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**Three enchanting hillside resorts by
SpaceMatters, New Delhi**

Resourceful Renovations

On the threshold of a young practice, Parvathi S. Rao of PSR Architecture, Bangalore, has established herself with a burgeoning portfolio.

TEXT: AMITA SARWAL PHOTOGRAPHS: ARJUN V. & RAJI S. COURTESY PSR ARCHITECTURE

LET THERE BE LIGHT!

Parvathi S Rao speaks of the Vedabh housed in an 80-year-old home that lay vacant and unattended for 12 years located alongside a congested road in north Bangalore.

The client spotted the potential and approached PSR Architecture, to convert the dwelling into a contemporary retail outlet, Vedabh, a lighting showroom, showcasing a diverse spectrum of illuminating fixtures.

The existing home comprised a living, dining, kitchen and two bedrooms with a shared bathroom. The shell and internal load bearing walls were 15" thick. There were small window casements which let minimal natural light enter, thereby causing the internal spaces to be rather dark and uninviting. It was detached from the surroundings and had no connectivity to the outside. Furthermore, the groundscape was rough-hewn and was



The previous living and dining areas were combined to form a single expansive space in order to showcase the spectrum of lights.



Rao concludes confidently.

The original teak-wood doors and windows were repurposed and used as tables and consoles to exhibit the task lights and other artefacts.

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FACT FILE

TYPOLOGY
Renovation

PROJECT
Vedabh lighting retail outlet

LOCATION
Bangalore

AREA
1500 sq. ft.

COMPLETION
2013

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM
PSR Architecture

ARCHITECT
Parvathi S. Rao

CONTRACTOR
Dinesh



A room with a view attracts passers-by.

The alteration shows the eye-catching exterior of the showroom, transformed from the original dilapidated residence.

devoid of greenery.

‘Due to years of neglect, we encountered several civil and plumbing challenges. However, we saw them as an opportunity to restore, revive and renew the dignity of this charming aged dwelling,’ says Rao.

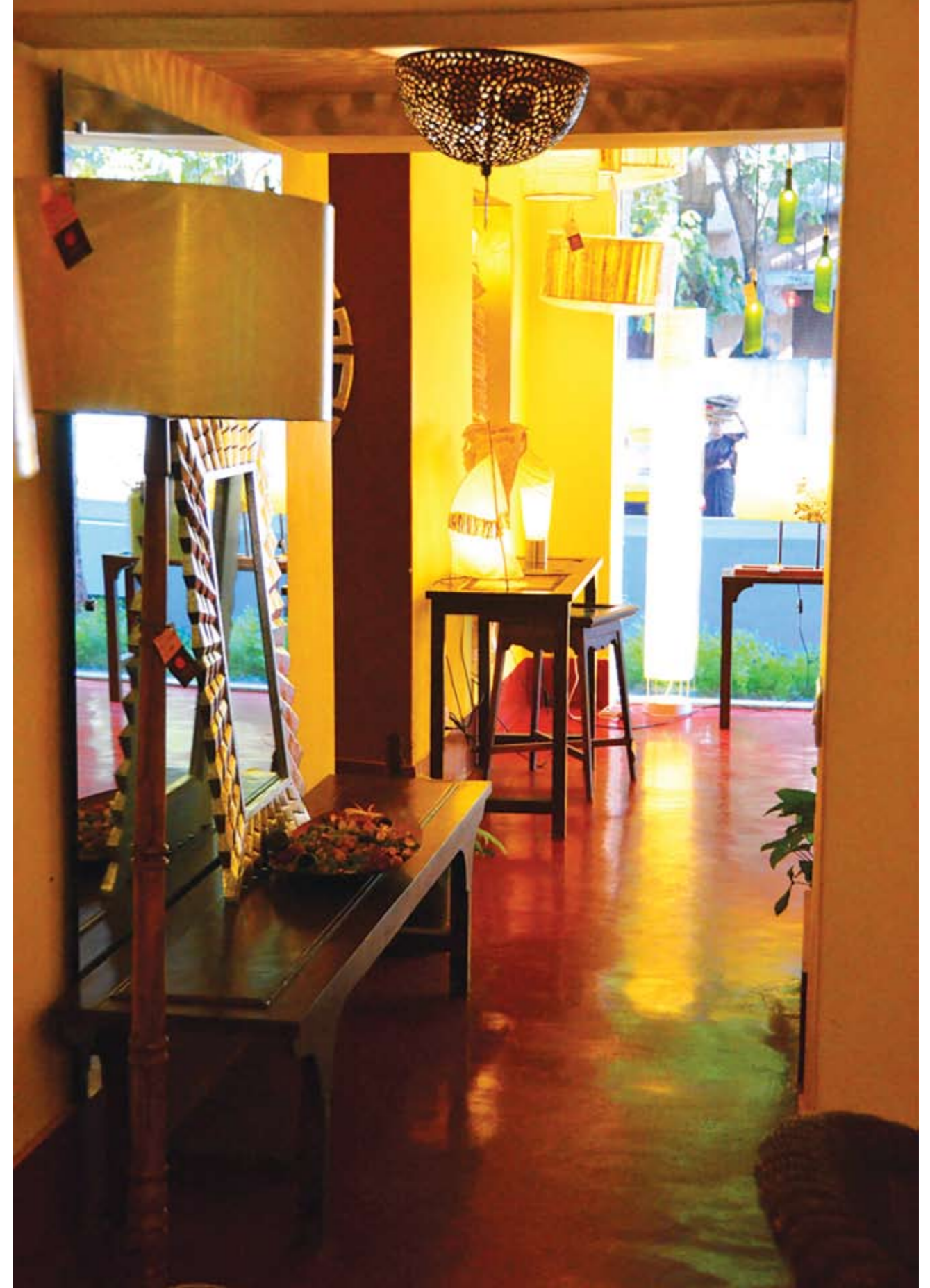
For example, in the lighting showroom, the original red oxide flooring was retained and polished. The wood of original solid teak doors and windows were recrafted and repurposed and used as display tables for the various lights and accessories.

Several structural changes

were necessitated, which included increasing and expanding the size of the road facing fenestrations. Not only did this allow for an interplay of natural and artificial light to enhance and enrich the showroom, but also gave a larger street frontage as it was imperative to incorporate a dramatic visual engagement for passers-by. The shop exterior was reskinned, thereby making the shell clean-lined and crisp. Moreover, an element of soft landscaping in the narrow walkup to the main entrance was added. Within the distinctive exterior, certain

confining walls were removed and rooms were combined to create larger volumes flowing into one another. To support the lights, slender mild steel sections were mounted on the walls and ceiling at strategic positions.

To sum up, the interior palette is a combination of ‘old meets new’, where the architect has retained and blended strategic features and elements of an age-old Bangalore house, with vibrant trendy colours and textures mingling to form an appropriate setting for the display of myriad lights.



The multihued reflections of both natural and artificial lights are captured in the red oxide flooring.

THE ARCHITECT

There are several factors that influenced Parvathi S Rao's decision to become an architect. It began with her learning Bharat Natyam at the age of seven under dancer Alarmel Valli. 'This introduced me to temple architecture in India. Thereafter, living and studying in various countries – USA, Germany, UAE, UK and India – during my formative years, gave exposure to various cultures and myriad styles of architecture telling me fascinating tales about each place's history and people. The culmination, was the inclusion of Design and Technology as part of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program in high school in Dubai, exposing me to architecture and spatial design,' reminisces Parvathi S Rao, principal of PSR Architecture, Bangalore.

Starting her undergraduate degree in London, after a year she transferred to Mumbai and graduated from Kamla Raheja (KRVIA). She worked with the Studio of Environment and Architecture under Kapil and Jayashree Bhalla, before moving to her hometown, Bangalore. 'During the next three years with Sandeep Khosla, principal architect of Khosla Associates, I learnt the importance of organisational, design, site and client management skills,' she says. Having garnered work experience, she then acquired her Master's degree in Architecture Design from the Ivy League University of Pennsylvania, USA.

'My tenure at UPenn helped shape my practice. I was mentored by renowned professors Stephan Kieran and James Timberlake of KieranTimberlake Architects. The studios were design intensive and rigorous, and focused on cutting edge theoretical and technical knowledge, equipping students with the analytical, interpretive skills required for an innovative architecture design practice,' she relates.

Inspiration for Rao has come from Indian and international luminaries like B V Doshi whose work responds to local culture, climate and material, and Japanese architect Tadao Ando's artistic use of the natural elements of light, water and wind.

'In 2011, I set up PSR Architecture. Our portfolio includes retail, residential, corporate and institutional clientele. PSR Architecture's design philosophy embraces transformation and progress, while respecting the intrinsic value of the building. The design approach and direction is dependent on the project at hand. We evaluate the physical and social context of a building and integrate it into the design process. Renovation projects can pose more challenges than new ones,' she reveals.



Parvathi S Rao, Principal Architect, PSR Architecture

The current buzzword – sustainable architecture – is a big focus at PSR. 'We strive to deliver designs that are environmentally conscious and reuse existing resources. In a large duplex apartment renovation, we installed solar panels for heating water, and salvaged the existing mild steel and utilised it for other fabrication works. At a residence on the outskirts of Bangalore, in addition to rainwater harvesting, we are completely going off the city's electric grid by using solar electricity,' she avers.

Rao considers kudos received for her work as 'a recognition of a noteworthy contribution to the profession. 'I see this as a by-product of exceptional work. We are hoping to establish a global footprint down the line, and both national and international recognition will help achieve this.'

And finally, crystal ball gazing: 'We have strong ambitions. We are looking to expand and diversify our practice and undertake a larger spectrum of work both in scale and scope. We would like to have projects which challenge our design ambitions, including pro bono work, as part of our portfolio and forge ahead with a strong focus on technology and sustainable design,'



The rust colored feature wall at the entrance showcases Karnataka's indigenous Chittara art work.

TOTAL MAKEOVER

The clients' new 1650 sq ft apartment in V+V Residence, was an empty shell, with bare walls, doors, windows and flooring, demarking a hall, kitchen, three en suite bedrooms. The affable owners approached PSR Architecture to design their 5th floor

home, giving the architect a free hand.

Upon assessing the apartment, PSR Architecture found it blessed with cross ventilation and spectacular views of south Bangalore. Tackling the building services such as the electrical and plumbing,



The open plan living space with rich earthy tones, is enhanced by the natural light flowing through the glass doors.



The third bedroom was converted to a home office/guest room, utilising the limited space.



The open plan dining space seemingly flows from the living area, yet maintains its privacy with a low ledge.



The simply attired master bedroom has generous storage space and the combination of art and fabric colours makes it cosy.

besides the structural complexities, were challenging. The beams were enormously deep and broad, projecting far beyond the lines of the walls at very odd and unexpected places. The columns were tremendously wide and occupied a large part of the wall surface, making it an arduous task to chase and integrate the electrical and plumbing layouts. PSR's design process embraced the panoramic view and natural breeze. The interior spaces were remedied to make the apartment



FACT FILE

TYPOLGY
Renovation

PROJECT
Three-bedroom apartment

LOCATION
Bangalore

AREA
1650 sq ft

COMPLETION
2012

ARCHITECTURAL FIRM
PSR Architecture

ARCHITECT
Parvathi S.Rao

CONTRACTOR
V&S Contractors


renovation



A panoramic view of the apartment makes it appear spacious.

feel spacious and engage with the outdoors. The civil changes included shifting and extending certain walls of the kitchen and master bedroom, and converting the guest bedroom into a study. A low wall was introduced into the large existing hall to create a subtle divide defining the living and dining spaces.

PSR Architecture's art work chosen for the apartment was a reflection of its Kannidiga owners. The strategically positioned and brilliance of the commissioned folk art Chittara, is indigenous to Karnataka. This mural painted on a striking rust-coloured wall, was framed by the main door wooden jamb as a welcome contrast to a dimly lit building corridor.

The wooden furniture, designed by the architect, combined harmoniously with the simple elegance of the house. The layered views of the interiors flow to the vistas of the city beyond, with strategic lighting adding a luminosity at night to an eclectic home with a smooth, logical flow of spaces. 



The children's bedroom is conducive to playing and studying, while providing individual space on different levels for each child.



The refurbished, high specification kitchen opens onto the dining space.