

ARCHITECTURE+DESIGN

A N I N D I A N J O U R N A L O F A R C H I T E C T U R E

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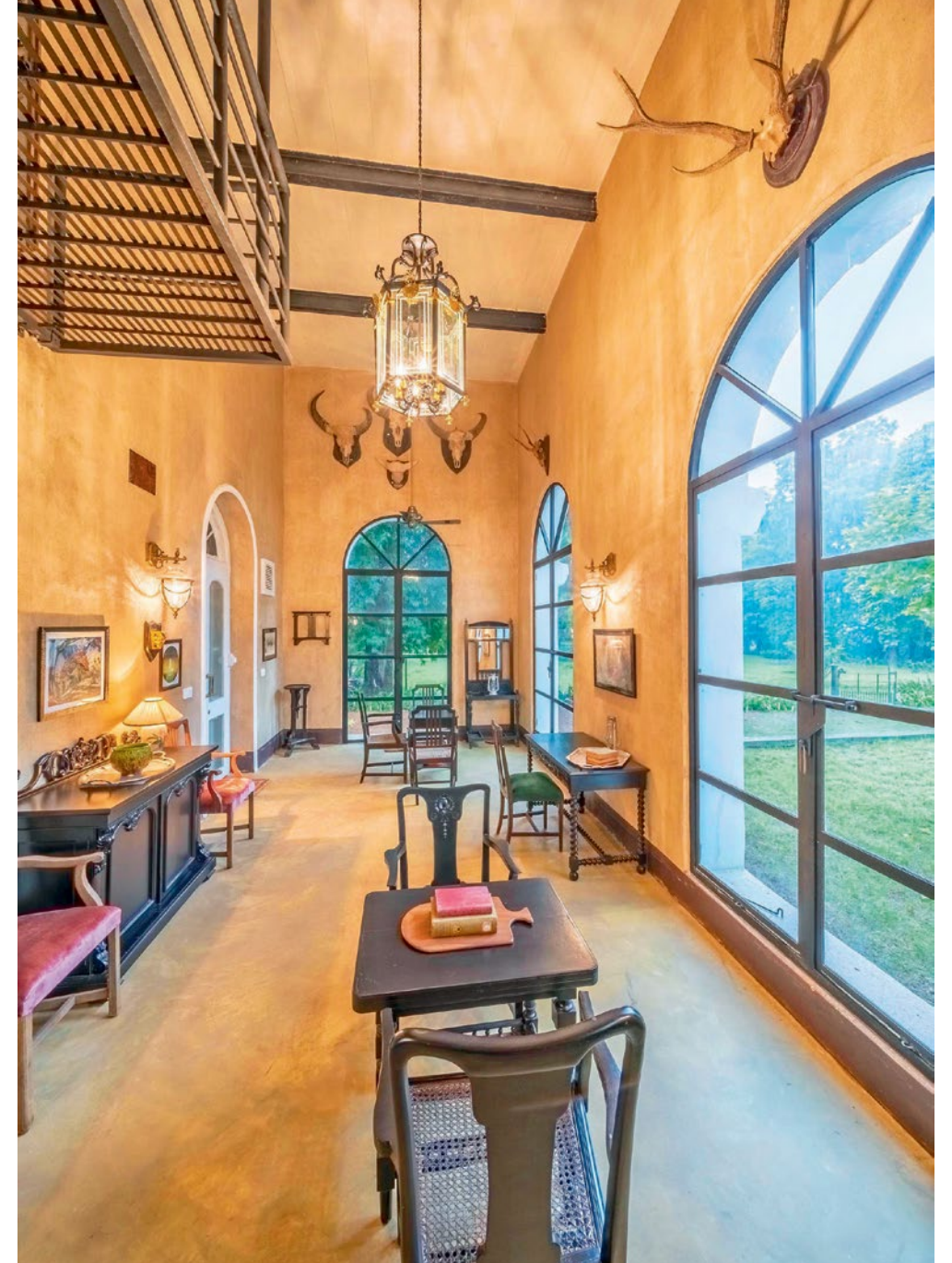


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Experiments in Residential Architecture

Conscious, Contextual and Sensitive Designs



Reminiscing the Old

Project: Belgadia Palace, Mayurbhanj
Architects: Spaces and design, Kolkata

The extravagantly decorated palace of the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj is a heritage building depicting the rarest engineering skill and architectural excellence of a bygone era. The construction of the first phase of the palace began on orders of Maharani Sumitra Devi Bhanj Deo in 1804, who ruled the state from 1796 to 1810. In phased development, the palace gets its aura of majesty with intricate

designs during the rule of Maharaja Krushna Chandra Bhanj Deo (1868-1882), Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanj Deo (1882-1912) and finally during the rule of Maharaja Pratap Chandra Bhanj Deo (1928-1948). It is a brick-built double-storey structure in the classical Western style with a Doric-Corinthian column and a mixture of Greek and Victorian architecture. The palace is built on a hill and surrounded by orchards and groves

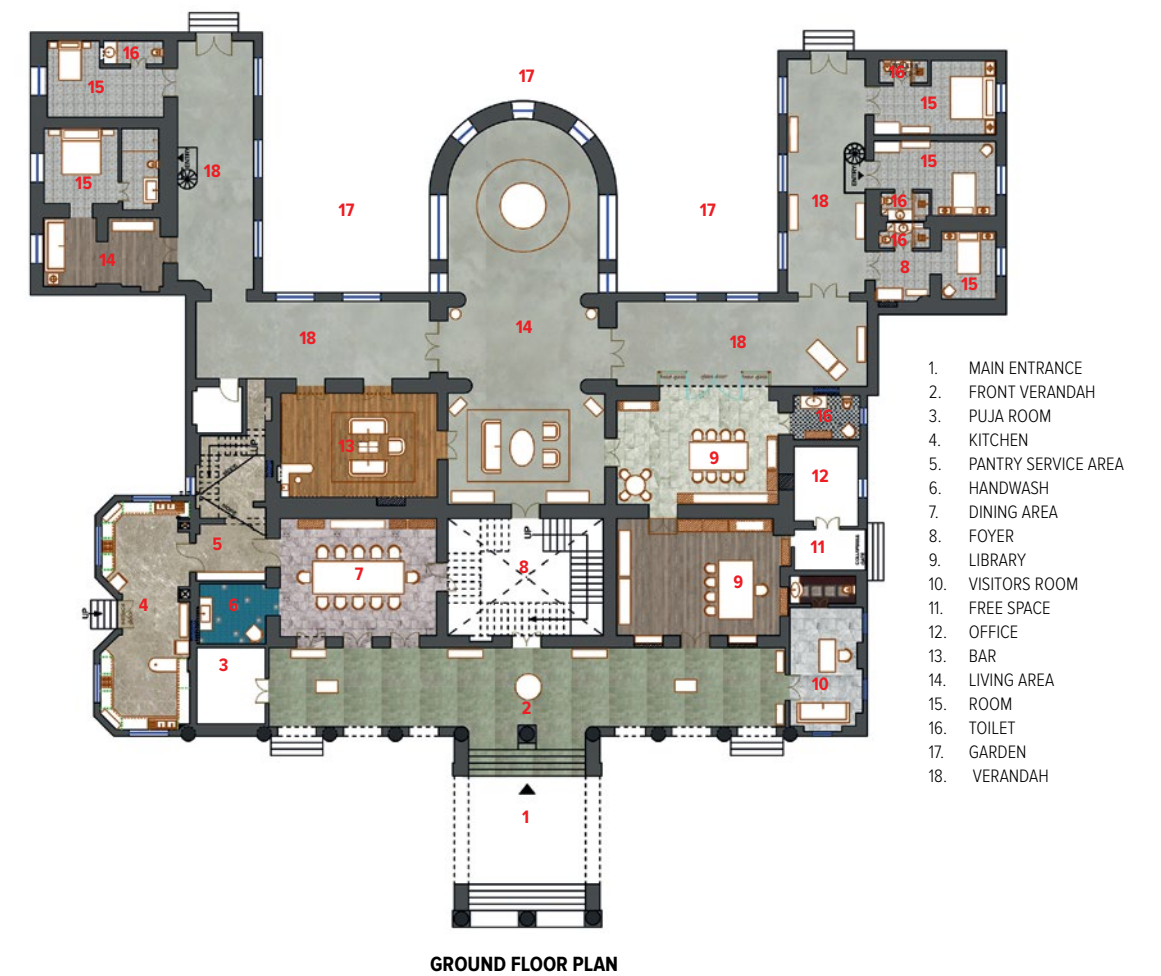


and is in close proximity to the Simlipal Tiger and Elephant Reserve.

The designers worked on a carpet area of 20600sq ft spread over two floors. The clients wanted the architects to utilise all their antiques. The architects carved out a brief in the first site visit and set it within the structural limitations of the huge property. The idea was to bring back the glory of the original structure but with all modern amenities and services.

The primary challenge was to conceal and upgrade all the services within the old load-bearing walls. The second challenge was to implement these over room heights of over 19ft. To maintain the old joist ceilings, to maintain and touch up the old cornices, to maintain the symmetry of all arch openings and doors were others to mention a few!

Since the main aim was complete restoration and no harm to the original





structure and its elements, the architects decided to be flexible with each design element and room. In most rooms, the opening segmental arches did not match the original arch openings. So, a cornice was designed around these openings to make them look symmetrical. The strategy was distracting asymmetry and aligning to geometry.

Renovation of the walls was done by understanding the old paint colours and recreating the effect with sustainable paint. The walls were adorned with terracotta flowers and nature imagery which was brought out by carving out the original designs from the walls and painting them a different colour to highlight the craftsmanship. Remaking ceilings and reinforcing the very structure of the building was critical. The old wiring and pipelines were replaced with modern facilities but in keeping with the original architecture and furniture of the palace. Old teakwood panels were re-used as flooring and decoration pieces so as not to use any new



modern architecture unnecessarily.

An attempt was made to keep it as an environmentally sensitive building as much as possible by installing energy-efficient light fixtures. The shell of the house was kept intact, but the 25 rooms inside were broken down and redesigned to accommodate luxury

suites, conference spaces, an extended library, billiards and theatre room, rooftop for performances, gym, spa, museum with a few additional verandas, for a multifaceted curated experiential heritage stay.

Gold leafing, miniature paintings and beautiful murals which were restored in



old antique shops in Kolkata were placed strategically in rooms, hallways, turrets and verandas as they would have been in the original palace. All the art deco, stained glass, chandeliers have been repaired and polished to be placed strategically to give the essence of living in the turn of the century as walking through the halls gives one a sense of the different periods the house has been through beginning with the 1800s.

The engraved teak entrances on main archways were restored and leakages from old columns, both inside and outside the house were fixed. Century-old carpets and animal taxidermy were cleaned and repaired to be mounted on walls and showcased in the museum. To give guests a taste of Indian tradition mixed with authentic local experiences, the family's roots from the royal families in Nepal, Rajasthan and

Odisha were brought out in different rooms and mixed subtly with the overall Victorian architecture. Gargoyles and window frames were repainted and fitted to mellow down the tone of the Victorian architecture with the remodelled 1920 French designs. ✚

Photo credit: Vivek Das

FACTFILE

Client: The Bhanjdeo Family of Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Odisha

Design team: Pooja Bihani (Principal Architect), Subhasis Sau, Tuhin Bhattacharjee, Soumadip Mondal, Silki Agrawal

Contractors: KNB Associates, Kolkata

Furnishings: Skipper, Kolkata

Built-up area: 20600sq ft

Year of completion: 2017