

53 Silver Oaks

Residence

Gurugram, Haryana



ARCHITECTURE DISCIPLINE



LOCATION: Gurugram, Haryana

PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT: Akshat Bhatt

DESIGN TEAM: Nishant Malhotra, Nikhil Auluck

BUILT AREA: 10750 sq. ft

COMPLETION OF PROJECT: January 2014

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS: Lirio Lopez

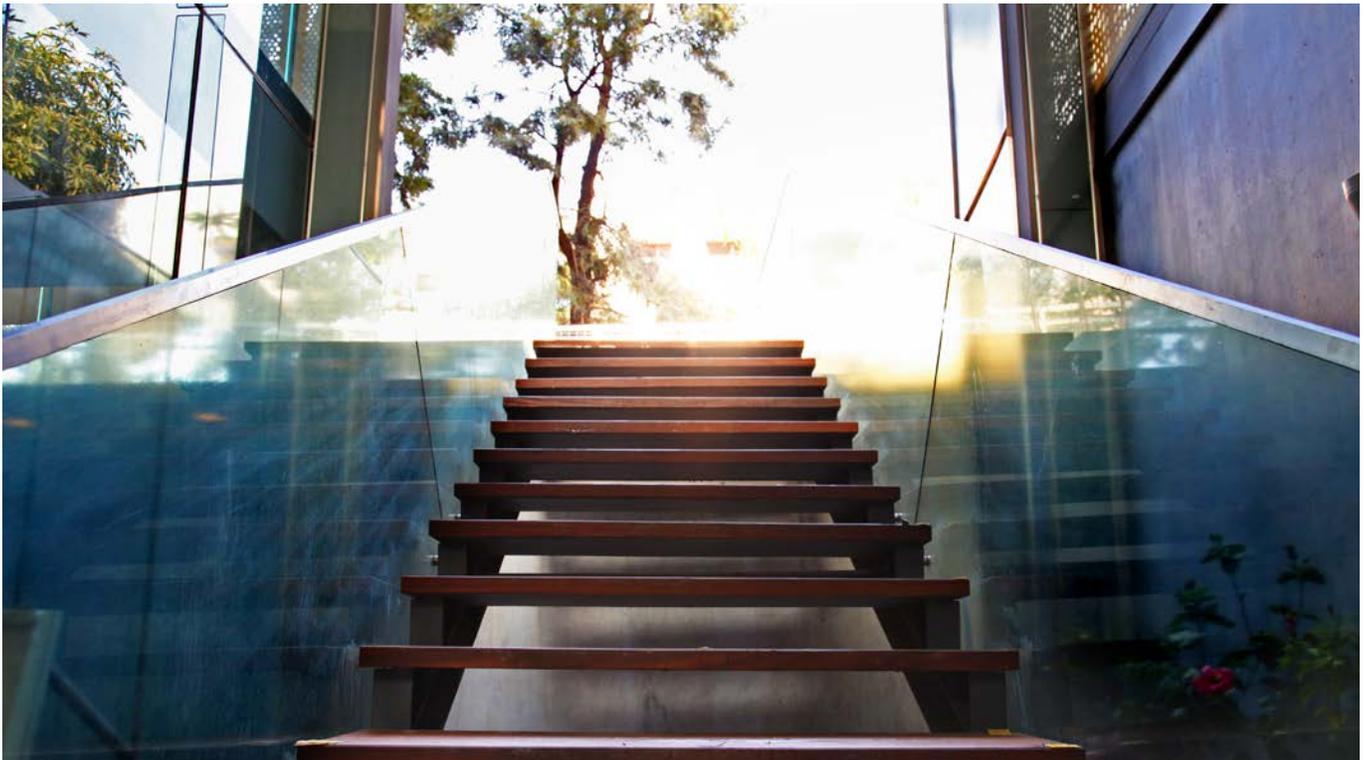
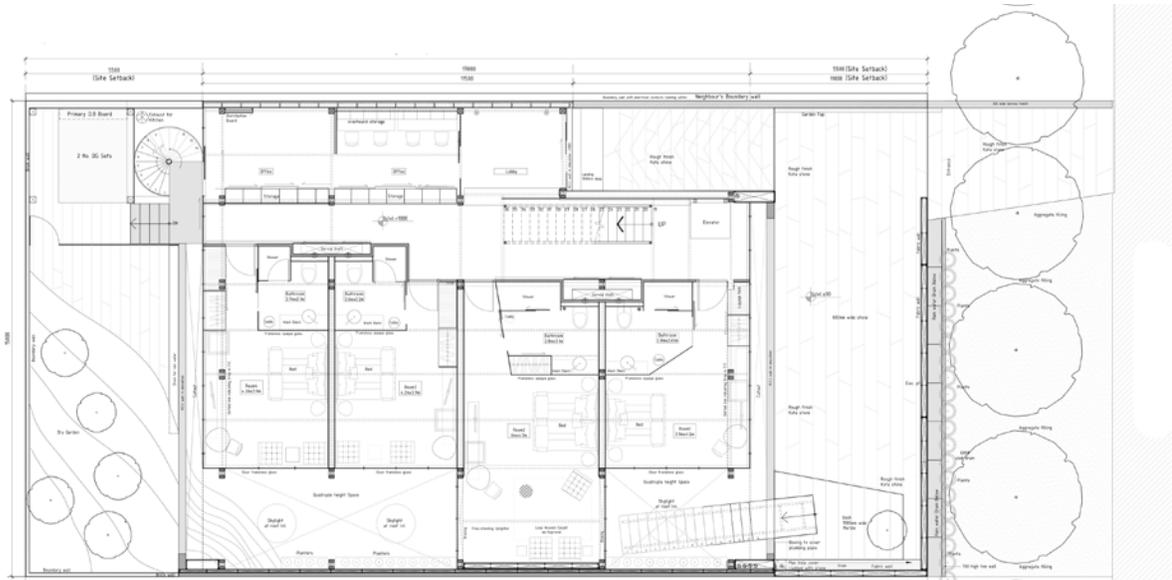
STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Isha Consultants Pvt. Ltd.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Jeetin Sharma

Deep within this context of banality lay the rectilinear project site and a complex brief of requirements. The client wished to accommodate a large public space and a combination of several kinds of guest rooms, on a site that mandated that no windows could overlook either of the long sides. Having lived in a climate responsive and an inward looking house made in exposed brickwork and concrete, he also wanted the building to imbibe the unique qualities of the mid-century modernism that put post-independent Indian architecture on the global map.

As a unique parti, it was decided to create the main public areas below ground level and thus, the principal entrance leads to a generous subterranean space. The glass walls of this light-filled space are set in, detached from the peripheral retaining walls, eliminating the sense of being underground by creating deep horizontal views and negating any impact of possible dampness. On the upper floors, an efficient combination of suites and rooms are organized around a central vertical movement core, emphasized by the stark geometry of the stair. Skylights and atriums bring





light directly into what is almost an ephemeral space, consisting of translucent and reflective surfaces, multiplying the light by reflecting.

The overall intent begins from the need to express the architectural concerns within space and not just leave them to the exterior massing/public spaces; hence the structural system and construction techniques being expressed clearly (as opposed to practice wherein most internal surfaces are concealed by cladding, plaster etc.) A uniquely symbiotic relationship has

evolved at 53, between the design of the structural system and the exterior skin. For centuries, architecture in the Indian subcontinent has battled the sun, the dust and the heat. The screen (or the Indian jaali) is a marvellous architectural device, reduced somewhat unfortunately to a mostly decorative element in the contemporary scenario. Adapted to a contemporary interpretation, here, it is used to keep out the glare of the sun, moderate the interior temperature, whilst all the while providing a uniform subtle light quality in interior spaces. The objective was to wrap the structure

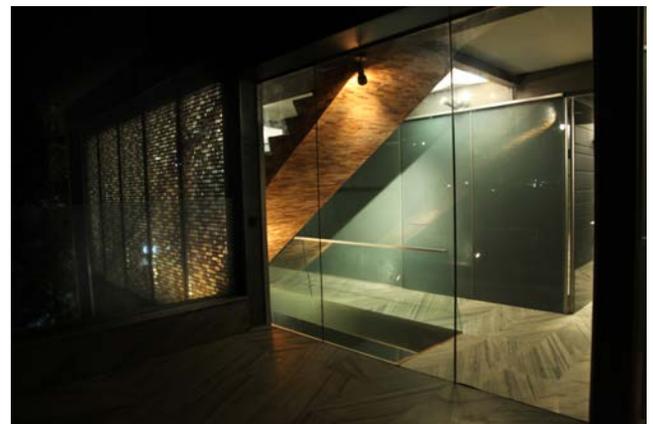


in a thin, light, perforated screen so that the structure itself could be lighter and free from supporting the weight of unnecessarily heavy interior and exterior partitions. The pattern of the perforations are not simple repetitive modules; instead they are seemingly random until viewed together, when they coalesce into an overall composition.

Further, the mesh creates a Uniform envelope around the building, whilst creating a dynamic play within by enabling a play of shadows internally, yet ensuring privacy from the road by creating a significantly clear architectural product. The skin also facilitates a peak into the outside world, while bringing in filtered

views of the trees inside through corridors, creating a controlled engagement for the occupier vis-à-vis the neighbourhood. By limiting the use of concrete to the basement retaining walls and roof slabs, the resultant building is remarkably sustainable in its life cycle, maximising the use of recyclable materials. Nearly all of the walls are made of double insulated glass units, eliminating privacy concerns with respect to noise.

The steel frame itself was designed for maximum lightness, with bracing provided by diagonal members, their geometry expressed through the glass. Not only does this allow maximum flexibility, it enables easy maintenance by nearly eliminating repeated painting.



The metal frame is finished with aircraft grade non-VOC paint. The steel joists that hold up the deck slabs are visible within the guest rooms. The main load bearing columns are expressed through the public spaces as slender elements.

By using mostly dry materials and highly articulated material transitions, the building can be assembled quicker and with a greater degree of precision. Locally sourced materials have been used throughout the building. A deeply veined Indian marble was deployed in an asymmetrical pattern to complement the cool tones of the interior glass partitions. Plumbing, lighting and air conditioning were conceptualised within the

framework of the building at an early stage including systems like pressurized water supply, solar hot water generators with recycling pumps, rainwater harvesting etc. A professional kitchen situated in the basement caters to the entire building. An insulated roof increases the thermal mass of the building, while the glass walls allow it quickly cool in the evening. The interior furniture in solid oak wood, stained in a Scandinavian fade is designed to complement the interiors and reflect the environmental concerns of the property. The boundary wall, otherwise a banal necessity in the urban context of Gurgaon, has been transformed into an animated part of the building by incorporating a retractable planted screen, enabling a dynamic expression of



the plants from the back to the basement. The resultant aesthetic is one of elegant simplicity. At night, the varying pattern of the retractable blinds animates the ordered elements, while during the day, the shadows of the surrounding trees play out on the façade, reflecting their movement. A single material used in the façade, not in the manner of the local context, but one that fully exploits the abilities of composite glass to act as a sustainable peripheral skin.

