

house fact file



OWNER Arti Sondhi Malik
PROPERTY 1st floor of an independent house
LOCATION New Delhi
ROOMS 3 bedrooms
AREA 3,000 square feet
INTERIORS DESIGNER Arti didn't hire professional help since she is a trained architectural interiors designer
RENOVATED IN 2008



Arti's home is a treasure chest of all things aesthetic

Le Corbusier once said, "the home should be the treasure chest of living." This is truly reflected in Arti Malik's home. "It is like a diary of my life and reflects the different phases I've been through," says Arti. "I grew up in Delhi but lived overseas for 20 years." Just having moved back home from Africa, where Arti stayed for almost five years and having spent some time in London as well, Arti has lived in places spread across three continents and picked up things from each one of them.

As you walk into Arti's apartment, a sense of grandeur envelops you. You first notice the décor that's done in neutral colours and textures but still makes a bold statement through large contemporary furniture characterised by straight lines. Slowly, your

focus shifts to the other interesting elements that adorn the space: the African Kuba cloth, sculptures from Zimbabwe, Turkish rugs, Chinese antiques, an Art Nouveau gramophone and even a Victorian rosewood chiffonier. What you see is a carefully selected set of collectibles from across different cultures and eras. Every time you go around a room, you find something new that catches your eye, which you may have missed the first time around. It's almost like turning a page to a different chapter in the same story. Tying everything together are the earthy tones that have been maintained across all living spaces. It's incredible that I saw it in just the way Arti had intended, as she later said, "I prefer to have many layers to the design."

Arti has received training as an



Melting pot

After having soaked in different cultures, Arti Sondhi Malik is now finding her balance back home

FEATURE SHIVANI SEN PHOTOGRAPHS KAMAL KANSARA

Arti's drawing room is aglow with colours and eye-catching artwork

Architectural Interior Designer at the Inhbald School of Design, London. This formal education in the craft came much after she became interested in the field of interiors design as she says, "Even before I got the qualification, I had done many homes wherever we lived—Johannesburg and London. I realised it was something I really enjoyed and so decided to get a professional qualification." Arti has worked with a design agency in London on residential projects. "I even designed an Art Deco porter's desk for the entrance foyer of an apartment building."

Arti's Delhi home is an inherited property on the first floor of an independent house. She chose not to make any architectural changes as that would have broken down the space further; instead, she tried to accommodate what she could from her home in Johannesburg. "Most of my furniture is bespoke and was made in South Africa. It was made to my specifications for a very different style of home. However, I shipped only what I felt I would be able to accommodate in this space and what I could not bear to part with! It was a challenge to accommodate the same furniture into a much smaller space without making any architectural changes," she says. "Besides, since I also had time constraints, I changed the look of this apartment, which was a total mess, by just using paint. I hand-painted the pattern on the wall in the stairway, changed the lighting and front door, and basically gave the apartment a more contemporary look. I would have loved to change the flooring to natural stone, which is more in sync with my sensibilities, but alas!"

Arti's living spaces are divided into two. One is that which greets you as soon as you enter through the main door. It is also the



space most heavily influenced by African art and craft. Immediately putting the décor influence in perspective are Heidi Lange batiks from Nairobi, masks from Ivory Coast and a framed piece of raffia textile from Congo, which continues onto the cushions as well. Arti calls this space her "morning corner, where I can listen to music, read the paper and have my tea."

As you move in to the left, you come into the formal drawing room, which is more like a melting pot of different influences. It's more contemporary, with brighter colours and bolder statements made through exaggerated wing-backed chairs and a huge, bright painting by Iranna, bought in 2003, framed by a Paprika day bed. The square coffee table in the centre has an L-shaped groove for jasper chunks, which Arti found in a plant nursery in Johannesburg and bought 20 kilos! Another of Arti's proud purchases is the painting on the easel by Gabrielle Ellison, a well-known Zambian artist. It is titled 'Mother-in-law.' "I like the typical weathered African face of a middle-aged woman. Even Prince Charles bought a painting by Ellison on his visit to Zambia!" says Arti proudly.

Turn around and on the other side of the arch lies the dining room. On the main wall here hangs a painting by Yusuf Arrakal. Just below it, on the sideboard, I find functional art in pewter. There's also a creamer, sugar pot and jug, part of the 'Naked Man' Series, from Johannesburg. Then there are malachite busts from the craft market in Lusaka, Zambia. These seem priceless, rare pieces to me and yet they are kept there so casually. Just as the huge chunks of amethyst—yes, raw amethyst from the mines, gifted to her by a friend—just lie there on Arti's balcony. These large rocks are so heavy

My favourite corner

"This is my morning corner, where I can listen to music, read the paper and have my tea. Most of the furniture here is bespoke and was made in South Africa. I love African art and this room displays a lot of my finds."



LEFT The house is a treasure trove of art. A Yusuf Arrakal adorns the dining room wall and you see a Thota Vaikuntam on the wall next to the arch



RIGHT Arti's daughter's room is distinct from the rest of the home. An Andy Warhol print and an Elvis headboard add a lot of character to this room



Though Arti paints, there are not very many of her paintings around the house. This one, on the easel in her room, is an exception

“Design is all about achieving a balance—a balance between function and aesthetics.”

— ARTI SONDHI MALIK

that you cannot move them an inch. The amethyst treasure trees of course are also pretty but the raw beauty of the stone is something else.

As Arti takes me to the other side of the house where the bedrooms lie, I notice that this part of the house is more contemporary. In her room, I saw her own piece of art. Arti paints too, though her works are not seen much around the house. She has done up her teenage daughter's room in a style different from the rest of the house. While her daughter is away studying in Paris, Arti's put up the Elvis headboard and Andy Warhol print, which are her favourites. The guest room is a fusion of Chinese antiques and contemporary pieces.

Arti has always been involved in something creative, be it running a knitwear company as long back as in the 1980s, creative writing for an advertisement agency in Africa or learning to paint and photograph

while in Johannesburg. “Living in Africa and Europe has increased my design vocabulary, due to which I am now able to create aesthetically pleasing and interesting spaces.” Having moved back to Delhi, Arti has started her own consultancy here. For Arti, “Design is all about achieving a balance—a balance between function and aesthetics and between proportion and simplicity of line, while infusing a lot of light. If there is the luxury of a lot of space, the interiors should let their occupants feel the expanse and yet have warmth. Décor done in neutrals, with a burst of a single colour through accessories, looks quite dramatic. Moreover, accessories can be changed to give the room an entirely different look and feel.”



◀ **Bespoke furniture**

The Square Table has an L-shaped groove especially made for the jasper chunks that Arti purchased in bulk

▼ **Comfort zone**

Cushion covers made of the Raffia textile from Congo add texture in the true African spirit

▼ **Functional art**

This Creamer, Sugar Pot and Jug are from The Naked Man Series from Johannesburg



▼ **Face off**

African masks from Ivory Coast bring Africa closer to New Delhi for Arti



Arti's style file

This home displays a heavy African influence and has contemporary colours



▲ **Green with envy**
These Malachite Busts are from one of Arti's hunts at the craft market in Lusaka, Zambia



▶ **Intricate and ethnic**
Eye-catching Heidi Lange Batik from Nairobi, Kenya is distinctly African

▶ **Precious tree**
While Arti's Amethyst Treasure Tree is from South Africa, you can source one for yourself from a local Feng Shui shop

