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THIS SPREAD A

tunnel vision of Suneet's high fashion store at Emporio Mall: the ivory panels forming the bi-fold planes typical of Origami patterns contrasts with the black porcelain tiles with wood grain texture to wrap up an unconventionally pretty package in designer terms.

DESIGNER VERVE

Suneet Verma's store designed by RK-DS's lead architect, Martand

is inspired by the Oriental art form of origami. This retail couture space

draws on contemporary architectural concepts reining in a perimeter

of luxe merchandise that articulates a chic ambience - artlessly!

TEXT BY DEEPANJOLIE SONYA FIGG • PHOTOGRAPHS SAURABH PANDEY COURTESY THE ARCHITECTS



THIS SPREAD An uncluttered expression of luxury: a single mannequin sits pretty atop a high wooden box that continues the basic theme of a stage-like effect of the boxed-in area, designed on Origami principles. **RIGHT** A closer view of the white inclined planes and support panels above the main garment display racks (lit from above) conveys a sense of functional sub-sections within an Origami-inspired commercial establishment artistically created to serve as designer retail space.

That Romi Khosla Design Studio undertakes distinctly urban architectural design projects is a well-known fact for all who follow developments in contemporary architectural trends. That they do fun projects may have been a bit overlooked in the light of past achievements, but we aim at rectifying that image here. For "fun" is the operative word used by Martand Khosla in describing the whole experience of 'designing for a designer.'

So, among the newest additions to the RK-DS portfolio was the Suneet Verma store located at the high-end Emporio Mall in Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, which bears witness to their understanding of things beyond mere architecture as art you can walk through.

Creative efforts by Veer Nanavatty, the project architect and principal architect, Martand Khosla, accomplished for designer Suneet Verma a 100 square metres of retail display space that afforded a unique shopping experience for luxury garment buyers keen on doing more than simply trying out his latest line of garments à la mode. They ensured it was everything the fashion designer wanted; a high fashion showroom that was exclusive, elegant and infused with a characteristic Suneet spirit of life and nothing like what such clientele would expect - opulent, luxurious lounging spaces that were overly adorned with artifacts.

Martand elucidates, "though we don't do ▶





interiors, we took this on for the fun quotient it was brimming with...and we have worked on designer retail spaces before, but Suneet gave us a lot of latitude in building up on the original theme of a Origami-inspired environment. It was an idea that clicked instantly with both of us. Clean, well-structured dynamic lines and folded projections form the atrium which overlooks an L-plan that is narrow at one end then 40% of the store broadens out to expand the notion of Oriental spaces within spaces that Origami is all about."

Built at a cost of Rs. 30 Lakhs, the essentials of the project dictated that the new showroom be one completely at home among the other high-end international and Indian designer shops the Emporio Mall is flooded with. It required of the RK-DS team to achieve this while retaining a unique essence of individuality that subtly highlighted the celebrity designer's love for diffusion lines, versatility with prêt as well as couture set-ups and spontaneous combustion of well researched, brilliantly executed embroidered high fashion.

So, how does one go about addressing that tall order, especially when the client is as famous as the clothes he designs?

Marrand makes the design process look simple, as he says, "the conceptualization was imaginative and

different from the early stages - a dark, mysterious ambience provided mainly by black flooring, subdued mood lighting with focus lighting reserved for certain niche garment display spaces that were fused into the recessed overhanging panels," (constructed mainly out of plaster of paris and DIY wood integrated into the permutations of ceiling and walls).

He further attributes a lot of the ease of translating "the hard cut and dry edge of a different interpretation of luxury" as presented in the Suneet Verma's store to the precision of computer aided drafting board support the team largely depends on for stylizing good products into ultimate successes. Rudimentary studies were conducted on paper, but each progressive stage of the store's design was conceived using 3-D modeling software instrumental in generating the 28 sectional profiles, which served as the base for the working drawings. In-depth study of the permutations of these forms helped the RK-DS team reconfigure the ace designer's retail space using numerous scale study models, finally resulting

THIS PAGE An artistic vision of minimal décor lent to the clean, straight lines of inclined surfaces comprising the store's well-articulated retail sections via the boisterous assemblage of the floral trellis overhanging over them randomly.



in a high fashion store like none other.

The arrangement of the mannequins in seemingly casual forms at random areas across the store was another minimal yet effective touch to 'reducing predictability' with Marrand even wanting to suspend a couple of them - "super-hero style" - from the ceiling. The suggestion was only vetoed for the spare second craziness quotient it represented for the client, a self-confessed lover of "Raphael-inspired classics, old-fashioned notions and clean, good-looking lines."

So, the onus of adding to the ambience fell on the inclined surfaces constructed out of PoP layers enveloping chicken wire-mesh resting on a framework of regular aluminum false-ceiling scaffolding, used for making the shell. Thick wood planks nailed to 19mm plyboard were mounted on wooden framework to give the structure added strength and ease for incorporating folds into the store's interior design. ▶

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Inclined white plane of wall protrusion suspended close to garment display rails divided by artificial mood lighting and shadow play at work.

BOTTOM A closer view of the laser-cut acrylic floral trellis in metallic and bright red is the minimal decorative touch allowed to the sole mannequin in this garment display space.





All the PoP surfaces were coated with Ivory automobile paint then touched up with wax polish for a smooth, designer look while the longitudinal false ceiling contained in the centre of the store's roof running parallel to the shoppers' walking corridor below was fitted with an MS trellis made up of 8 x 8mm bars.

Added to these is the shadowy mood consciously created by inclusion of black matte flooring of Italian porcelain tiles with a wood grain finish that absorbs excess store lighting while the ivory white of the wall and ceiling permutations combined with the full-length mirrors incorporated into the variable folds skirting the store reflect the store's strong design statement. Artful illumination provided by DeCom Lighting proves fixtures as small as focus lights, (mostly fitted overhead) serve just as well as décor accents in

THIS PAGE TOP A stretch of the high-end fashion store stands testimony to the intangible allure of luxury represented by non-traditional materials, such as wood planks nailed to 15mm ply board, mounted on wooden framework and touched up in Ivory polished with wax colour as permutations of Ongami patterns that is sleek and chic.

BOTTOM A more spacious garment display section, also created within the inclined surface design of Ongami folds used for giving the store a signature style.



THIS PAGE Two perfectly formed delicate mannequins emerge from the mysterious shadows surrounding the perimeter of Suneet's store, representing an ode to the allure of the feminine form. Changing room curtains and bits of bright red in the overhanging silvery floral embellishments on the ceiling add controlled colour to the different interpretation of luxury designs here.

