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BUILDER

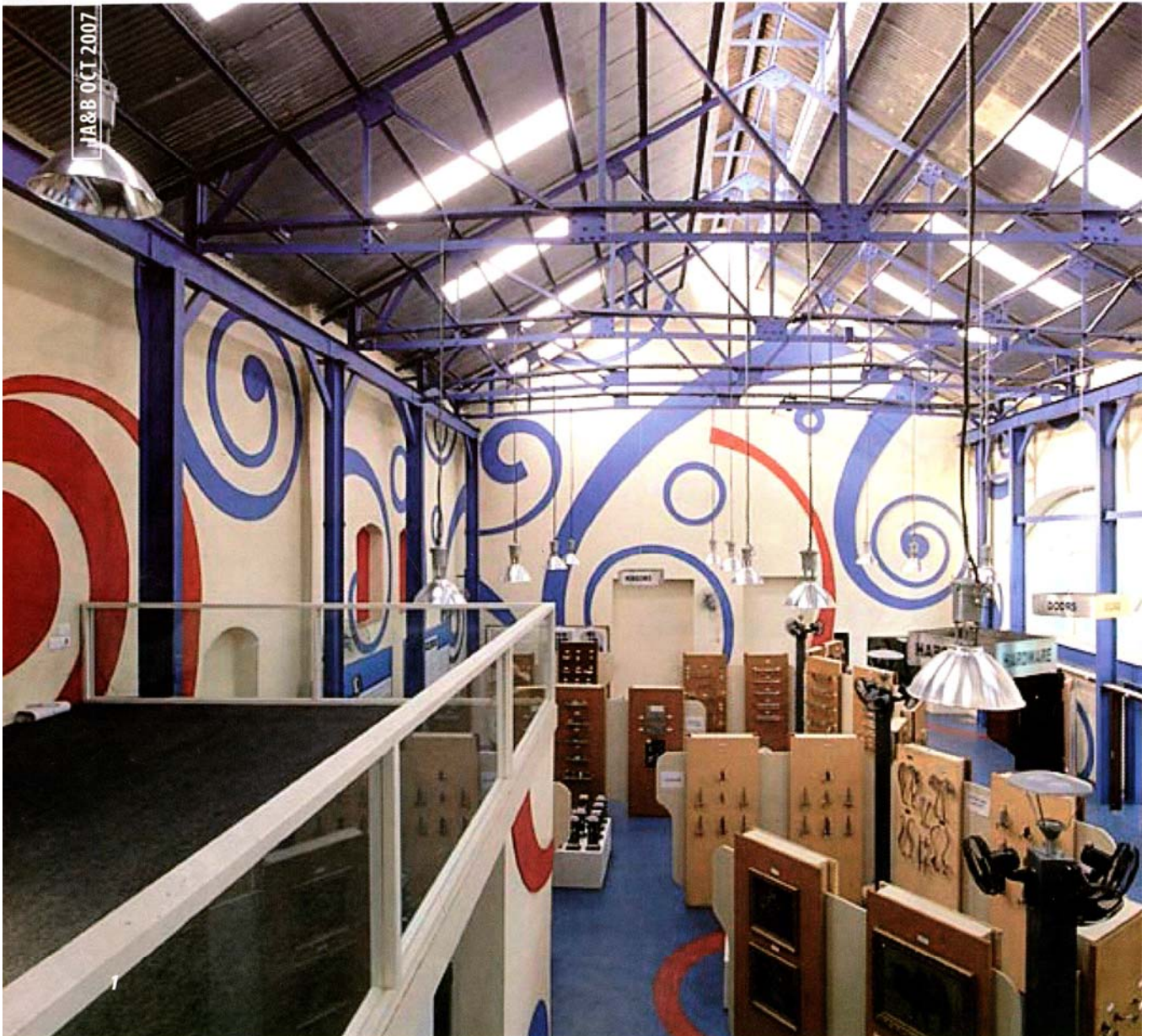
INNOVATE

# I A & B

## ARCHITECTURE

- Pragrup Architects, Bangalore
- Planet 3 Studios, Mumbai
- Artengo Menis Pastana Architects, Spain





# Reusing Space

The Sea-Horse project by Mumbai-based Planet 3 Studios embodies the process of putting to best defunct open built spaces, enlivening the once dark and dingy spaces with creative design ideas.

*Text: Felix Lobo*

*Photographs: courtesy Mrigank Sharma, India Sutra*

The Sea-Horse project set out to design and refurbish an abandoned industrial warehouse located in the heart of Mumbai, the aim being to create a new hub of activity in the area by carving out a new retail outlet that was both appealing and interesting.

The client wanted to utilise the extensive 11,000ft space gainfully, but

preferred to keep costs to a minimum. Moreover, the operational life—the retail outlet was required to be kept at 3 to 5 years. As after a few the client wanted to construct a high-rise tower in place of the e warehouse. Until then, putting the landmass to its best use was top agenda. Minimal investment and optimal gain was the mantra.



courtyard just outside the warehouses, but was later cut down. The memory of the beautiful banyan tree spurred the designers to re-create it in the façade, this ultimately became the central theme of the design concept.

The designers created 20ft high AutoCAD banyan tree stencils, cut out of plywood, manufactured and pasted to the high walls of the interior. This created a striking effect. Their shadows adjacent to the windows also added to the ambience. Thus, the play of light and shadow became primary to the visual effect of the warehouses. However, this caused the wall facades to look similar. It was then that the Sea-Horse logo caught the eye of the designers. The logo was modified such that it matched the overall aesthetic and became the focal point of the pattern.

Due to the fact that this was a retail store, all categories of products had to be displayed, in order to allow the buyers to make their choices. The background wall canvas therefore, had to be subtle so as not to overshadow the products, making sure that they were prominent.

The final finishing touches to the design were brought through the bright colour schemes of the interior that gave the spaces a warm glow. This created a colourful mix and match and brought to prominence the multi-coloured ceramic tiles and other accessories. The play of colours proved essential for the hospitality area within the retail façade, as it helped attract visitors to the store. This lure helped the retail area reverberate with higher footfalls, impacting business volumes positively.

Thus, colour and creativity combined brought a warehouse that saw no visitors, to now witness a flow of patrons, making the best use of a space that was once in disuse. ■



3 & 4. Sanitary ware display with stencils of banyan tree in the background.

#### FACT FILE

Project: Building Products Mall – Sea Horse.  
 Firm: Planet 3 Studios Architecture Pvt. Ltd.  
 Client: Sumer Group  
 Design Team: Kalhan Mattoo, Hina Parmar, Santha Gour Mattoo  
**Contractors**  
 Electrical contractor: Poertech electricals.  
 Carpenter: Local vendor.  
 Built up: 11,000sqft.  
 Cost of Construction: Rs.400/sq.ft  
 Year of completion: August'07



The project of redesigning the industrial warehouse into a modern retail outlet posed an adaptive reuse challenge. The old, sprawling and large spaces, at one time, a hub of activity, but in disuse now, triggered questions on how to use these spaces effectively. The challenge was more intense due to restrictions on demolition and on effecting changes to its structure. While these limitations did constrict the designers, the potentials of bringing in new design innovations were exciting. The large warehouse offered a fascinating, multidimensional and intriguing canvas for the play of ideas.

The client intended the project to be a display hub for architectural hardware and interior materials, where a range of products imported from neighbouring countries would be laid out. It would be a one-stop-shop for products and services of the realty sector. The volume of the warehouse space was immense and this allowed the designers to play with it conceptually. The

dimly lit, dilapidated nature of the warehouse required a design that would make its space appealing, attractive and above all enchanting.

The creative process took place gradually propelled by a series of discussions between client and designers. The first approach was to unblock the huge windows of the three bays of the warehouses. This brought in natural sunlight and fresh air. It also brought in innovative design ideas! The play of light and shadow triggered the imagination of the designers. "Why not incorporate huge embroidery patterns which rise to a height of 60ft and reflect on the walls?", wondered the design team. Having done so, the next inspiration was the gigantic banyan tree that once occupied the central

1. Warehouse converted into retail outlet for architectural display.
2. High rise embroidery patterns reflecting on the warehouse walls.

