

The open plan of the living and dining areas features an arched opening framing the dining room. A textured Rugberry carpet adorns the floor while decor pieces from Purple Turtles, Westside Home and Home Centre accentuate the custom-made coffee tables

A Japandi Haven

An elegant penthouse makeover blends Japanese and Scandinavian aesthetics, creating a serene, minimalist sanctuary for a growing family

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The double-height space, as you step into the foyer, is adorned with tall, elegant wooden louvres that create a mesmerising play of light and shadow. The foyer runner carpet from Obeetee adds a touch of whimsy to this space

Ajay and Yagavi, a young couple from Chennai were expecting their first child when they found their dream home in a four bedroom, 4,500 sq ft penthouse. Despite Ajay's background in architecture, Yagavi took the lead in designing their home, wanting it to reflect her personal touch. They were drawn to architect Susmitha Ramesh of The Auburn Studio, whose work they admired. Ajay notes, "We were drawn to Susmitha's work, particularly a villa she'd designed which aligned with our vision."

The project, christened 'Shibui', embodies a Japanese aesthetic of subtle and unobtrusive beauty, achieved through simplicity and restraint. The design philosophy aims to find beauty in the understated, inviting a sense of calm and tranquility. Approaching the design process with an open mind, the primary brief was a home with bright, cosy spaces for relaxation and gatherings. The couple's gentle and welcoming demeanour also played a big role in guiding the design direction for their home. During the initial briefing, Yagavi expressed her desire for a peaceful sanctuary. Inspired by one of Susmitha's earlier Balinese-themed projects, the concept of a Japandi home was suggested, blending the elegance of Japanese design with the cosiness of Scandinavian style.

The material palette embodies a soothing beige monotone, creating a serene atmosphere. Susmitha explains, "We incorporated a mix of materials, including cement, light and dark wood, and linen fabrics to introduce texture and depth. These elements add visual interest and also contribute to the tactile experience

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of the space, inviting inhabitants to touch and explore." Layered with sheer fabrics, jute, and wool carpets, the space feels cosy and peaceful. Lights with a washi paper finish add a touch of Japanese elegance.

A key decision was to reorient the staircase, which originally disrupted the flow of the space. The new positioning created a more welcoming entryway. The highlight of the project was designing the master bedroom, featuring arched openings, a tucked-away reading nook, and an open washroom that added luxury and convenience. Susmitha shares, "The layout and design of this space came together beautifully, and I was thrilled with the result."

During the house-warming puja, the guests were puzzled by the unfinished look of the home. The hosts laughed, explaining it was a work in progress. Despite the challenges, the project exceeded the client's expectations, transforming confusion into admiration at the final celebration party where the same guests highly appreciated the final design.

By embracing Yagavi's vision and collaborating closely with the couple, Susmitha was able to create a home that mirrors their unique personalities and also serves as a reflection of their values and aspirations. ♦ theauburnstudio.com



The standout feature of this home is the carefully chosen finishes. A light beige IPS finish for the floors and walls, is complemented by clean lines in the woodwork and hand-made custom-designed furniture



In the guest bedroom, the play of walnut and light wood creates a striking contrast, complemented by rattan accents throughout the room and pendant lights by Mianzi



The dining room is highlighted by a wooden ceiling and adorned with custom-made fabric artwork that seamlessly blends with the wall

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The master bedroom is intentionally simple and clean, and is the reason for the absence of a headboard, so the rounded legs stand out. The tall floor vase with dried stalks is from Purple Turtles



THE AUBURN STUDIO, LED BY PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT SUSHMITHA RAMESH, is an architecture, planning, and design firm known for creating spaces that blend seamlessly with their surroundings while maintaining a unique identity. Auburn prioritises comfort and believes that places should evoke emotions and bring life to inanimate environments. The designers at Auburn Studio translate each brief into a distinctive space that celebrates individualism, ensuring unrestricted creativity for compelling experiences. Sushmitha, with her formal education in Architecture from SRM University, Chennai, and experience in hospitality projects, has infused her vision into Auburn, where every place is designed to tell its own story, a hallmark of the studio’s culture.



The rooftop terrace serves as a perfect space for hosting friends and family, featuring a small bar counter with hanging pendant lamps from Mianzi. Small arched details create a beautiful mural backdrop, adding charm to the terrace

IF THE WALLS COULD SPEAK THEY’D SAY?
They’d love the fact that they’re not just plain walls but have so much character.

YOUR FAVOURITE DESIGN FEATURE IN THIS HOUSE?
The curves and arches.

DESCRIBE THE HOUSE IN THREE WORDS
Minimal, cosy and calming.

A COSY NOOK IN THE HOME?
The reading nook in the master bedroom - that’s as cosy as it can get.