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WINTER SPICE

Tropical artworks and the chilli-like heat of this home's colour palette are intended to transport its owners far away from cold, grey London

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PHOTOGRAPHY FELIX SPELLER



Living room Sitting on the 'Sense' sofa by Roche Bobois, the cushion, a gift from the Caribbean, is joined by more pieces from homeowners Gautham and Sreeja's art collection – including a painting by Achutan Ramachandran Nair (between the windows) and two by Thota Vaikuntam (above the wooden bar, bought in Mumbai). Sat on the bar are three birds, purchased in Cambodia and once used to store chewing tobacco. The coffee table is a piece by Mumbai-based designer Pinakin Patel, while the pendant lights are the 'Masina' by Bert Frank. Through the bespoke glazed doors is the double-height study, with its Herman Miller office chair and 'Flauti' lights by Giopato & Coombes ►





Living room Another 'Sense' sofa by Roche Bobois, this time in blue, sits in front of two large artworks by Vasantha Yoganathan, which depict festival dancers from Mumbai. The wooden chair was bought in Red Blue & Yellow, while the side table is from Baro – both are furniture stores from the Indian city. The pendant light is from Giopato & Coombes's 'Bolle' collection. Underfoot, architects BVDS chose herringbone 'Venture Plan' in 'Cedro' by Havwoods



When George Bradley of architecture firm Bradley Van Der Straeten first met the owners of this home, chat soon turned to the cold and drabness of British winters and how to survive them. Many of us feel our mood drop as the temperature plummets, but for George's clients, Gautham and Sreeja, a move from Mumbai to the UK had intensified the challenge. 'They talked with us about how their artwork makes them feel warm. A lot of it is tropical in theme; it is escapist but comforting,' he says. 'They view colour as a way to get them through.' It was these discussions that inspired George and his team to take the chilli reds, lush greens and vibrant blues from the couple's collected paintings and make them a defining part of the architecture of their new home.

Aside from warmth, the main concerns were space and light. This home was once two apartments, with Gautham and Sreeja owning just the upper level. It was after buying the downstairs flat, too, with its higher ceilings, that the pair got in touch with BVDS with the idea to recreate the vast, lateral living spaces they'd enjoyed in Mumbai. 'They shared a video of one of their grandparent's houses for inspiration,' recalls George, who was intent more on creating the right mood than translating an architectural style.

His approach hinged on the biggest intervention in the space: the staircase. The new link between the entertaining level on the lower floor (living room, kitchen, office) and the private areas above had to make a statement. First, the team needed to decide where to put it. 'One plan had the staircase at the other side of the flat; in another it was in the middle. In the one we chose, it's right there at the entrance,' explains George, who liked that it emphasised the crosslight in the apartment (it has windows on one side, with internal glazing also allowing a view through to the ones above the double-height study).

There were challenges, of course. The floor had to be raised on the bottom level to reinforce the broken-flow layout, while the necessities of shared piping and electrical work in the apartment block meant there was a lot of disguise at play – but it's testament to the skill of this project that nothing feels like a compromise. Instead, glazed doors allow spaces to be closed off (another necessity in colder months) without disrupting the passage of sunlight, and precise details of colour and form tie the whole scheme together. See how the circular staircase's shape is mirrored in the rounded end of the kitchen island and the curve of the walk-in shower.

This home may be what Gautham and Sreeja needed to remind them of Mumbai, but there were times, admits George, that the plan was out of their comfort zone. 'They wouldn't have chosen all of these colours or had the confidence to think it would work. The red, blues and greens definitely gave them moments of doubt.' The key, he believes, was an understanding built up over hours of talking and shared enthusiasm. 'Without trust, we can't do what we do,' he states, 'but, equally, you have to earn that trust.' The payoff can be magical. b-vds.co.uk ►





Kitchen Sat at the centre of the living area and opening out to rooms on three sides, this space showcases the full palette of the home, with the island in Farrow & Ball's 'Blazer' red, cabinetry in Little Greene's blue 'Mazarine' and sections of the wall and ceiling in the delicate green of 'Aquamarine Mid', also by Little Greene. The pendant light seen above the small dining area beyond the island is the '28 Series' by Bocci, while the wall light above the Frank Belfast sink and Quooker tap is the 'Aura Plus' by Joan Gaspar for Marset ►



Staircase Architects BVDS designed this new link between what was formerly two separate apartments. The curving balustrade is painted in dark 'Air Force Blue' by Little Greene, while the windows through to the adjacent study are framed by deep red. Two artworks, hung either side of the glazing, are by self-taught Keralan artist Murali Nagapuzha

Bathroom The shape of this walk-in shower mirrors the curve of the staircase and, with windows on two sides, is bathed in natural light. Tadelakt in 'Foggy Green' enhances the glow, while the tiles include the 'Yubi' kitkat-style by Domus and 'Amber Forest Green' terrazzo from Terrazzo Tiles ➤





Bedroom A print of David Hockney's *Colour Forest* hangs above the 'Belsa' bed from Soho Home. The bedding and cushion are from Indian design firm Good Earth and the bedside table is a refurbished antique the homeowners bought back from Mumbai – the little wooden elephant on top is a gift from one of their grandmothers

Guest room The cabinetry in here is painted in Farrow & Ball's 'Picture Gallery Red', while the walls are in 'French Grey'.

The colours can be found in the details of the fabric used to upholster the chair bought from Baro in Mumbai (it's a reproduction of the seat prints found inside the city's black-and-yellow cabs).

The curtain is made from Romo's 'Linara' fabric and the wall light is the 'Mini Glo-Ball' by Jasper Morrison for Flos

See Stockists page for details **ED**



