

IT'S BETTER BRIGHTER

Kunal Khandelwal retains a home's spacious feel and minimises its flaws

TEXT BY SUBUR MUNJEE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIGNESH JHAVERI

A view of the bright and airy sitting room. The sofa is from Red Blue & Yellow. The leather chaise-lounge was custom-made by Stanley. The painting near the bar is by Rajendra Kurlikar







The bar forms a solid corner of the dining room with the counter echoing the dining room console design. The bar stools are from Fusion Access

Left The dining room. A textured grey wall and pink accents balance the largely brown and white theme of the house. Much of the crockery, cutlery, glassware and decorative accessories were bought expressly for the house and thus fit seamlessly into its format



Kunal Khandeewal's recent project involved a challenge: Turning a 3,000 sq ft flat with limited illumination and rooms that led off a long central corridor, into a well-integrated home for a family of four. The clients remained very involved in the project throughout and were specific in their brief. They wanted clearly demarcated public, private and service areas, a lot of space for entertainment and a minimalist feel in order to allow the integration of artefacts and electronic equipment acquired over extensive travel. It was also essential to preserve the spaciousness that had attracted them to the house in the first place.

The architect's solution was to retain the high ceilings, keep the original period doors and windows, shorten the long corridor by incorporating a portion of it into the master suite as a walk-in closet and unify the entire space by a play on a common, relatively limited colour scheme of brown and white, repeated through wood finishes, paint and furnishings. A prodigious amount of storage space was created, most of it invisible, with no handles to give the game away.

Since only the front of the flat receives adequate natural light, myriad fixed and free-standing lights provide both clarity and atmosphere throughout the house. Even cabinets and headboards are backlit.

An intimately lit foyer connects the principal public areas of the house – the sitting room with a bar and dining room next to it. The first room has a den, TV room and library and has the potential to double up as a guest room. Folding shutters connect the study to other public areas, which can all be combined to entertain on a larger scale.

The children's room has a Mies van der Rohe-inspired checked wall. This is joined both visually and spatially to the master suite beyond, and a balcony enclosed to make the family breakfast area. When shut, the door to the children's room seals off the entire private area from the rest of the house. On the opposite side of the passage, a rather old-fashioned arrangement of small rooms has been rationalised into a functional kitchen, utility area and staff room.

The spaciousness of the flat is immediately apparent. Kunal's minimalist decor is calming and maintenance-free without it becoming constraining. The limited colour palette with the lines of the accessories providing the accents creates drama and adds to the open feel. The architect insists that every feature reflects an expressed need. Nothing is merely for effect. The result: A lasting impression of restrained elegance, a successful variation on the modernist style that contemporary Mumbai seems to have willingly embraced. ♦

**KUNAL'S MINIMALIST
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Sheer curtains let in light to brighten the monochromatic master bedroom. The backlit headboard is made up of square leather pieces fused together to form an unusual panel. On the wall, an artwork by R. Santhanam

Above Left The foyer forms a "reflecting area" where a Laughing Buddha and plants lend a welcoming touch. Both the mirror and the simple bench are backlit

Centre Left Detail of the tableware; the place setting is by Noritake

Below Left Styled very consciously as a den - the "heaviest" room in the house in terms of furniture and accessories, it is done up in walnut as opposed to the wenge used in other parts of the apartment. The Lazy Boy chair is made by Stanley and cowhide rug, made to order