



SHAPESHIFTER

This family home in New Delhi seamlessly blends natural materials and traditional values for an artisanal approach

Words: Lucy Land



Within the bustle of New Delhi, there's a serene farmland upon which a large family residence sprawls. Designed by award-winning architects Sonali and Manit Rastogi of Morphogenesis, this impressive property, named Artisan House, is designed as a welcoming family space while also making the most of the natural surroundings on which the property is located.

Home to a three-generation Indian family, including the homeowners, their three children and a grandparent, the property is also a meeting point for the rest of the family, which comprises of several sisters and their families.

"It is, at one level, a house for six people, and, at another level, a celebration space for the entire extended joint family," explains Sonali.

The 22,000 sq. ft. building is located just off centre of the 2.75-acre lush green landscape on which it sits, allowing for a large front lawn. Moreover, the entire project – architecture, structure, landscape and interior – was conceived to work seamlessly together. Its split-level design, for example, is a result of integrating the building with the terrain to make the home more energy efficient.

"As we move down two to three metres, and further, the soil temperature naturally sits at a constant temperature, which is the average annual temperature of the region," Sonali explains. "So the earth itself becomes an insulator to the adjacent rooms of the house while the topography of the site allowed us to naturally thermally bank a large part of this property."

The design came about after plenty of conversations between the architects and the homeowners, who were supportive of Morphogenesis' vision.

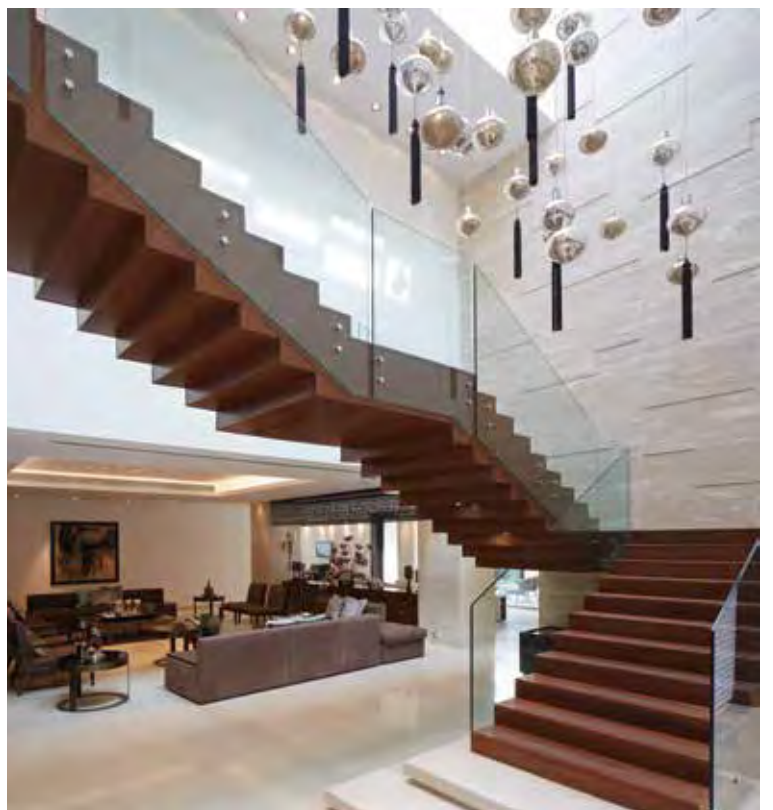
"The starting point was a syncing of minds," Sonali says. "To convince a rooted, grounded Indian family to go for this kind of avant-garde approach could easily have been a hurdle, but it was met with much enthusiasm."

He is extremely grateful for this: "Every architect and designer wants to do something unusual that hasn't been seen before. However, it is patronage that truly allows for it and, in this particular case, there was a patron who was excited by newness. What's more, the homeowners reminded us on a regular basis to remain in that state of mind."

The design team worked with natural materials, including wood, stone and metal and carefully considered the natural light. "The interesting thing about this project is that it was approached wall by wall rather than

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room by room.” This approach created a strong graphic element to the design. Moreover, the walls were used to exclude the sun’s harshest rays while integrated courtyards allowed daylight to reach the complete home interior. “It’s not just light; it is light and shadow that, together, form the poetry and inclusiveness of light in the project, and this is something that we have worked towards consciously,” Sonali reveals.

Among traditional Indian households, courtyards offer a space where the extended family gathers for meals, events and celebrations. For the design of this house, the courtyards also play an important role in the family’s own cultural practices.

The property’s harmonious design is perhaps most apparent in the stunning

living room. Its focal point is a 20 ft tree above which is a skylight, part of which is in water. “It seamlessly marries the interior with the outdoors,” Sonali enthuses. “It offer a variety of experiences and its unique design will ensure it continues to stay relevant to the home’s occupants.”

The project is something that Sonali was thrilled to be involved with. “Working on Artisan House gave us the opportunity to work towards re-establishing a patronage for these artisanal skills and contribute towards cultural sustainability – something I feel very strongly about. It’s one of the reasons I chose to be an architect, and it has been an honour and a pleasure to have an owner -patron driving this project.”



