

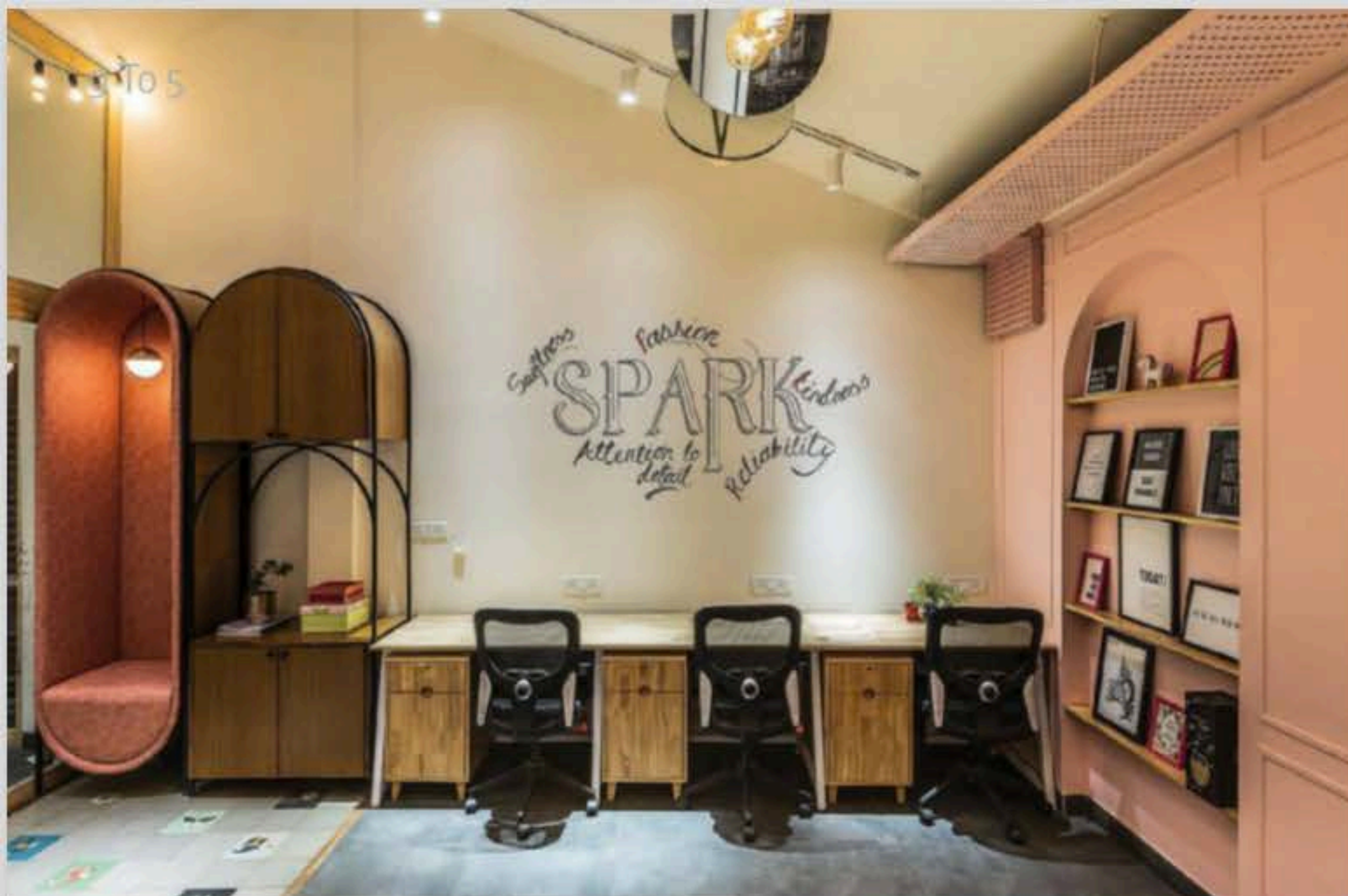
A Batter Workspace

Respecting site conditions and blending them with client requirements, Patch Design Studio whip up a cosy, comfortable and chic workspace for well-known patisserie brand Le 15 in Mumbai.

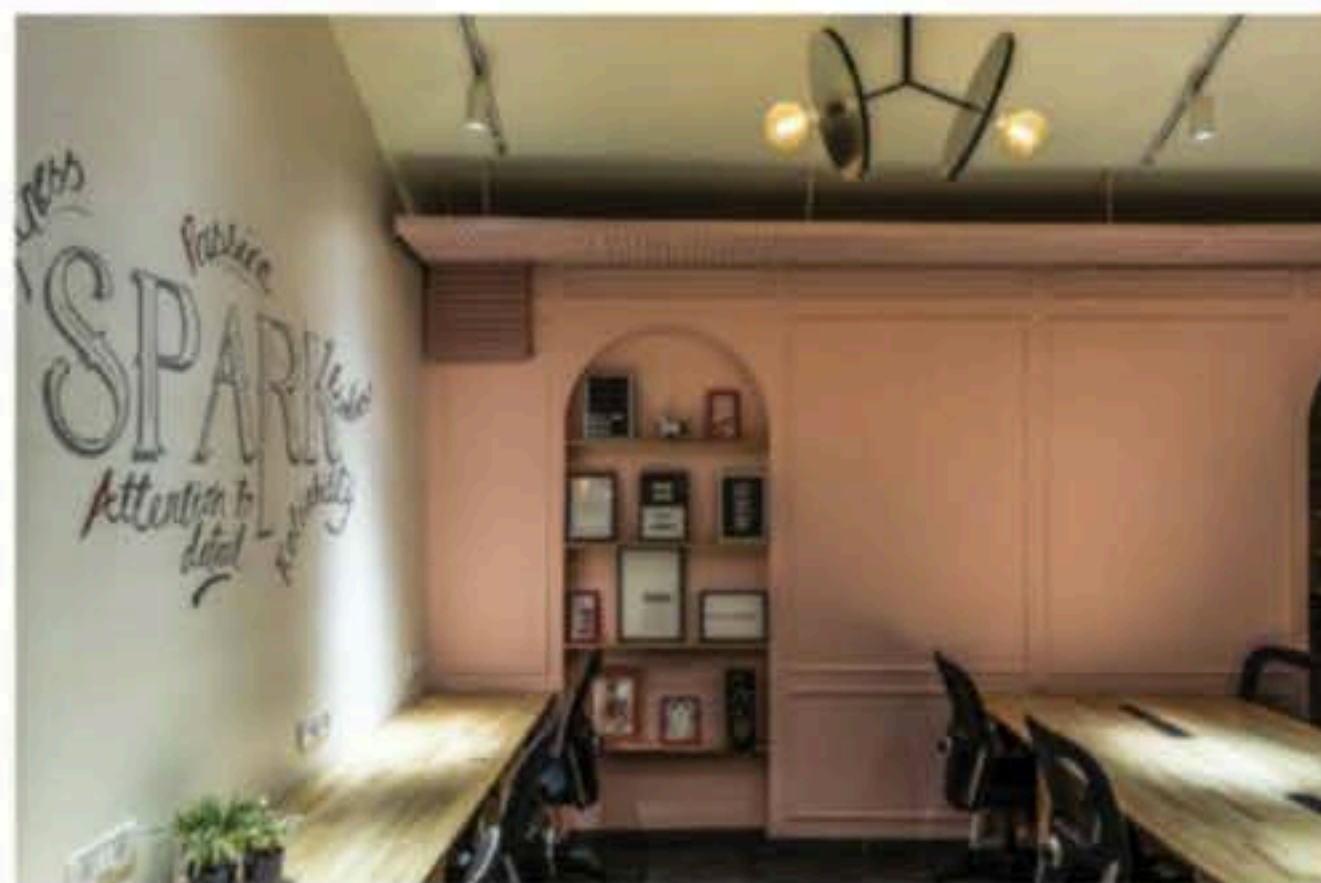
TEXT: RUPALI SEBASTIAN; PHOTOGRAPHS: PHOTOGRAPHIX (RUPALI SEBASTIAN) COURTESY PATCH DESIGN STUDIO



The workstation area just outside the main cabin. Seen overhead is one of the two skylights that were opened up to invite natural light into the space. The decorative patterned tiles are a stark contrast to the pink and white walls thus defining the circulation at the entry making it stand out.



THIS PAGE The pastel pink interiors are a reflection of the brand's classic pink and white packaging boxes that extends the project's identity. The custom made light fixtures with mirror surfaces reflect and disperse the light that flows in through the skylights. The capsule seat and the printer unit next to it echo the arched forms of the doors and display niches.



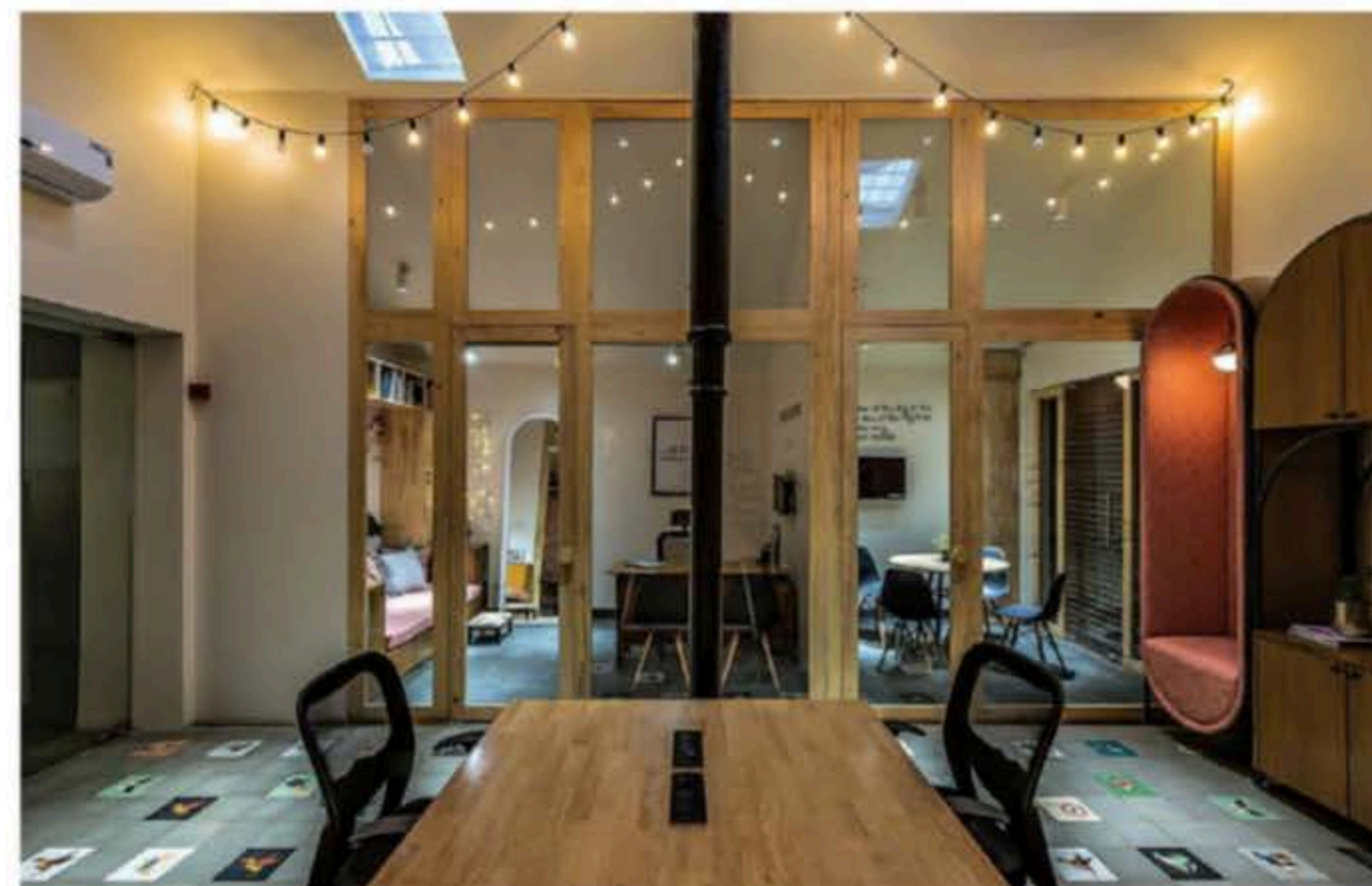
Le 15 is a familiar name on Mumbai's food scene. The Pooja Dhingra-founded brand of France-inspired desserts has left a lingering taste in the mouths of epicures since it was birthed in 2009. With a view to consolidating operations and expanding their workspace, they decided

to create a new head office space with a kitchen studio near their central kitchen space, located in an old industrial warehouse at Elphinstone Road, Mumbai — a task that was entrusted to architects Rika Patel and Ipsit Patel of Patch Design Studio. The alumni of CEPT were excited about this assignment: the site itself — an old industrial warehouse

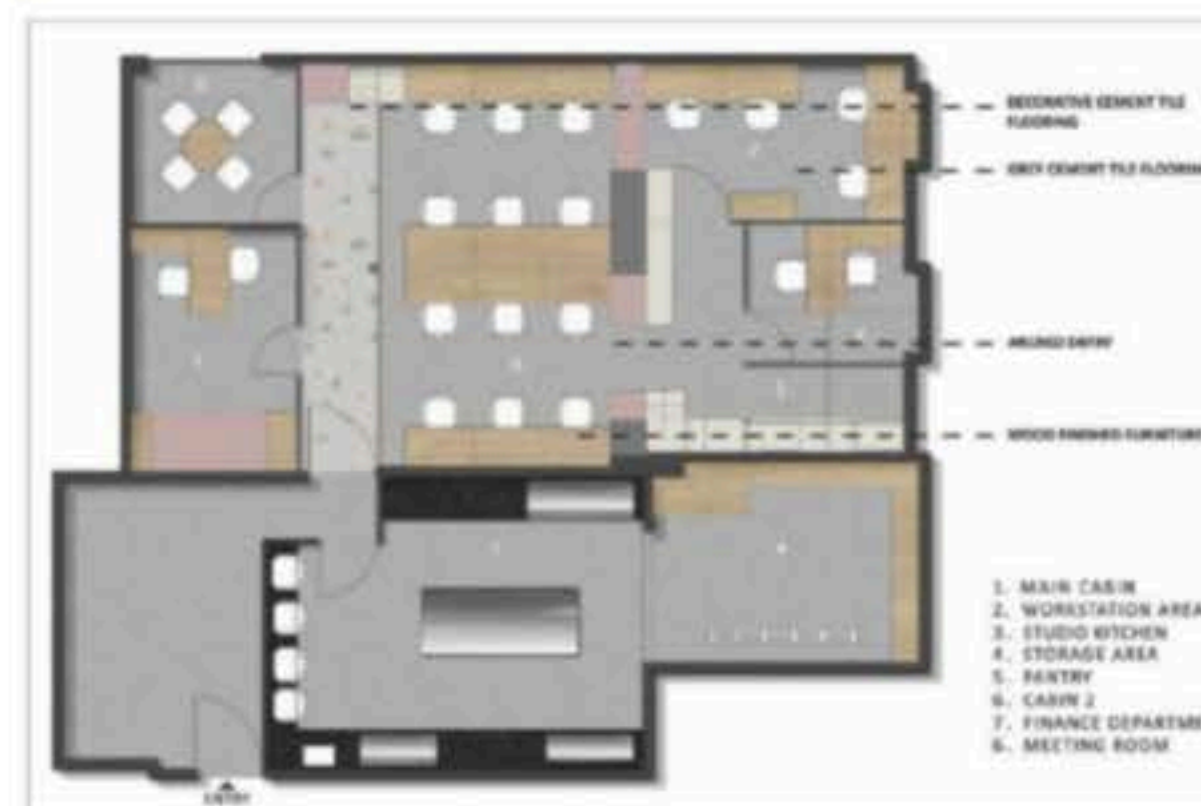


ARCHITECTS

Rika Patel and Ipsit Patel



CONCEPT: The aim was to create an office for a Paris-inspired brand that would seem as its extension — and thus the concept was derived out of the brand language but keeping the essence of the existing site.



TOP A view towards the main cabin and the neighbouring meeting room. With the pastels and the fairy lights, the whole effect is quite Gay Paree!

ABOVE The floor plan of the Le 15 office.

— resonated with the architect within and, to sweeten the deal, the client was "a young, driven entrepreneur open to experimentation," they say. Pooja's brief was clear and spot-on — making the process easy and smooth. "The project brief asked for workspace area for staff, head chef's cabin, library and kitchen studio space for workshops and baking experiments, having a laidback Parisian vibe," elucidate the duo.

The main challenges revolved around the windowless nature of the space and the fact that its walls were load-bearing, and therefore had to remain inviolate. The latter site condition came into focus when the architects had to find a meaningful resolution to fitting a "hectic" functional requirement within the space. Since the employees would spend more time in the office than at their homes, cosiness and comfort also formed a significant part of the design intent. "Our organic response was to repurpose the existing site conditions while retaining the ceiling heights, skylights, keeping an open plan, and also infusing brand identity in it," say the architects who firmly believe that built environments can contribute in various ways to businesses as well as individuals. "There were two skylights which were covered. We decided to open them up and use their positions to plan the layout in a way to maximize the effect."

Since Pooja spent a large amount of her daily time in the office, it was necessary to create a comfortable workspace for her — like a mini studio apartment. The pastel pink mural of Mt Fuji mounted above the cosy single bed isn't just as an aesthetically pleasing decor addition; it's a business target.



The site, which took three months in the making (or dare we say baking!), is divided into the kitchen studio zone and the workspace zone. The workspace itself is resolved as a three-part programme deployed in a parallel manner: Pooja's cabin with a meeting next door at one end; a workstation area in the centre; and, beyond a load-bearing wall with an arched doorway, the finance department and one more cabin, topped by the loft-lounge.

While the workspace bears echoes of a Parisian apartment, its predominant colour — a pale, pale, pink — while borrowed from Le 15's pink-and-white packaging, is also evocative of the delicate, pastel-hued Rose macaroons that form a part of the patisserie's delectable fare. The arched form of the doorway that leads to the section with the loft, is mirrored by a niche with shelves for inspirational wall frames. On the walls are full-height storage units, painted a barely-there grey to blend with the minimalist and bright decor. The wood-framed glass partition of the main cabin allows the light from skylight to reach all the interior spaces. A tall pink "capsule" seat — its shape reminiscent of an éclair — was custom-designed to create a

point of seclusion from the wide workspace. The main movement path is marked by decorative patterned tiles, which are a stark contrast to the pink and white walls.

Pooja's cabin is designed to be a laid-back multi-purpose space, like a mini studio apartment that hosts business meetings, private drawing lessons, long work nights and recording sessions for her podcast. On one side is a commodious work desk, and facing it lies a cosy couch which can also be a single bed. Framed by overhead wooden storage cabinets, the pastel-pink hand painted mural of Mt Fuji serves as an icon to motivate everyone towards the company goals.

A compact space such as this office called for several space-saving strategies, the most visible of which is what the architects call the

MATERIALS

Flooring Cement tiles Furniture Wood veneer and powder coated MS Partition Glass and wood Walls Paint

ABOVE LEFT The client's cabin is designed such that it manages to be both laid-back and business-like.

ABOVE RIGHT A view from the workstation area looking towards the mezzanine breakout space, which is accessed by the library staircase



ABOVE The attic acts as a breakout space designed to provide a retreat from the general working environment.

EXTREME LEFT The staircase and library were bundled into one space-saving solution.

LEFT A cabin has been accommodated under the loft-lounge, and is an example of how every inch has been utilized in this compact office.



library staircase, located in the workspace's furthest section, the one with the loft. "We found solutions to each problem within the constraints of the warehouse. For example, we used the double height to accommodate an attic, but limited by space, we melded the idea of a staircase with our client's desire for a library, to form a 'library staircase', which leads up to an inviting loft beneath a skylight," reveal the founders of Patch Design Studio. "The attic is carved out away from the working atmosphere and acts as a breakout space designed to provide a retreat from the general active environment."

The quaint kitchen studio for India's Macaroon Queen was designed for her baking experiments with an island work top that enables her to conduct workshops live and online for her 1.6 million-strong social media following. The industrial lighting and exposed ceiling balances the pink cabinets and patterned tile backsplash with functional kota stone flooring. It is followed by a prop storeroom that transforms as a backdrop for her interviews and podcasts.

The material palette complements the chromatic strategy which was informed by the branding: wood furniture accented, in

places, by powder-coated metal, glass (for transparency) and cement tiles. The lighting strategy sought to maximize the daylight coming in. To this end, in addition to opening up skylights, the architects created custom-made light fixtures with mirror surfaces to reflect and disperse natural light from the skylights. "Since they're placed at angles, they create some fun peak-a-boo moments too," state the architects. "Additionally, two different lighting systems were designed to cater to different moods: working and lounging."

Working within and around the constraints posed by the site, and infusing the design with brand-specific elements, Riki and Ipsit have successfully demonstrated that where there's a will, there's a way!

FACT FILE: Project Le 15 Head office & studio kitchen **Location** Elphinstone Road, Mumbai **Area** 820 sq ft (office) + 450 sq ft (kitchen studio) **Design firm** Patch Design Studio **Principal architect/designer** Riki Patel and Ipsit Patel **Design team** Raahaat Versey **Contracting team** Swift Interiors

ABOVE LEFT The gentle rounded form of the doorway is echoed by the subtle pattern on the shutters of the floor-to-ceiling storage unit.

ABOVE RIGHT The kitchen studio was designed for Pooja's baking experiments. The island work top enables her to conduct workshops live and online for her social media followers. The industrial lighting and exposed ceiling balances the pink cabinets and patterned tile backsplash with functional Kota stone flooring.