

NATURAL LIGHT

A Guy Ferrer painting graces the wall along the main seating area, directly facing the French windows that open onto the vast veranda.



By Design

In a duplex in a Mumbai high-rise, Dorothy and Nikki Wagle—with the help of AD50 firm Architecture BRIO—have created a home that can be defined in one word: theirs

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WIDE OPEN SPACE

The view from the bar and library extends all the way to the circular space that leads to the kitchen and dining room. Each cornice in the house has been designed with a different number of steps.





CORRIDOR COLLECTION

The hallway is lined with Nikki Wagle's cherished sketches—by a costume designer in New York—and connects the living room to the circular dining room. The wall of the dining room is covered in a floral wallpaper designed by an old friend and colleague, and balances out the sturdy early-19th-century wooden dining table brought in from London.



here are countless clichés that have found their way into ideas about what makes a house a home. Some will say it is its history; some will argue it is a

function of comfort; and others will go on about the art of building a home. But it's easy to talk about art. Talk, instead, about the disappearing act of good design.

Good design isn't allowed the excuses of personalities and points of view; it encourages one to create an environment that optimizes the individual aesthetic and functionality of all that exists in and around it. Simply put: good design disappears. It doesn't sit on a gallery wall, begging to be gasped at, discussed, critiqued; it is the chair on which you sit, comfortable enough to concentrate on the piece of art on the wall, which you then gasp at, discuss, critique.

Dorothy and Nikki Wagle's beautiful duplex flat on the 51st floor of a high-rise in Tardeo is just that: an environment built around carefully curated instances of good design, great taste, and overwhelming warmth. What may, while you wait at the door, seem like extravagant decadence waiting to overwhelm you welcomes you into a home ripe with pleasant surprises.

DRAWING INSPIRATION

Led by AD50 architects Robert Verrijt and Shefali Balwani of Architecture BRIO, the design of this home is a breathtaking blend of the old and the new. Although most of their best-known work is quite modern, this home instantly tells of their versatility. While the spaces remain true to themselves, with every room wearing its personality on its sleeve, the delicate use of art and heirlooms strikes a fine balance with the grounded nature of the structure. This came at the behest of the owners. Nikki is the chairman of Damask Projects, a real estate firm, while Dorothy runs an NGO called Foundation for Mother and Child Health. She says, "Nikki and I grew up living in houses—him in Bombay, and myself in California. >

ART DECO ELEGANCE

At the landing of the stairs leading to the upper floor stands an art deco Italian marquetry credenza. Above it are limited edition architectural photographs by Richard Fleischner.



CUSTOM ART

Dorothy's favourite object in her home is this custom work of art inspired by Indian textile prints, which they commissioned in New York, flanked by the bar and the entrance to their cosy library.



◀ We didn't want moving to a high-rise to mean that we would have to compromise on that sturdy, earthy feeling."

The door opens into a warm, wooden entrance hallway—that leads to the living room—setting the mood at once by not trying to merge spaces to give the impression of enormity, but each room taking exactly as much of the light and space that suits it best. The living room itself is a solid space full of sturdy and minimal, yet tastefully detailed furniture and upholstery; the light from the veranda pours through its tall French windows in a clean, natural manner. The veranda doesn't just overlook all of south Bombay, but frames it perfectly; every wall, every pillar in this home has been built from the ground up over a period of two years, and in this perfect framing, it highlights the aforementioned disappearing act of good design, where this layout seems ideal for the view it offers.

A well-stocked closet bar and a library sit on one side of the living room; their doorways, like every doorway in the house, form straight lines that could make an arrow envious. The former sports an anti-prohibition print that might have been my favourite thing in the whole house. The dark wood and metal trimmings used in the cosy library create an atmosphere worthy of deep romanticism.

On the other side of the house, the round dining room—which was built to house the round wooden dining table from London—tells of its owners' passion for good, comfortable living beyond the ephemerals of extravagance. "You haven't seen my favourite bit yet," says Nikki, as he leads us out of the dining area through a hallway lined with fascinating pieces of costume design croquis, each framed perfectly to blend into the walls around them. He talks with childlike enthusiasm about these pieces, "I collected these over time, on every trip I made to New York, from this very fascinating

costume designer I met. I couldn't afford them all at once, but I had to have them."

BUILT TO SPECIFICATION

The kitchen is an absolute homemaker's delight. The breakfast table for two that it houses is probably the quaintest, quirkiest part of the home. Standalone antiques find a way to blend in just enough to not seem contrived, while maintaining their dynamic presence.

"Everything was hand-picked, and who knows what it cost us to have all of this brought in!" Dorothy explains. "I know how much it cost," Nikki chimes in with all his inimitable charm.

Moving on to the upper floor, a sturdy, U-shaped stairway leads upstairs to a balcony flanked by the bedrooms, bathrooms, dressing rooms, and an easy-to-love TV room that acts as that perfect dash of lime in this smooth, yet potent cocktail of a home. The bedrooms are cosy and tasteful, each with distinct personalities. The bathrooms, however, are where the careful planning that went into building this home truly shines; both share the view Dorothy and Nikki handpicked for themselves.

There are two things that steal your heart as you walk around this space. The first is the attention to detail; each doorway, each cornice has a unique feel and purpose, yet they all maintain the sturdiness and style the owners cherish. The second is their pug, Winston, who, I'm told by Nikki, is an "expert cuddler"—not just him, but also the ease with which he gets about, indicating that the home was built with its adorable third member in mind.

It all comes together upon meeting with the owners of this space; their innate warmth and deep passion for their home add to its beauty. And that's what makes this house a lovely home. ♦

TABLE FOR TWO

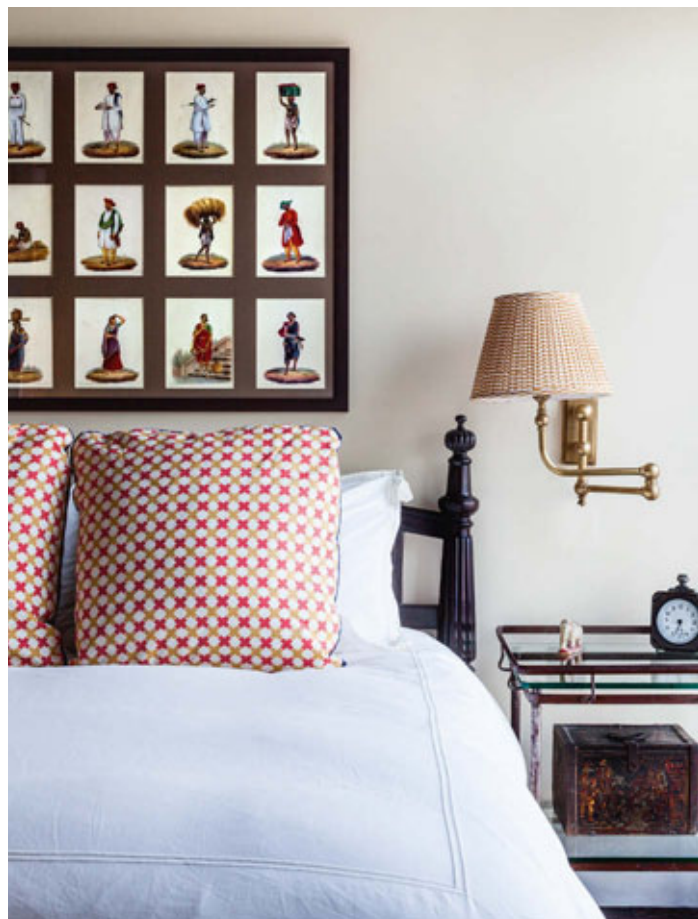
The custom blue-grey and white storage units lining the walls—which were built by their contractor, Interscape—and the kitchen island with tall chairs give the space a very western-classic feel.



PERSONALIZED VIEW

Nikki's bath and dressing room is solid and state-of-the-art, crafted with metal finishings and black marble. The shower looks directly out the window from where he can see the house he grew up in.





(Clockwise from above)

LIVING IN COMFORT

The bold, colourful TV room on the upper storey is decorated with New York City-themed prints. In the minimally furnished bedroom, a framed collection of antique prints—*Indian Costumes of Colonial India*—hangs on the wall behind the antique colonial bed from The Raj Company, Mumbai. Dorothy and Nikki seated on the veranda of their duplex flat in Tardeo. The veranda is done up with simple wooden furniture and a few potted plants.

