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Exotic furnishings
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SHOW ISSUE



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Western bazaar

Indian furnishings find a new home at De•cor

By Jenny Rebholz Schrank







Photos: Derek Rath, Venice, Calif.



The exotic merchandise at De•cor, a turn-of-the-century antiques warehouse in Pasadena, Calif., transports customers to different parts of the world. For 10 years, owner Deepali Pareek engaged customers in a modest, 2,000-sq.-ft. home furnishing store that barely fit the handcrafted rustic furniture, artifacts and textiles she hand-selects during trips to Western India. “One day I realized that my merchandise was not showing well,” Pareek says. “There was not enough space, so I looked for a great building that would showcase my furniture, textiles and artifacts.”

From there, Pareek partnered with Santa Monica, Calif.-based AkarStudios to create a store environment, like its name and logo, that celebrates the ancient and ethnic aspects of the global merchandise with a modern sensibility. The new 7,500-sq.-ft. warehouse setting created a large, open, yet challenging canvas for the design team at AkarStudios. “The challenge was to break down the space in order to create a visual narrative for the display of artifacts—a destination gallery atmosphere,” says Sat Garg, principal, AkarStudios.

Expansive windows on either side of a handcrafted glass door at the entrance façade entice



Opposite page: The furniture, artifacts and textiles are arranged to create destinations, or “settings,” within the showroom.

Top: Design elements, like a floating structural detail in a vibrant fuchsia, add depth and interest to the interior.

Bottom: This portion of the gallery features a section of traditional green colored doors that were sourced from a village dwelling.



customers with views of bright colors and exotic merchandise, while energizing the space with natural light. Track lighting is then used to focus attention within the store, highlighting displays and defining key areas.

In order to maintain some of the more interesting aspects of the existing warehouse space, the design team stripped the interior and refinished it to reveal its natural beauty. “We kept the open-warehouse concept, but transformed the area into a large, open gallery concept,” Pareek

explains. “We opened the ceiling to display vents and crossbeams, sanded the beams and the bricks to its original state, added skylights, and installed pendant lighting in both contemporary and handcrafted mosaic styles.”

With merchandise constantly changing, the flexibility of the store was a priority. Walls and floor space were designed based on a concept of “stage sets” in order to easily accommodate the arrival of new merchandise. Custom-made fixtures of stained plywood and raw steel create a distinct



Left: The simple, custom-made, plywood fixtures on the perimeter keep the attention focused on the merchandise and complement the traditional table displays.

Above: The combination of materials reflects the industrial nature of the building, while creating a sense of warmth that is punctuated with the element of color.

presence on the perimeter of the store, as well as in the Textiles Room in order to effectively display textiles and smaller-sized product offerings.

Garg refers to the Textiles Room as the “jewel of the store,” creating a permanent setting for the constantly changing merchandise. The beautiful textures and colors of the fabrics alone engage shoppers, but details such as a wall of deconstructed wooden pallets adds to the visual impact of the room.

A floating structural detail with an industrial

staircase that leads to the mezzanine adds depth and interest to the interior, while maintaining a sense of openness. Other signature focal points within the space include a cluster of carved wooden posts attached to ceiling beams that reach to the floor, a Carrera white-marble-topped credenza counter, and a section of aisled warehouse industrial metal open shelves stripped of color to be consistent with the natural brick and beams.

Garg intentionally kept the palette “simple, light and neutral” in order to set the stage for the colorful, visually stimulating products on display. However, he infused the space with a vibrant fuchsia to pay homage to the origin of the merchandise. “It expresses the sensuality, art and culture of the region and captures the eye,” Garg explains. “For me, color becomes my medium for how to define a space.” Bold, colorful furnishings were then strategically placed to complete the

overall design scheme.

For Pareek, the goals of the project were met, and while the building and construction process proved challenging, “the desired first impression is, thankfully...ah-h-h-h-h-h,” she says. **DDI**

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|project file|

De•cor
Pasadena, Calif.

CONTRACT DESIGN FIRM
AkarStudios
Santa Monica, Calif.
Sat Garg, Principal
Sean Morris, Designer

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Hernz Construction
Pasadena, Calif.

CERAMIC TILE
Crossville
Crossville, Tenn.

LIGHTING
Delray Lighting
Burbank, Calif.
Nora Lighting
Commerces, Calif.

PAINT FINISHES
Sherwin-Williams
Cleveland

SOUND SYSTEMS
Angulo & Associates
Los Angeles

SIGNING/GRAPHICS
Simon Joh Signs
Los Angeles

Information in the project file is provided by the retailer and/or design firm.