

# home review

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**BUSINESS CUM PLEASURE**  
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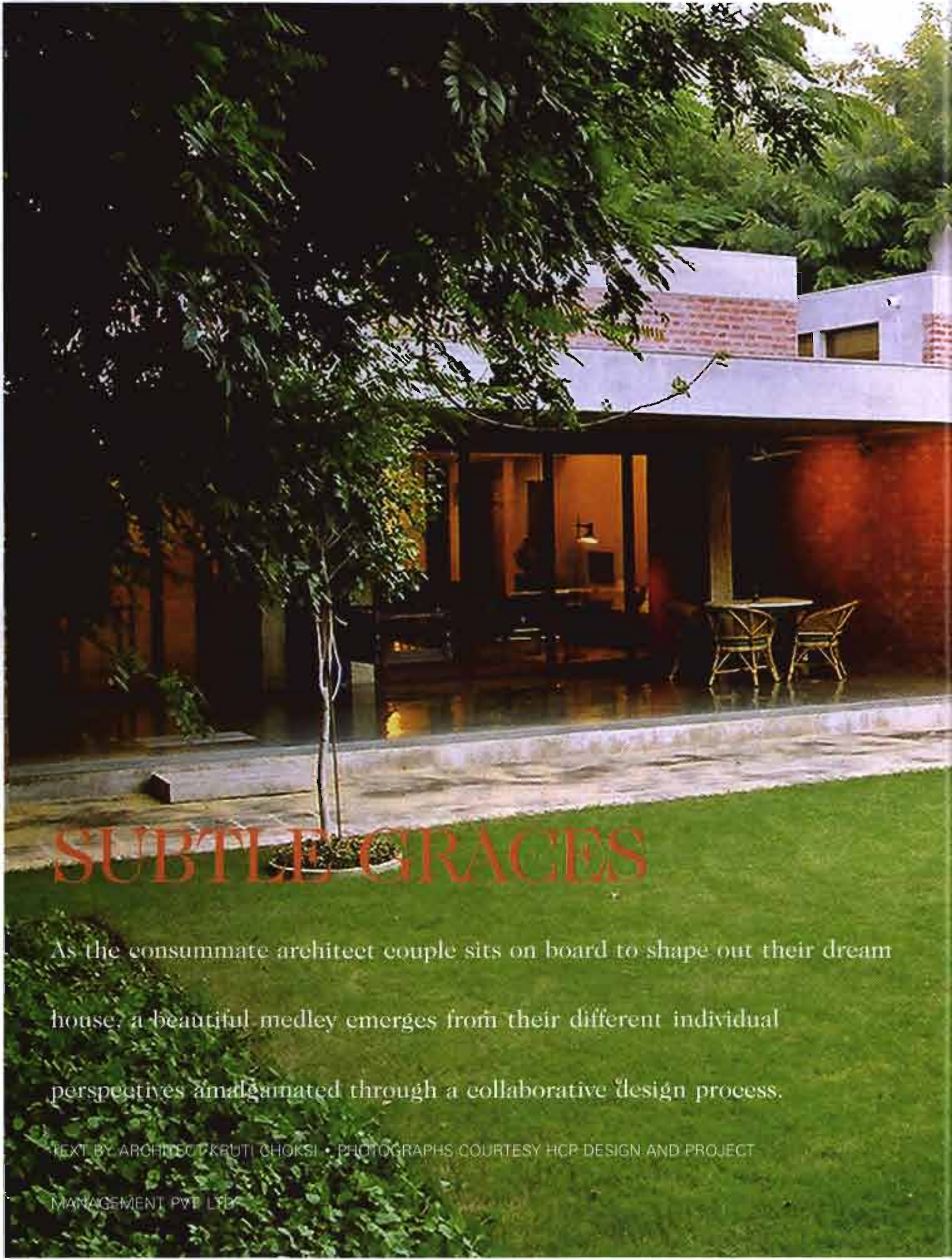
**SINGING A DIFFERENT TUNE**  
Manasaram Architects

**Subtle Graces**

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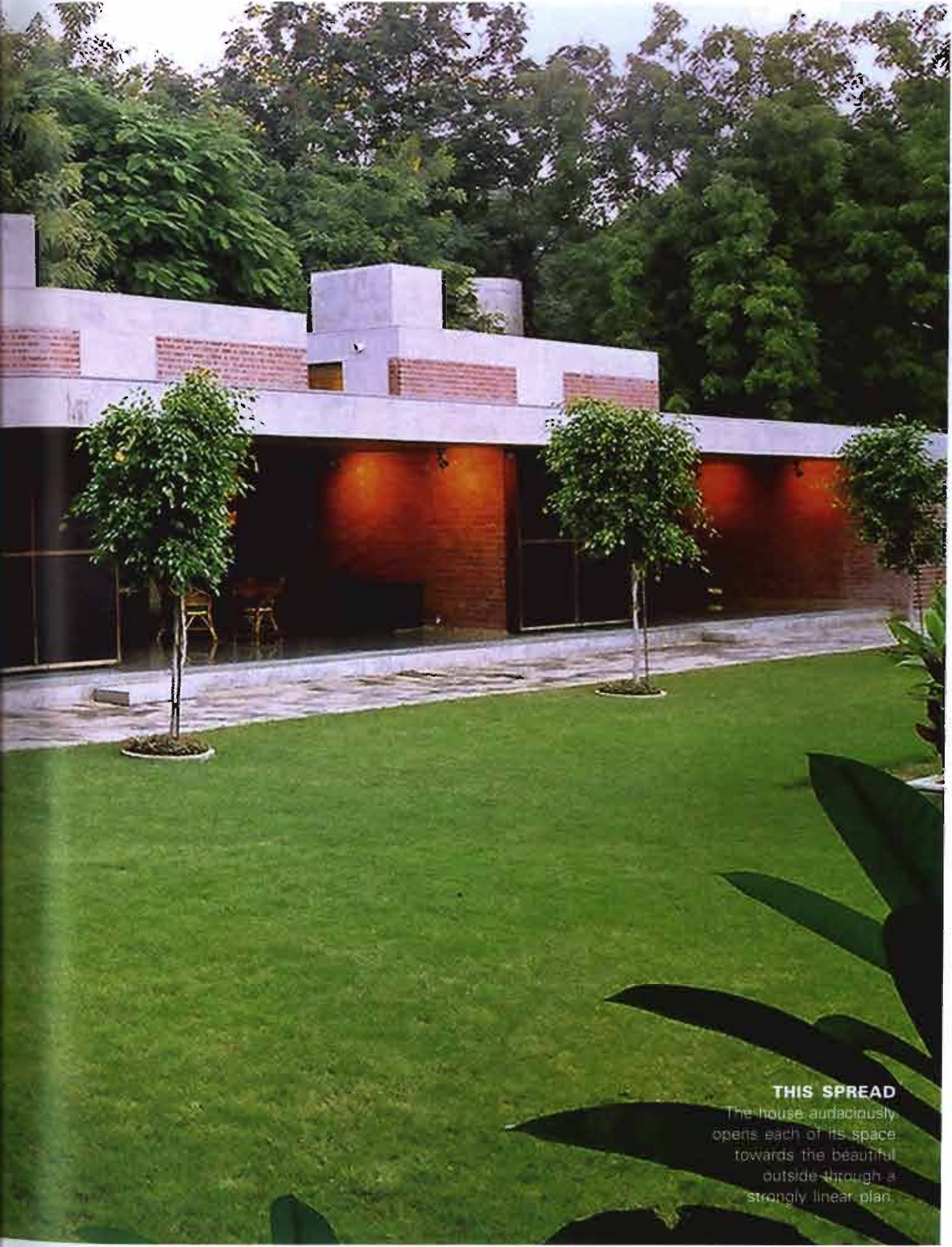
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## SUBTLE GRACES

As the consummate architect couple sits on board to shape out their dream house, a beautiful medley emerges from their different individual perspectives amalgamated through a collaborative design process.

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**THIS SPREAD**  
The house audaciously opens each of its space towards the beautiful outside through a strongly linear plan.



When an architect sits down to shape out the design for a project, what comes to the rescue to guide him forward is the list of requirements laid down by the client. But when one is his own client, it is critical. "Frankly it is not difficult but it surely is a different experience to set up your own requirements and subsequently a functional plan. To add to it, we both are architects and more often than not have had differences over a number of issues. But then I always believe that design is a collaborative process," reminisces Ar. Bimal Patel with his wife Ar. Ismet Khambatta of the times they worked together on the design of their own house.

On a rectangular plot in Ahmedabad, the house sits parallel to the eastern edge, leaving a huge open space for a garden in the front towards the west. A guest house emerges as a separate entity within the site. The linear plan of the main building is completely rectilinear with no complicated angles. Primarily a single storey

structure, nothing here has been created in order to boost the owner's status in any way as is the norm these days. "We do not innovate for the sake of innovation," enunciates Ar. Bimal Patel in a firm voice. Designing a house, which spells grandeur without adding any strong embellishments, can only be achieved if the space in question has the right proportion of design elements that hold it together.

On entering the house, one confronts the

**THIS PAGE** The subtle colours, sleek furniture and ambient lights at the living room generate sophisticated interiors that truly reflect the owners' personality.

**OPPOSITE PAGE**

**TOP** The narrow backyard of the house, paved with bricks and shaded with well grown trees, also helps to promise cross ventilation for each space. **BOTTOM** The different patterns formed through light on walls and floors add dynamics to the spaces within.

cosy cluster of living room, study and dining room connected through an open plan. Space demarcation here is not necessarily through rigid walls. The kitchen is conveniently connected to both the dining area and living space, ensuring an ease for the lady of the house.

"We envisaged a house that was simple, unassuming, comfortable and unostentatious," says Ar. Bimal Patel describing the initial concept for their design. The outcome today radiates the purity and serenity that can rejuvenate a tired soul after a long day. The subtle graces exude an undeniable magic. Despite the substantial number of visitors and the constant hustle and bustle, there is a certain tranquillity that is simply unshakable.

"Undoubtedly the verandah is the most magical part of the house. It connects the house with the garden. We spend most of our time here," states Ar. Bimal Patel when asked about his favourite space at home. A city home, which makes room for leisure, can be quite a

bonus. The challenge lies in synchronising the various functions that take place within with each other as well as the outside; that would be perfect harmony.

Profound elegance can sometimes be achieved by merely pairing a simple design with humble materials. If treated with careful selection and skill, these can lead to extraordinary designs in spaces. While exposed brick is popularly accepted to be suitable for Ahmedabad's context, exposed concrete seems to be the architects' personal favourite. Remaining true to its context and owner, the house is built employing a synergy of exposed red brick walls and exposed concrete.

Every house has a strong point that dictates the rest of its interiors. This could be in the form of materials, colours or textures. Once an architect finalises a theme, it acts as a binding factor that helps merge all the spaces. The sporadic colourful interlude through tapestry, cushions, floor mats and paintings adds spunk, creating different points of focus. Strategically placed art pieces ▶

**THIS PAGE TOP**

The juxtaposition of living and dining spaces allows a better communication within the house.

**BOTTOM** The semi-covered verandah turns to be the most mesmerising space of the house, with its changing moods as the light traverses it across the day.

**OPPOSITE PAGE**

Natural light drawn in through different types of openings at different heights makes the overall interiors feel lighter and more spacious.





**THIS PAGE TOP** The house opens beautifully at its west facade towards the lush green lawn shaded with trees.

**BOTTOM** The neutral palette of the overall interiors reflects warmth and comfort promising the feel of being at home.

create a dramatic break in the overall austere appearance.

The bedrooms of the house are linearly arrayed and accessed through a passage beyond the living room. "All the bedrooms are almost equally sized, there is nothing like a master bedroom with privileged facilities. We do not follow hierarchy within the family," explains Ar. Bimal Patel. Unlike the usual trait, the bathrooms attached with the bedrooms, are not placed towards the backyard of the house. Rather the bathrooms get projected towards the front garden, such that the space between them serves as a beautiful semi-covered buffer zone connecting the interiors of each room with the beautiful outside.

Again, the interiors of the bedrooms have a unified, minimal material palette in neutral tones that shuns any attempt at attaching themselves to an 'ism'. The house's almost sober interiors are a conscious effort to maintain the focus on the intangible luxuries achieved through elements like natural light and views of the outside.

As the house is primarily derived through a tactful play of the built, semi-covered and open-to-sky spaces, the patterns achieved through the play of natural light has a most vital role in defining the mood of the space. "Well ventilated and naturally lit spaces are my derivatives for sustainable architecture," says Ar. Bimal Patel absolutely delighted with himself! ■

