

FINDING NEVERLAND
A Portuguese gateway leads to the east *balcão* (veranda-like space) and garden beyond. The exterior of the house retains the traditional ochre and indigo colour scheme of Goan-Portuguese houses.



OCEAN *blue*

Far from the madding crowds and their attendant baggage of chaos, conservation architect Abba Narain Lambab's seaside home is an oasis of airy, light-banded charm

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STYLIST KIM SIDHU

(Clockwise from this picture)

INSIDE OUT

The south *balcão* frames the view of the dining room to the garden; in the foreground are century-old laterite grinding stones found during the excavation of the garden. Oyster shell windows filter light into the traditional *saala* (living room) and master bedroom. The seating in the east *balcão*, which has a tiled roof and a polished pigmented floor, is a typically Goan feature.



COOL COMFORT

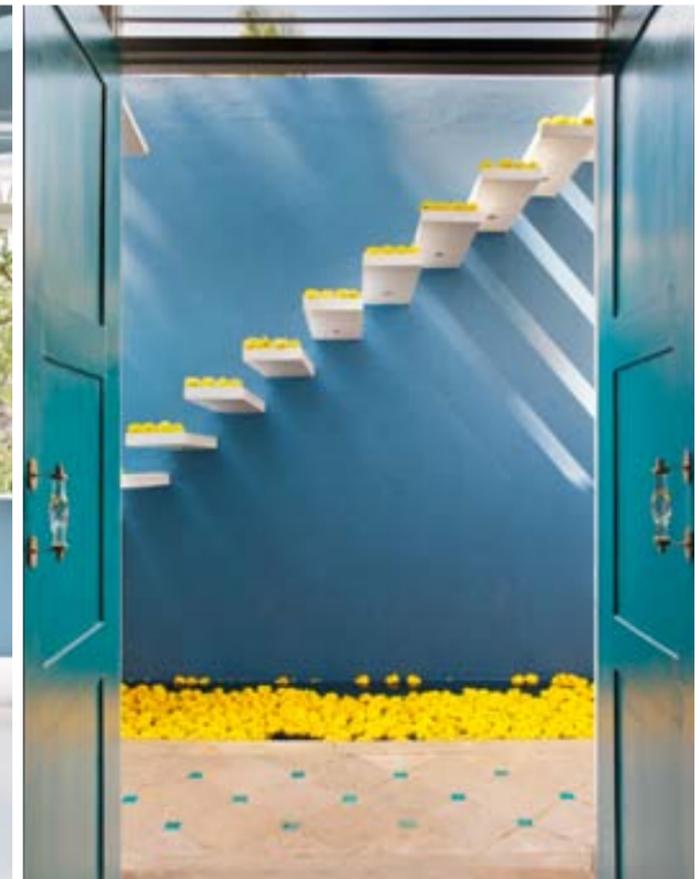
Dayanita Singh's framed photographs adorning the indigo-hued walls were a gift from her to Abha. An antique jamewar shawl that belonged to Abha's Kashmiri grandmother rests on a day bed. A range of collectibles from husband Harsh Lambah's travels are placed on the distressed white wooden chest. In the foreground is an ottoman with a digital print of the family's holiday in Europe.



(Clockwise from this picture)

FEEL THE BLUES

The saala has a seamless white resin floor; an antique armoire from Chor Bazaar reflects a Maple & Co antique armchair. The doorway from the dining room leads to a courtyard which has a tiny pool; the floor is laid with rough Shahabad stone with inserts of teal ceramic tiles; a flight of steps leads to a terrace. A pair of limewashed French chairs is set against the indigo wall with framed butterflies.



HOME CENTRE
The chandelier in the dining room is antique.

(Opposite page: clockwise from top left)

SOFT FOCUS

The first-floor suite has a Victorian cast-iron bed from Chor Bazaar; the wallpaper and chair fabric have Victorian botanical prints; a rattan chest from The Charcoal Project is under the bed. Daughter Ambika's bedroom overlooks the rear garden; a limewashed Hepplewhite chair is in the foreground. The white-and-teal kitchen overlooking the front garden. The master bedroom has white epoxy flooring; a four-poster bed frames a Marilyn Monroe photograph.



DRAMATIC BACKDROP
Designed by Ambika, this bedroom continues the white-on-white theme with a white floor, white leather headboard and limewashed furniture. The wallpaper is an architectural printed theme, 'Rome' by Zoffany, inspired by the 'intaglio' print-making technique.



Abha Narain Lambah's favourite childhood memories are of family gatherings at her grandfather's place in Kashmir, where the house would echo with the chatter of cousins and the camaraderie of a large family. She has managed to transport a bit of her childhood to her new home in Goa, with the long dining table that is the heart of the home and visible as soon as you step inside. She says, "It is my favourite spot in the house. I wanted to have one room where the entire family can converge." And sure enough, for her sister-in-law's 50th birthday last December, she hosted 40 cousins and relatives there. The memories of those communal lunches and dinners still make her smile.

Since Abha is an architect (specializing in conservation projects), she took on the renovation of this 100-year-old Portuguese home. Even though she was not working for a client this time ("what a relief!"), her 11-year-old daughter played critic, and the mother-daughter duo had fun redoing the house from scratch. It had been abandoned for almost 40 years and all Abha had to work with was a bare-bones structure. "Being a conservation architect, I have always wanted to restore a building for myself," she says, explaining the choice of this house. A leaky roof, termite invasion, and an absence of plumbing—she braved them all to finally come out with Casa San Antonio in November 2012, nine months after she bought it.

THE QUIET LIFE

It is easy to lose your way getting to the house; "*Gaadi nabi jaati*," locals tell you helpfully. And that, Abha says, was intentional. "For me and my husband [Harsh Lambah], a holiday means being close to the beach and away from the sounds of traffic." The house sits at the end of a narrow path, with its cool yellow facade and a red stone seat in front, typical of Portuguese homes. The five-bedroom house is bright and airy and sunlight pours in from all sides. There is a large garden surrounding the house but it is yet to be worked on.

Abha describes her Goa routine this way: "We walk to the beach for breakfast, come back and have a shower, and head back to the beach. After I get home from the airport, I don't go out anywhere else—unless it is to the flea market." And inside the house, it is not possible to lose sight of the fact that you are very close to the sea; it is just a five-minute walk from Anjuna beach.

There is a pleasing consistency throughout, in terms of aesthetics and colour palettes. Everything is in white and shades of blue or aqua; white walls, white and blue antique chandeliers, blue and aqua green furniture in the living room and lots of antique lamps, also in the same colour scheme. The house looks typically Goan-Portuguese on the outside but Abha says that such homes usually have dark brown furniture and feel crowded. She wanted a home with a Portuguese feel but managed to turn it on its head with a lighter palette of colours. Her inspiration for this has been the homestays she has stayed in at Lisbon, "where they have a great celebratory mood of whites and lighter colours."

LIGHT AND AIR

The furniture is mostly light and enhances the feeling of sunshine flowing through the house. The living room has two quirky ottomans with architectural prints on canvas as upholstery. Most of the artefacts inside her home have been collected over the course of many years, while on family holidays in India and abroad. Abha is

glad that she finally found a place for all these treasures. So flea-market discoveries from Portobello Road in London share space with expensive antique chandeliers from Chor Bazaar in Mumbai. The chandeliers were the only things they splurged on "because the high ceilings demanded that." The family even used the house as an excuse to take holidays—like their frequent trips to Sri Lanka to pick up white crockery from Paradise Road.

The white dining table—with a glass top and blue-green legs—seats eight, though the two long, white benches ensure there is always room for more. The flooring here is in rough Shahabad stone with insets of tiny aqua ceramic tiles. "I wanted to celebrate the contrast between the smoothness of the marble elsewhere and the roughness of the stone here," says Abha.

In keeping with the light and playful feel, the dining area opens out into a narrow courtyard with a pool, which is filled when there are guests. Abha says, "Kids have a great time jumping in that makeshift pool and we don't have to worry since it is so shallow." There are surprises in every corner and in unexpected places—a sun hat on a chair in her daughter's bedroom, a chandelier in the bathroom where the bedroom has none, bursts of purple here and there, a white cupboard opening up to a shocking pink interior, a wine rack under the stairs leading to the bedrooms upstairs.

The bedrooms also remind you of the fact that Abha is currently working on the restoration of the Opera House theatre in Mumbai. Her love for movies is evident in the framed film posters in every bedroom; from Marilyn Monroe to Audrey Hepburn, Al Pacino to James Dean. "In my family, we love to eat and we love the movies," she says. The two guest bedrooms upstairs have similar decor—film posters with wrought-iron beds—and are her daughter's favourite places. The roof beams slope into the room, "making it cozy."

Abha's is a warm space, designed to resonate with the voices of friends and family. And what better reason to build a home? ♦



BREEZY CHARM
Abha and her daughter Ambika sitting on the cantilevered steps in the courtyard.