



Benafar J. Mirza

# BUILDING DREAMS

Meet Maneck K. Gilder, who has helped give Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Agiary, Pune, a beautiful new look.

**W**hat does it take to build your dream home? Pots and pots of money, hard work, good destiny, and most

realistically speaking, a great architect and interior designer! Maneck K. Gilder is one such architect, who has successfully transformed the four walls of a house and made it a home, and also beautifully turned routine office spaces into interesting and exciting work environments. He has worked on the interiors of some very well-known companies, such as Deutsche Bank, Reckitt & Colman of India Ltd., Tata Industries Ltd. and Swiss Business Hub India, to name a few. While he has done himself and the Community proud by getting associated with such renowned clients, one of Maneck's most fulfilling projects has to be the restoration of the Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy Agiary in Pune. Read on to know how Maneck built (literally!) and converted his childhood passion into a profession.

## Block by Block

### Which school and college did you go to?

I did my schooling in Jamnabai Narsee School, Juhu, Mumbai, and St. Theresa's High School, Bandra, Mumbai. I studied interior designing at Rachana Sansad School of Interior Design, Prabhadevi, Mumbai, and architecture through the Indian Institute of Architects, Fort, Mumbai.

### What got you interested in interiors?

I think my interest in interior design began in school in approximately the 8th standard. My first design was for my own wardrobe for my bedroom back then, and I still have it! Since then, I knew that I wanted to become an architect and always dreamt of the day when I would have 'Architect' printed on my visiting card. So, that is how it all started.

Also, my background had a role to play in it all. My grandfather was an architect — he has designed the bungalow where I currently reside and a few others on this road — and so is my uncle Soli Gilder, a Chartered Architect. I started my

where my uncle was an associate. They both have been a great influence in my life. Coincidentally, Mr. Doongaji and I not only share the same name, but also our birthdays. In fact, there were amusing instances of telephone calls being transferred incorrectly by the secretary due to the same name. It is he who taught me the overall aspects of architecture, not only in terms of design, but also professional ethics. I worked with him for ten years and then started out on my own. It wasn't an easy decision to make but having my own practice is what I ultimately wanted.



Maneck K. Gilder

My first project on my own was for Jardine Matheson Ltd. This project was very special for me because it was my first independent assignment. It was a small office but a very well-finished one. I got a very good letter of recommendation from the Chairman of the organisation, which I truly cherish. **What are the challenges that you constantly face?**

The first challenge is to convince the clients that they need to appoint an architect for the designing and a contractor for the execution of the project, and not the same person doing the design as well as the execution. An architect is a professional, just like a doctor or lawyer, and is an independent person. He administers the contract between the client and contractor and is paid a fee for the services he renders. Clients, at times, don't realise that this works for their benefit. The architect, apart from designing, checks the rates quoted by the contractor, supervises the work at site for quality control and to make sure that the work is being done as per his or her detailed drawings and on schedule, ensures that the contractor is using materials that have been specified by the architect, and, finally, checks the measurements and the contractors' bills and certifies the same for payment.

Every project has its own set of challenges, site problems, issues with the contractors...but it's all a part of the process. I am fortunate to have my associate Diana Reporter with whom I can share them (smiles). The challenge is to ensure that what has been planned on paper is finally delivered at site and to achieve a balance between the design, cost and time. Nowadays, computer-aided drawings and 3D images greatly assist in conveying the overall design to the client. But the drawings are only a means to an end — what matters is the quality of work at site at the end of the project. It is futile having good drawings if this is not achieved at site. Our emphasis, therefore, is on the details and finishing.

### designing a residential or commercial space?

Minimalism, clean lines, and less clutter — that's our design philosophy. I don't want to use the word 'simple', as that's pretty clichéd. I would say that it's more of design and less of decoration — a design



Maneck makes a house a home with his minimalistic style!



CA Media



Maneck's swanky style, that has been executed at CA Media.



Maneck's work at Jardine Matheson Ltd.



Maneck's innovative design at Nexstep Infotech Pvt. Ltd



Beautiful passage of a private residence designed by Maneck.

work experience with Maneck R. Doongaji, Chartered Architect,

## Lines and Strokes

What is your personal style when it comes to

To know more about Maneck and his beautiful works, log on to [www.maneckgilder.in](http://www.maneckgilder.in)



Scenic and serene — best describes the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Agiary, Pune, which has been restored by Maneck

## The Grand Agiary Project

Approximately two-three years ago, Maneck was appointed to restore the 166-year old Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Agiary in Pune. This Agiary is one of the oldest and grandest Zoroastrian structures in India. And while this project has brought Maneck quite a lot of fame, no way was working on it an easy task. He says, "This project was really challenging because I had never done a restoration assignment, and that, too, on a very tight budget, as it was largely dependent on donations."

He continues, "Also, since we are based out of Mumbai and the Agiary is in Pune, it involved frequent to and fro trips to constantly monitor the developments. Moreover, due to the nature of the work, a lot of samples for finishes and prototypes had to be made at site. Some of the items that were restored to their original splendour were the woodwork of doors, windows and ceilings that had earlier been painted — these were scraped down to expose the beautiful wood and then polished. The existing Italian marble floor was also polished and some cracked slabs were replaced. Some new additions in the Agiary were a new exhaust system, installed to take out the smoke, and an entirely new electrical installation (for which the contractor, Firdaus Masani, did not charge) and lighting. Another important addition was the construction of an entrance ramp for the elderly and wheelchair users. Overall, though it was a challenging project, it was an equally satisfying and rewarding experience and I am grateful to Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy (8th Baronet) for giving me the opportunity to be associated with such a prestigious project."

The Agiary project was done in three phases. It began with the main Agiary area, during which the Atash (Fire) was moved to the Dadgah area. After completion of the main Agiary area, the Atash was moved back to its original place. After which the Dadgah area was restored, followed by the Muktdad room. What's interesting is that Maneck admits that he did learn a lot about the religion in the process. He also adds that it was a real pleasure to work with Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy (8th Baronet), as he is a wonderful person, and had valuable inputs throughout the restoration work. In fact, the admiration is mutual, as Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy mentioned in his letter to Maneck, his appreciation of all the ideas, effort and hard work that he put into this restoration project.

As Maneck says, "One of the factors for the success of any project is the cordial relationship and trust between the client and architect together, with the effort of the contractors, and credit for the Agiary project in this case goes to the entire team".

that stems from an idea behind it. For instance, while planning a city, if you have the circulation areas marked out as your roads, then you'll know that the blocks are where the buildings will be built. Similarly, when you're designing office interiors, if you have the basic circulation figured out, the blocks will be the work areas and offices. At times, when you enter an office, you get confused because the circulation has not been given much thought. As far as residences go, we apply the same design approach and high standard of quality; however, we

feel that the 'personalisation' should come from the end user as it is after all their home.

### What are the greatest mistakes that we Indians make while designing our home or office?

In my opinion, I'd say, over designing and overdoing things; going over the top with the colours and materials. People do this because they often think that if they have spent a lot of money, it should show. So, they end up using assorted materials and finishes to jazz up the space and make it look expensive, which they don't have to. Then

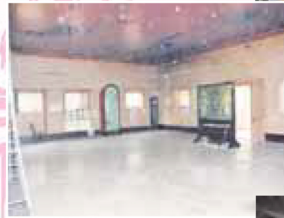
again, it's about individual choice and taste.

### Where would you like to see yourself in the next five years?

I just take each day (and each project) as it comes. I am quite contented and not overly ambitious to plan that far ahead. Having said that, I believe in focusing on the projects in hand, constantly aiming at improving myself. Let's say I look for the client's satisfaction after I feel I have done my best to satisfy myself first.



The Prayer Hall, before & after restoration



The Sanctum area, before & after restoration

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