

Network 18

better interiors

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9 To 5

The whole Schbang!

The new office space of Schbang Digital Solutions in Mumbai, created by The Ashleys, wears its resilient and youthful brand identity with pride — where art plays a significant role in its exuberant design.

TEXT: CAROL TERRACI PHOTOGRAPHS: PHOTOGRAPHER MEDIA COURTESY THE ASHLEYS

In keeping with its young and creative spirit, the Schbang office is a reflection of contemporary, minimalist design in form and details — just, streamlining the brand identity.





The flock of birds art piece on the ceiling, made of light-colored polyurethane foam, adds a fun element to the otherwise formal exposed ceiling.

Fueled by passion for good design and communication, Schbang Digital Solutions is a thriving millennial-run firm in Mumbai. Co-founded in 2015 by Harshil Karia, Sohil Karia and Akshay Gurnani, the agency thrives on being edgy yet relevant, helping clients see "completeness" and "the whole shebang" of creative marketing. When it came to concretising their principles in brick and mortar, the founders turned to The Ashley's, a boutique Mumbai-based firm set up by the talented interior designers, Pooja Ashley and Arbaysis Ashley.

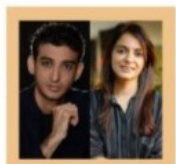
"Sohil, the co-founder and a designer, wanted the office to exude young and creative vibes. A modest budget was the basic brief around which we spun the whole design ideology articulating it in larger fabric as well as finer nuances of detailing," mentions Pooja as she explains how they wove their subtle trademark style throughout the project, creatively expressed with art, colour and restrained yet bold elements. "Our goal was to lend Schbang a design identity which would confirm uniqueness and an artistic approach," adds Arbaysis.

With a typical commercial layout, the brand new office space was previously a bare shell commissioned to The Ashley's as a design and build project. The planning had to account for

the grid of columns in the layout, seamlessly integrating it into what would become an open floor plan office. Designed as a close-knit work environment, the 10,000 sq ft Schbang office, which accommodates 100 employees, breaks the hierarchy by laying the foundation for a design vocabulary that is as informal as it is professional. The fluidity of spaces devised the spatial alignment of the office, resulting in an open plan with a circulation pattern that encourages interaction. Art and vibrant decor accents replace obvious and expensive interior trends to express the brand identity.

From the transparent reception lobby, the adjacent, partially enclosed conference room and the open meeting room, the fluid planning augments the perception of space and optimises the scale of volume. Anticipating the need for flexibility and freedom in a millennial work environment, the office neatly transitions from formal to informal sections. The workstations form the core of the office space, while the breakout zones are spread out on the elongated perimeter. Along with a cafeteria and pantry, the office is equipped with a multi-functional zone to accommodate professional shoots and events.

To promote a close-knit office culture between the employee and the employer, the co-founder's office is left open, separated only



INTERIOR DESIGNERS

Arbaysis Ashley and Pooja Ashley

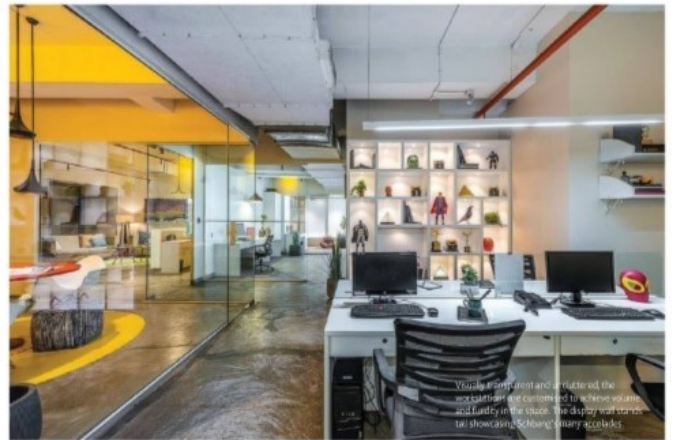


Acting both as a breakout space and informal zone to kkkate, the plush, in-built seating is deliberately linear and elongated to celebrate the scale of the space.

CONCEPT: Materials, textures and colours with informal and formal characteristics are curated with handpicked art to exemplify the young and ambitious ethos of a digital agency's office.



The monotony of the formal workstation is softened by the breakout zone's colourful seating (made of natural cotton finished with naturally woven Indian fabric) and handpicked accessories.



You'll never meet and a fitted to the workspace, the customer to where you are and finally in the space. The display wall stands tall showcasing Schibang's many accolades.



ABOVE Instead of solid partitions, the co-founder's office is distinguished by its bespoke interior using statement elements like artwork and the wood and string lounge chairs by Defurn.

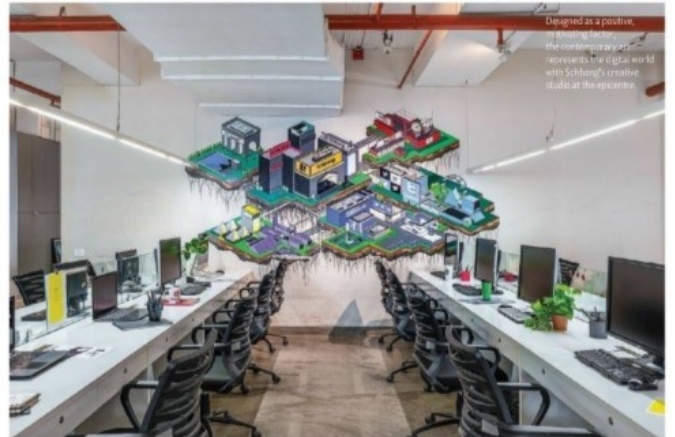
LEFT The relaxed breakout spaces are arranged in the perimeter to take advantage of the rejuvenating nature of the daylight that streams in aplenty from the transparent facade.

by its eye-catching interiors. An unpretentious white desk is paired with statement chairs instead of regular office ones. Quirky wood and string chairs form a mini-lounge area within the workspace. Walls featuring artwork and shelves displaying creative collectibles emphasize the laid-back, youthful nature of the company.

Expressing the character of the office, the reception area is a blend of formal and informal palettes. It's a canvas made up of a concrete floor, a solid mass desk in stark white laminate, white walls, glass partition and neutral toned sofas. A yellow backdrop wall with a quirky hashtag symbol and the company name adds a touch of playfulness to the space along with accent cushions and a rug. The white wall features a mural composed of bottle caps of assorted sizes. — "The whole composition has been articulated using over 300 caps and layered with colour spectrums resembling waves. This was our approach to express power ideation and creativity of

MATERIALS

Floor Concrete Walls Bricks Facade Glass Partitions Gypsum and glass Furniture Plywood and laminates Lights Metal



Designed as a positive, an inspiring factor, the company's approach is the digital world with Schibang's creative studio at the epicentre.



ABOVE The partially enclosed conference room is enhanced with diverse materials and textures — a transparent lift section, grey flooring, deep bold orange right wall and clear white furniture.

LEFT A quirky and artistic approach is followed in the lighting design in the meeting room, customised to complement the vibrant colour palette.

Schbang, which is the core strength of all of their services," explain the designers.

Visible from this impressive reception is the semi-open conference room, a cuboidal space characterised by merging variant material textures and colours. A glass wall softens the deep blood orange wall opposite, and over the rustic grey floor rests the clear white table and chairs. Conference rooms often tend to have a sterile appearance, but this one is bursting with energy and conducive to ideation. The floor and pendant lamps add the necessary relaxed, informal touch for balance.

Moving inside the office and observing how each zone unfolds, we notice how The Ashleys have maintained a consistent design story that is also surprisingly distinct for each space. "Colours have been carefully handpicked and layered throughout the office in a controlled and a graphical approach over a combination of raw concrete and white base," highlights Pooja. A muted, yet impactful material palette with rhythmic textures endorses a better user experience in the design. The rustic grey of the concrete floor forms a muted foil for vibrant interiors accents.

The customised workstations are arranged in the central core and are designed to be visually transparent and uncluttered. Details




An extension of the informal zone, the cafeteria and pantry sit in a cosy corner of the office with a vista of Mumbai's cityscape.

such as the low glass dividers on the workstations maintain the fluidity of the space. Custom artwork and a display wall with Schbang's array of accolades add an element of playfulness which is key to the creative process of the company. The workspace is broken by a series of columns that were carefully entwined into the layout to make them part of the design. Some double as feature walls showcasing exquisite hand-painted art.

The formal-meets-informal narrative also continues in the ceiling which is exposed, with the quirky brand identity of the company expressed by the Flock of Birds art piece suspended over the worktops. "It is inspired by the evening sky and augments the persona of the micro-environment. This is a cost-effective alternative for false ceilings," mentions Arbayis.

The blue birds twinkle as the natural light streaming in from the transparent facade flows through the office. The informal and relaxing breakout spaces are arranged in the perimeter of the design to take advantage of the rejuvenating nature of the daylight. While the design is mostly barrier-free, the few partition walls in the office are mostly a mix of solid brick and transparent glass, decided strategically with privacy and visual flow as the two main parameters.

One of the foremost challenges for the designers was to work within the modest project budget without trading off on the design goal. "We achieved this through various strategies like simple and cost-effective art installations like the Flock of Birds, murals, wall art, etc. and sleek, customised lighting fixtures that run along the whole length of the desks," the designers assert.

At Schbang, the conventional understanding of office culture is questioned with subtle interventions, making a captivating statement without being abrasive. It's just the right dose of creativity and professionalism that millennials crave from their workspace and The Ashleys' design strategy definitely comes across as spot on. 

FACT FILE: Project: Schbang Office
 Client: Schbang Digital Solutions, Location: Lower-Pare, Mumbai Area: 10,000 sq ft
 Principal designers: Pooja Ashley and Arbayis
 Ashley Venkatesh, Dofam and Essenza (accent furniture) and Enrica (accent lights)

