

# Inspiring SPACES

are public places that can floor you their attitude, charm, elegance and of humour

The endless glittering malls of Gurgaon represent a new India, one is often told. Sadly, there is little to inspire in much of their architecture. The enormous facades of glass sheathe rather tortured convulsions of concrete and steel. They do not inspire hope. And as much as I enjoy the science of their air-conditioned interiors on a hot summer afternoon, the unimaginative and blandly repetitive arrangement of space is usually just functional at best. And is often not. I've been thinking of some of the public spaces, and places, have passed through that have impressed me, or lightened my in some way. As a user of these spaces, I was inspired by a certitude and intrigued by their sensitivity to design. Below are of the public spaces, and their attributes, that made it to my they may not be the best designed spaces, but for me, they do only represent the best attitudes!

**TY:** Patel Chowk Metro Station, New Delhi: This is absolutely courteous. I love this structure. There is a splendid dignity about low-lying structures in pink sandstone. Even though they represent probably one of the most revolutionary and progressive experiments of Delhi, these elegant buildings sit quietly on their on the Asoka Road without any pomp. They are completely integrated into the architecture of the street. This is an excellent example of how responsible design can create a functional yet aesthetically pleasing structure.

**PROMISE:** Mumbai Airport's new domestic terminal: Yes, yes I know! This pales in comparison to the wonders of most other international airports. But this is India, and this is written from the perspective of an Indian traveller who has suffered. You are greeted in this terminal by long rows of check-in stations for passengers, which actually have room for you to stand in front of. Then after checking in, an



The Good Earth store in used the building's key in its design



**OPULENCE:** The decor at Veda celebrates old school decorating excess



**NO POMP:** The Patel Chowk metro station in Delhi reflects the city's progress. The exterior too is aesthetically pleasing



**HOPE:** Mumbai airport's new domestic terminal gives you space to check in without being shoved or pushed!

elegant and well-lit passageway lined with bamboo trees to pass through. It all falls apart, of course, after that walk. You return to the hysteria, chaos and the overall hideousness of the older section of the building. But these initial newly designed spaces are an indication that all is not lost. There is hope yet.

**RESPECT:** The Good Earth Store, Raghuvanshi Mills, Mumbai: One of the most responsible interior jobs that I have seen in a Indian city. Housed in a renovated mill building, the unique legacy of the building's industrial past as a factory has not been ignored. Indeed it has been drawn upon, to create a unique design identity, which incorporates the history of the building with elegance and restraint. Now a showroom for contemporary interior and home product, this is an excellent example of how the sensitive restoration of an old building can reintegrate it into the changing needs of a modern city.

**FLAMBOYANCE:** Veda, New Delhi: This restaurant in Connaught Place has had reams written about it. I am no food critic and I restrict myself to the décor. This celebrates old school decorating excess. Unabashed opulence close to our Indian style hearts. Excess, but well modulated. Red, black, mirrors, mirrors, mirrors; the opulence is a refreshing change to the minimalist white cubes that are now the general trend in restaurant interiors. I'm getting rather bored of all this po-faced minimalist restraint. Great expanses of cool white frostiness. White walls, tasteful niches, flickering votive candles. Yawn! Time to move on.

**WIT:** Aqua, swimming pool at The Park Hotel, New Delhi: This is an outdoor space that deserves a mention. This swimming pool has glamour. A little silly, but really in the best sort of way. In most hotels, swimming pools are functional, dull spaces. This offers more. Cabanas, sleek lounge areas, snappy bar and a large mirrored disco ball! Now how many swimming pools have you seen with mirrored disco balls? The slightly retro modernist design features pay a more than respectful nod to Miami style, yet strike a witty and irreverent chord in Delhi's brush new style vocabulary with its love for excess and glitter.



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# Talking design