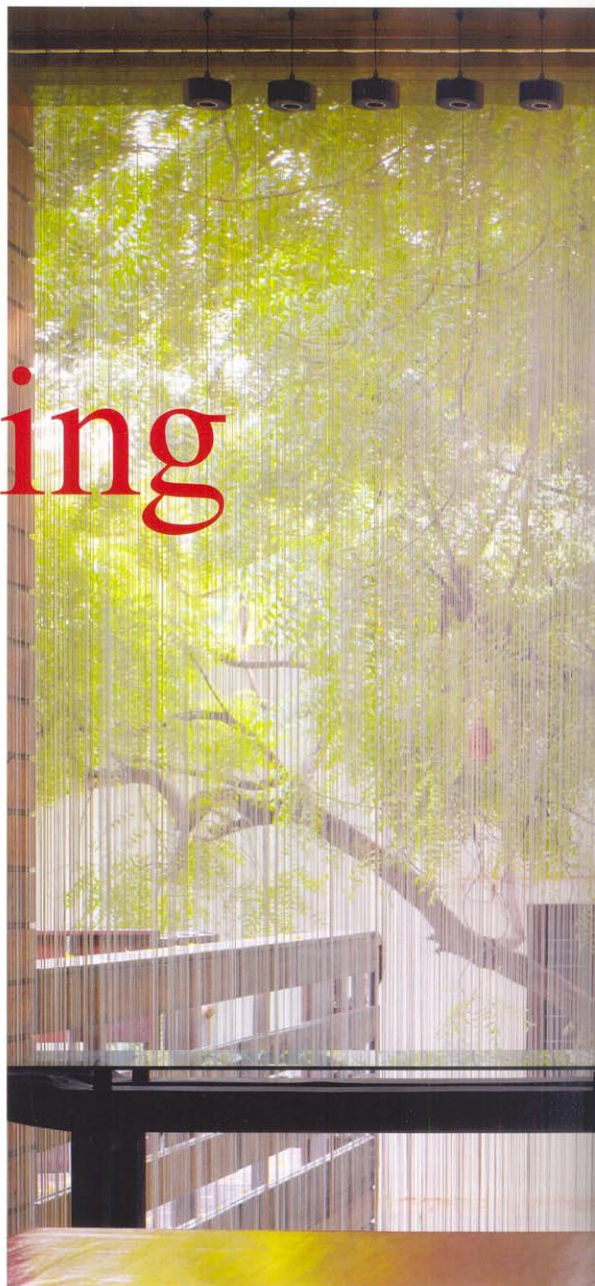


LIVING WITH ART

Morphing

Renowned Indian architects, **Manit** and **Sonali Rastogi** of **Morphogenesis**, are re-defining Indian architecture. **Jagan Shah** explores the creative spaces of the Rastogi's own home.

HOMES





director's cut

n85 — NEW DELHI, india

MORPHOGENESIS





03



04

01
Sonali's favourite
Neem tree catching
the morning sun.

02
The house as seen
from across the street,
a palace surrounded
by greenery.

03
The Rastogis catch up
on a game of chess in
their living room.

04
Garden courtyard and
sun-bathed staircase
beyond: nature invades
the man-made.

Gone are the days when the hot, dry climate of North India and primitive building technology would automatically combine to produce heavy-walled boxes with cramped, dark rooms and sparse, small openings. Gone, too, is the assumption that privacy demands screens and veils for the eye, and that the Indian home must be an impenetrable fortress where threatened customs and mores are preserved and perpetuated.

Instead of these tropes of the past, the contemporary Indian home is being re-defined as the interface between home and world, work and pleasure, individual and community, solitude and society. And the re-definition is coming from a new generation of architects, like Mani and Sonali Rastogi, principals of Morphogenesis Architecture Studio in New Delhi, who see their role as a post-modern avant-garde, transforming Indian society by changing its built form.

Like their predecessors in early 20th century Paris, Vienna and Moscow, the Rastogis are also evangelists for new technologies, new aesthetic forms and new lifestyles. They enjoy privilege, and access and leverage these currencies to seek opportunities where art, design and building science can infuse a new spirit into architecture. However, unlike their bohemian cousins, the designers behind Morphogenesis are located in India, the last place on earth where you might expect to find the cutting edge.

director's cut

N85 — NEW DELHI, india

MORPHOGENESIS



05

Yet N85 is just that: a place where the new is being invented every day, in the Rastogis' basement full of architects and urbanists, where new typologies, forms, methods and technologies are a staple diet, and in the Rastogis' home above, where creative professionals and thinkers of all variety drop by regularly, and their random thoughts and inspirations remain like gifts that can be cherished long after they leave. The N85 household is seldom idle, as there is always an idea that needs following up and a person who needs to be engaged with.

In a relatively short life, Morphogenesis has achieved international recognition as a leading practice in 'green' buildings and a wellspring of innovation. Manit's professional calendar is marked with numerous commitments to speak about the future of Indian architecture and Indian cities. As director of a leading school of architecture, whose 80 graduates join the profession every year, his engagement with the future of Indian architecture is ever more critical. His reliance on Sonali, as business and design partner, and spouse, is therefore doubly intense, and their

home office is a crucible for ideas as well as an environment for nurturing the positivity of family and friends.

The ethos of 'practice what you preach' is strong in the architectural community; N85 needed to be a paradigm-shifting demonstration of 'morphogenesis' in action and a true reflection of the Rastogis' beliefs.

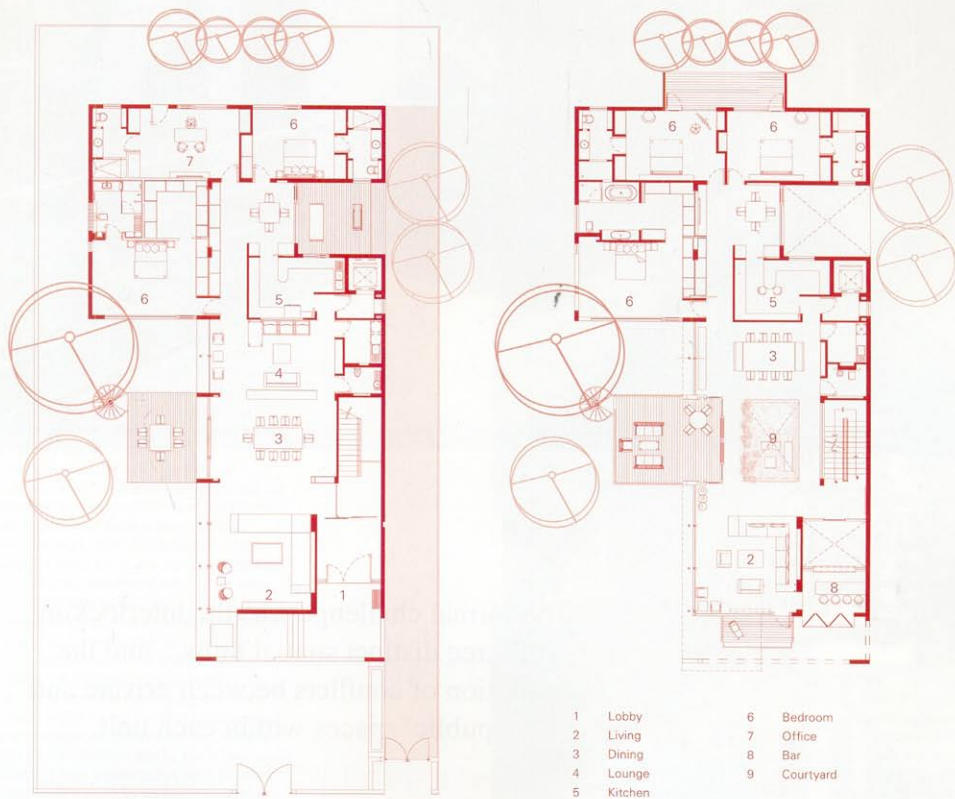
The formal challenge in the project was the interlocking of three distinct spatial units – a house for Manit's parents, a house and home office for the Rastogis and their two children, and an office/studio for Morphogenesis – and the resolution of conflicts between private and 'public' spaces within each unit.

The solution is masterfully straightforward. Vertically, the studio necessarily occupies the basement floor – an allowance given by the codes for commercial activity in a residential zone – and the residences stack up above. Horizontally, the block above ground is divided into two volumes: an opaque, protective mass at the rear containing bedrooms, dressers, bathrooms and lounges, and a transparent mass at the front containing living and dining rooms, lobbies and the main staircase. The kitchen

The house is homage to the **marriage** of materials, the **play** of forms and the **seduction** of senses.

05
The internal courtyard is a domestic landmark, a constant point of reference that can shift in a moment from being a location of activities to being a background or foreground for them.

06
Ground floor plan (left) and first floor plan (right).



director's cut

n85 — NEW DELHI, india

MORPHOGENESIS



07

07
The penthouse is a sanctum where reflection, rejuvenation and recreation can be pursued with equal ease in solitude or in company.

08
The house becomes an accommodating and lively event-space during the periodic 'Manthan' gatherings hosted by the Rastogis, when designers, architects and thinkers of all variety congregate.

09
The Rastogis have made the balance between nature and artifice into a signature of their practice.

The formal challenge was the **interlocking** of three distinct **spatial** units... and the resolution of conflicts between private and 'public' **spaces** within each unit

provides a functional and spatial segue between private and public in each house.

But the configuration of plan and section are like back-of-the-envelope operations for these seasoned designers. The real architecture emerges from the detail, especially the working of an environmental logic into the spatial configuration. This truly is where the Rastogis' hearts lie: in using passive solar techniques like the thermal mass on the south and west sides – the cluster of smaller south-facing private spaces at the rear, and the unbroken protective wall surface on the west side – and the grouping of large glass surfaces on the north and east façades, and in embracing the natural environment by devoting half the site to gardens and inserting a green atrium.

The atrium is the *pièce de résistance* of the house – the energy centre around which the house comes alive. It greets the visitors as they arrive at the piano from the entrance vestibule downstairs, it locks together the living and dining areas and the balcony that extends the home into the garden, and it enables the free movement of air and the dispersal of natural light throughout the public areas.

With its plants, pebbles and garden furniture organised into a strict geometry, a space both interior and exterior, the atrium is also a signature of the Rastogis' central preoccupation: to create an architecture that marries nature and culture, where landscape and building are in peaceful communion. In the deft hands of a crafty designer, these binaries dissolve into nothingness, and are replaced by a fullness of experience and discovery.

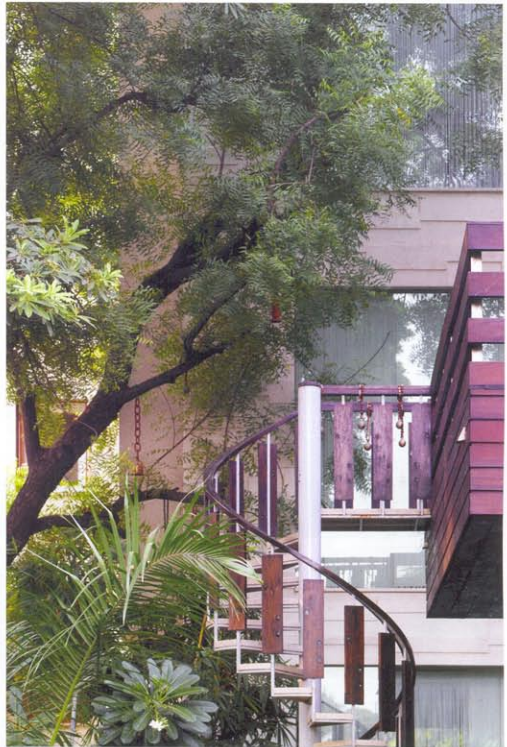
No wonder Sonali's favourite spot is at the red dining table, from where she can gaze out on the large Neem tree in the garden, through the dappled light filtering past the silk-string curtains. It is here, she fondly recalls, that "innumerable memorable conversations take place over dinner with friends".

As evangelists of a new Indian architecture, Manit and Sonali consider the art of engagement, of conversation, of persuasion and commentary as concomitants of their professional work. But their concerns about the state of Indian cities, the environment and the education system would seem worn and pedantic if the rationalism wasn't offset by an artful sense of detail and the delight of making.

The house is homage to the marriage of materials, the play of forms and the seduction of senses. Such devotion produces the light that filters through the rooftop lap-pool into the atrium, and the cosy bar that is suspended over the entrance, its protruding bay windows evoking a relationship with the street that could have been, if New Delhi hadn't been planned for isolation. It's as if the Rastogis would have the front setback erased altogether, and their house become a renaissance palazzo once more, inviting maestros and virtuosos to walk in from the street and share some enlightenment.



08



09

director's cut

n85 — NEW DELHI, india

MORPHOGENESIS



A place where the **new** is being **invented** everyday.

10
What were sunlit interiors during the day become glowing beacons at night.

DESIGN
Morphogenesis
STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT
Optimal
ELECTRICAL & PLUMBING
Spectral
CONTRACTOR
Bhayana Builders, Vadehra Builders

TOTAL FLOOR AREA
1,508m²

Morphogenesis
morphogenesis.org
(91 11) 4182 8070

ARTWORK
Bar by Baiasubramaniam, and Nitin Agarwal. Living Room by F.N. Souza, and Chintan Upadhyay. Staircase by V. Ramesh, Sanjeev Serpimpare, and Amit Ambalal. Foyer by Probrir, and Dhawan. Dining Room by Jyoti Bhatt. Manisha Gera, and Probrir. Bedroom by Sonali Rastogi, Probrir, and Ajay Rajgarhia.
FURNITURE
Bar custom designed by Morphogenesis. Chaise in Living Room from Molteni&C. molteni.it. Sofa in Living

Room custom designed by Morphogenesis, made by Proform, upholstered in fabric from Shades of India, shadesofindia.com. Seating tall chairs in Living Room and hardwood seating in Courtyard custom designed by Mike Knowles at India Chic, (91 11) 2630 3968, chairs in Dining from Proform, and Calligaris chairs in TV Area from Stanley Boutique, stanleyboutique.com. Tables in Living Room and benches in Dining are custom made by Kaaru, kaaru.com, red table in Dining custom

designed by Morphogenesis and Mike Knowles from India Chic, Anchor tables in Dining from India Chic, and Jean Nouvel Less Table in TV Area from Stanley Boutique. Cabinetry in TV Area is custom made by Proform, and from Poggen Pohl, poggenpohl.com. Outdoor rattan furniture purchased in Hong Kong.
FINISHES
Flooring Oak planks and Travertine stone. Timber throughout is Teak ply and veneer and renewable forest timber treated with Linseed

oil. Wall panelling handmade fabric and paper sandwiched in glass, and textured Limestone. Paint throughout is non-toxic paint (acrylic emulsion) from Asian Paints, asianpaints.com. Glass in joinery by St Gobain, saint-gobain.co.in.
LIGHTING
Bar lighting by Murano, muranolighting.com. Lamp in Living Room, Louis Poulsen lamp, louispuulsen.com. Rubber lights in Courtyard, are handmade with rubber by Quasar, quasarled.com. Chandelier in Dining Room is

Phillip Starck from Flos, flos.com. Recessed lighting in TV Room by Antares, antares.com. General lighting throughout by Erco Lighting, erco.com.
FIXTURES/EQUIPMENT
Bathroom fixtures Jacob Delafon, jacobdelafon.com. Kohler, kohler.com, Ceramica Flaminia, ceramicafiaminia.it, and Gessi, gessi.com, all from FCML, fcmlindia.com. Hardware from Hafele, hafeleindia.com, and Hettich, hettich.com. Fans antiques from flea market at Chor Bazaar in Mumbai.