

ARCHITECTURE+DESIGN

A N I N D I A N J O U R N A L O F A R C H I T E C T U R E



The Modern Maharaja

SHANTANU GARG



SYNERGY IN DESIGN

AMRITA GUHA, JOYA NANDURDIKAR X ABHIMANYU DALAL • HUZEFA RANGWALA,
JASEM PIRANI X PRIYANKA THAKER • VIKAS SONI X MARIE-ANNE OUDEJANS

Untitled Design x Abhimanyu Dalal Architects

AMRITA GUHA, JOYA NANDURDIKAR & ABHIMANYU DALAL



Abhimanyu Dalal



Amrita Guha and Joya Nandurdikar

What unexpected event or realisation led you to consider collaboration with a potential competitor?

Untitled Design: Mr. Dalal is not a competitor, he is a mentor to us. We've completed three projects together, and it's been an enriching experience. It feels like returning to college, allowing us to grow both as designers and professionals.

Abhimanyu Dalal: Over the years I have come to realise that design consultants bring to the project a specialised value that we, as architects, cannot achieve. Interior designers Amrita Guha and Joya Nandurdikar of Untitled Design add a layer to the architecture that enhances the quality of interior space making. On one of our earlier projects, we approved furniture that the owners liked. But when it was placed in the rooms, they were too large and did not look right. We realised that the standard dimensions were not as standard as we had imagined. It was time to collaborate with an interior designer.

Of course, they bring more to the project than just furniture. I often think architects are, by and large, colour-blind and use colours and textures in a limited way so as to let the architectural quality speak for itself. However, over time, it has dawned on me that the palette can be extended to add to the architectural quality.

How did you overcome your initial reservations about working with someone in the same field? How has this collaboration redefined your understanding of your own creative process?

Untitled Design: My initial reservations stemmed from a place

INSTANT INSIGHTS ft Untitled Design

- **Describe your collaboration in one word:** Catalytic.
- **Who's the bigger perfectionist?** Him. Definitely.
- **Morning meetings or late-night brainstorming sessions?** Morning meetings.
- **What's the most surprising thing you learned about each other?** The depth of his involvement in every aspect of a project. For him, it could be my willingness to learn.
- **If you could choose another designer or artist to collaborate with, who would it be?** Manjunath Kamath and Samanta Bhatra Mehta

of respect for Mr. Abhimanyu's renowned status in our industry. His reputation for creating beautiful architectural forms and his years of experience naturally positioned him as a captain of the ship. Clients look up to him, and he makes decisions on how the practice should run accordingly. As we worked together, I found myself absorbing invaluable insights into the nuances of residential design from a client's perspective, the art of setting professional boundaries, and the intricacies of project handovers. Mr. Abhimanyu's approach to maintaining a cohesive design narrative throughout a project has been particularly enlightening.



Urban Hearth's living room is adorned with a dramatic gold leaf mural on the double-height ceiling, paired with a captivating Bocci light installation of tinted glass bubbles that cast a soft, mesmerising glow



Starting from the facade metal screens, the articulation of light and shadow has been an integral part of the narrative of how the house unfolds itself as one moves around

INSTANT INSIGHTS ft Abhimanyu Dalal Architects

■ Who's more likely to bring a wild idea to the table?

Certainly not the interior designer, as they are far too practical trying to resolve functional issues!

■ Who's the peacekeeper when opinions clash? The client.

■ Coffee or tea during design discussions? Coffee

■ Sketching on paper or digital design? Both

■ If you could choose another designer or artist to collaborate with, who would it be? Now that I have learned so much from interior designers, maybe I can do it on my own!

His practice of regular brainstorming sessions ensures a continuous flow of ideas. This collaboration has fundamentally reshaped my understanding of home design, from the initial assessment of client's needs to the final touches of space planning.

Abhimanyu Dalal: We don't consider interior design consultants as potential competitors but consider them as collaborators on the project. They add value to the architecture. Their association with

projects has given me an appreciation of the finer details that go into completing super homes. We are now able to refine the architecture to accommodate these details even before the interior designers ask us to!

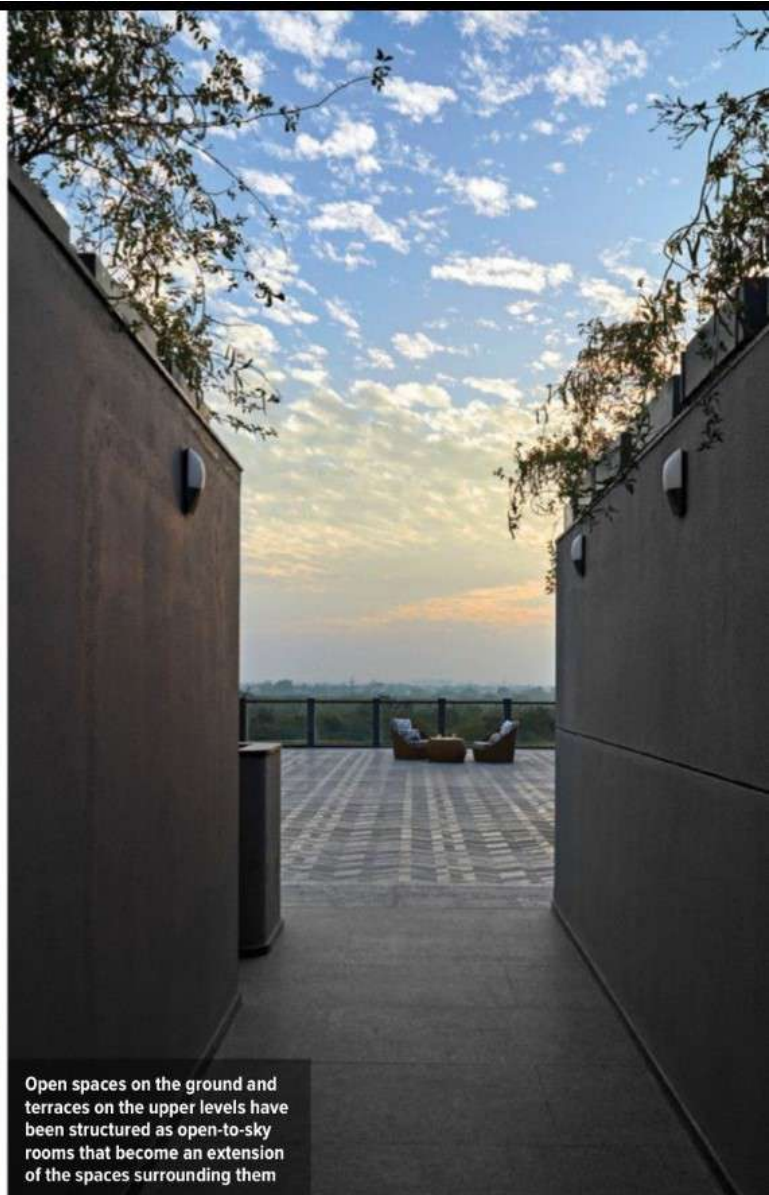
Can you share an instance where a disagreement led to an unexpected breakthrough?

Untitled Design: This project presented us with a unique challenge: an expansive wall stretching alongside a five-floor staircase. Initially, we grappled with how to prevent this from becoming a monotonous feature. Our process involved numerous brainstorming sessions, each of us bringing different ideas to the table. While it wasn't a disagreement in the traditional sense, the back-and-forth exchange of ideas pushed us to think beyond conventional solutions.

Drawing inspiration from international architectural projects, we eventually decided to incorporate a series of niches into the wall with randomly placed installations by Jaipur rugs created in collab with Furgonomics to elevate the whole space. This decision beautifully complemented the home's overall brutalist aesthetic, creating a signature element that broke up the wall's expanse without compromising the clean, minimalist palette of black, stone, and wood that defined the rest of the home. This experience taught me the value of persistent ideation and the power of finding a middle ground between different creative visions.



Spanning five stories, Urban Hearth is designed as a sanctuary for a close-knit family, offering a delicate balance between the vibrancy of urban life and the peace of nature



Open spaces on the ground and terraces on the upper levels have been structured as open-to-sky rooms that become an extension of the spaces surrounding them

Photo Credit: Ashish Sahi

Abhimanyu Dalal: Untitled Design did a lot of studies and sampling with wall textures, materials and colours to enhance the interior volumes and how they focused on the landscape around the house. There were often discussions and disagreements about the colours and the wall finishings, but in the end, they would always get their way. The effect was usually magical. However, I still feel it was the architecture and not just the wall finishes!

What aspect of your collaborator's approach do you find yourself unconsciously adopting in your solo work?

Untitled Design: Mr. Dalal's unwavering commitment to every aspect of a project has profoundly influenced my own work ethic. His insistence on defining and involving himself in every detail, no matter how small, has shown me the power of thoroughness in design. He doesn't leave anything to uncertainty. Every little nitty gritty detail has to be defined, put on paper, ideated, and executed by him. I've found myself adopting his structured planning process in my solo work, approaching each project with a more systematic mindset. This has helped me improve the efficiency of my work, and I was able to close a project sooner. It has allowed me to approach my work in a more defined manner.

Abhimanyu Dalal: Untitled Design has an interesting way of mixing

traditional and modern materials to create a contemporary but timeless interior. This has always interested me, and as we now design other projects, there is a continuous to-and-fro in the studio between ideas of materiality, modernity, and architecture.

What misconceptions about designer collaborations would you like to address?

Untitled Design: My experience collaborating with Mr. Dalal has been exceptionally positive, largely because he is a generous and secure individual. He approaches collaboration with a genuine willingness to teach and mentor, keeping his door open for questions and concerns even when they fall outside his direct responsibilities. My experience with Mr. Dalal has shown me that the most fruitful partnerships are built on mutual respect, a willingness to learn from each other, and a shared commitment to the project's success.

Abhimanyu Dalal: An area of great debate on projects is how one considers art in an interior setting.

Is art simply a decoration, or does well-curated art form a story of its own? It links the client's collection and interest to how it is placed in the architectural space to add a new dimension. There is often a misconception that the interior designer uses art as decoration, but this is not always true.