

UNCOVERED: ANDBLACK DESIGN STUDIO

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DESIGN QUEST: VILAASITA

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INDIA CALLS
MINNIE BHATT DESIGN

QUIRKY N' YOUTHFUL
BY DCA

THE GEM IN THE CROWN

STUDIO LOTUS BUILDS A NARRATIVE OF FRAMES AND CONNECTIONS



Cement floors, brick walls and a ceiling with exposed services declare the aesthetics of the space.

QUIRKY & YOUTHFUL

The Delhi office of the Nando's food chain has been so designed by group DCA that it not only reflects the work culture of the multinational, but also showcases the collection of modern South African art which it owns

With more than 1000 outlets in 30 countries across the globe, Nando's is a casual dining restaurant chain originating in South Africa. "Consequently, many of their outlets have been designed by international architects. So when this project came to us, we did a recce on their brand and noted that its image is quirky and youthful," says Amit Aurora of group DCA. "Moreover, they have a large collection of modern South African art and also work with the artists there, giving them an opportunity to display their work.

Text By Devyani Jayakar
Photographs Courtesy Kapil Kamraa



"We believe that the interiors of a good office should accurately mirror the core values, the ethos and of course, the strategic objectives of the brand, while aiming to craft a lively and efficient workspace for the employees. Taking this approach forward, we designed a creative and conducive workspace for them in Gurugram," he says. The brief was to go local. "Nando outlets are known to use materials in their true form...for instance, they never use veneers," explains Amit.

Since the clients required a dynamic, playful and vibrant space for their young team, the design breaks away from the monotony of dull, stereotypical workplaces, and instead carries forward the chain's international aesthetic whilst showcasing its emphasis on art. With a sense of place in the Indian context, an eclectic stance is adopted to enliven the space and create a playful working environment that is fun as well as edgy.

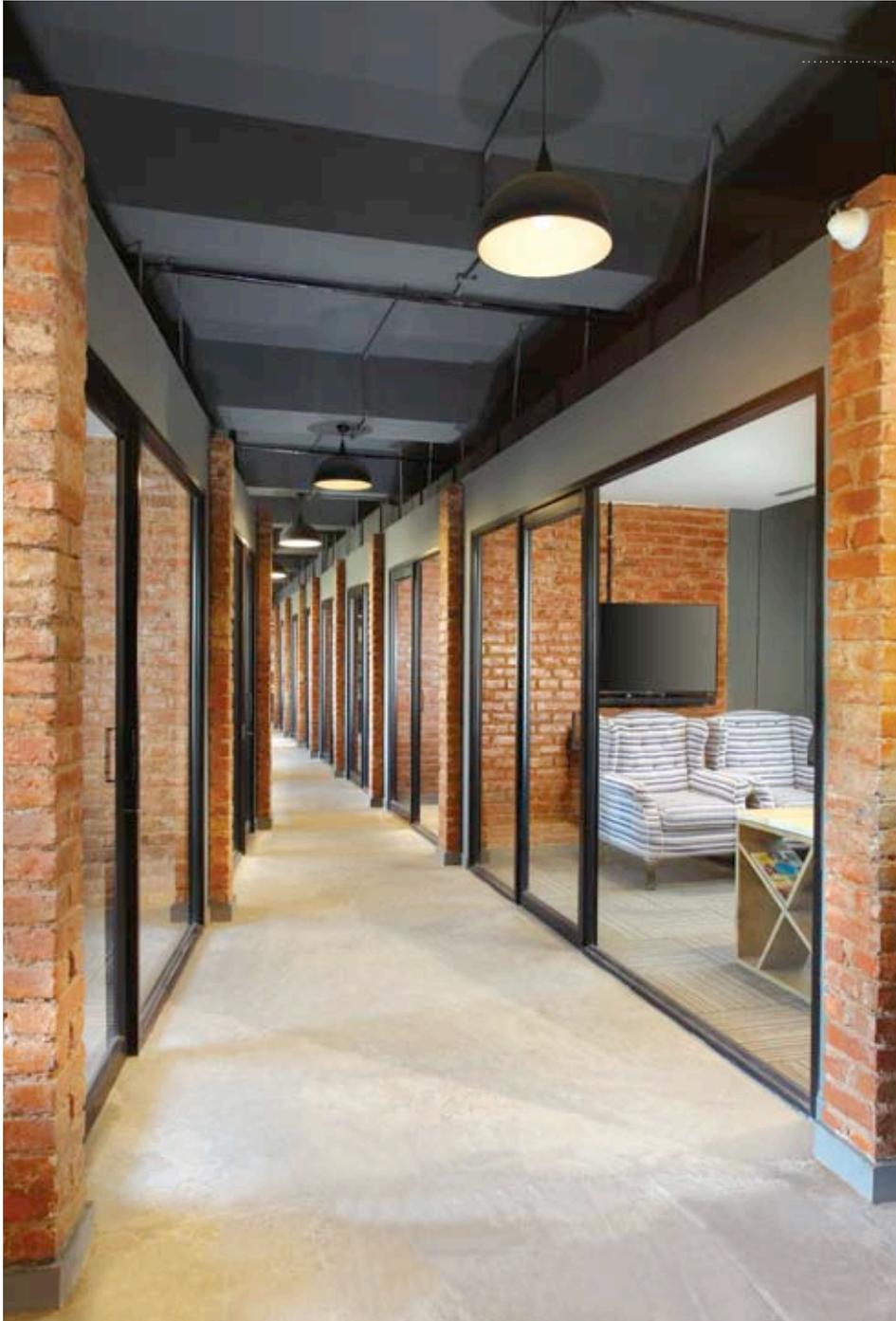
There is no reception desk; just a café and a jhoola located near the entrance. The cafeteria sets the tone of informality present throughout the workspace. "The work culture is not rigid, so employees who wish to make a phone call are welcome to pour themselves a cup of coffee and sit on the swing while they talk," says Amit. A lunch table doubles as a table tennis table, when its wooden top is removed.

The long, narrow footprint with windows on the north and south enabled the office to function simply with the ingress of daylight; the design optimises the form and exploits the window frontage to its best. Glass doors facilitate optimum natural illumination encouraging daylight to permeate the interiors while creating a shift from the typical, artificially lit corridors.

The use of regular, artificial lighting is reduced to after-dark hours only. Since the office sits on the top floor of a commercial tower, the cabins are aligned with a window on the outer wall that reflects views of the urban surroundings.



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“In spite of the linear plate, the feel is not of a corridor since we’ve staggered the cabins and placed them like a funnel which is wider in the front and narrower towards the rear. This spatial planning exploits the site to direct people inside, from an open, wider reception to the more private, meeting rooms inside.” This feeling is accentuated by the visual perspective as well.

Dividing the long linear corridor into a series of interactive spaces, the monotony is broken; the working cabins and open areas are arranged in a manner that the corridor always seemed interesting. This layout provides for an array of open, co-working and individual spaces. A boardroom in cement and bricks sits on one end of the corridor, behind a glass wall.

Cement floors, brick walls, mango wood and windows with glazing make up the non-fussy material palette. Metal chairs add to the eclectic mix of elements. “Many of these are discards, scrapped at the time of renovating Nando’s restaurants. This is in sync with Nandos’ overall green approach, of minimising the use of resources,” says Amit.

Most of the ceilings have been left untreated, with the beams, air conditioning ducts and electrical conduits being clearly visible. Painted a dark colour, they are not at all attention-grabbing. The furnishings such as the rugs and carpets are handcrafted and sourced locally; basic in design, yet elegant in nature, they further the design intent.

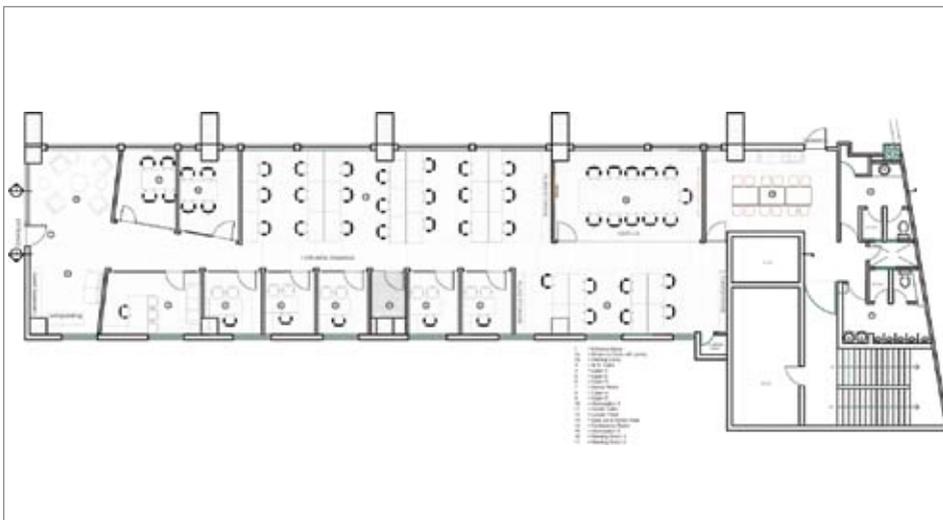
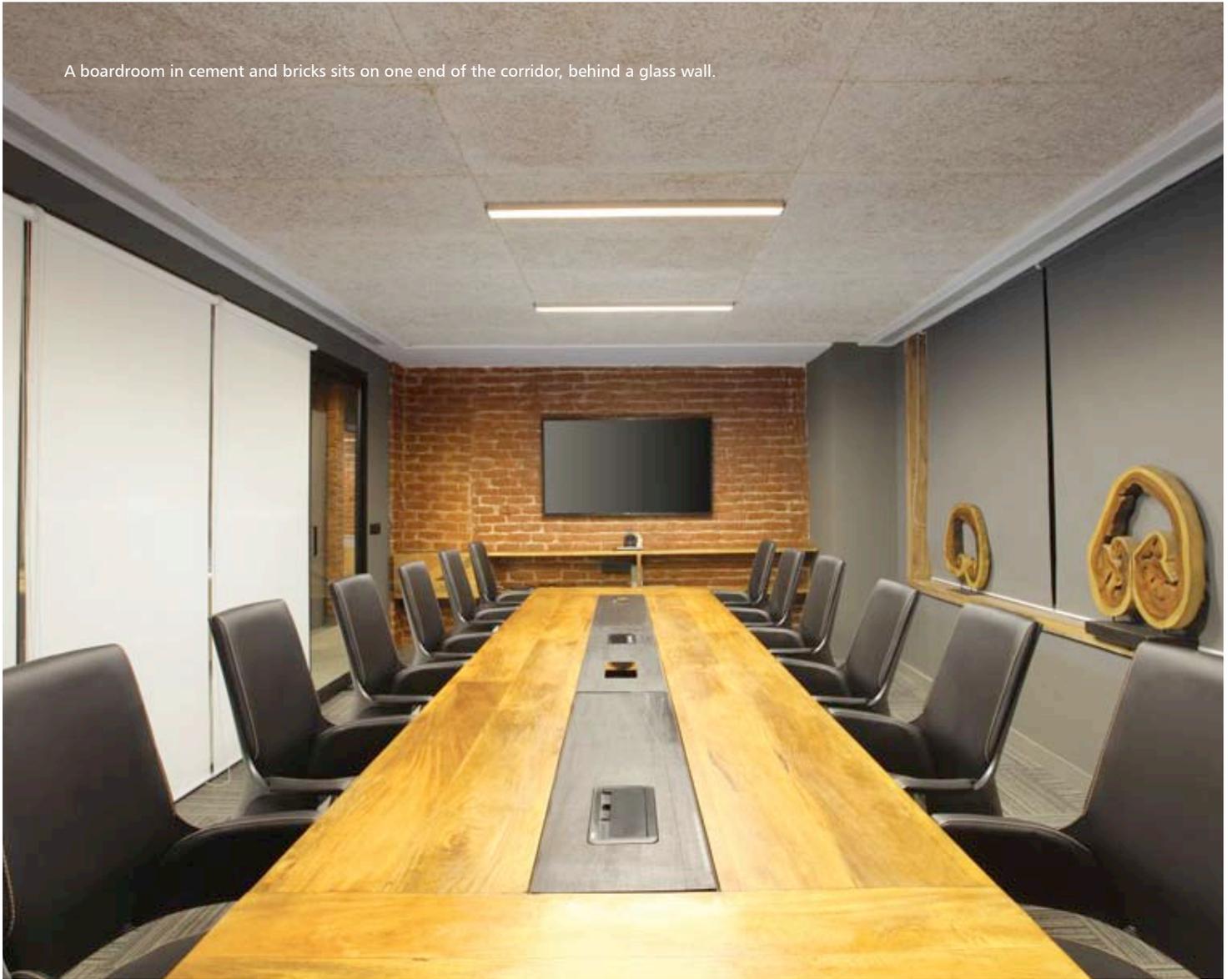
Nando’s as an organisation, supports local talent as well as an art foundation that is a patron and collector of South African Art. “Therefore, the curated art pieces on the walls have been exclusively picked from this foundation to showcase the art of the region, enhanced by spot lights from the ceiling above,” says Amit.

“The lighting, cooling and the use of the space itself is optimal,” says Amit. Simple lighting is an essential focus of the overall design approach. Natural light is exploited to the maximum, with accent lights being used to highlight the exclusive artwork. “The design provides a good sensory experience, with colour coming from the fabrics and art, while the rugs and brick walls add texture.”



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Floor Plan

If good design must be rooted in its time and space, while catering to its function, this is it. DCA's design lives up to the brand's ethics - simple, an honest use of materials and no-fuss aesthetics.

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