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SAFE ZONE

Rug Republic
New Delhi, India
Architecture Discipline

Photography courtesy of the architects



A recovery project of a central Delhi building for the HQ of one of the country's largest producers of rugs, with a limited budget but plenty of imagination. After removing a plethora of ad hoc modifications and additions to take the structure back to its basics, Principal Akshat Bhatt got down to the fun part. He's produced a chic lair of dim lighting and evocative nooks that feels like an artist's atelier crossed with an urban loft-harem. The rugs themselves play their part, hung, draped, stacked, layered such that they interact with the architecture like members of the materials list. Others include rusty steel, chalky brick pavers, glass, plywood, concrete.

The external facade sets things off with a bang, wrapping the elevations with horizontal bands of angled, overlapping corten sheets, that evoke both war machines and stacks of carpets. The effect is defensive, as if protecting the occupants from the surroundings, which was partly intentional. Rug Republic provides an internal oasis in a busy, cacophonous area of the city. But the

facades also attract, due to their almost iconographic singularity – you're not sure if this is a 'building' or some kind of apparatus. Bhatt uses simple chain mesh to enclose the gaps between the bottom of the umber metal plates (to exclude monkeys) and the actual glass windows behind. Thus we actually have a solar shading system, in modern armour.

Once inside, the large spaces are centred by a dramatic helical staircase in more of the rusty metal. Offices and display areas cluster on the lower level, off a lovely courtyard in which a shipping container is adapted to serve as a meeting pavilion. Space is left flexible and raw, industrial components serve for most surfaces. The client can manipulate many of the larger spaces as required over time. But in the architect's mind, the building delivers a critique on our current ways, questioning what state we've brought our modern cities, and environment, to. This urban shelter may seem on trend and desirable, but it also results from city conditions that are less so.

