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# Inside Outside

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**School for Islamic Studies in Nagpur  
by Shera Bano Merchant**





# Flexible Fluidity

Cricket lovers will get a thrill seeing the vibrant Delhi Daredevils' office, while a TONI&GUY salon's interior is inspired by, obviously, hairstyling! Both are manifestations of fluidity, the design idiom of New Delhi-based M:OFA Studio, headed by Tanushree and Manish Gulati.

TEXT: AMITA SARWAL PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEV SINGH & MANISH GULATI COURTESY M:OFA, NEW DELHI

Panoramic view of the office showing the open plan and the spiral 'think tank lounge' as a functional installation within the space.

The Indian Premier League's (IPL) hype just dying down, it is timely to view the Delhi Daredevils' cricket franchise premises which recently underwent a complete image makeover.

A new logo was launched depicting a soaring kite. M:OFA, reputed for its fluid

design approach interpreted it through the whirlwind energy created by the game in a jam-packed stadium; of a ball hit by the batsman soaring across the boundary for a six.

The new, youth-oriented branding went in a semi-formal open plan with multiple overlaps, and blurred lines

## Delhi Daredevils

between working and meeting areas, surrounded by a sporting energy vibe.

Meeting areas comprise a formal conference room, and two informal ideation spaces. Of these the central spiral 'think tank lounge' draws immediate attention. It embodies a swirl of





Open workstations intended for ideation and team building.



Internally, the multifunctional 'think tank lounge' is for discussions and media interactions.



Senior management cabins offering complete transparency.



Informal reception space showing the new logo, a display of retail items and players' memorabilia garnered over the years.

energy, designed as a work-play-meet space. 'We analyzed multiple movie frames of batsmen hitting various strokes to bowlers, and judiciously overlapped various shots and derived the splines to model a swirl cloud – representing various cricket balls hit by multiple batting strokes in every direction across stadiums. This NURBS (Non-Uniform Rational B-Splines) model was constructed economically using a slender

steel cage covered by modules of 4 in by 3 ft recycled wooden planks from waste shipping pallets, each size almost replicating a cricket bat. The trapezoidal panels of the lower part of this installation have UV printed over MDF boards – representing player members on Delhi Daredevils' timeline,' details Manish.

The 'energy cloud' serves as an alternative for staff meetings and for discussing game strategies away from

their workstations – and has collectively encouraged a cohesive team spirit across all horizontals of the organization's structure.

Additionally, the experiential shape externally emulates the energy of batting strokes, while internally, it resonates the collective force of thousands of spectators cheering during a match.

The workspaces encourage flexible collaborative working yet keep each indi-

vidual identity intact. Replacing the opaque divider panels between the workstations with low dynamic red acrylic panels helped reduce the official hierarchy at every level, leading to teams indulging in free flow of ideas and strategies.

Autographed bats, players' handprints, screening matches, display of player profiles over the cloud installation – create that high, obsessive intensity that cricket is associated with in India.

#### FACT FILE

**TPOLOGY**  
Corporate

**PROJECT**  
Delhi Daredevils office

**LOCATION**  
Aerocity, New Delhi

**CLIENT**  
GMR Group

**BUILT-UP AREA**  
3200 sq ft

**PROJECT COST**  
₹1.3 crores

**COMPLETION**  
2014

**ARCHITECTURAL FIRM**  
M:OFA Studio, New Delhi

**ARCHITECTURAL TEAM**  
Manish Gulati,  
Abhishek Sorampuri,  
Sameeksha Gulati,  
Sonali Gupta  
& Smriti Dhawan

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT**  
Jade Consultants

**SITE CONTRACTOR**  
Vishal Furnishers,  
Cutting Creations

**LIGHTS**  
Luzlight Design Studio

**FURNITURE**  
Steelcase



## The Practice



M:OFA's  
co-founders  
Manish &  
Tanushree Gulati.

‘**M**anifestation of Fluid Architecture (abbreviated M:OFA) is the realization of a design theory that redefines and reinvents architectural manifolds, moving beyond the clichéd world of regularised grids, dimensions, standards and principles,’ reveals Manish Gulati, co-founder, M:OFA Studio, New Delhi.

‘Fluid in M:OFA is a way of thinking and a working methodology. A process of integrating experience, innovation, design and technology across time, project and context,’ adds co-founder Tanushree Gulati.

The firm was founded in 2002 by Manish and Tanushree, both graduates from CEPT, Ahmedabad. After a couple of working titles, they evolved into a name that became synonymous with the deep-rooted philosophy that the firm has adhered to fastidiously in all its actions and executions.

Manish details, ‘At M:OFA design and deliveries are equally important. Our projects range from furniture for residences to sizeable sports stadiums. The connecting thread across the board has been our evolving, yet strong working methodology. Understanding a project from the client’s perspective – its intended use and the design opportunity that a project

presents us, both add tremendously to the final narrative’.

M:OFA’s philosophy adheres to design as a subconscious process, starting with a set of ideas and progresses into a collaboration that clients, engineers, planners and contractors become an integral part of.

‘From the onset, M:OFA consciously chose to work with some of the top consultants in the industry as innovation requires knowing the subject well for handling it with ease and timely deliveries. Irrespective of the scale, we are excited by the design challenge that our project brings forth. We intuitively understand the potential and the possibility within a project without upsetting the critical project budgets. We see projects like stakeholders and create a dialogue deeply valuing the balance between the two. It is always a partnership,’ he continues.

M:OFA strongly believes that the language of architecture is derived from local context, history, future vision, locally available material and the aspirations that fuel and connect the intended user and the project with a sense of belonging.

Believing that continuous growth prevents stagnation, the firm keeps the indigenous arts, crafts and procedures of a given place

as a unique design resource, often with its inherent limitations. This helps in innovating and crafting methodologies uniquely suited for projects, thereby creating unprecedented solutions and designs.

‘With over 15 years of experience garnered, we deeply understand that our profession impacts the quality of life, space, people, cities and countries worldwide. It is not possible to either innovate or design good architectural spaces without understanding the human psyche or having experienced life,’ says Tanushree.

M:OFA has won eight out of 10 design competitions entered. It serves as a testimonial to the team’s pursuit of excellence and a challenge to go beyond what is known, and stay updated with both design and technology. This has become an inherent part of their work culture.

‘Building anything requires tremendous energy and resources, and the coming together of very diverse yet proficient minds and skillsets. Our experience helps us understand that the sum of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Hence collaborations have enhanced our total experience as well as our willingness to work with experts from various fields,’ confirms Manish.



Drama created by the play of monochromatic ceiling within the hairstyling area.

## TONI&GUY

**D**esigning interiors for a fashion-related service industry always poses the challenge of juggling between style, functionality and brand identities. When M:OFA Studios was commissioned to design a salon for the famed TONI&GUY in Gurgaon, the concept evolved with the symbolism of the ‘hair and comb’ relationship the parent company is known for. Founded in 1963 in London, an international chain with more than 100 salons spread across 20 countries, TONI&GUY follows a monochromatic palette of black & white with certain shades of grey in all their interiors worldwide.



Hairstyling zones with mirrors suspended from the ceiling.





Reception and waiting area.



Brand identity at a subtle, human level.



**FLOOR PLAN**  
**LEGEND**  
1. Reception, 2. Waiting lounge, 3. Styling section, 4. Private lounge  
5. Shampoo stations, 6. Pedicure/manicure spa, 7. Nail art, 8. Spa therapy, 9. Bridal makeup, 10. Staff room, 11. Pantry, 12. Toilet.

**DESIGN PROGRESSION**



**FACT FILE**

**TYPOLGY**  
Lifestyle, Spa

**PROJECT**  
TONI&GUY

**LOCATION**  
Gurugram, NCR

**CLIENT**  
TONI&GUY

**BUILT-UP AREA**  
1600 sq ft

**COMPLETION**  
2013

**ARCHITECTURAL FIRM**  
M:OFA Studio, New Delhi

**DESIGN TEAM**  
Manish Gulati, Sebastian Peter & Amit Jangra

**SITE CONTRACTOR**  
Universal Woodcraft

**LIGHTING**  
Luzlight Design Studio



Kerastase lounge for a personal experiential treatment.



## Commercial



Retail section in the reception area.

The concept for this salon depicts the drama created by flowing tresses formed by suspended partitions out of laser-cut MDF panels which appear to be held in various places with thin, wooden comb-like louvres. It's indicative of a relationship between hairstylist and model held in suspended animation to create various spaces within the salon.

The salon follows an open plan with the hairstyling tables paired and sporadically spread within the main space. Each pair of the styling section is divided by mirrors suspended from the ceiling, placed back-to-back, with their edges lit through concealed LEDs that give a uniform lighting for the stylist. Apart from the styling sec-



The 'hair and comb' relationship between the ceiling and the internal partitions.

tion, the salon comprises of pedispa areas, spa therapy rooms, shampoo stations and an enclosed hair colour section. Linear lights, apart

from focused spots, spread in a planned randomness within the tress-like ceiling to uniformly light up the entire salon in the evening. 