Off the Shelf



Rustic Bliss

Much like the products they retail, the design of Bangalore-based lifestyle store Magari — created by co-founder and architect Amitha Madan of Treelight Designs — is a hotbed of creativity and innovation.

TEXT: DEEPA NAIR; PHOTOGRAPHS: MANOJ MASANT; COURTESY MAGARI

ld-world brick walls, a staggered metal door in pale green with a mini wood-framed glass window and a nondescript logo — the facade of this intriguing space on a busy Indiranagar road in Bangalore presents a perfect visiting card to onlookers. For over a month now, this red brick structure has been host to a new home lifestyle brand, Magari, which in Italian means 'to desire' or 'to want'. The brainchild of businessmen Vishal Wadhwa and Karun Mathew; and architect Amitha Madan, it was established to bring all the home solutions under one roof and to give a client — be it a designer or home-maker — the option to customize them with the aid of an in-house design team. Furthermore, the objective is to also provide a platform to showcase locally found design talent, and from different parts of the world too.

"The idea was to curate a collection of niche, customized designer furniture that wasn't seen in other places and at affordable prices. We wanted to re-create all dying forms of art, carpentry and design that includes, cane, metal and single solid wood pieces," say the founders. "The current high-end players in the furniture market rarely customize and if they do, their prices are unaffordable to most. As much as we would like to sell what we have in stock, we lay emphasis on selling things that fit into homes in the right sizes and right finishes. Again, our manufacturing facility

gives us the flexibility to control costs, which most of our competition does not have," informs Amitha.

With the basic philosophy of offering unique products and services to their clients, it came naturally to the founders to house them in a shell which was not run-of-the-mill. The biggest plus was the fact that one of the three founders was an architect and therefore giving life to their vision was also an in-house job. Amitha helmed the project, and with immense support of Vishal and Karun; Magari was born. Amitha, who has worked with several architects and started her studio Treelight Designs in 2015, believes that there is no particular path to design and anything can give birth to an idea — be it a child playing, a conversation, a story, a math problem, a performance, nature in all its glory, or just a few lines on paper. Her vision is to create design with less noise. And, her process is just as unique and can be customized for each project. She is also a firm believer in sustainability. To achieve this, she actively promotes and engages local artisans to take advantage of the resources available in the vicinity.

In case of Magari, her keen interest in using simple materials can be seen right at the outset — read, the double heighted facade that has been crafted from bricks, exposed concrete framework and glass. "When we first visited this space, the promoters of the property already had a facade in mind, but we

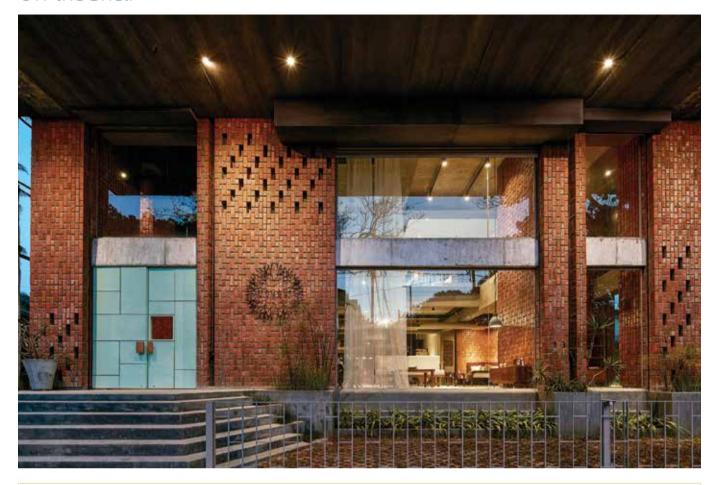


ARCHITECT

Amitha Madan

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CONCEPT: To create different home environments within a large space which allows for rearranging areas and furniture.



TOP If the staggered pattern on the pale green metal door was not intriguing enough, Amitha added a mini wood-framed window and complementary wooden handles to create an interesting entrance portal.

ABOVE Red brick and cement brick backdrops were created for displaying the bespoke furniture Magari retails. the overall look of the elevation," informs Amitha. Inside, the site only had columns and beams when the architect started work. The

decided to give it a different spin. As brickwork was also something they liked to work with, it was easy convincing them for the rest of the design. The double height of the facade extends to the store too and adds to the overall look of the elevation," informs Amitha. Inside, the site only had columns and beams when the architect started work. The

service areas (the lift and main staircase) were already built, but Amitha erected the walls and designed the internal staircase.

In terms of spatial configuration, the 9,000-square-foot store is distributed across three levels. "The basic design philosophy was to have one large showroom rather than





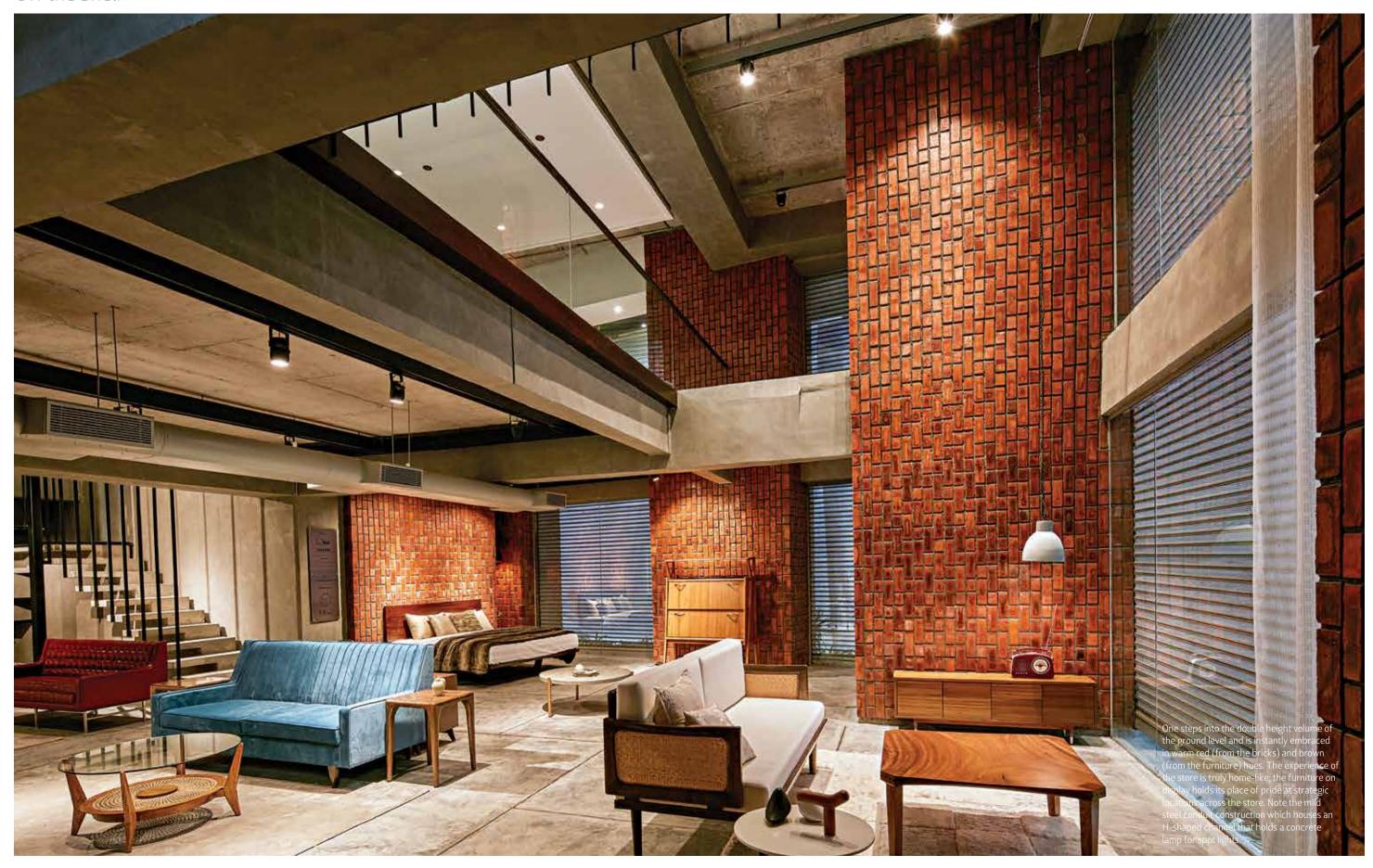
The current collection of furniture revives past traditions and art forms with modern detailing through the skills of local artisans. A strategic partnership with Yavanika, provides a collection of eyecatching designer fabrics (seen below) in a wide range of textures and colours.







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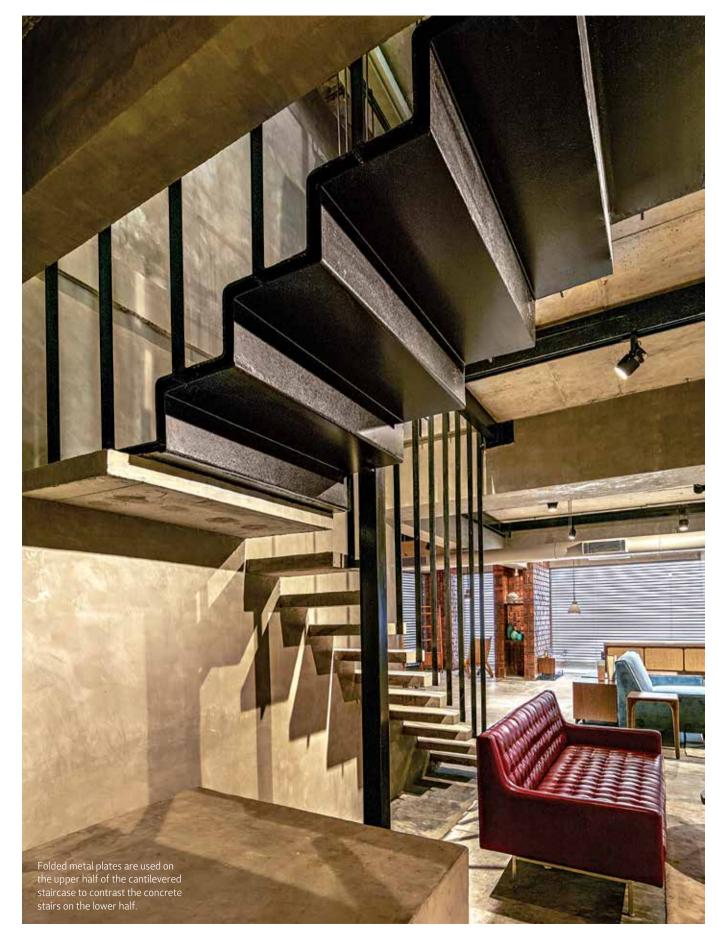
individual spaces. And then, to create different home environments within. It also gives us flexibility in terms of rearranging areas and furniture frequently," explains Amitha. Therefore, on the ground level you'll find furniture, wardrobes (from brand Mora) and accessories. The mezzanine floor is where their sub-brand Yavanika's fabric and furnishing display is, along with rugs from The Rug Republic, and blinds and wooden flooring from Parador. The first floor remains unfinished, but is set to house stunning kitchen concepts from the famous Boffi.

The shell (read, basic structure) which holds these exquisite products was consciously selected to create a strikingly beautiful contrast between the product and the space. Amitha wanted to contrast the furniture Magari retails, which is well-finished and largely inspired from old classic styles, with an evergreen texture — and what better material for this job than another classic exposed bricks. But, to give a newness to the design, the architect brought in a twist by laying the bricks vertically. "We devised a joinery technique which is inspired from the bespoke furniture we make for the brick laying. This technique was very tricky as according to the basic construction of a brick, it has to be used horizontally to take the stress of the load. Hence, we developed an interlocking system, which would distribute the weight evenly and created 12-foot-tall walls for the store," asserts Amitha. At various junctures of the store, the red bricks are replaced by grey cemented ones (created by a technique similar to the one employed for the brick laying) to break the monotony. The untreated look of the concrete ceiling and the cement flooring, again in grey, are perfect companions to the exposed brick.

Another highlight of the store is the staircase which uses concrete on one flight and metal on the other. "We wanted a staircase that was simple and not too bold. We liked the idea of it cantilevering from the wall beside it, but we would not have been able to achieve the same where the staircase turned. We used a folded metal plate which would contrast completely with the lower half of the staircase but not

MATERIALS

Facade Brick, exposed concrete framework and glass Interior walls Brick, cement blocks Floor Cement flooring with MS flats to create the grid Ceiling Untreated concrete Windows Glass



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Magari also stocks striking hand-tufted and hand-woven rugs from The Rug Republic. Then there is the Mora range of wardrobe designs with emphasis on functionality and attention to detail. The accessory range is a collection of lovingly handpicked pieces, each one with a story to tell. As lighting is one of the most defining design elements of any space, at Magari they help you create the perfect ambience with their range of lamps, fixtures and statement pieces.

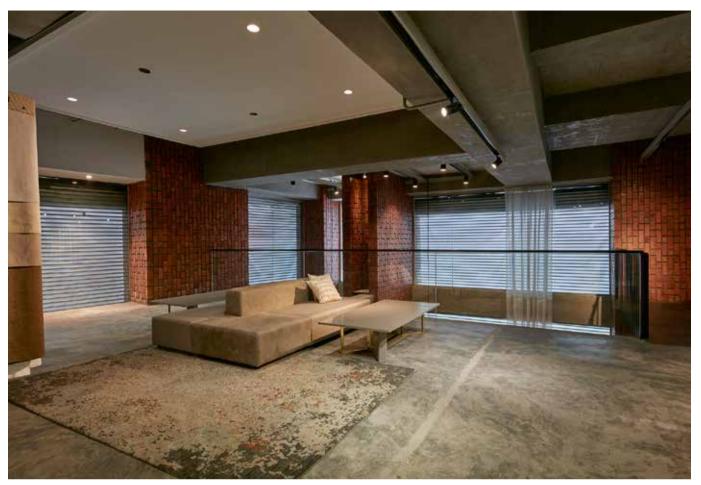














TOP A view of the mezzanine floor which displays the furnishing fabrics and rugs from Yavanika and The Rugs Republic, respectively.

ABOVE Amitha custom-designed the hangers for the Yavanika fabrics — she incorporated the Yavanika logo in to the hanger and crafted them out of mild steel.

seem out of place. The railing had to be light so one could see the product in the store even while climbing up, while being safe and aesthetically appealing," explains Amitha.

To further strengthen the old-world-meets-retro look, simple yet important details like centrally locating the air conditioning ducts and exposing it to naked eye, creating a mild steel electricity conduit on which H-shaped channels hold concrete shells for spots and carefully planning the concealing of electric points and the channels for blinds and curtains for the windows adds to the overall experience of the store. Magari's philosophy is to create timeless design that inspires and promotes design itself. It has an open culture that celebrates difference. "We should be able to evolve and grow with the times and yet not lose the soul of the space" Amitha signs off.

FACT FILE: Project Magari Location Indiranagar, Bangalore Area 9,000 sq ft Principal architect Amitha Madan

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