

Zen and the art of flower arrangement

Something old; something new; something Japanese- a tag line that would very well depict Flower Box, a florist's boutique blooming in the City of Gardens, Bangalore. Drawing parallels to Zen ideologies, an aura of spirituality is expressed through contemporary methods. The owner herself is trained in the Japanese Ikebana art- an art involving creative flower arrangements.

This 900 sq. ft. of space was originally a doctor's office. The space was small and had to be dealt with an uncanny sense of design. "Ikebana is about flower arrangement with detailed attention to shape, line and form. So, for undisputable reasons, my shop had to have Japanese connotations. The design had to be minimalistic and not overpowering. It had to be the backdrop for the flowers and yet set a stylish tone," said Megha Arya, the Japanese art form expert. The flower arrangements obviously have distinct nuances; but the elements of décor added by the owner herself, propose a sense of personalization and care.

The flower shelter has a very curious entrance. The architectural language with a tiny white fenced gate, surrounded by greenery, arouses curiosity and makes one stop in one's tracks in an otherwise dull road. Standing in front of the store, the only hint of colour seen in the frame is the vermilion door. The colour vermilion





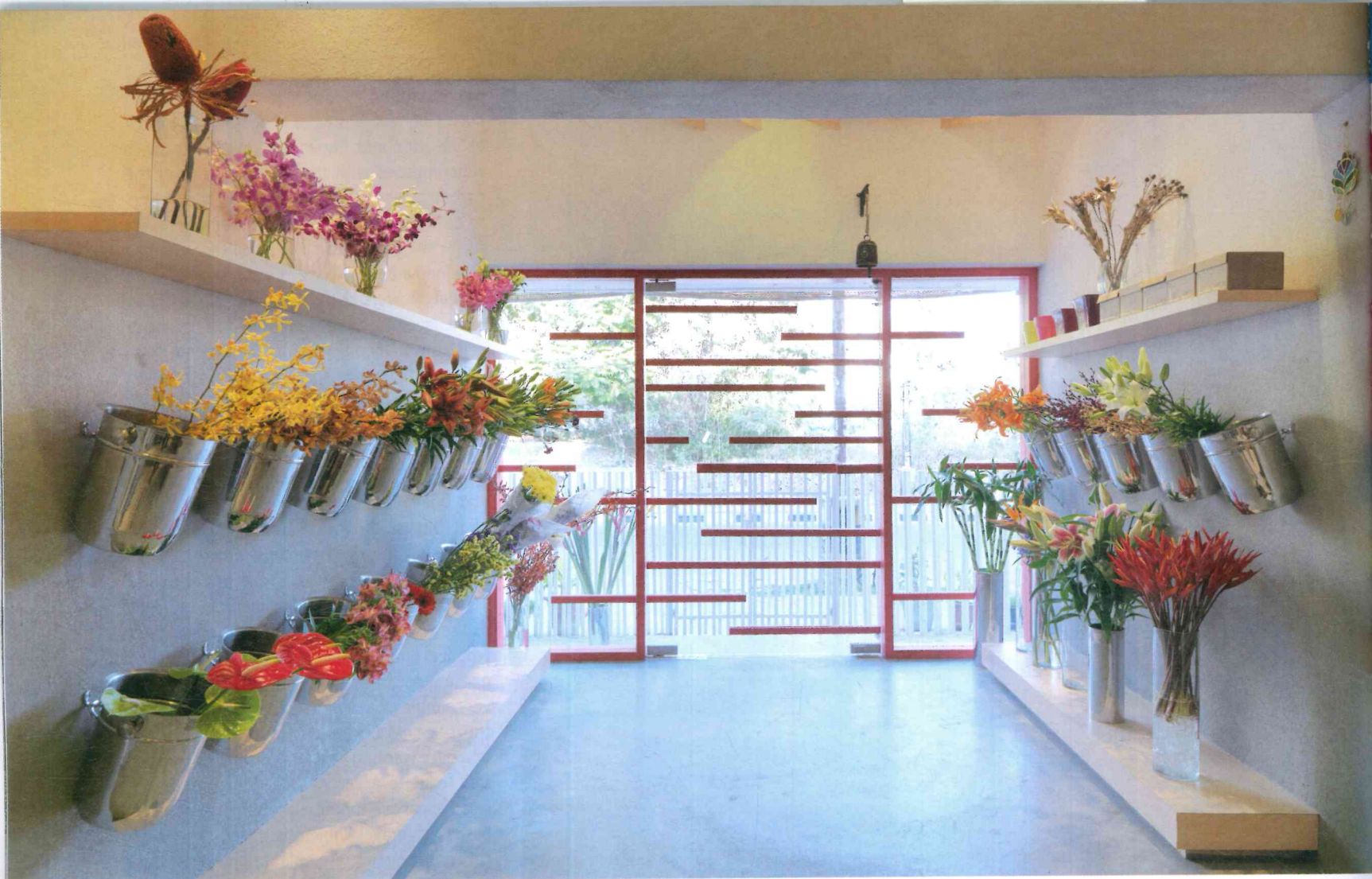
has its roots in Japanese entrances which makes perfect sense for this store. A collage of verticals and horizontals in this shade is superimposed with the white verticals of the gate to create a montage allowing the flowers to be showcased through the transparencies. As for the window display, well the very idea of window display for a florist's shop is quite radical. Flowers shelved in steel oil cans and white swings hung from the top create a palette which complements the interior hues. Colour is added to this display only through the flowers, the ultimate selling point.

A central entry for the store was a well thought of design decision by Farah Ahmed and Dhaval Shellugar of FADD Studio (Farah and Dhaval Design Studio). The window display on the right remains unperturbed in its aura of tranquility. A sense of continuity resonates through the installation in front of the window. The white painted oil cans on wooden chunks standing tall on the gravel, give a sense of old school imagery. Although a very simple idea, it enhances the experience at the threshold. On the left, there is an indication of a path wanting to take you somewhere. The trail leads to a Zen garden. Zen gardens are small Japanese ornate elements of landscape based in gravel which is raked to create concentric circles resembling ripples in water.

On the other side of the facade, an element of surprise greets you with the sound of a bell. A small space might have proved to be a challenge to design, but the end result is testimony to how well the space matches the experience offered. Farah Ahmed, one of the Creative Heads at FADD Studio, said, "It helps a lot when the client knows what they want. Knowing that she is an Ikebana artist, a little research on the Ikebana art and the Zen concept gave us a direction to work with and the design evolved with our design instincts. While flowers play a huge role in gift giving in the Indian culture, very little importance is paid to the actual shops that house these beauties. Perhaps it is because the flowers are already so vibrant and colourful, one thinks the flower shop can be an after-thought. This shop is exemplary that, that is not the case."

Neutral colours, grey and white, lay the carpet for the flowers to model. Minimalistic interior is the discourse of the store. But the ceiling with bamboo veneer light fixtures steals the show. Bamboo, a material very symbolic of Japanese art forms and architecture, fits perfectly into the design philosophy. In adherence to the concentric Zen circles in the exterior, this piece of art trademarks the store with its exclusivity and creative outburst. White ceiling is the background for this chandelier-like art to boom its presence. Rough cement flooring keeps the floor as





neutral as possible to glorify the flowers. In this arena of innovative ideas, the walls stand strong as well. Shaded cement is used on the walls which draws a gradient from the grey floor to the white ceiling. Considering the neutral shades, this wall detail may go unnoticed by many; but it grabs a lot of points in chic interiors while catering to the functionality of the store.

The walls create 3 zones in the store which can be identified as private, public and service; but all the spaces are fluid in terms of connection. The private zone with the owner's cabin is separated from the public zone by a mere canvas cloth screen depicting a fragile division of space.

Keywords like balance, minimalism and harmony are what one would associate with this store. Content in their home, the flowers dance to the romance of the interiors! ●

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