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An Understated Luxury

PHOTOGRAPHY: SASKIYA ZACHARIAH

Created to appeal to people with varying tastes, the design of a show flat is like walking a tight-rope. It can't be too bland, it can't be very edgy. Potential buyers must be able to mentally transplant themselves and their lifestyle into this space. Fulfilling aspirations is also on the check list. Some clever design ideas which make buyers go 'Aha!' must also be incorporated, for firming up renovation plans for their own apartments. Design details can make or break a show flat, so drama is introduced even in transition spaces. Foyers, balconies, all receive special interest. Juggling all these requirements, Rooshad Shroff strode into what turned out to be a blizzard of activity.

Using an unusual vocabulary, Rooshad Shroff designs a show flat for Oberoi Realty in Mumbai, moving away from the in-your-face typology of most projects of this kind. Subtle, understated, it is design that rules as brands take a backseat, finds Devyani Jayakar.



Rooshad Shroff



TEAM: Khushali Chawda, Niyati Singh, Dhruvin Shah



In the living room, Rooshad's own C chairs created in traditional joinery find a place. Facing them is a cluster of small coffee tables with marble bases and solid brass tops. In varying heights, they offer the flexibility of being placed in different configurations, as desired. A leather border has been added to the carpet, driving its luxury quotient up a notch.



There was much shouting and screaming, as the large teams worked overtime to clock many man hours. The work was handed to different agencies and then peaced together. It was quite a nightmare, as the flat had to be ready for a Diwali launch," laughs Roostad. If the project was like working in a pressure cooker, he betrays no sign of it now.

That the 1,675 sq ft, three-bedroom project had to be completed in 45 days would seem to have necessitated off the shelf 'buying and styling' which Roostad says he steers away from. "But since I design furniture, the R&D was already done...no fresh research was required," he says. The time factor also ensured that there was no scope

for changes. Everything had to happen really fast. Maybe the clients expected me to just "go shopping," especially given the time restraints. They certainly didn't expect me to "design" everything. But this is what I enjoy and bring to the table. I'm not into buying ready furniture and artefacts and then putting them together to style a space, which many other architects and designers are good at," says Roostad. With good reason. Everything in this show flat for Oberoi Realty is made to measure and is a showcase of what Indian craftsmen can do, right from the furniture to the soft furnishings.

The palette is largely one of natural materials and includes teak, brass, marble,

dark wood and leather. The tile format has been used in marble, leather and wood for the paneling of various surfaces. Silk, hand embroidery and fine cashmere for the soft furnishings and the throws on the beds add to the air of quiet luxury. The designs on the cushions look like a graphic, as Roostad has steered away from the traditional 'pais and bootis' of Indian embroidery, creating, instead, striking geometric or abstract patterns. All the lighting has come from MoMA in New York. A playful one is the Lumio, which masquerades as an elegant hardcover book bound in laser-cut wood when shut. When opened, it magically transforms into a sculptural light illuminated by a high-performing LED.

Using a tile format, a variety of textures are added throughout the apartment as wall claddings, with different materials and techniques. Using concave and convex tiles, their three-dimensional nature adds a play of light through the day, creating a range of shadow patterns and enhancing the textures on the wall.



'In the master bedroom, leather tiles adorn the headboard of the bed as well as the shutters of the wardrobe. Of these, the 3-D ones took 10 hours each to make.'

Lumio was born from San Francisco-based designer Max Gunawan's fascination with the functional potential of origami and his desire to create a flexible lighting solution that adapts to the user's needs.

Using a tile format, different textures are added throughout the apartment as wall claddings, using different materials and techniques. Using concave and convex tiles, their three-dimensional nature adds a play of light through the day, creating a range of shadow patterns enhancing the textures on the wall. At the entrance, 200 wood cut tiles adorn a wall, each tile having taken six hours to make.

In the living room, Rooshad's own C chairs find a place. 'I've designed pieces with traditional join-

ery, so there are no screws or hinges,' he says. Facing them is a cluster of small coffee tables with a marble base and a solid brass top. In varying heights, they offer the flexibility of being placed in different configurations, as desired. A leather border has been added to the carpet, driving its luxury quotient up a notch.

At the dining table, the iconic Wishbone chairs by Danish designer Carl Hansen make a statement with their distinctive Y-shaped back. Echoing the tiles at the entrance, the adjacent wall is clad with 1,300 hand carved marble tiles, each of which took eight hours to carve. While each piece has a three-dimensional design with a dip, they create a larger pattern when put together, with the accom-

panying textures and play of light and shadows. In the master bedroom, leather tiles adorn the headboard of the bed as well as the shutters of the wardrobe. 'Of these, the 3-D ones took 10 hours each to make,' says Rooshad.

Rooshad has indulged in experimentation with materials. Leather is used in different ways, from upholstery to different weaving techniques inspired by basket weaving. This is seen on the headboard in the bedroom where the leather is pleated in two directions, creating a gridded effect. In another bedroom a tighter, more traditional basket weave is used as the cladding for the side tables which have a leather top.

Not a stylist or a decorator, Rooshad's strength is



as a designer. Communicating the language of the brand was facilitated by the fact that he and the client shared the same clean-line aesthetic. "I had the leeway of expressing myself, but kept one eye on the fact that potential buyers shouldn't be intimidated by the space. The thumb rule is that people usually spend 15-20% of the total value of the apartment on the interiors," he says.

It also helped that the pragmatics of running a house are taken away in a show flat. "So enter 200-kg monolithic marble side tables in one of the bedrooms, without a flustered housewife asking how anyone is going to sweep under them," he laughs. The black cube on one side of the bed is made of Bheshara marble, while the white one on the other




The playful light on the bedside is the Lumio from MoMA, which masquerades as an elegant hardcover book bound in laser-cut wood when shut. When opened, it magically transforms into a sculptural light illuminated by a high-performing LED.

show flat



is in Makrana. An experiment in pushing the crafts, they were made by artisans from Jaipur who are accustomed to carving figurines of deities. 'They didn't want to touch this kind of work. It took a lot of convincing,' says Rooshad.

With this intense level of customisation, there are still subtleties which come across only on closer examination. Devoid of bling, the aesthetic is a mature, understated one which celebrates Indian craftsmanship, with forms that are at home in a contemporary vocabulary. All the furniture pieces are handmade from solid wood, using traditional joinery devoid of metal fasteners. Says Rooshad: 'What I enjoy is engaging the crafts. I don't just create souvenirs for tourists.' 

There are 200 kg of monolithic marble side tables in one of the bedrooms. The black cube on one side of the bed is made of Bheslana marble, while the white one on the other is in Makrana.

