



Debika Banerjee who is keen to experiment in Calcutta after a decade's stint in Europe asserts that the city's craftsmen need to be given more opportunities to prove their potential

Anyone can be an interior designer. But what usually determines the level of appreciation is the originality of the final result that can relate to and inspire those who are going to spend their time in the room," says UK-returned interior designer Debika Banerjee, who is keen to experiment in her native Calcutta, after over a decade's stint in Europe.

The early 80s found her crafting interiors for some of South Delhi's poshest addresses. Her experiments in leather were well liked by customers and promptly snapped up by some five-star hotels at the time.

A few years down the line, Debika was restoring period prop-

In vogue: Understated, innovative, functional

BY BRIDGETTE COLACO

erties in London. This was followed by the avant-garde "Debika" creations, made in Ireland from Indian silks, which were retailed at Harvey Nichols in Knightsbridge.

She was the only Indian to participate in the British Designer Show under her own brand name.

Later, she was to be influenced by her exposure to Eastern Europe — Hungary in particular. "I love the architecture of that country," she gushes.

Debika has just completed her first assignment in Calcutta, the regional office of Pal Peugeot Ltd

on Rawdon Street. She has worked on the project for five months. The result is her signature minimalist style — understated, innovative and functional, giving the office a unique European look.

"I love to experiment. I refuse offers where the company brief tells me to be conservative in my designs. The lay-out is different from a conservative office and this is evident right from the see-through conference rooms to the high-tech wiring beneath the

ceramic and colour-stained cedar floors," she points out.

In-laid computer work-stations in wood with wrought iron and a pantry area cordoned off in perforated anodised aluminium adds to the futuristic look, complimented by specially designed accessories.

The transparent company logo that lights up after dark is also a novel touch, added by the designer. Debika is keen to spend more time in Calcutta.

She detests the fact that the city

is said to be lagging behind as far as interior designing is concerned. Criticising companies for bringing in big names from other cities, adding: "The immense skill of our craftsmen are well-known but they need to be given an opportunity to display their talent," she opines, proud that her first work was crafted entirely in the city.

"There is no reason for people to go to Mumbai or Delhi and buy furniture. You get the best here," she says.

"I prefer to focus on commercial interiors but would be happy to do private residences to customer's

brief provided I have the freedom to be different."

Debika is appalled at the sky-high prices of some of the designer furniture available in the city.

"Keeping in mind the number of young people setting up home on their own and also those who want to improve their lifestyles without paying through their nose, I am working on a range of furniture and accessories which I will be launching shortly. I am sure that once these are out in the market, it will be tangible proof of the concepts I believe in."

*For further details contact:
Designer's Guild,
4C, Orient Row, Calcutta 17,
Phone/Fax: (033) 2806194*