

# INSIDE OUTSIDE

ISSUE 195

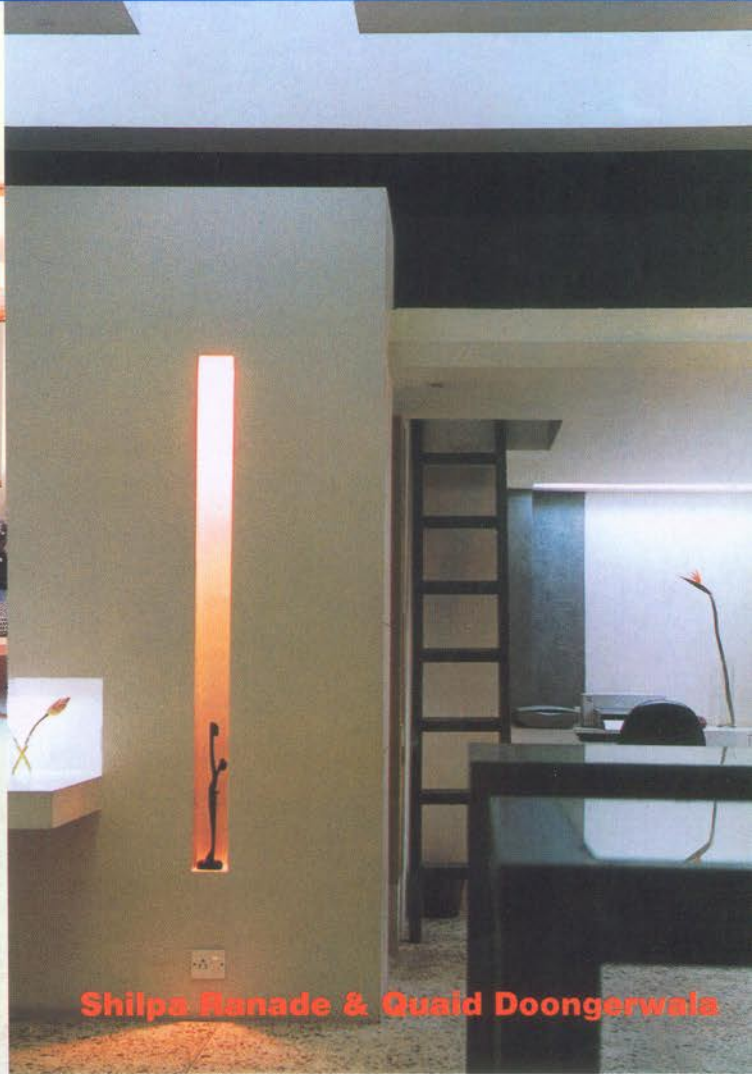
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**Kiran Kapadia**



**Shilpa Ranade & Quaid Doongerwala**

**designer**  
of the year 2000

**spaces**

award winner

architects

Shilpa Ranade & Quaid Doongerwala,  
Quaid Doongerwala Associates

carpet area

840 sq ft floor area,  
180 sq ft mezzanine

office-cum-studio

Mumbai

photographs

Quaid Doongerwala

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**designer**  
of the year 2000

**S**hilpa Ranade and  
Quaid Doonger-  
wala win the

INSIDE OUTSIDE Designer

of the Year Award 2000, for

commercial spaces.

# Contemporary design

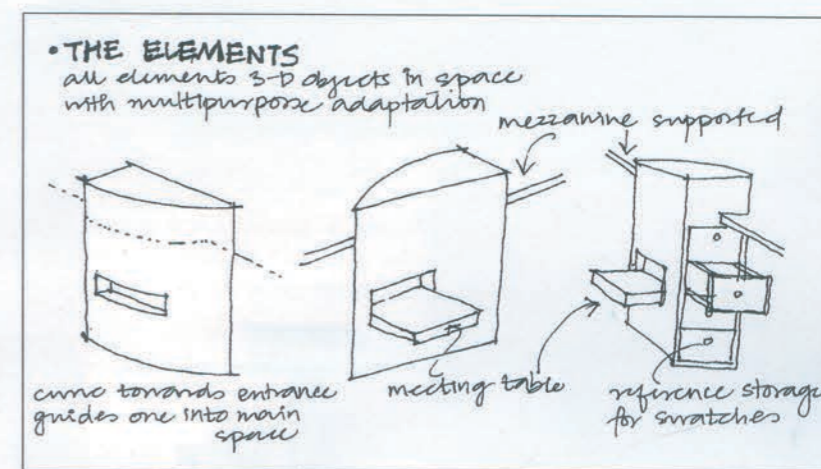


THE BRIEF

A metal workshop occupying one bay in an industrial estate was to be transformed into an office-cum-multipurpose studio, for a firm supplying embroidery and leatherwork to European haute couture designers.

One of the basic requirements of the client, Arun Jyothi, was **flexibility of use**. Being a new office with possibilities of expansion in various areas, it was important that the planning allowed for ongoing

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**PREVIOUS SPREAD LEFT & ABOVE:** The design section, the reference catalogue storage and the access ladder to the mezzanine, seen from across the inspection tables.

**PREVIOUS SPREAD RIGHT:** A play of coloured planes connect the reception, the design section and the inspection area, as one looks in from the entrance.

**OPPOSITE:** A frontal view of the curved wall that is the pivot of the design. The wall divides the reception, the design section and the multipurpose area. It holds a meeting table and a sculpture, and provides storage for reference catalogues within its wall. Suspended panels with concealed lights give a floating effect to the ceiling.



changes. The essential set of functions comprised: a large multipurpose area, a smaller working space for guest designers, an office for the proprietor, a general reception-cum-waiting area and the services (toilet and pantry). The activities in the multipurpose space included periodic checking of embroidery swatches on specifically designed inspection tables, packing material for export, a reference library of swatches, modelling for the items designed and meetings with guest designers. Also to be provided was a mezzanine for storage. The studio area would at various times accommodate between two to 15 people at a time. An important defining issue for the design was the **stringent budget**. An implicit requirement was that the design should project the image of the company — a contemporary design studio.

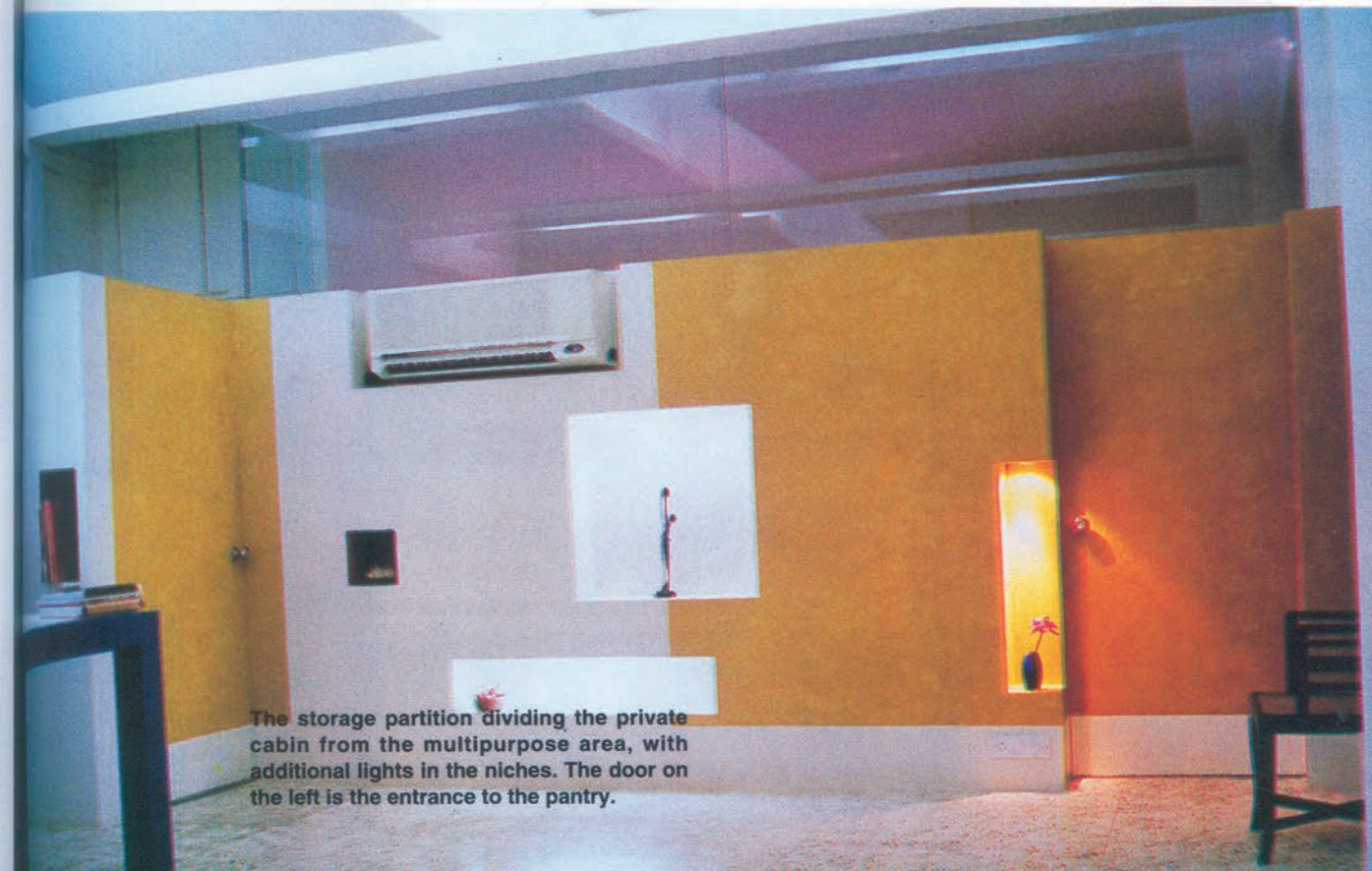
Working in an industrial bay offered its own limitations and possibilities. Bye-laws and service specifications required that the existing doors and toilet locations could not be changed. The long, rectangular box-like area had openings only at one end and very little natural light and ventilation was available. It also offered little connection to the outside. On the other hand, the high ceiling of the space could be manipulated to make the space seem much larger than its actual size.

### THE DESIGN CONCEPT

The aim was to design areas for specific functions within the large shell of the industrial bay, while keeping the sense of its oneness intact.

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The storage partition seen from inside the cabin. Spots of yellow light within the general white light create areas of warmth.

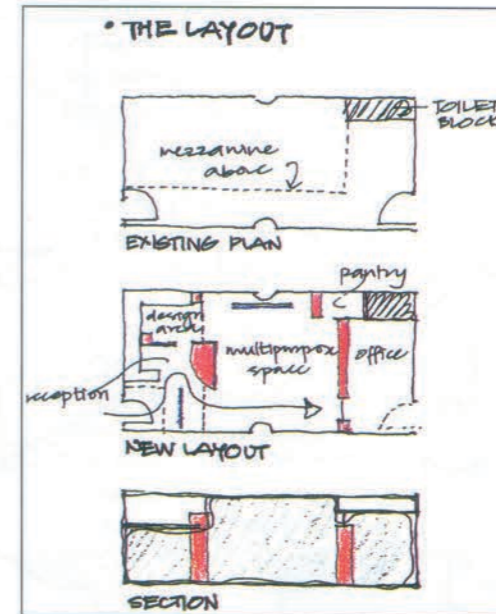


The storage partition dividing the private cabin from the multipurpose area, with additional lights in the niches. The door on the left is the entrance to the pantry.

A self-lit inspection table with coloured niches in the background.



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**award winner**

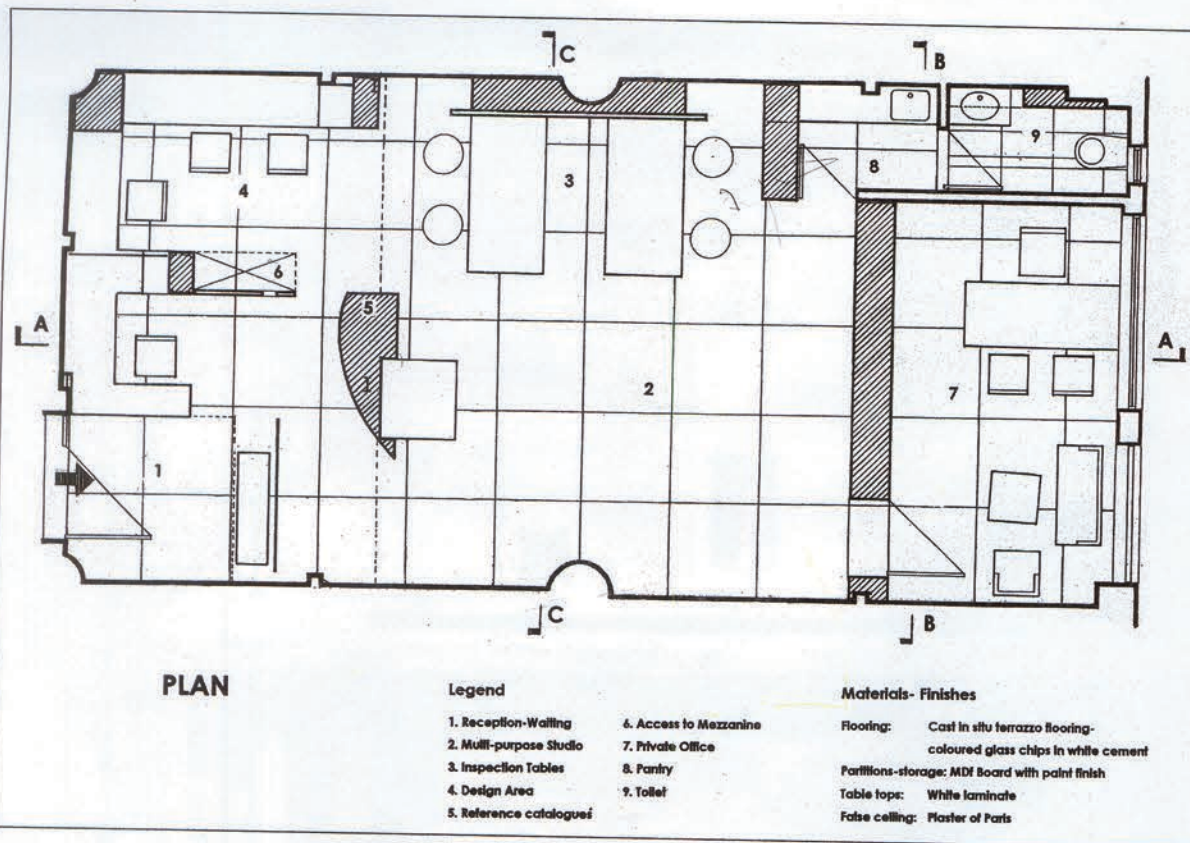
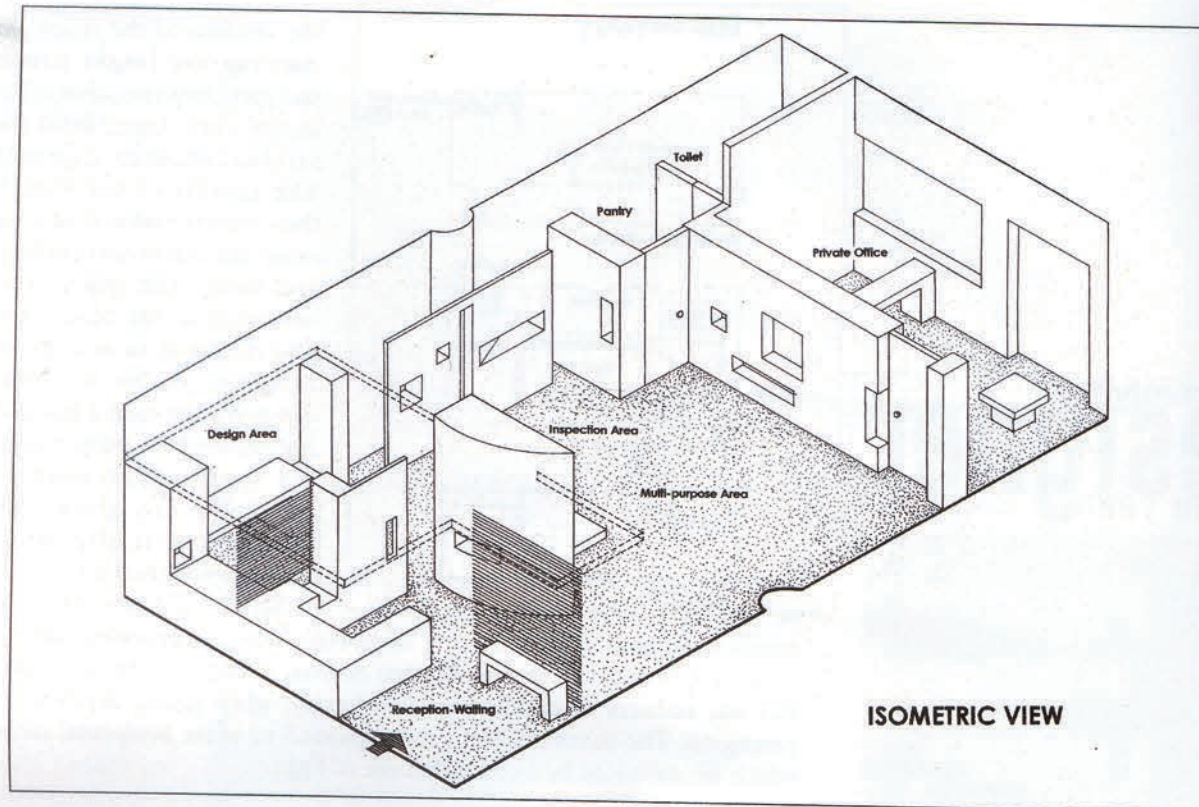
We configured the space by inserting low height screens and partitions that divide, but at the same time, hold the various functions together. The totality of the shell is thus maintained and one can sense the continuous ceiling, and hence the space, from any point in the office. This also results in an articulation of spaces so that the office can accommodate a fluctuating number of people without appearing too empty or too full at any given time. No structural alterations have been carried out.

All the partitioning elements also combine the function of storage, which is provided partly in closed cupboards and partly on open shelves. Combining the storage in this way **reduces visual clutter** considerably, while giving depth to the partitions. The partitions are then exploited to make sculptural niches which are enhanced by a controlled use of light.



The multi-purpose area seen across the inspection tables.

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The elements that structure the space are designed as three-dimensional objects, which energise the space on all sides through their tectonic, functional and visual data. An example of this is the central curved object that works as a pivot in the shell. While the basic function of this object is to divide the main working space from the entrance area, it is taken farther and many uses are incorporated into it. The curved edge of this object faces the reception area and directs a visitor into the main space. This curved edge also has a niche, which is used as a display counter. On the inside, the object holds a small meeting table and a vertical light fitting with a sculpture. Within the mass of the object is generous storage, which is accessed from its third side and is used as a catalogue library of the sample swatches. In this way each object is suffused with information within its limited mass. The spatial structure and the elements constituting it were designed by making a number of study models.

One of the constraints that played on the design was the tight budget. To adhere to this, we selected the materials carefully, and improvised to get the desired effects: all the partition elements are made in MDF and painted a basic white, and the flooring is cast in situ terrazzo.

Since our choice of materials was restricted to a limited palette, we have made colour play a central role for enriching the interiors. Colours have been used as spatial elements and the choice of colours and colour pairing is based on the understanding of their qualities of depth and shallowness, achieved after much experimentation. Hence we used

colour as an additional tool of spatial manipulation, to overcome the limitations of the 'given' shell of the interiors. The colours are applied as planes, which float above the floor and turn around corners to define spaces. This exaggerates the sense of layering of the planes, thereby increasing the apparent depth of the space. Hence while on one hand, the space is kept unified and uncluttered in plan to allow for maximum use of space and flexibility, the colour planes ensure that the space does not become dull and one-dimensional. The palette of colours is inspired by traditional miniature paintings. Coloured glass chips embedded in the white terrazzo of the floor ricochet these colours too. The terrazzo floor, which extends all over the office and studio, becomes one of the unifying elements of the design.

Lighting is an integral part of the spatial structure and does not appear in the form of loose fittings. As a general concept, the lighting for all working areas is white light, while niches with indirect yellow light form focus centres, setting off the whiteness and picking up the colours. For example, the multipurpose area is lit by floating panels of light, which order the space while providing the indirect

lighting required for work.

These various elements and techniques of manipulating space have made the office look more spacious and larger than its area would indicate. It has a crisp, youthful and refreshing look, which goes with the image of the office in particular, and the fashion industry in general. **0**

