

DECORATING

# A vibrant Mumbai apartment where art assumes centre stage

Designed and owned by Kiran Gala & Associates, this home—an eight-year-long passion project—centres around their unanimous love for art

By Ela Das

Photography by Suleiman Merchant

Styled by Samir Wadekar

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*A set of wooden logs from Venice were moulded into the dining table's legs. To complement this, Kiran Gala designed a wooden bench in multiple stains and types of wood with a unique grooved seating.*

Architecturally, Mumbai is a city of contradictions. It's a common sight to find seaside boulevards and neighbourhoods lined with heritage buildings and structures built at the turn of the last century, juxtaposed against a burgeoning landscape dotted with towering skyscrapers. While independent houses are a rare gem in the city—with most homeowners largely residing in apartments—recently built residential high-rises boast of sprawling homes known as bungalows in the sky.

For Kiran Gala, founder and head designer at Kiran Gala & Associates, and his daughter Sonam Gala (a senior associate designer at the firm), planning for such a home was an eight-year-long journey. “We spent years collecting pieces for this house—everything from the art to the furniture and even marble for the floors. There was never a particular idea for how we'd place or pair everything in each room. We simply chose things we would love to live with,” recalls Sonam, when describing every uniquely designed piece thoughtfully placed around the home. The 5,000-square-foot duplex was bought as a bare shell, giving the duo a blank canvas to play around with their designs and the way they'd want to live in each space.

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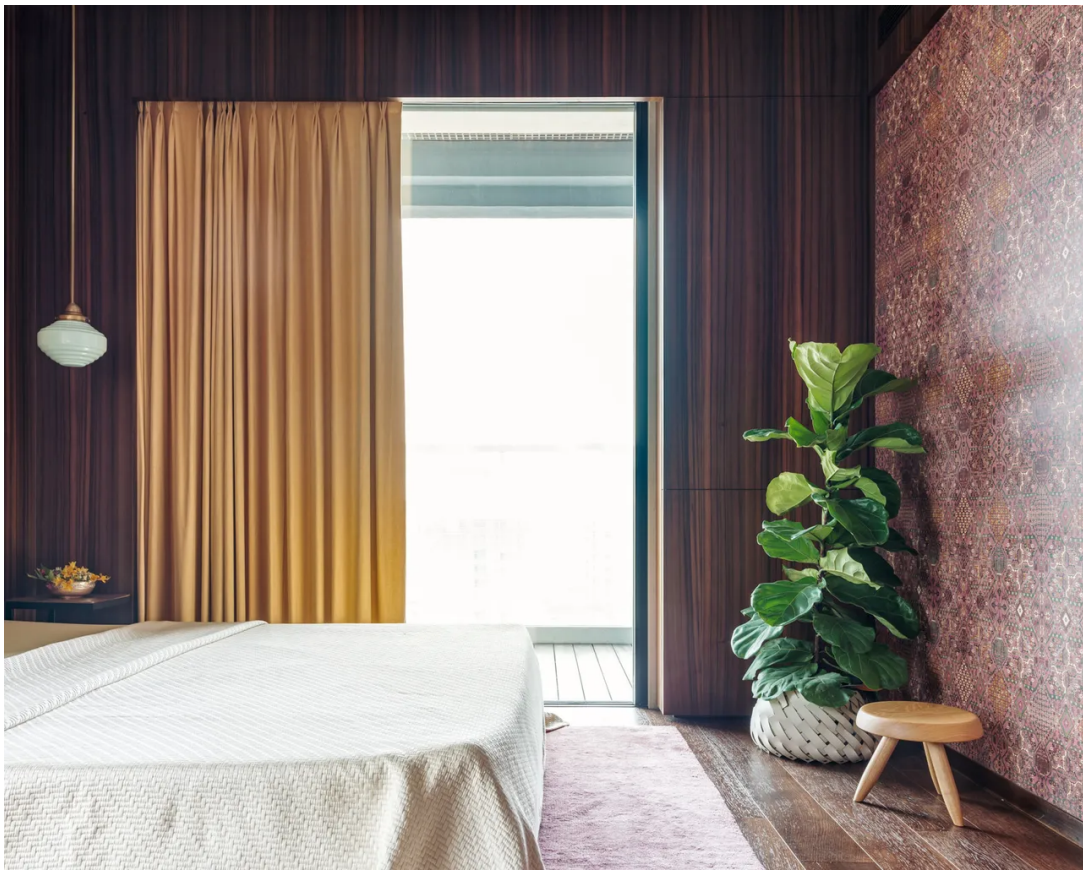
*In the double-height ceiling family room, a sheet of glass spanning 10 X 12 feet moves up and down with a weight mechanism designed by Kiran Gala to cover the niches within the wall. A collection of keepsakes and statement pieces from travels over the years have been placed around a set of armchairs by Ceccotti Collezioni.*



*The dresser unit in the main bedroom downstairs has been custom-made by Trunks Company. The antique light to its left by Taherally's complements the House of Hackney wallpaper in the background.*

While a part of the collection was bought during travels overseas, most of the furniture in the apartment is custom-made in India. As you'll begin to notice a quiet story unfold in every corner of each room, you'll wonder how one would begin to pair such an intricate collection across such a large space. "Everything came

together like a jigsaw puzzle. The starting point was probably how we divided each area and placed each room. Then we began to design each space with what we already had,” says Sonam. The house’s four bedrooms are spread across two floors—with the parents’ and grandmother’s below, and Sonam and her brother’s rooms above—and the lower level being designed to bring the family together and function as a complete home by itself.



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*An intricately patterned wallpaper by House of Hackney makes for an accent wall in Sonam’s bedroom upstairs. An antique fixture converted into a pendant light by Taherally’s hangs beside the custom-made bed.*

Despite its generous floor plan and remarkable style, the home feels cozy, even intimate, at times. The first space we begin to notice this is in the home theatre room where conventional loungers and armchairs have been eschewed for custom-made, L-shaped low seating to make the space more snug. Panels of thin wooden *pattis* across the walls not only conceal the speakers but also bring in more warmth in the room. “None of the bedrooms in the house have televisions, so you’ll find all of us here every night watching something. Unknowingly, it brings us together at the end of the day,” Sonam says.



*A vibrant carpet by Jaipur Rugs ties the entire home theatre together, while a simple floor lamp by Poltrona Frau creates ambient lighting in the room.*

While the double-height ceiled family room and formal living room have striking styles, a keener eye will notice remarkably designed details that make the spaces more functional. To cover the niches in the family room's wall unit, Kiran designed a single sheet of glass spanning its breadth to move up and down with a

weight mechanism. Similarly, in the living room, 20-foot tall sliding panels serve as a screen to diffuse light from the window behind it.



*In the formal living room, 20-foot tall sliding panels act as screens to diffuse light from the window at the back. The sofas and ebony armchairs have been custom-made for the space.*

The family's penchant for collecting comes alive in the dining room where a set of oak logs from a trip to Venice serve as the dining table's legs. To complement this extraordinary interplay of wood, Kiran designed a wooden bench on one side of the table in multiple stains and a unique grooved seating. The family also bought slabs of Statuario marble seven years ago as an investment, which today can be found on top of the home's kitchen counter as well as the claddings of the lift lobby.



*In the smaller family room upstairs, a custom-made silver divan is juxtaposed against two Pierre Jeanneret easy armchairs by Phantom Hands.*

Perhaps the most symbolic moment for Sonam—who's watched and learnt her craft over the years from her father—was noticing the love and respect from all their vendors while putting this home together. “The way they paid attention to each detail and went out of their way to bring things together—they told us it was like they were building their own home. In the end, the entire house feels like a love letter to their work together over the past decades,” she reflects.



*The countertop on the kitchen's island is clad in Statuario marble, while the shutter fronts beneath are fitted with brass metal sheets. An antique set of lights have been custom-made into a modern chandelier by Taherally's.*



A quartet of paintings by Raja Ravi Varma hang in a corner of Sonam's bedroom. Beneath them, showpieces by Daum and a set of trinket trays by Tom Dixon are displayed on a custom-made console table, with an armchair by ESSENZA HOME placed on its side.

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