

AD

FOURTH
ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL
EDITION

MARCH-APRIL 2016

INDIA

₹150

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST THE MOST BEAUTIFUL HOMES IN THE WORLD

AD 50

THE 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL NAMES
IN ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN 2016

AD EXCLUSIVE

BIJOY JAIN
IN HIS ELEMENT

*CHARLES
& MONIKA
CORREA'S*
MUMBAI HOME

PLUS **PATRICIA URQUIOLA · CHRISTIAN LIAIGRE · AXEL VERVOORDT · SANJAY GARG · KELLY HOPPEN**

SPOTLIGHT

THE GRADUATES

In the design schools of India, those ultimate crucibles of innovation and craft, AD50 architect MADHAV RAMAN discovers the imagination and creativity that fuelled these projects, which effortlessly straddle functionality and novelty



UPPING THE ANTE
Somesh Singh Grewal (left)
and Akshit Dhiman designed
this recliner, called 'The Sting'.

PHOTO: PRARTHNA SINGH

To the outsider, design schools might appear to be places of strange alchemy. Their hermeticism is largely because of the singular way things are taught, and learnt, here. The 'magic' lies in a pedagogical mix of mentorship, collaboration and fabrication. Inherently non-deterministic, these processes pivot learning away from passively receiving instruction, and towards actively pursuing open-ended arcs of enquiry. The teacher does not lead, but instead provokes and advises students, who also learn from their peers and, iteratively, from their failures. The workshop is not a centre of production, but a laboratory of experimentation and testing. Knowledge of material is acquired through its manipulation, and prototyping stretches both material and design to optimum performance.

This year, we have evidence from top institutes across the country that this way of learning consistently produces excellence, beauty, empathy, joy and wonder. Whether undertaken individually or in large groups, the works of these mentored, collaborative, workshop-driven charrettes are uncompromising in ambition, scale and finesse.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN (NID)

With prototypes stacked to the ceiling, the furniture and interior design lab is a repository of successes, rejects and works-in-progress, warehousing its past, present and future. "We would like to produce an iconic, patented and internationally retailed design by 2017," says Pravinsinh Solanki, the coordinator of the department. It's that kind of aspiration and drive that ignites the young minds at NID. These designs by the class of 2015 indicate that his ambition is no pipe dream.

THE STING

'The Sting', designed by Somesh Singh Grewal and Akshit Dhiman, has all the hallmarks of great postmodernist design. The quirky and iconic silhouette of the recliner—which holds the user in a lethargic position—is ironically derived from the alert stance of an ant about to sting. The structure mimics the splayed exoskeleton of the ant's body, whose head, thorax and abdomen become the upholstered footrest, seat and backrest of the chair. Ranjit Konkar mentored the duo both in the studio and the workshop. Even though it was rapidly conceived and prototyped over an intense two weeks, no effort was spared in exacting perfect form, comfort and stability.



PHOTO: PARTHNA SINGH



PHOTO: PARTHNA SINGH



ZIPP

The foldable kids' furniture one encounters in playschools are typically miniatures of the adult versions. Their hard surfaces, complex assembly and awkward bulk render them inappropriate, if not dangerous for children. Ayushi Jain's colourful range of flat-pack EVA foam seating, called 'ZIPP', addresses this with remarkable flair. A single foam sheet is smartly cut, folded and fastened with a zipper, whose seam gives it enough stiffness to take the weight of a small child. The material is also excellent for embossing, a way to introduce graphics on to the product. Guided in studio by Solanki, Jain worked with Rambhai, a cobbler near NID, to develop the prototype for this frugal, simple, intelligent design.



PHOTO: PRARTHANA SINGH

SERA

“Que Sera Sera,” sang Doris Day in a comforting ode to inevitability. Ever so often, one encounters a beautiful design that encapsulates a similar sentiment by simply letting a material’s natural properties lead to the form, and refraining from the itch to over-engineer. Displaying great material sensitivity, **Medha Gupta** splits, notches and flexes a single bamboo culm into a delicate wine-bottle-and-glass-holder for two. Starting “not on the drawing board but with material in hand”, Gupta credits Subrata da, the resident bamboo-craft expert at NID for unrelentingly pushing her to discover, and become fluent with, the material’s inherent qualities. The form revealed itself in an inspired moment and was guided into sophistication with advice from Solanki.

SYNERGY/ORIGAMI BENCH



Recreational courts or breakout spaces are de rigueur in most large offices today. Designed for the Tata Consultancy Services campus in Gandhinagar, **Nupur Priya’s** ‘Synergy’ offers an alternative to the usual combination of rickety chairs and rigid plinths that typically furnish such spaces. In fact, the zigzag, folded-plate aluminium bench combines the flexibility of lightweight, loose furniture with

the ordered arrangements and robustness of built-in seating. Its indented form allows folks to sit face-to-face, converse and share a snack, while the faceted ends allow multiple pieces to be joined in various permutations. Stability and sizing challenges were overcome by prototyping, for which Priya relied on technical advice and production support from Minimalance, an Ahmedabad-based furniture firm.



PHOTO: PRARTHANA SINGH

CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND TECHNOLOGY (CEPT)

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of CEPT’s School of Interior Design, rechristened the Faculty of Design, the department curated a public exhibition of their designs. The annual summer and winter schools hosted by CEPT see experts, academics, artists and craftspersons, and students partake in mentored workshops. It reflects the institute’s conviction in “learning by doing”, which is reinforced by the excellent work its students consistently produce.



PHOTO: PRARTHANA SINGH

THE MORPH

This year’s winter school module in Goa, ‘Palm to Palm’—mentored by Rachita Sareen, Nereus Drego and Mann Singh—was a “hands-on exploration of materials derived from the coconut palm”. Among other investigations of coir, shell and thatch, the ‘Morph’ is a particularly interesting foray into the wood’s properties. Looking beyond its popularity as a hardwood substitute, the authors, **Bhagyashree Nene, Elsa Thomas and Radhika Sudhakar**, exploit coconut lumber’s fibrous and knot-free grain, for its aesthetics as well as to generate

wafer-thin sections. The surface’s triangular tile tessellation mounted on textile gives the wood a new fluid vocabulary that opens up the realm of fabric, drape and tapestry. From architecture to product design, its potential as an undulating surface render is huge.





FOLDABLE CHAIR

The greatest challenge in designing stackable furniture is to resolve proportion with structural integrity, ergonomics, scale of production and material frugality. All five come together beautifully in **Priyank Mistry** and **Udit Parekh**'s lucidly expressed design for a foldable chair. Guided by Snehal Nagarsheth, and using an intelligent, strictly subtractive manufacturing process, they carved out three round-cornered pieces from a single plank of wood. These are reattached to each other with hinge pins to create an exceptionally comfortable, light and sturdy seat. The same process extends its detailing by extracting two perfectly placed notches that assist in carrying. The result is an absolutely flat-packed, brilliantly process-efficient piece that can be easily mass-produced, through handmade as well as machine-made assembly.



WEAVE CANOPY

This ambitious exploration of parametric design epitomizes the Gestalt adage: 'the whole is more than the sum of the parts'. The 18 participants of the 'Digital Craft' module were organized into groups of 2 or 3 by their mentors, Urvasi Sheth and Rudrapalsinh Solanki. They set about separately, exploring various algorithmic techniques in computer-generated forms, structural assemblies and pattern iterations. With processes straddling both design and fabrication, the teams then consolidated their work into an ensemble installation for the department's 25th-anniversary celebration. Stretched across a steel frame, the different weaves of fabric bands morph and bulge away from the backdrop to form a gentle canopy.



PHOTO: PRARTHANA SINGH

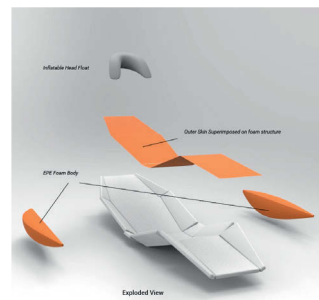
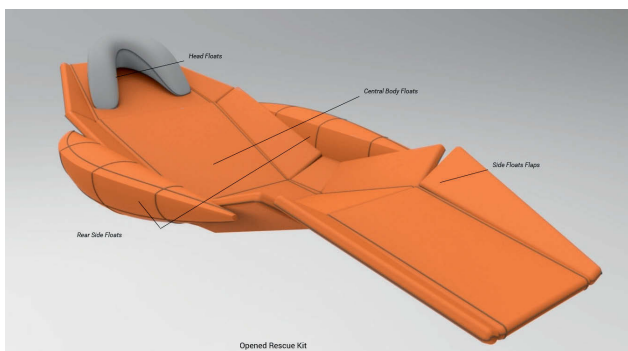
INDUSTRIAL DESIGN CENTRE (IDC)

A design school within the premier technological institute in the country would be expected to leverage its locational advantage to produce purely tech-heavy designs. However, the works of the students at IDC in IIT Bombay reveal a much more holistic approach, equally at ease with craft as with industrial manufacturing. The agile pedagogy here facilitates a design-led technical education that is strongly motivated by marketable value addition and social impact. These designs, from their Design Degree Show of 2015, address issues as varied—but relevant—as aesthetics, mobility, learning, and public safety with sensitivity, ingenuity and beauty.



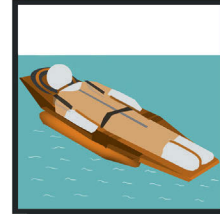
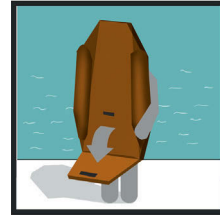
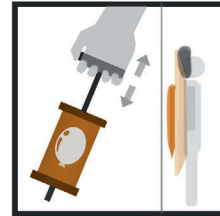
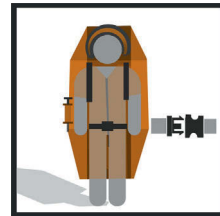
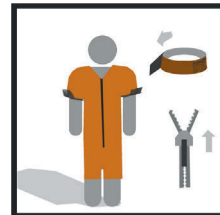
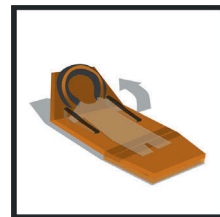
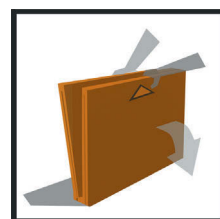
ZUHRAH

'Zuhrah', meaning brightness in Arabic, is a poetic celebration of both the autumnal landscape and the traditional copper smithery of Kashmir. The referencing permeates both form and finish with the rose-tinged light bouncing off the burnished copper insides, akin to a warm afterglow, while the rough-finished exterior of crisply curved 'petals' strongly alludes to the gentle descent of fall leaves. With each pendant formed by three beautifully nested pieces clasping a wooden stem, the design's modularity and simplicity also has potential as a chandelier. **Midhun KM's** exceptional approach of melding studio processes, crafted fabrication and sculptural composition mellifluously into one gorgeous luminaire was guided by Sajid Wani over a month-long internship.



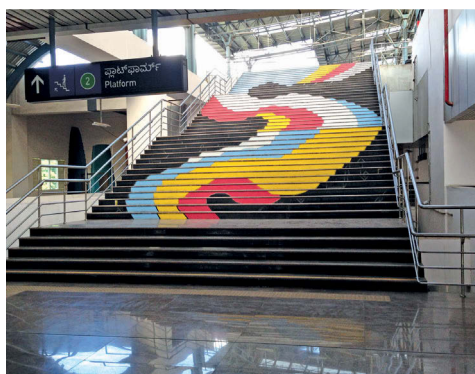
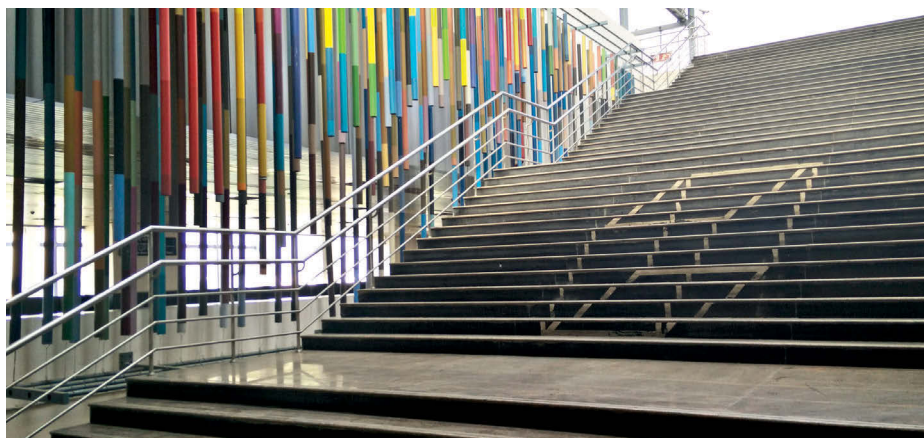
FLOOD RESCUE KIT

Design purposed towards limiting fatalities during emergencies is truly noble. As recent floods in Chennai and Srinagar have shown, even in urban areas, lives are lost in the time it takes to mount rescues. **Tushar Vijay Wankar's** lightweight, flat-pack, individual flotation device can be deployed in advance among at-risk populations or, in an emergency, airdropped. Back-strapped, it allows the user to wade or securely float in a prone position and can be anchored safely during rescue. The National Disaster Relief Force facilitated extensive primary research and review during this thesis project, which was guided by Nishant Sharma. Wankar, with assistance from his peers, rigorously prototyped and tested the design for form, material, buoyancy and build.



SRISHTI

Envisioned as a 'community of learners' that includes faculty and students, Srishti believes in extending design education beyond the campus and into the street, the bazaar, the city and the village. Strongly grounded in visual and liberal arts and technology, the work by its students stands apart in terms of sensitivity, artfulness and an ability to straddle the abstract and the real.



PHOTOS: ART IN TRANSIT PROJECT AT THE SRISHTI INSTITUTE OF ART, DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

THE PEENYA PILOT

Transition and flux are constant motifs in our urban lives. The ever-changing landscape of flyovers, facades, subways and stations blurs contexts into anonymity, giving rise to disengaged alienation. Started in 2014—by Arzu Mistry, Amitabh Kumar, Samir Parker and Agnishikha Choudhuri—and currently led by Mistry, Kumar and student-turned-facilitator Ruchika Nambiar, Art in Transit is an ongoing public art project by Srishti that creates “meaningful artistic interventions in spaces of transience”. For the ‘Peenya Pilot’, the institute partnered with the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) to access and engage with the large public spaces of a new metro station near a peri-urban industrial estate. The exertions of the partners, mentors and participants in devising and committing to a programme that engages with the city in a sustained conversation—in the face of time and funding challenges—is truly laudable. Their efforts have given the community and commuters a vibrant, curated cultural register and the school a matchless urban laboratory. Nineteen separate projects by students across two batches have been realized thus far, both by exploring process-driven linkages with the locality or site-specific articulations within the station. While the ‘Peenya Pilot’ will hopefully continue to evolve and stratify, Art in Transit is seeking canvases outside Bengaluru, with another project initiated in Kandivali, Mumbai in partnership with Urban Vision.

TRIPURA YOGA MAT

Shaurya Rastogi developed the ‘Tripura’ yoga mat within the ‘Impact Edge’ module, mentored by Jacob Mathew, Naga Nandini, Ritu Sonalika and Tulip Sinha. It was created as an option to the ubiquitous PVC yoga mat, which he realized is counter-intuitive to the ecologically mindful practice of yoga. He worked with the techniques of handloom weavers of Tripura to develop a rugged honeycomb weave to withstand the wear and tear of yogic practice, with a yarn woven into it for enhanced cushioning and sweat absorption. The critical challenge of giving the mat a good grip was overcome by developing a spray-on or paintable coating of natural rubber that is low cost, durable and biodegradable. This is a superlative combination of craft wisdom and design intelligence that clearly creates immense value both for the maker and the user.



PHOTO: KEVAT PADIL & RAJSHIKHAR KUNDU



PHOTO: AAKASH KEDIA