

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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THE MOST BEAUTIFUL HOMES IN THE WORLD

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BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE DOING BEAUTIFUL THINGS
IN THE HAMPTONS OF MUMBAI



AD 100
THE MOST INFLUENTIAL
ARCHITECTS AND
INTERIOR DESIGNERS IN
THE SUBCONTINENT



Architect Rooshad Shroff and designer Kunal Rawal at the latter's flagship space on the first floor of the Rhythm House building, the former home of the iconic music store that downed its shutters in 2016.

TEXT: RHEA VARGHESE,
PHOTO: TALIB CHITALWALA



HE'S GOT RHYTHM

Three years since Mumbai's iconic music store Rhythm House shut shop, its first floor reopens as fashion designer Kunal Rawal's new flagship store

Music may have little connection with the new store's merchandise, but it certainly acted as a catalyst for the space's new owner. "I am passionate about music, and being a Bombay [sic] boy, one of the ways to connect with music was through Rhythm House. It was, therefore, the first—and probably only—location that came to my mind," says fashion designer Kunal Rawal, about the setting for his flagship store, which opened its doors in January. The eponymous store comes nearly two years after he set up his first studio in Juhu. This space, though, more closely mirrors the underlying ethos of Rawal's design—a contemporary take on the traditional. "It embodies the philosophy of my label, which is a perfect amalgamation of heritage, luxury and the industrial," says the designer.

To translate his vision into three-dimensional reality, Rawal hired architect Rooshad Shroff. "After having closely studied his work—a balance of luxury and creativity—I was certain that I wanted him to design the space," he says. Shroff's and Rawal's creative spirits are clearly aligned and both their artistic expressions feature anti-trend, multifunctional design; texture play; and experimentation with embroidery and metalwork.

With neo-traditionalism being one of the primary elements of Rawal's design, feeling connected to the heritage structure was important to him. He and Shroff were both keen on keeping the bones of the structure intact. From the exterior facade to the high teak-wood ceiling, the wooden floor to the cantilevered balcony with a panoramic view of Kala Ghoda, they tried to restore as many of the original design elements as possible.

As for incorporating Rawal's aesthetics into the space, Shroff says, "It was very important to design a store that reflected the brand's vision." And what could be a clearer reflection of that vision than a space that could transform, just like Rawal's designs do? The tricky feat was achieved by fitting the 25-foot-high ceiling with motor-driven, trapeze-like garment racks that could be positioned up or down, depending upon the need for space. Rawal's assorted design influences were further incorporated in the floor studs arranged to create hidden Morse-code messages like "Make your mother proud" (a tag line of his label); a stiff-fabric-lined table embroidered with French knots; cabinets and metal drawers sourced from military bases across the world; metal accents in the form of wrought-iron claddings; and a collapsible cage-like changing room with a grid formation.

Now, with sunlight streaming in from the glass windows and dramatically lighting up the oxblood and military-green accents, Rhythm House in its new avatar hits the right notes for Rawal's designs, which hang on the garment racks, combining luxury and traditionalism in a fresh, modern manifestation. ♦