

INTERIORS IN EXPOSED CONCRETE:

# raw sensual TIMELESS

*Popularly chronicled in the 20th century for its brutal honesty and expression, exposed concrete has always been championed by yesteryear designers. With advancement in technology, revolutionary surface treatments, expansive scale and the ability to merge with a diverse material pallet, concrete is now being used in unexpected and versatile ways.*

*Our distinguished designers bear witness to the recurring theme of exposed concrete in contemporary interior spaces, with a host of looks inspiring modern, urbane and textured 21st-century concrete styling coupled with its timeless dignified ruggedness, which is both hard wearing and aesthetically striking.*



## The Mango House - "Form follows Function"

- Puran Kumar

1. The Mango house is set amidst magnetic and attractive mango trees, thus dictating the built architecture and materiality. The overall scheme of the interiors naturally aligned to the trees, thus paying an homage to their presence

The Mango house is the physical manifestation of a quest to connect with the natural environment. The house is a reflection of the architect's creative sensibilities; its essence being simplicity in thought and expression - taking shape through the form, its spaces and building materials.

The site has been defined by the coordinates of several existing majestic mango trees. Hence, the 'function' is the conservation of these 100-odd-year-old inhabitants; while the 'form' of the structure is governed by their location. Their integral presence warranted the design approach to accommodate the roots of the trees, thus embodying the basic values of being organic. Having established this, the aim was to be able to view the surrounding landscape from any point in the house - along both North-South and East-West axes. Entrance on all four sides helped meet this aim and present an uninterrupted view of the verdant environ.

There are two design aspects here: one is its universal target and the second is its very orientation towards the exteriors and the green, the whole metamorphosis. Therefore, the very aspect of having to find your balance between the existing feature, the landscape and your house became the tone of the design. This can be seen in







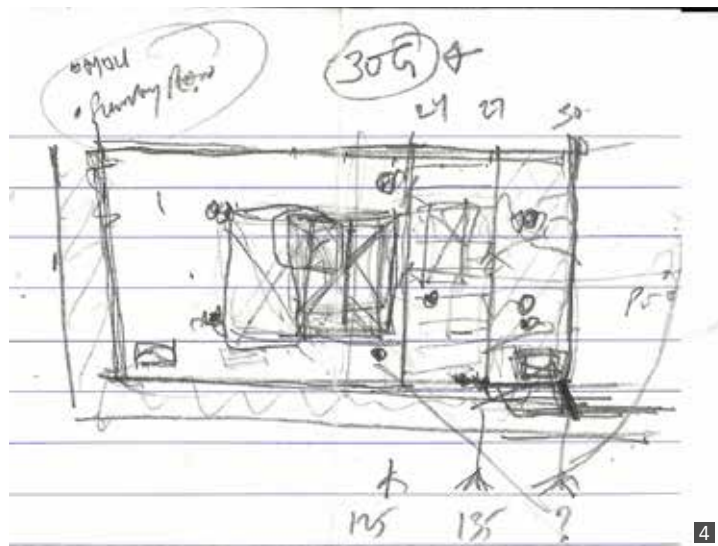
**2.** The earthy material palette consists of locally sourced materials such as bricks, old recycled timber, terracotta tiles along with exposed concrete as the mainframe in the slabs, beams and columns. The driving factor being the sensory perception of the juxtaposed bold concrete standing among the host of the tactile surface and floor finishes

**3.** The house is a dialogue between the existing landscape and the interior spaces at the two levels. The design caters to the relationship between the branches of the trees on the upper level, the punctures within which allow interaction with the lower level

the way the spaces responded, the way those spaces were placed initially; for instance the small and humble entrance porch on the north façade, nestled in between the branches of the huge tree, forgoing the tradition of having a majestic entrance.

To ensure the balance between the open and covered spaces, and owing to the narrowness of the plot, the house was taken to the second level. Its form reflects an azonic flow of spaces across both levels without losing proportion in design. A majestically suspended steel staircase and its dominance of the interiors is the *raison d'être* of the house. The testament to the tactile nature of architecture is that the birds, and butterflies that inhabited the plot, can be seen flying in front of the house, perching on the railings, using the house pretty much as another prop, which is the winner.

The Mango House is a subtle presence of the expression of creativity, which bears virtues of timelessness and serenity amidst the chaos that surrounds us. There are two things here in terms of perception: the feel is visual and textural and the touch is textural and tactile, that you can sense, as a guide for your material selection. In this project, you



**4-5.** The original sketches and thoughts were very different from what eventually turned out to be in terms of the spaces. The design developed and gradually metamorphosed, as the spaces changed in the process of finding a balance between the existing features, the landscape and the house



**6.** The site plan showing the overall design scheme and the placement of the spaces surrounded by the landscape along both North-South and East-West axes

**7.** A view of the house with the vibrant lounge looking out into the outdoor pool, the existing flora and fauna are in synergy with the built and natural environment

have the experiential feel of natural stone flooring and the warmth of wood in juxtaposition to the concrete, the naked feel of any surface whether it is the walls, beams, columns is something very primal. The materials used in The Mango house are mostly locally sourced, the bricks from the local mills, recycled wood from old Bungalows, terracotta Mangalore tiles from the Konkan Belt and Shahabad stone for the floor.

Concrete happened to be one of the

materials, which were used for the basic construction, as the structural main frame, the entire concrete experience became the skeleton of the superstructure. As the structure was coming up, we were constantly contemplating, if we needed to cover or mask it. I must admit that concrete as an exposed surface, was not a conscious decision, it just came along the way, with its flaws and blemishes, and an instinct to let it retain its own boldness, a show of strength and pride as a material, provided it did not look incomplete.

The site is located in a high precipitation area; having now seen a couple of monsoons, yet the house has retained its ethereal quality, with just a protective surface treatment, a solution for ageing and maintenance, forsaking plaster which might have been a better material of choice on the exposed surfaces.

However, the drive was the charm and appeal that the exposed surfaces offer, the material palette, the play of timelessness and ageing, not conforming to universal sensibilities, this design philosophy is very integral to the kind of work that we do. ●

*Puran Kumar established his design studio in Mumbai in 1993, after working for a few years on a diverse range of projects. An advocate of uncomplicated design expressions, he supports and practices the use of natural building materials that lend an everlasting appeal to any design. From large corporate offices – both domestic and multinational – to residential projects that range from apartments and bungalows to villas, Puran’s repertoire of architecture and interior projects is as wide as it is simple. His hallmark space planning and clean-line designs are a natural extension of Puran’s sensibilities as a person and an architect. An IIT Roorkee alumnus, Puran believes in flowing with the tide and making the best of what life offers and enjoys whatever phase of creativity he is in.*

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