

INTERIORS

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PARAG PANDYA DESIGNS A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND PRE-FAB HOME IN NASIK



**USHA RANGARAJAN'S
SUSTAINABLE OFFICE IN PUNE**

PLUS

Vipul Soni • Lalit Dalmia • Amit Maitra & Kallol Baroi
Rahul Sen • Aarti Aggarwal • Dilip Panchal
Raaj Sree Ram Siddamsetty



View of the atrium as seen from the entrance of the office.



A PASSIONATE CREATION

AR. USHA RANGARAJAN EXCELS CREATIVELY IN BLENDING SUSTAINABLE FEATURES AND FUNCTIONALITY, WHILE DOING UP HER OWN OFFICE IN PUNE.

Text: Bindu Gopal Rao

Photographs: Anand Diwadkar

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ustainable design' lies at the core of the architectural and interior design work that 'Landmark Design Group' undertakes. When they decided to build their own stand-alone dream Design Studio for their 30 odd member team, the wish-list was quite endless and highly ambitious. The challenge was also to ensure all this was to be accomplished within a relatively small piece of land of 2,700 sq.ft.

The brief the team had in mind was to have an office that was open, free, un-cluttered, natural, unpretentious and timeless. Having worked on large scale green building projects with emphasis on solar energy and passive architectural principles, the team was excited by the challenge of successfully implementing these within the confines of this much smaller site.

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The interplay of volumes is seen in the office especially in the higher level.

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The various workplaces at staggered levels are tied together by the atrium.





4 The meeting room sees the use of solid colours.

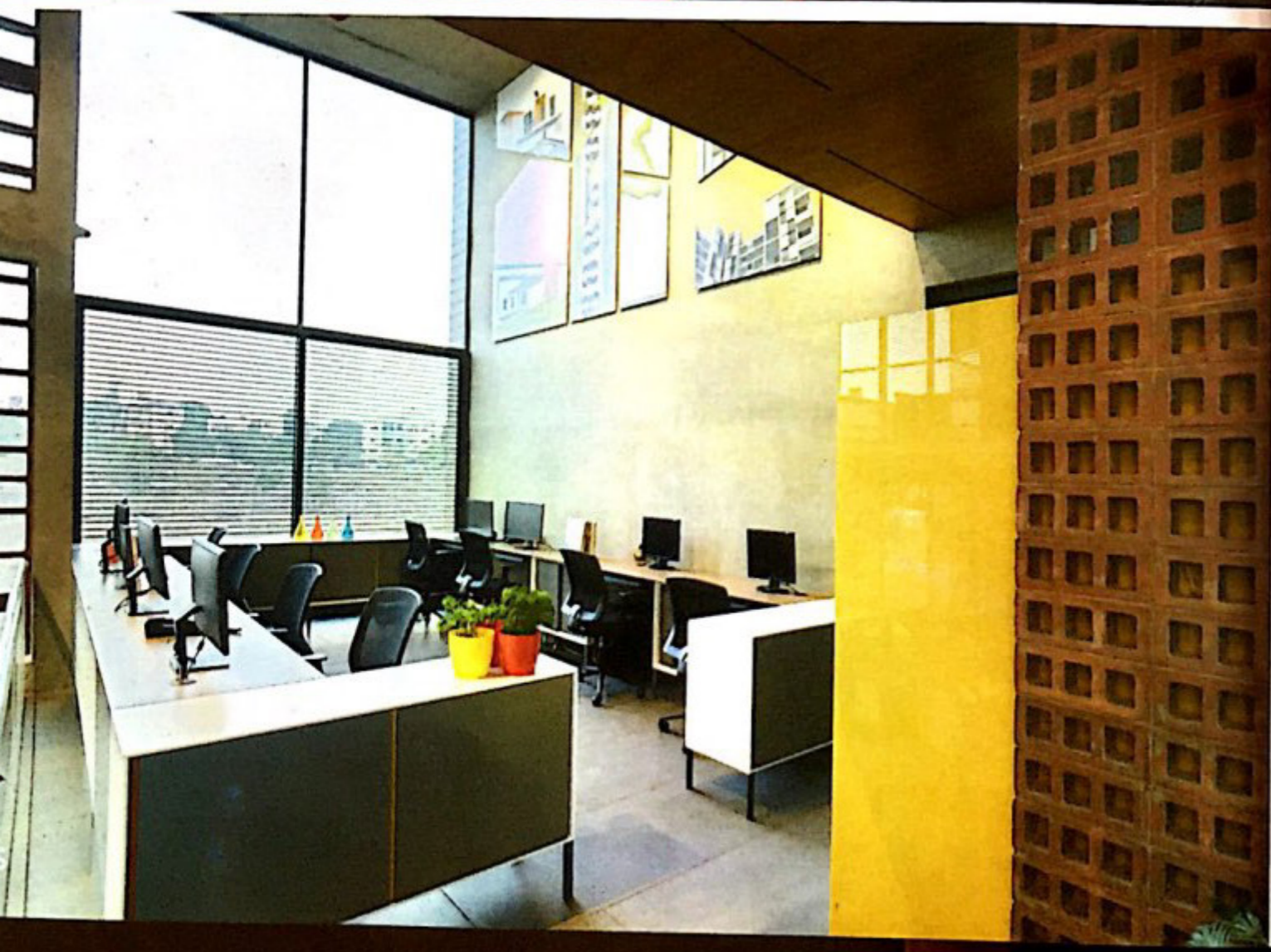
5 The office stations see a juxtaposition of contrasting materials.

6 View of the reception verandah as seen from the gate.

7 The workspaces in the office are designed to have a clean contemporary line.



Located in a newly developing suburb of Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune, this plot, despite its size, had two major pluses, the orientation of the plot being North East facing and the expanse of green meadow opposite. "The key factors that determined the evolution of the design were daylight and natural ventilation. Nothing infuses a space with as much energy and positivity, as natural light and fresh air. As we were scaling up, we did not want to lose-out on the close-knit interconnectedness indispensable to the vibrancy of our firm, by being physically departmentalized," says Usha. The plan is a direct resultant of this desire with three floors staggered across a central atrium at split-levels enables visual and social interaction across the floors.



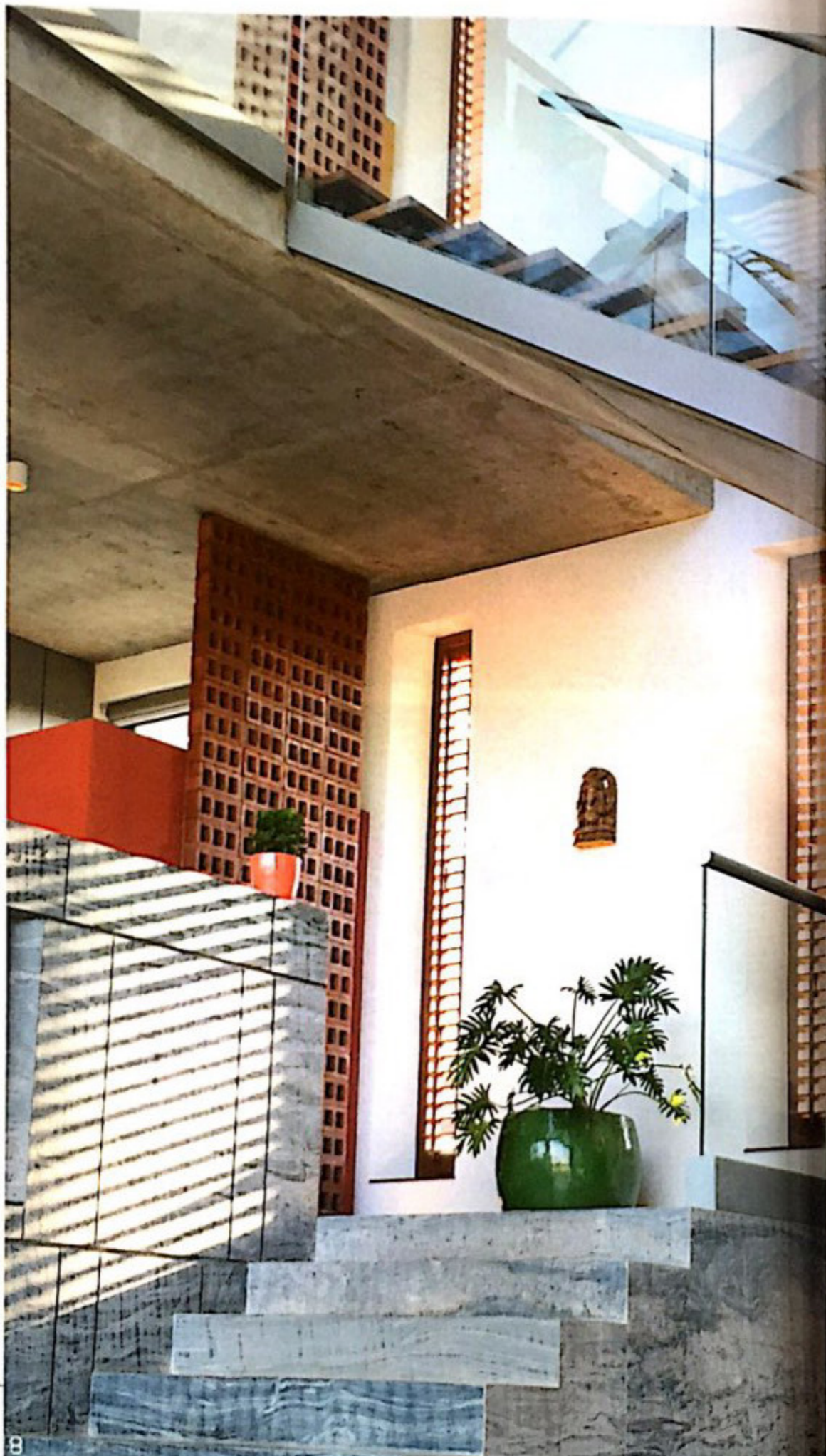
"In addition, rather than creating an insular, introverted cocoon-like enclosure for ourselves, we chose to be happy participants in the bustle of the street, whether working at our desks, or enjoying a coffee break," adds Usha. Except for a "national" main door, the Studio is unenclosed and fully permeable; there are no doors other than those enclosing the meeting room and the restrooms.

The ground floor has atrium where the floor inlaid with a pattern composed of natural ground covers and murum (the locally available hard soil), opens out to a verandah that functions as the 'reception' area with benches made of granite slabs supported on wooden blocks, as well as

an informal meeting table. A meeting room that opens on to a dense tropical garden has an informal feel to it, with its bright red table, the open-celled ceiling tiles lending a sense of being unconfined. The Studio is designed to have equitable, non-hierarchical work spaces. The Principal Architect too has an open nook as work space, rather than an exclusive closed cabin. A terrace with a lofted ceiling, wooden benches and green chik-blinds doubles as a break-out space and lunch area. The longer North-eastern façade on the front is largely unaffected by direct solar radiation; large windows with a provision for minimal shading in the form of movable louvered panels span wall to wall, opening out verandah like. The South-West façade that receives the most direct and low radiation is almost opaque, punctured only with narrow openings; operable wooden louvers let in the westerly breeze and can be tilted as per the sun's position in the sky.

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Sunlight streaming in through the louvered windows.



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"The unfussy, pared-down feel that we wished for our workplace led us to choosing bare, form-finished concrete for the shell, the walls, as well as, the roof. This decision set the tone for the rest of the material, as well as, the colour palette," says Usha.

Shades of grey dominate, in a variety of textures and combinations, be it the textured and patterned 'Nero-magic' granite of the atrium floor and walls, or the matte grey tiles that complement the concrete shell of the upper floors. "Teak wood, sourced from a dismantled 'wada', is used for the windows and staircase, and adds warmth to the largely grey interiors. Cheerful yellow and red accents are used in the artwork, as well as, in the free-standing partitions. A rustic Terracotta Jaali creates an interesting juxtaposition with glossy enamelled glass. Indoor plants in large green and blue ceramic pots thrive in the natural light. Surface mounted LED luminaires and track lights, as well as, bright yellow and red pendants are provided for artificial lighting. Viewed through the almost completely transparent road-facing façade in the late evening, the interiors take on an altogether different character, the textures and colours accentuated by the effect of strategically placed lighting. "Showcasing our endeavour for resource efficiency further is the earth-air tunnel heat exchanger that travels a circuitous 50 metre length underground and supplies cooled fresh air to our meeting room at a fraction of the energy consumed by an air-conditioner. An 11 ft. wide high-volume low speed fan circulates huge volumes of air for better ventilation, helping us brave the warm months without the aid of refrigerant-based air-conditioning," says Usha. A 3kw pv solar PV system powers nearly 60 per cent of the daily energy requirement. During the monsoon, rain water is collected in a tank and used as a substitute for municipal water supply, so this makes the building green as well. "Despite our constant exposure to a plethora of ideas, materials and infinite possibilities as design professionals, what gives us the greatest satisfaction is that our studio, as it took shape, is a true reflection of our core values and design sensibilities. It is also gratifying that the dream was realised with the active involvement of our long-standing associates; contractors, masons, artisans, carpenters who have shared our journey from a firm of 2 to 30 and growing," signs off Usha. ■

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The exterior façade of the office seen in the evening from the road.



AR. USHA RANGARAJAN

Established by Ar. Usha Rangarajan (M.Arch Environmental Architecture) in 1993, 3D, the team comprises of Architects, Interior designers, 3-d visualizers, and architectural assistants, apart from managerial and support staff. The nature of work for the firm includes Architecture, Interior Design, Project Management, Sustainable design and Consultancy for Environmental design, Energy simulation and Green Building certification.

LANDMARK DESIGN GROUP,
ARCHITECTS AND INTERIOR DESIGNERS
Plot No. 32, Sector No. 29
Iskon Mandir Road,
Pradhikaran
Pune 412101
+919763033222, +919822194909
landmarkdg@gmail.com
www.landmarkdesigngroup.org