



THE HOME & INTERIORS ISSUE

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DESIGNING

LIVING SPACES

The definition of interiors has changed over the years. People are more willing now to take risks and experiment with the looks of a space to reflect their opulence and personality. Today's consumer is browsing the Internet, researching and also taking expert advice to translate her dreams into reality and accentuate her living experience. To understand the changing trends in interior designing of living spaces, Mint Indulge spoke to four specialists in the trade—Raseel Gujral, Latika Khosla, Ashiesh Shah and Rooshad Shroff. Edited excerpts:



Raseel Gujral (RG) is creative director at Casa Paradiso, an indigenous brand that covers a broad spectrum of architecture and design from retail, home decor to interior design.



Latika Khosla (LK) is design director at Freedom Tree Design, a colour and trend studio in Mumbai.



Ashiesh Shah (AS) is a Mumbai-based architect and designer.



Rooshad Shroff (RS) is principal at Rooshad Shroff Architecture Design, a multi-disciplinary architecture, design and research-based studio in Mumbai.



EASY LIVING: A living space designed by Latika Khosla.

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HOW DO YOU DESIGN AN INTERIOR SPACE? PLEASE TAKE US THROUGH THE ENTIRE PROCESS.

RG: The primary function of a design is to define a space and not merely occupy it. To simply implement an existing typology or trend is not sufficient. A living space must be designed to accentuate excitement and challenges to the lives of people occupying them. In a way, give them a nimble nudge to embrace the unexpected.

Each of my design comprises functionality to the core with an air of subtle grandeur. It is an engagement between the client's vision and my translation of it into an organic entity.

LK: We already have imagined what people might want. Being in the trend business, we have to be ahead of the curve and have things in place to excite people's imagination.

People come to us for a look that is "easy living with good design every day". Freedom Tree has collections and looks for casual and emotive. Furniture is the bare body of home and we have three looks—Mid-century 50s retro (elegant teak that is turned and twirled right here, to make it Mumbai modern), Industrialuxe (our experimentation with different repurposed woods and metal structures) and Clever crafts (where we work with a manufacturing partner, adopting to their technique, production and habits.)

AS: Client's brief, size specification and the space are kept in mind while designing. Interiors are a shell with both an inside and an outside environment. I try to bring in the elements of the outside within and create a seamless piece. I always try to open out spaces. The space between the inside and outside is very important and I keep that in mind as my strategic point of design. Also, I'm very intuitive about energies, so I try to bring that inside the space, the colour scheme that the client wants and I also like to follow certain basic principles of Vaastu, especially when designing homes. I do not like too many walls or divisions and prefer open panels so that the spaces can be manoeuvred in different ways.

RS: A complete understanding of the place is important. We study the brief and propose alternatives in terms of how the space could be used or enhanced. For residences, we see how spaces could have multiple uses. The visual aspect, materials, space planning, layout, everything is important.

IS THERE EVER A CLASH BETWEEN DREAMS AND REALITY? HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH IT?

RG: Radical innovation is integral to any creative process. Not having an answer or even willfully ignoring obstacles allows one to progress through the unknown and be able to challenge obstacles. I like to explore ideas beyond the conventional boundaries.

LK: Designers work as interpreters of dreams and help modify those for people. In case of a clash of opinions, the idea is to bring down the scale of what they want. We help them keep the core of the design—that is non-negotiable—and modify only the peripherals. We help them make better choices.

AS: There's always a clash between dreams and realities. Client briefs are based on places they have ventured—physically, on the Internet, or in some book. They do come with dreams and aspirations, but it's upon the architect to realize their dreams and give them a practical solution. If you are recreating something, you are copying someone and trying to fit in something where it is not supposed to be. We try to work around the essence of the space and not copy it and get inspired by the few elements that derive the real energy to the space.

HOW FAR CAN YOU PUSH YOUR BOUNDARIES WITH A CLIENT?

RG: In the interior and architecture segment, a major Indian buyer is the urban housewife. The aspiration is luxury with relevance and comfort being a priority. It is all about creative collaboration that can transform a space into a realization of the consumer's likes, wants and needs.

LK: Designers have to be a mirror to the ideas of people. It is like a conversation; they say something and throw back an

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good design, if not the best (design). This could bring the correct look of the space.

WHICH LIVING SPACE ACCORDING TO YOU IS THE TOUGHEST ONE TO DESIGN?

RG: More than the toughest, I'd say my favourite space to design is entrances. They're very high on drama with minimum function yet having the maximum impact. For me, height of a space is also crucial.

LK: There's always a solution to everything. I would not say a smaller place is tough to design. Rather, the bigger the space, bigger are the chances of making glaring mistakes.

AS: A good designer is someone who can challenge himself or herself constantly. It's probably the situation that is tough. May be the geographical conditions are a problem, sometimes the architect and the client not being on the same page makes the project tough.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE HOUSE OF THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

LK: People are going to find the wonderful in the normal. It will be about enjoying the vastness of nature and celebrating the smallness of new. There'll be large quiet spaces with big picture windows and very little clutter inside. Use of natural materials—strong woods, metals—and metal hues will be seen more.

A lot of layering, paint and colour effects, will be used to define the state of mind. We have a whole idea of separated spaces inside shared spaces, classical, good, simple lines, feminine space and equally handsome masculine space. Today, the whole concept is about the community. Whether it's a public space, a coffee shop an interior of your room or office, we are increasingly sharing spaces. How you make niches and corners for yourself is one of the most important concepts going forward.

AS: Design is instrumental and dependent on the evolution of the space. Evolution of human race is parallel and goes hand-in-hand with the design evolution. Green homes, where things can be reused and are recyclable is definitely the next trend.

RS: It's going to be more about customization. It will be more time consuming and laborious with a lot of R&D (research and development) going into materials.

IS GOLD STILL THE COLOUR OF LUXURY?

RG: While gold retains its epitome of luxury, the sparkle of crystals and the contemporary glamour of nickel also make their imminent presence felt.

LK: Copper tones and rose gold tones are more critical.

RS: Gold does add the element of luxury to any setting. It's a colour that is subconsciously engraved into any form of luxury. It's very much engraved in the Indian society.

WITH MORE DISPOSABLE INCOME IN PEOPLE'S HANDS, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE FUTURE OF INTERIOR DESIGNING IN INDIA?

RG: India and its design sensibilities are no longer closed to the world. Today, with the rising disposable income, the opportunities are more. So, people are willing to take the risk—away from the conventional—and experiment.

LK: People are shopping around for ideas. They travel, they look out for things when they go to trade fairs, exhibitions, they are looking at other people's homes; they are in the mindset of buying things and doing their homes.

I think designers will end up being curators to guide people. People may have ideas and may be struggling between looks, our job will be to help them pull together and edit those looks and ideas.

AS: India is in a very interesting phase. I think we are entering a design revolution.

WHAT IS YOUR STYLE MANTRA?

RG: I am passionate about art, space and form. If I bring all three together, I have a topical piece of furniture which gives me the opportunity to have art when I don't have a wall.

LK: Easy living. It's about good design every day. You should not wait for a party to lay the table.

WHAT ACCORDING TO YOU THE BIGGEST DESIGN DISASTER?

RG: I have always been attracted to the animal form and have been using it in inlays and my work. However, design houses furnishing excessive adornments in exaggerated animal forms in defiance to the aesthetics puts me off.

LK: Overly designed spaces and visual imbalance of materials, colour and proportion.

Also, spaces designed without keeping in mind the people who will use them and Italianate sofas sitting with Ganesha bric-à-brac.



UNDERSTANDING THE SPACE (Anti-clockwise from top) A leather wall designed by Roohshad Shroff; Shroff's take on a modern space, playing with the flooring scheme; a spiral staircase by Shroff; and Ashesh Shah's take on modern storage space using natural material.