

Left of Centre

The Pocket Aces office designed by Patch Design Studio in Mumbai is replete with quirky, innovative solutions — a place where work and play peacefully co-exist.

TEXT: ALIPIYA MEHAMDABADWALA PHOTOGRAPHS: KUNAL BHATIA, COURTESY: PATCH DESIGN STUDIO

The inhabited wall with the green pockets was created to utilize the height of the space for both storage and relaxing. The space above the tiny editing room (with the grey curtain) was made into a resting area too, accessible through indents created in the wall. To the right is the open informal workspace with high chairs.



ARCHITECTS
Rika Chaudhry and Ipsit Patel

When Anirudh Pandita and Ashwin Suresh, the co-founders of digital media start-up Pocket Aces that focuses on producing original youth-oriented content, were looking to design their new office at Parel in Mumbai, they zeroed in on the young, talented architects Ipsit Patel and Rika Chaudhry of Patch Design Studio, having liked their work on a previous office project.

With an innovative and youthful team in tow, Anirudh and Ashwin were on the lookout for a space that served as a creative outlet. From the outset, one thing was clear for these young entrepreneurs: they wanted an unconventional office that encouraged open discussions, collaboration and ideation and didn't tug too hard on their purse strings. "Since most of the office's population would be on the go, the idea of a fixed workstation didn't apply here," explains Rika. She and Ipsit had a 1,500-square-foot blank canvas to play with, which was to accommodate large informal workspaces, multiple break out areas, storage, a screening room, an editing room, two cabins and a conference room. "We were

To minimize costs, the architects decided to keep the air ducts bare, organically merging them with the grey of the idea wall and the flooring. At the far end, one can see the steps leading to the stage area.

asked to provide for a variety of fun informal workspaces that were reminiscent of working in a cafe, while the storage requirement was slightly more than that of a usual office space," informs Ipsit.

The architects decided to make optimal use of the 13-foot high ceiling—a sense of expanse on entering the space was essential—and therefore, constructing a mezzanine was ruled out. Instead, the design highlight of the office was born—a two-foot deep feature wall, built from low-cost packaging board, which wraps around the quiet zones, segregating them from the large, open format common workspaces. To add playfulness to this "inhabited wall", niches in varying sizes were introduced. Equipped with seating upholstered in parrot green rexine, several of these pockets are large enough to accommodate a person and can be used by employees to work, watch a movie, rest or ideate, while also serving as ample storage space. In addition, the wall holds a television and drawing board that face the informal work area and a platform above the inconspicuous editing room which serves as a space to rest and sleep during the long overnight hauls the team is used to. Further, the thickness of the wall helped provide sound insulation for the screening room.

As one enters the office, the first thing one notices is the imaginative signage of Pocket Aces created using nails on crate wood. The main office space falls to the left of the reception desk. The conference room can be accessed through two doors: one that is opposite the cabin and another that is barely visible near the reception.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT

Plywood has been used to create the bespoke high table and chairs in the informal workspace with the chairs upholstered in grey and green cotton fabric.

A raised stage was designed on one side of the external glazing for smaller group discussions. This spot also doubles as an audition area.

The huge glass windows installed lets ample light in during the day and provide a beautiful view of the city and the sea beyond. The two doors one sees on the right of the work area lead to the pantry and the screening room.

The space opposite the feature wall was left as an open format workspace, which faces the external glazing and offers a view of Mumbai's suburbs and the sea beyond. It is occupied by a high community workstation and a raised stage area for smaller group discussions which could also double as an audition area. Lying lateral to the workspace is a seating arrangement of couches that was also created for informal meetings. Since the team would spend long hours watching movies, videos, screen tests and other content, cosy, snazzy sofas were made on site for the screening room.

While the decor of the informal spaces has a quirky, vibrant tone, the clients wanted the cabins and conference room to reflect sobriety and seriousness. Simple black office chairs were arranged in the conference room with a uniquely shaped glass table that's a mirror image of the lighting above. The cabin wall, which also doubles as the backdrop for the seating lounge

MATERIALS

Flooring IPS carpet, wooden laminate
Ceiling Plastic paint on exposed slab
Walls Oriented strand board, glass, plywood. Lighting T5 tube lights

CONCEPT: To create a fun, offbeat work space for a young digital media startup.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP

A seating area was created outside the cabin to accommodate sit-down discussions amongst the team. A combination of grey and green was used for the sofas here to provide visual connectivity with the rest of the space.

The formal-looking conference room is tucked away at the other end of the office and is enclosed in a glass and aluminium frame box. A uniquely-shaped table with a suspended light fixture which echoes the design of the table form design highlights of this space.

To accommodate the storage requirement of the client, Koit and Rika created a cubic wall in the cabin as an extension of the one outside. Plywood and glass were used to construct this wall as well as in the furniture here.



ABOVE LEFT & RIGHT The most fascinating feature of this office design are the various green pockets created in the wall made of packaging board. The ones seen here can be accessed from the reception area.

LEFT These colourful comfy sofas were purposefully made to add some life to the screening room since the team would spend hours viewing screen tests and other videos. Note the rectangular niche, which holds the projector, between the two green squares behind the sofa.

area, was designed with little boxes jutting out. These are not only an element of visual interest but also provide additional storage.

"With a tight budget to adhere to, it was the fun elements and the freedom to explore unconventional materials that were the driving force of the design," exclaims Ipsit. This is evident in the use of the packaging board for the inhabited wall that was stained grey and fitted with parrot green rexine seats or the nails fitted on crate wood for the main signage. All the furniture and lighting too was custom-designed by the firm to suit the purpose of each space in the office.

The first ever office of Pocket Aces needed to be unique, feisty and a little out-of-the box just like the work they do and Patch Design Studio brought these requirements to life almost effortlessly. **DI**

FACT FILE: Project Pocket Aces
Office Clients Anirudh Pandita and Ashwin Suresh **Location** Parel, Mumbai
Area 1,500 sq ft **Principal architects** Rika Chaudhry, Ipsit Patel **Design team** Anirudhan Iyengar