



OFFICE 'SOUL'UTIONS

Integrate efficient interior urbanism with a spirit of the external environment for a space that exists beyond the basic demands of an advertising agency and you glimpse an interactive office like the TBWA office.

TEXT BY DEEPANJOLIE SONYA FIGG • PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY THE ARCHITECTS.



**TBWA OFFICE
THIS SPREAD**

The exposed air-conditioning ducting that endow the industrial space with a character rapidly undergoing gentrification, CFLs that reinforce its industrial roots, re-use of furniture from the existing office that reduces demand for virgin materials and clear cabin partitions that maximize natural light availability are evidence of contextual reference and environmental sensitivity both.

Creatively conceived and thematically choreographed into varied and functional work spaces, the fresh perspective of looking at organizational structures architecturally by giving them a personified feel - akin to looking at the soul of an individual for his or her driving force - enabled MOOF's principal architects, Shantanu Poredi and Manisha Agarwal, to give an eclectic twist to 'the home of disruption,' as TBWA is better known as.

For the architects, it was important to merge the external image of the agency with the internal environment so it would reflect in the completed design of the industrial workspace of the TBWA office in Mumbai. Inner spaces are suspended with the provision for stairs and bridge features, while segments intended for circulation are looked upon as an event street

and therefore, have been presented as an amphitheatre so this promotes easy interaction.

But, that's not all. Shantanu believes in researching a company's identity to learn as much as he can about the work patterns of the organization so spaces can be created individual to these systems and in an evolving manner. Manisha supports him in the view that "an office is representative of the organization it houses, hence the challenge is to evolve a framework that captures its philosophy."

This is the reason why they investigated 'a qualitative and quantitative study,' which was further refined to re-define the functional brief for the workspace in question. They explain: "In TBWA we imagined a work-play balance by inserting informal spaces between formal work zones, which is emblematic of ▶



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THIS SPREAD The organizational identity highlighted in bright and light reflecting shades of yellow on both the in-step of the staircase, which is also backlit, as well as on the wall on the access to the upper level of the TBWA office.

THIS PAGE Choreographing an energetic, developing and future-oriented workspace called for unrestrained use of corporate vibrant colours like red and yellow, interpreted here at the connecting curving stairway to the upper level. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Suspended mild steel structures like stairs, bridge, mezzanine levels enhance the north light space highlighting the industrial nature of the office's outline.



an advertising firm."

Since the site was handed over to the architectural team with no orthogonal walls on its perimeter, it was evident from the beginning that "space needed to be rationalized without loss of usable space." This prompted the team to include open plan furniture for dissolving the reference of the space, make provisions for strategic breaks in the plan with interactive non program spaces such as the amphitheatre while for the program within a program, namely Third eye niche office space designing, the MO-OF team expanded the small footprint so furniture appears seamless. A transparent and high gloss material palette to dissolve defined spaces helped the creative architectural team achieve this culmination of their concept for an exciting ad-venture's customized workspace.

So, in Third eye, one finds that cellular spaces have been creatively fused with interactive spaces in order to maximize the available footprint and to balance efficiency levels making these more effective. This is also why the idea for transparent, translucent and opaque surfaces helped to present the ultimate expansive work environment that is a alternative to conventional work environments because these combine to alter preconceptions of typical offices even though a basic need for spaces reserved for meetings, decision making and ▶





an informal collective area are all catered to successfully within its scope.

The MO-OF team clarifies that it is the nature of work environments that allowed them to define spaces and transparency, which was a conscious decision as these factors helped dissolve organizational hierarchy (usually the criterion for most creative commercial environments, especially international organizations).

Thus, the TBWA office in Mumbai has expandable meeting zones that can also open into circulation corridors to redefine the nature of the meeting space, which has been designed along with staking of the floor to enable a space for viewership. "These tactics question the very basics of work environments and its spatial profile," say Shantanu and Manisha, contented to see the successful conversion of TBWA from an industrial north light mill structure into a dynamic office environment.

They explain their approach for both programs further when they reveal that 'the adaptive reuse character was proposed for the office (TBWA)' whereas 'for Third Eye, the concept was of a generic office building type...Hence the expression is influenced by the way light was filtered from the outside into the office space.'

For determining the layout for both offices, the MO-OF team however, laid emphasis on 'understanding quantitative and qualitative aspects of their working environment' - an achievement made possible after several interactive sessions with various people within the organization "to create both an efficient and an effective layout," as Manisha and Shantanu regard the final creation as.

As regards the reasons governing their choices for materials, textures and visual presentation applied in the spaces, the design team reveals, "For material ▶

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THIS SPREAD The open workspace plan intersperses several meeting spaces with service zones, informal interactive spaces like the pool table and book niches laid out against coloured epoxy flooring and vibrant wall shelving units that resemble letters of the alphabet.

THIS PAGE An open meeting space characterized by a compact round conference table and bright ergonomically supportive office chairs, with sophisticated cabinetry along unconventional office walls painted a bright red for encouraging bonhomie and brainstorming sessions, which are an integral part of any forward looking international advertising agency.







selections we worked with primarily their existing brand identity, echoing their corporate colours and logos at strategic locations and responding to nature of space they had."

They also stress on the vital aspect of the interplay of natural light and choice of sustainable materials used in their interior urbanization decisions as 'the quality of light within each space was distinctly different - such as in TBWA it was north and west light, whereas in Third Eye light was at the periphery. So, we mapped shadows through the day within the existing shell and how certain translucent/ transparent materials allow the play of light within the white space' for determining the final layout in relation to this.

As they believe, 'an office design is a combination of efficiency and effectiveness. Each sector has a different demand with its specificities, which makes it organizationally entirely different.'

And was this project much different from other contemporary office design assignments for high profile clients they have taken on in the past, one queries?

The MO-OF team responds with an answer that makes it evident being true to design sensibilities in terms of vocational dedication is a priority that has



kept them in good stead and continues to inspire their art - yes, even in architecture, as they clarify in simple terms: "We redefine a client's brief to offer customized offices solutions that allows for new imagination in working environments. We have worked on offices in different sectors, such as a corporate law firm, researchers, financial consultancy, advertising, sports media each of which is distinctly different. We profile clients by their need and not their stature."

Point seen, filed, as office executives from another era would have said, for the supporting graphics for the compact Third Eye office space designed to accommodate 15 employees and the larger, expansive



TBWA workspace intended for 110 only serve to drive home the point of transformation of an industrial zone measuring 8650 sq. ft. as a welcome move that encourages development by creating hybrid zones where functions can be mixed and communities integrated for fostering interdependence of programs.

That's the MO-OF message and one that ought to be taken seriously for firms committed to collaborative efforts with people, not simply organizations - the key to ideation and sustainability. Thereafter, pure design intentions of 'bridging the gap between architecture and ecology' can be realized which, projects such as TBWA, Mumbai exemplify: 'to create socio-

cultural communities and integrated physical infrastructure systems.' Our accompanying photographs underline the significance of these parting words from the principal architects, as their fidelity to the client's brief is evident from these images of an 'intelligent officing' approach - seeing is, indeed, believing and for the guys at MO-OF, it is nothing short of visionary. ■

THIRD EYE OFFICE THIS SPREAD Cellular spaces have been creatively fused with interactive spaces in order to maximize the available footprint and to balance efficiency levels of this small office.