

European escape

Group DCA captures old-world European charm in a New Delhi cafe

Tucked away in a corner of the city, Amour Bistro is a 1000 sq ft cafe designed by Group DCA that exudes a quaint charm evocative of the street cafes in Europe. Amit Aurora, one of DCA's principal architects alongside Rahul Bansal explains how the firm arrived at this aesthetic. "First, we had to find the design language, which we did by looking at the cafe name and the cuisines being served. This pointed us towards the style you see on the streets of Europe," he says.

To begin with, the architects had to work within a very constrained plot size. The cafe had to be entered through a narrow, low-ceiling space. To counter the stifling effect this created, Aurora made some structural changes. He says, "We kept the columns but removed the internal walls and added floor-to-ceiling windows. For us, the tight plot was a challenge that we turned into an opportunity."

The exterior facade looks invitingly cheerful, with a wooden pergola and bright yellow planters spruc-

These pages Amour Bistro is a 1000 sq ft New Delhi cafe designed by Group DCA. Large iron windows allow the cafe's warm interiors to engage with the wooden pergolas and bright yellow planters of the exteriors.

Following pages The low wooden ceiling leads to the spacious double-height area at the counter. Tumbled sandstone floors, white plaster walls combine and handcrafted furniture give off a Euro-Mediterranean flavour.







Facing page Two eye-catching installations brighten the interior of Amour Bistro. The first is the trio of musician statues above the counter, and the second is the wine rack on the double-height wall.

Below right Intricate details add a new dimension to the space. Vintage bells and lamps adorn the walls, bringing greater authenticity to the European experience the architects were trying to capture.

Following pages Several wrought iron chandeliers light the interior. These chandeliers are suspended at different heights and can be dimmed or brightened according to requirements, creating a dynamic and enigmatic play of light and shadow in the interior. The restroom is located behind wine rack installation. A stone and copper basin reflects the approach to showcasing the materials in their natural form.

ing up the facade. The full-length glass windows allow passers-by to catch a glimpse of voluminous double-height space at the cafe's rear.

"As the volume opened up towards the back, we exploited the height to enhance the ambience and highlight the most attractive elements," Aurora adds. Once inside, the low-ceiling seating area opens up to a double-height space around the food counter. A collection of statues depicting a trio of musicians crowns the space above the counter.

"You might laugh when you hear how we made

those statues," Aurora confides. The statues are actually store mannequins holding authentic instruments and they were posed to capture the desired look before being coated with a layer of metallic paint.

Another eye-catching feature is the installation of wine bottles that climbs up the double-height wall. Elaborating on this, Aurora says, "We were inspired by similar installations we saw on our travels. Also, this design affords the client the flexibility to use it just for decorative purposes or to display their





selection of wines.”

The furniture selection is a blend of chairs crafted from wood or wrought iron. Speaking about the furniture arrangement, Aurora says, “You see a system but there’s still a sense of chaos, just like a typical street cafe.” All the wooden furniture was customised and made-to-order using reclaimed teak wood. Teak and wrought iron dominate the interior material palette, with rough textured sand-

stone providing the flooring. The tumbled stone flooring was used to resemble the flagstone streets in Europe. Intricate flourishes and an immersive ambience make Amour Bistro a lively space. “At Group DCA, once we’ve found the design language for a project, our philosophy is to complete it in a true and basic fashion by creating the separate elements traditionally and with a lot of addition to detail,” says Aurora. ■



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