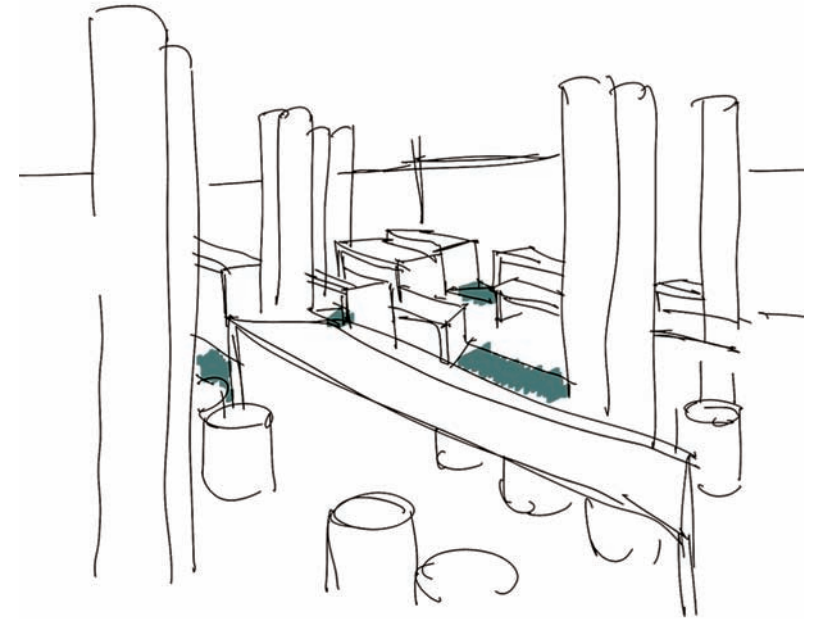


TOPOGRAPHY

Topography is a collaborative effort by the practice and the Institute of Indian Interior Designers (IIID) who wanted the firm to design a chill-out space of 16 m x 13 m, where the public could relax and stop over for snacks during the exhibition.

The programme guidelines were flexible enough to allow a fair degree of spatial innovation, say the architects. The brief they got was for a truly experimental space, which would challenge conventional design norms to generate new ideas.

The architects came up with a simple, straightforward layout with 'strips' running across the space. These strips turn and fold to become the seating, table and lighting, all in one stretch, while 'light trees', custom-fabricated out of Ferrari fabric give an ephemeral and magical aura to the stunning cafeteria and also complement the 'horizontality' of topography with its vertical vector.



Showstopper

Lalitha and Mujib Ahmed of Collaborative Architecture create public spaces which are highly innovative and interactive. We feature two of their projects, Topography, an award winning café, which they designed for the Inside Outside Mega Show, Mumbai, and Wrap-4, a showroom for Hyundai in Calicut, which with its sleek curves, shares the spotlight with the luxury cars on display.

PHOTOGRAPHS: MANISH GALA & LALITHA THARANI, COURTESY THE ARCHITECTS





Unlike most stores, which are designed for front viewing, here the design had to address the changing experiential views of the spectator.



WRAP-4

The showroom is housed in a 12,000 sq ft warehouse with a 60 m long, uninterrupted façade, and no set back. 'Our architectural response did exactly the opposite of the brief – we positioned the "parking-lot" (vehicular display) as the "raison d'être" and the anchoring element of the showroom,' adds Mujib.

The layout of the showroom posed a unique challenge to the architects. They wanted to create a 360° view of the cars from the main road and thus, customers would have to enter from the rear of the showroom. Unlike most stores, which are designed for front viewing, here the design had to address the changing experiential views of the spectator.

The 'wrap', which merges the floor, wall, ceiling and the products into a single, unified entity

The 'wrap' merges the floor, wall, ceiling and the products into a single, unified entity. A sinusoidal curve separates the private domains and lounges from the public area.





establishes the vital link between the showroom, the display and the people in the showroom on one hand and the speeding traffic and the passers-by on the street on the other, with a 60 m 'bill-board' mimicking the flux of the movement on the street.

Selling cars is like selling a dream of a better lifestyle and thus the process of decision-making goes through various stages. The showroom has different areas for customer interaction, a lounge, discussion area, back office, coffee shop and an accessory shop. A sinusoidal curve separates the private domains and lounges from the public area.

The 'hanging counters', as their name indicates, are hung from the ceiling and are the customer interfaces in the showroom. These can be slid and rotated to new positions to manoeuvre the vehicles in the space. Metallic colours sinuously flow through the interior, which look as attractive as the cars.

Certainly no parking lot this! 

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