

**THIS PAGE** *Wood panelled walls create the circulation niche, housing the elevator and the white staircase. Transparent railing and white treads give the stairs a light and airy feel, gliding upwards like steps to paradise.*

**OPPOSITE PAGE** *Note the glass drops that outline the ceiling ambient illumination. The crystals glint under the glare of the light creating flitting patterns in the space.*



## ELEGANCE IN WOOD

Architect Sourabh Gupta of Archohm Consultants Private Ltd. has designed a residence with an unassuming façade. It unwraps into an open and large house that speaks eloquently in an elegant and aesthetic vocabulary of wood.

TEXT BY K PARVATHY MENON • PHOTOGRAPHS HUMAYUN KHAN COURTESY THE ARCHITECT



Strolling past the Agra House, a large bungalow in an upscale Agra locality, one cannot decipher much about its interiors, save the notion that something contemporary and elegant lies behind the blank facade. A bold facade, composed of a thirty feet wooden square, complimented by a perforated inner skin of white, through which peek translucent masses is all that is seen by the eye from the outer confines, leaving one guessing and intrigued about the space within.

As you step through the landscaped perimeters to the cool interiors, the subtle and elegant tones of the volumes amaze you. No bright colours or bold design strokes greet you at the foyer, instead a volume draped in white and shades of brown ushers you inside; even the art pieces adorning the walls use a similar earthy language. The spaces enclosed are huge volumes balanced by the use of material on the vertical and horizontal

surfaces.

The client for Agra House sought a simple, elegant and contemporary space to replace their earlier traditional home, placing no constraints on time, budget or energy. As the design team at Archohm Consultant Pvt Ltd explained, "One has to only dare to dream and with us there is a good chance of it converting to reality".

After much brain-storming, the Agra House a 6000 square feet home, catering to the needs of a family of six members and five service staff was born.

What more could a design team want - the perfect client, unlimited resources and very brief guidelines. The team planned the residential requirements on four levels, maintaining privacy for the clients and separate circulation channels for the service needs. The basement houses the parking and electrical services, the ground floor and first floor have been kept for the public and ▶



private spaces of the client while the top floor encompasses the domestic help and other services. Vertical circulation has been planned through staircases and an elevator, with separate routes for domestic and service help.

A 16 feet large wooden door steers us into a double heighted entrance foyer with a floating glass bridge that opens into a lounge, which is a junction of vertical and horizontal movements. A panelled wall in wooden shingles guides us further inside, continuing from the entrance foyer to the lounge where it becomes the focus wall housing the elevator and a white stairwell. The space is washed in bright natural sunlight streaming through the large span of clear glass glazing that opens into the landscape beyond. Floral sofas with

**THIS PAGE TOP** The double heighted space is enveloped in a white floor, ceiling and walls with inserts of wooden planes. The wooden panel continues to the elegant foyer, acting as a guide to the visitor. **BOTTOM**

The foyer lounge is akin to a reception at a hotel, facing the lush green landscape, the large clear glass wall eliminates any visual boundary between inside and outside, merging the large volume with the verdant expanse.





**OPPOSITE PAGE** The corridor is a balanced act where the different elements echo in different planes; wood echoes as a wall rack and vertical panels while the cubed cut-outs in the wooden partitions are echoed as red alphabet blocks on the wall.



accents of red, add a subtle excitement balancing the sombre elegance of white walls and wooden panels. A corridor beyond the foyer detailed in a simple and elegant expression of wooden elements balanced with white expanses and accentuates, leads to the private ground floor spaces, the bedroom and the family room.

A landscaped courtyard briefly demarcates the private spaces; the bedroom and family room on one side and the formal entertainment spaces on the other side, while the dining room and living room open into this lush square. This introverted layout around the central court not only controls light and ventilation but also defines the views and privacy of the spaces.

The parent's bedroom is a large volume exuding richness and grandeur in the similar language of wood and brown shades for wall panels and focus walls that is seen throughout the house.

Entrance to the living room is marked by glass crystals that glint flirtatiously under the ambient lighting they perimeter. Wood in different expressions, echo in the fenestrations and wall accents of the living room and the dining room, a language in continuum.

The foyer leads to the kitchen from the other end, a space that boasts of the latest trends and designs in kitchen systems. This practical space is spread out in ▶



black and white with translucent partitions, which give a minimalist expression to the room.

The ground-floor plan demarcates space with precision, but continuity is maintained by the connecting open spaces like foyers and lounges. A common point in all spaces is the expanse of the volume; large clear heights in combination with white and transparent vertical planes create an ambient feeling of scale comparable to large open grounds which are toned in homely strokes by the deliberate and articulated use of wood and shades of brown.

The open staircase leads to the upper floor which houses the private bedrooms, family lounges, the prayer room and landscaped terraces. The master bedroom suite has an adjoining lounge and bathroom with a walk-in dresser; the same plan being replicated in the other family bedrooms. Brown tones once again, dominate the decor in the bedrooms, in the form of flooring and highlights, balanced by the large volume and white walls. Unlimited amount of funds has ensured bathrooms that boast of fittings and finishes from world over. White and transparent partitions for the shower cubicles is subtly contrasted with black accentuates and a focus wall, reducing the volume of the space visually.

The floor also contains a 26 feet tall meditation room, where the length is emphasised by a yellow focus wall at the far end. Fresh sunlight filtering through the shaded court, traces patterns in the volume giving a ▶





**THIS PAGE TOP** The kitchen designed in the latest trend and technology deviates from the brown wooden tones found everywhere in the house, and instead presents a black and white minimalist theme.

**BOTTOM** White planes in the large volume increase the feeling of space, well balanced with the warm wooden flooring that is spread out in the room.

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Note the geometry echoing in the upholstery and wall panels. Colours compliment and contrast each other to present a pleasing picture in a singular frame.



calm and relaxed setting to the space.

The floor is punctuated with independent terraces and multipurpose spaces that provide private escapes or interactive moments for the family. The designer has allowed nature in the form of filtered light coming through large expanses of glass walls; the shaded central court plays out a constant changing drama in the foyers and lounges, enhancing the spatial quality.

The top-most floor that houses the servant quarters and service rooms has been laid out compactly, and the circulation route developed in a manner to keep the owners insulated from unnecessary human traffic or view.

The layout of the spaces and zoning of the functions ensures privacy in the complex composition of spaces flowing into each other using a singular language in the way of materials and decor. A gradual play of views is engineered through fenestrations designed in a deliberate fashion as skylights, north lights and structural glazing. The house unfolds as a story through its

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Rich materials employed render a sense of grandeur to the simple bathroom.

**BOTTOM** The facade has an introverted opening into a central court; a complex massing of wooden planes, white planes and a transparent mass shading the external spaces and the living rooms within.



circulation routes and views.

Agra House augments the high profile skyline of the locale in a distinct vocabulary of its own; though there were no limits to money or energy, the architect, by avoiding a vulgar display of grandeur and opulence has presented an elegant picture in a nondescript framework. As said by Archohm Consultants, "One has to only dare to dream," and the dream has materialised as an ideal design, a dwelling where stories happen, life's little moments take place... ■