

# BUILDOTECH

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## Eco-friendly Paints

- Lightweight Durable Bricks
- IIA Award Winning Projects



# Rithu

## Enhancing the family feeling



When *Ar Jayadev* of Cochin met his clients, a doctor and his wife, to discuss their dream home - *Rithu*, he hadn't dreamt of winning the coveted IIA awards for 2012 in the 'Residential: Single Residence' category. What started off with a simple brief of a home on a single floor with three bedrooms was soon converted into the highlights — Integrated indoor-outdoor transition, simple lines, play of colours, and ample natural light and ventilation — of an award winning project. Jaydev writes about the 'making of Rithu'.

A working couple wanted spaces to call home for themselves and their kid. They had 15 cents of land at Petta, Thripunithura, Cochin. Like all clients they had their own vision of how they wanted their house to be through the influences they had from around them and their own dreams and aspirations. After all building a home for oneself is regarded as one chunk of life on earth, a large one at that.

As an architect, my immediate response was to clear them away from the jungle of notions they had and take them to a clean canvas. They were asked to prioritize their requirements and leave it at that rather than going into the architectural connotations of the same. After all the discussions the requirements were stripped out bare: three bedrooms with attached toilets and showers, formal and informal living quarters, dining space, a powder room, kitchen and a utility.

We decided to go for a scheme where the family gets to be together all the while it is home, which happens when the couple

returns from their respective jobs and their kid from school. Thus the informal living coupled with a TV lounge, the dining space and the kitchen was conceived as a single volume visually connected with subtle details like a pelmet at lintel level or a band in floor separating the spaces related to different functions. This volume was connected to the formal living space through a corridor that acts as part foyer and part circulation node with access to a powder room as well. A courtyard was formed adjoining the living room and foyer. The bedrooms were connected to the informal living quarters through a sky lit corridor that also acts as a utility as well.

The point of entry to the house was extended over a distance from the main gate along a walkway to create an experience and a sense of belonging. Punctures were created along the left side of the walkway from the informal living spaces so that a person moving along it gets glimpses of the interiors. We wanted the person to physically belong to the structure and its sense of







space through the time he finally enters inside rather than an immediate enclosed shell of a space. The manifestation of the form occurs through the bare bone columns flanking the walkway and the beams connecting them along with solid masonry and punctures; you see the lighter elements supporting the shading devices and roof giving away to solid mass and then you reach the comfort of the interiors.

We had a ficus tree at the site that we wanted to retain and fuse with the structure visually. This was achieved by framing the tree with the columns and shade slab forming a portal frame. This is the view from the entry towards the left and this becomes the service entry.

The walkway was paved with discarded railway sleepers which contrast with the smooth textured white walls; these are extended over a narrow pool.

The gaps between two sleepers were filled with small skin colored pebbles. The holes and dents that once used to take the bolts for holding the rails are now filled with pebbles. This is an example of adaptive reuse in terms of material which saved us some cost (we wanted to use treated exterior grade teak wood) though it was not effortless, but the effect is worth it.

Once you enter through the main door, you are treated to the landscaped courtyard which becomes part of the foyer and the formal living room. The couple is into reading, so we have a book shelf in the formal living room which also acts as a curio shelf.

The corridor connecting the formal living room goes into the informal living areas with the dining area and kitchen forming an extension of the same. As mentioned earlier, this helps in giving a feel of togetherness for the family even when each of them is involved in different activities during the short period of time they are together.

The informal living spaces are connected to the bedrooms (three) through a utility space which acts as a study. A cabinet there conceals the DB,

the invertors and other stuff. This corridor is sky lit, with the volume above the ceiling area acting as a ventilation device for the bedrooms.

Bedrooms are spartan. We have a built-in bed which acts as a storage as well. The windows go up from above the side table racks to the ceiling. There are no lintels in this house. All the windows go up till the ceiling which gives a feeling of a large volume. The lighting is also considerably uniform during the day time which gives a soothing feeling.

The silk roman blinds, when pulled down, act as a motif on the head-board side of the cot. The same pattern is continued over to the master bedroom

Apart from the dedicated dress areas, we also have wardrobes in white and silver laminate finish inside the bedrooms. All of it has clean lines and is minimal so as not to intrude into the serene, calm visual feeling of the interiors. The doors to the toilets or the dress are integrated into the wardrobe so that they feel like part of the whole.

A similar white and silver finish is employed into the kitchen and dining areas with wood veneer finishes providing a visual break. Artificial lighting is not at all required during the day time; the interiors are flooded with natural light. At night lighting is taken care of by fluorescent tubes or LED light strips concealed away above the wardrobes (inside the bedrooms) and above the kitchen cabinet shelves in the informal living areas. You can also see pelmets in the informal living areas separating the TV lounge and the dining area which give up reflected light.

So these provide two functions. One they divide the space visually but do not physically block the movement or circulation. At the same time they provide a visual connectivity. There are pelmets in the corridor connecting the formal living space to the informal living area as well. Almost all the lighting is reflected lighting in this house except for the floor lamps which accent certain areas.

We wanted to create spaces where the couple really wanted to spend time together after their jobs. This whole idea of being together in the modern day hectic lifestyle which is essential to enrich the family life was the driving force behind developing such a concept and it has worked well.

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