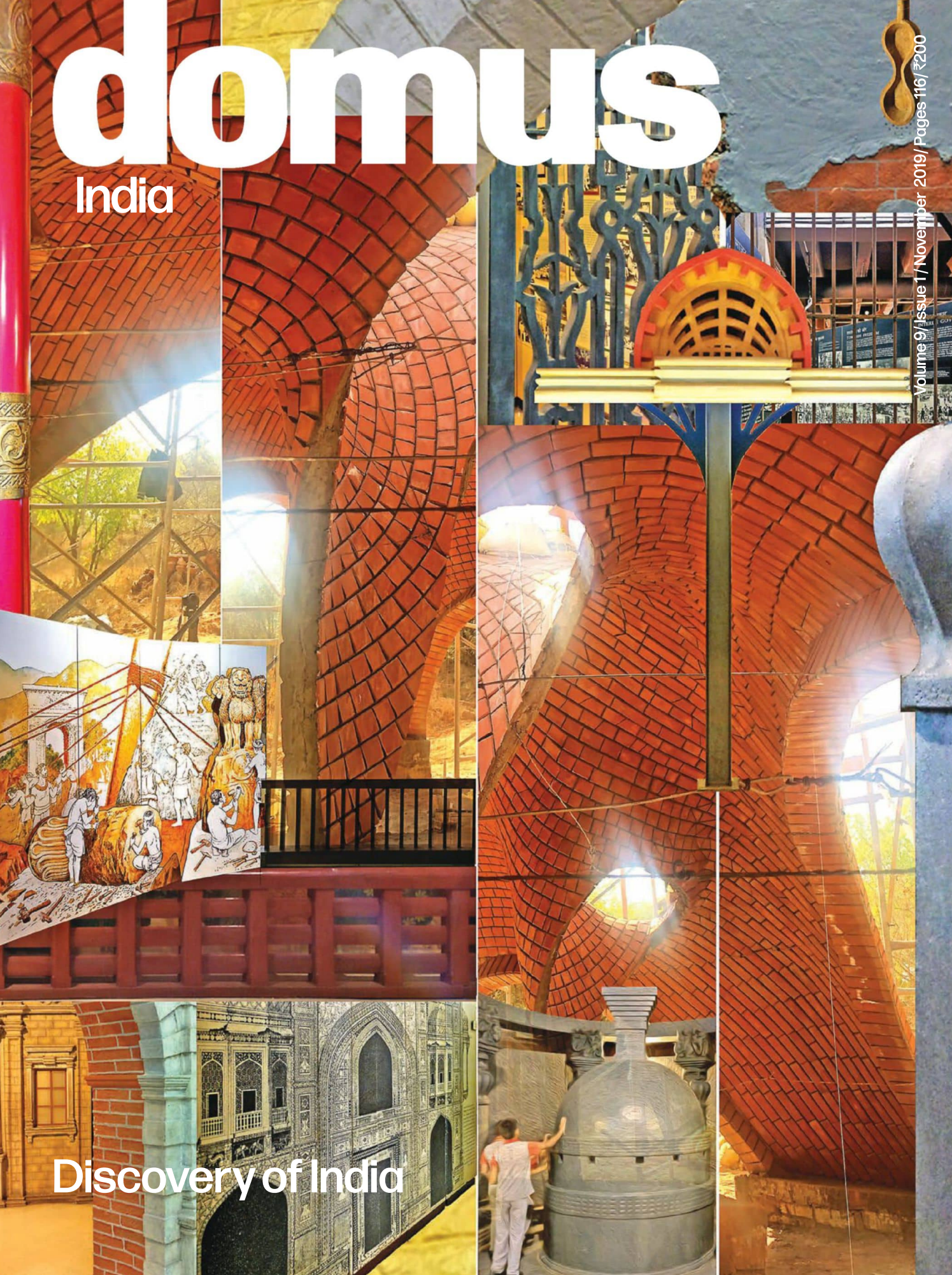


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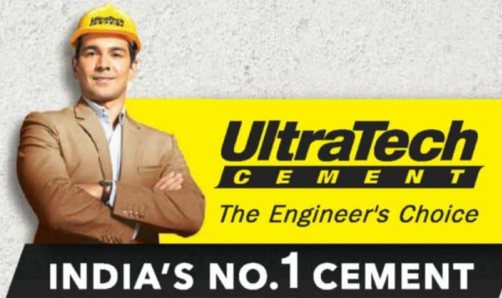
India

Volume 9 / Issue 1 / November 2019 / Pages 116 / ₹200



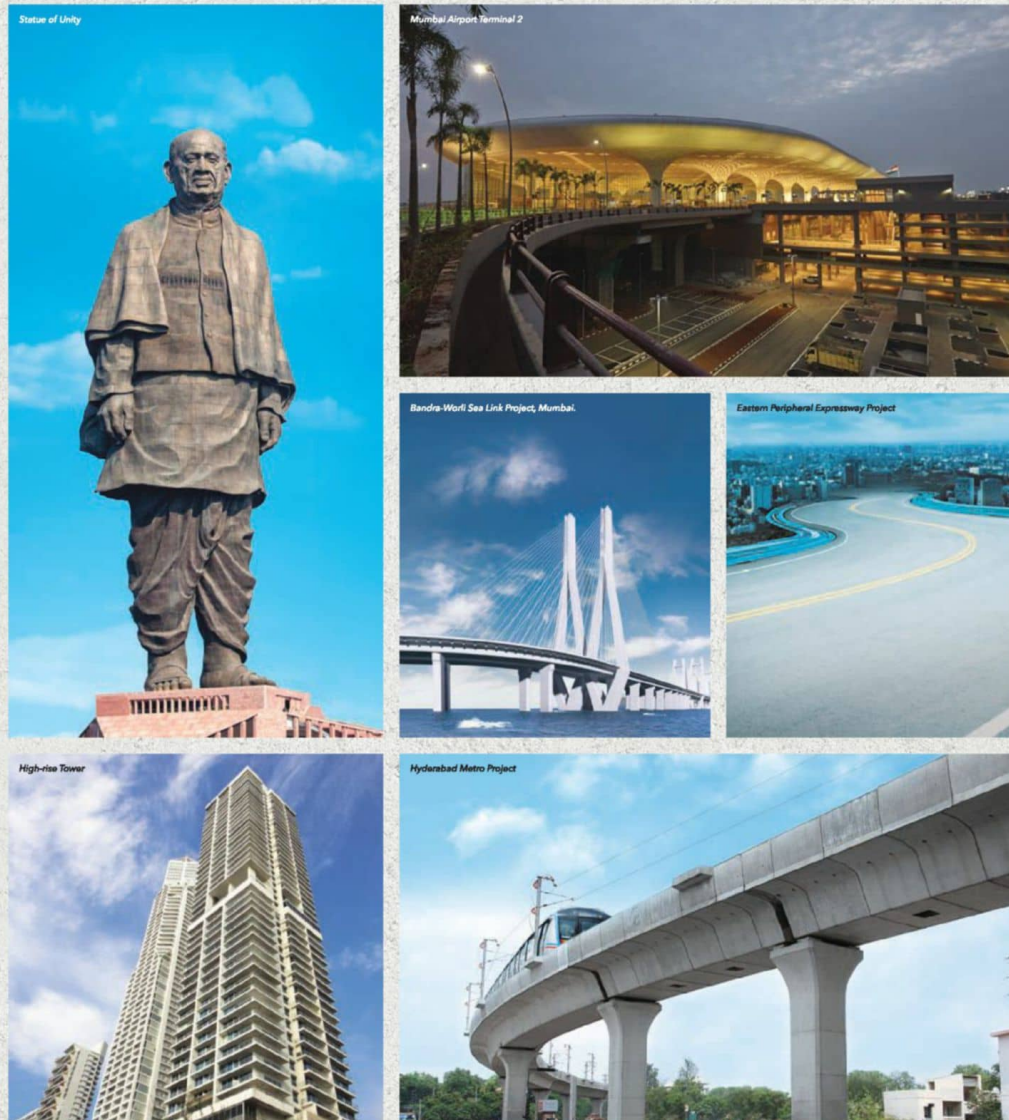
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Sketches, views, maps by Ico Migliore



In 176 pages, Ico Migliore gathers together an early 100 of his sketches made in notebooks in an A6 format. Divided into three main sections – sketches, views and maps – *Drawings* shows how the architect from Turin – founder of the studio Migliore + Servetto, former hockey player and student of Achille Castiglioni – uses drawing as an essential work instrument but also as a means to explore reality.

[www.ancbook.com](http://www.ancbook.com)

100 times white



Modern Milan in comics

In the comics of Paolo Bacilieri, architecture is often a support to the story itself. But with *Tramezzino* the real protagonists become the buildings of Modern Milan – Magistretti, Ponti, Caccia Dominioni – drawn with a personal touch and photographic precision.

[www.canicola.net](http://www.canicola.net)



Interiors to touch



From a collaboration between Nathan Williams (founder of the magazine *Kinfolk*) and Jonas Bjerre Poulsen (from the studio Norm Architects), *The Touch* presents 25 interior designs – museums, hotels, shops, houses: examples, as the authors explain, “for their tactile component”. There are new (John Pawson and Bijoy Jain) and classic designs (like the Brion Cemetery by Carlo Scarpa, left).

[www.gestalten.com](http://www.gestalten.com)

Victor Papanek  
Design for the Real World

After the exhibition last year at the Vitra Design Museum, the rediscovery continues for Victor Papanek, a social design pioneer, with the re-issue of his seminal book *Design for the Real World*, after almost 50 years. Today, it is more relevant than ever, seeing the need for action due to climate change.

[www.thamesandhudson.com](http://www.thamesandhudson.com)

“White exists on the periphery of life. Bleached bones connect us to death, but the white of milk and eggs speaks to us of life,” says Kenya Hara who, with *100 Whites*, continues his research. This Japanese graphic designer, who is art director at Muji since 2002, presents 100 examples – from milk to clouds, rice to the snow in Iceland – and invites to reflect on this non-colour essential to design.

[www.lars-mueller-publishers.com](http://www.lars-mueller-publishers.com)



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### Bureau Spectacular Los Angeles, California, USA



All photos: Andrea Caputo

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**Since:** 2008  
**Floor area:** ~80 m<sup>2</sup>  
**Public or private:** private  
**Teaching:** Yes (UCLA,  
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**RAL colour:** magenta, cyan

**Personnel Partners:** 2  
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Enzo Mari (Sedia 1)

**The Bureau Spectacular story** coincides with the personal and professional experience of Jimenez Lai, founder of the Los Angeles office. Leaving Taiwan for Canada, after living in the Arizona desert for a year to study in the legendary Taliesin by Frank Lloyd Wright, Jimenez Lai went to Rotterdam to the Atelier of Jeop Van Lieshout and then trained at OMA in New York. This sequence of extremely intense transversal experiences laid the groundwork for the Chicago studio, opened in 2008 at the height of the international economic crisis. Here, Lai spent all his economic and intellectual resources in research and teaching: Bureau Spectacular, until 2014, promoted constant theoretical investigations, in part represented by the book *Citizens of No Place*. The current studio, in Downtown LA, is a place that engages architects and designers in a wide variety of projects, once again focused on researching experimental typologies and processes: an approach that, in the majority of cases, is unpredictable and still respectfully disinclined to any commercial speculation.

**Andrea Caputo**  
[www.bureau-spectacular.net](http://www.bureau-spectacular.net)

## NEO CLASSIC *Refinement in the Social Kitchen*



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**Graff****'M-Series' – Concealed Modular Systems**

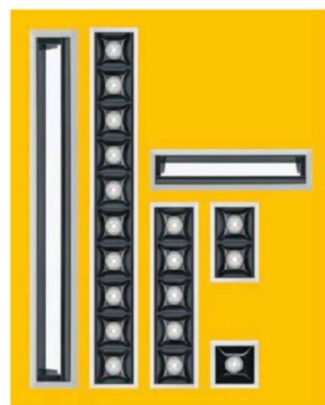
**GRAFF, the worldwide manufacturer** of innovative faucets and shower systems, presents M-Series shower sets. M-Series is a new modular concealed system offering solutions for the shower area, while also facilitating clean and efficient installations. The new series is composed of a thermostatic unit, two diverters and a cut-off valve that can be combined into a single compact block. Thanks to its modular design, M-Series is different from other systems currently available on the market that provide either a thermostatic with a diverter or a thermostatic with shut-off valves. With GRAFF's system it is possible to combine diverters and cut-off valves in different arrangements, to meet any application requirement.

M-Series meets the demand of an expanding market based on new buildings and renovations of residential and public spaces. A functional and

modular system, it is able to integrate itself into different environments. The installation is customisable. The components are stacked one on top of the other, creating a mono-block that sets the handles always at the same distance thus enabling an infinite number of combinations. It is a tailor-made system that allows shower levers to be installed both vertically and horizontally.

Headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and with locations throughout Europe, GRAFF is recognised globally for its trend-setting products and unique vision. Supported since 1922 by extensive plumbing and hardware manufacturing experiences, GRAFF offers a wide range of contemporary, transitional and traditional styling. GRAFF's commitment to creating cutting-edge, premium-quality fixtures is evident in each product.

[graff-designs.com](http://graff-designs.com)

**K-LITE****Architectural lighting**

**K-LITE is an ISO company** manufacturing indoor and outdoor lighting systems, and has recently launched a new series of LED architectural lighting. Inspired by the 'Make in India' vision, K-LITE, through their innovation, have showcased a product portfolio under Architectural Lighting. The application includes façade lighting, pathway lighting, in-ground luminaire, up-lighter, up-down lighting, billboard lighting,

vertical light bars, wall washers, area lighting poles and above all, sleek polar lighting solutions.

The solutions offered are backed by an extensive understanding of illumination in urban spaces and the expertise gained over a period of three decades. The fixtures are designed to provide value technology. The LEDs used comply to LM 80 testing requirements and from internationally reputed makes such as Nichia /CREE.

The luminaires are RoHS, LM 79 and CE certification compliant. The luminaire efficacy (lumens per watt) is much above 100 for all luminaires. Varied optical options for lighting distribution and correlated colour temperatures (CCT) for cool white, neutral white or warm white are available to suit requirements.

[klite.in](http://klite.in)

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## Tatiana Bilbao, Copenhagen

The third show in the series "The Architects's Studio" at the Louisiana Art Museum in Copenhagen (18.10.2019-16.2.2020) is dedicated to Mexican architect Tatiana Bilbao, who joins global visions and attentiveness to the cultural and social conditions of her country, focusing her time on well-paid "bread and butter" designs and essential social ones, characterised by low costs.

[www.louisiana.dk](http://www.louisiana.dk)

Mars Habitat by Hassell. Image Hassell + Ekersley O'Callaghan



## Giorgio de Chirico, Milan

Curated by Luca Massimo Barbero, the show "de Chirico" in Milan (until 19.1.2020) explores the work of the brilliant and controversial metaphysical painter, for whom architecture and cities were often pivotal subjects.

[www.palazzorealemilano.it](http://www.palazzorealemilano.it)



Giorgio de Chirico, 'Arca di Noè', 1913. © Giorgio de Chirico by SIAE 2019



Courtesy of Nilufar

## Bo Bardi + Palanti, Ghent

At the Design Museum of Ghent, "Lina Bo Bardi and Giancarlo Palanti. Studio d'Arte Palma, 1948-1951" (25.10.2019-16.2.2020) pays tribute to the Italian-Brazilian architect, focusing on the works of the studio she opened with the Italian architect Giancarlo Palanti. The show, produced by Nilufar Gallery with the Instituto Bardi, is the result of vast research; it presents the largest furniture collection ever shown and explores the oftentimes forgotten contribution of Palanti.

[www.designmuseumgent.be](http://www.designmuseumgent.be)



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[www.instagram.com/welspunflooring/](https://www.instagram.com/welspunflooring/)



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## "Mondo Mendini" celebrates 25 years of Groninger museum

The Groninger Museum celebrates its 25th anniversary with a vast retrospective on its architect, Alessandro Mendini. Conceived by Mendini himself, "Mondo Mendini – The World of Alessandro Mendini" (12.10.2019–5.5.2020) stages a series of over 200 objects – by Atelier Mendini, but also works by artists akin to him – in an ideal union of visual arts, architecture and design. An accent on the designer's creative force and irony that have made the Groninger Museum an international reference point.

[www.groningermuseum.nl](http://www.groningermuseum.nl)

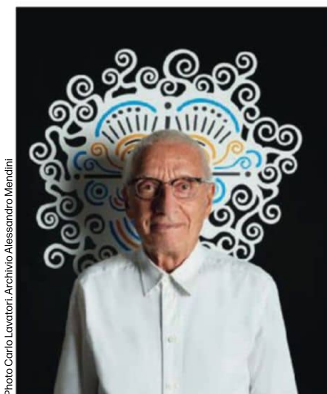


Photo: Carlo Lovatari, Archivio Alessandro Mendini



Photo: Erik and Petra Hemmer

## Bryk and Wirkkala Visible Storage

Legendary Finnish artists Tapio Wirkkala (1915–85) and Rut Bryk (1916–99) are the protagonists of a section at the Emma Museum (Espoo) that joins archives (6000 objects, drawings, photos) and shows.

[www.emmamuseum.fi](http://www.emmamuseum.fi)



Tapio Wirkkala Rt Bryk Foundation



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## CEPT, Ahmedabad Research Symposium, 14-15 February 2020



**All early-career researchers,** doctoral students (including MPhil) and academics in the areas of architecture, urban studies, and urban planning are invited to participate in the CEPT Research Symposium. This symposium is designed to provide a platform for sharing research processes and experiences as well as learn from peer and expert reviews and discussions. Scholars and researchers with diverse intellectual interests in the above-mentioned fields are encouraged to participate. All presentations at the symposium will be organised into thematic and topical clusters and moderated by experts and senior scholars. The abstract and the subsequent paper

submitted for the symposium should be based on:

- proposal submitted for/ongoing doctoral/MPhil research at a University
- proposal submitted for/ongoing research fellowship/scholarship/funding
- abstract or paper submitted for a professional or peer-reviewed journal

Applicants not eligible in any of the above categories are still encouraged to submit an abstract/proposal for a paper, clearly indicating the future course of this research/paper for consideration.

**Financial assistance** of INR 10,000 will be offered to all the presenters from outside Gujarat. For the

presenters from within Gujarat (outside Ahmedabad) will be offered financial assistance of INR 5,000.

**Application and format of submission**  
Please see website for details on application and format of submission: <https://cept.ac.in/doctoral-office/cept-research-symposium>

**Last date for submission of abstract:** 15 December 2019

**Announcement of shortlisted applicants:** 4 January 2020

**Last date for submission of paper and synoptic poster:** 8 February 2020

**Symposium:** 14-15 February 2020  
[cept.ac.in](http://cept.ac.in)

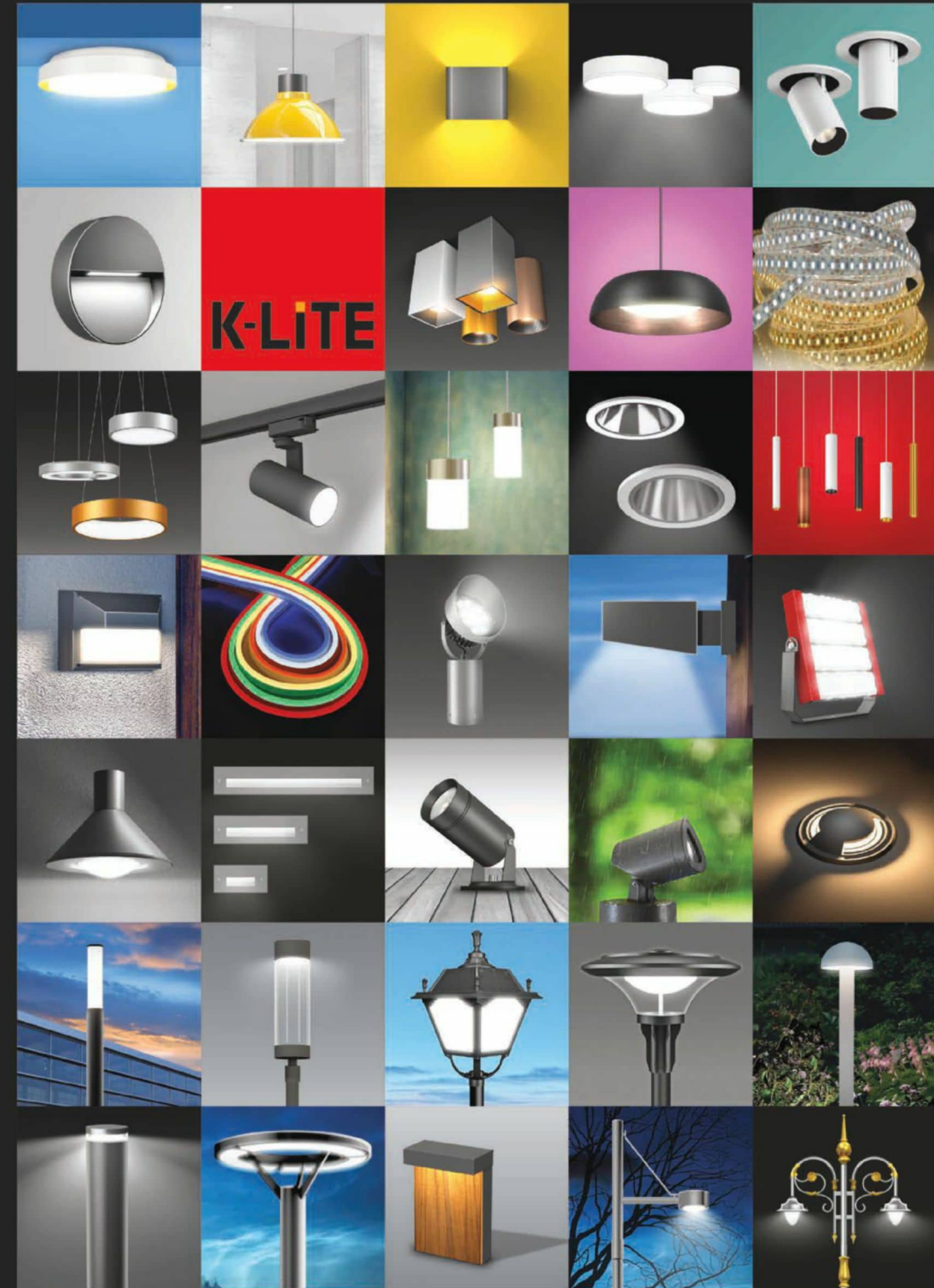
## The Lisbon Triennale and the poetics of reason

**Lisbon's 2019 Trienal de Arquitectura** (3.10-2.12.2019), curated by the French architect Éric Lapierre, offers five exhibitions in five venues under a single title: "The Poetics of Reason". The lifetime achievement award will be given to Denise Scott Brown. And finally, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation will host the symposium "Talk Talk Talk" (28-30.11.2019).  
[www.trienaldelisboa.com](http://www.trienaldelisboa.com)



A. Frey, Canvas Weekend House, 1933-1934, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

## The New K-LITE





### Issey Miyake, Tokyo

Designed by Tokujin Yoshioka, the first flagship store **Homme Plissé Issey Miyake** located in Tokyo was conceived as a production department where, thanks to a plissé and sewing machine and a press, customers can experience first-hand how their clothes are actually made.

[www.isseymiyake.com](http://www.isseymiyake.com)



Photos Y. Okumura

### Steel bars to divide without separating

Invited to create a new space on the first floor of an office building, Organic Design Architecture Studio proposes a free, transparent and multipurpose location. ReBar (from Reinforced Bar) offers steel bars and mesh, used to strengthen reinforced concrete, to divide the space while at the same time allow for a constant flow and exchange of ideas: classes, conferences and debates that – in the intentions of the architects – could also benefit others working on that floor, thus creating interesting synergies.

[www.organicdesign.co.jp](http://www.organicdesign.co.jp)

### Ordet, a new art platform in Milan



### Iris Ceramiche, London

After New York, Iris Ceramica Group opens in London, in Clerkenwell. Designed by Area 17 and inaugurated last June, the shop underlines the versatility of ceramic through a vast selection of furniture and solutions for interiors. Occupying three floors and a surface area of almost 600 m², products from the brands of the group (Ariostea, FMG, Fiandre Architectural Surfaces, Iris Ceramica, SapienStone, Porcelaingres) are displayed together for the first time.

[www.irisceramicagroup.com](http://www.irisceramicagroup.com)



Inaugurated in Milan this last spring is Ordet, an innovative platform for the production of art and culture, created by Edoardo Bonaspetti and Stefano Cernuschi, with Anna Bergamasco. The main objective is “to expand the format of art exhibitions and promote new models of research and spreading contents”.

[www.ordet.org](http://www.ordet.org)

**“It takes the power of strong beliefs to illuminate one’s path forward.”** A shining testimony to this fact, Vinay Electrical Solutions has had a bright journey for the past five decades. It was Mr. Vinay Chheda, a dreamer with a mission, whose idea led to the formation of this company.

Headquartered in Mumbai, with two high-tech manufacturing units, offering 600+ electrical products, Vinay Electrical Solutions has become a significant player in the electrical industry in India in the last five decades.

In collaboration with a team of highly skilled professionals and the best technologies at work in its 2,00,000 sq. ft. manufacturing unit in Daman, the group integrates excellence and innovation to make sure the quality is never compromised and only the best is offered.

Intertwining stories of passion, innovation, and excellence and with years of undeterred commitment to improve the quality of lifestyles, the company’s portfolio explores an array of wiring devices, wires & cables, lighting, switchgear & accessories. The most prominent of these ventures was the dual-color “Cozy range”, glass switch plates and feather-touch switch range in 2012. Fueling the requisite to keep offering innovative products, the recent years have seen the valuable addition of quality Video Door Phones and switchgear products, expanding their product portfolio.

Like every great brand has a major turning point, 2018 was an important phase in the company’s journey. Marking the 50th year from its day of establishment, the company rebranded itself, evolving to serve efficiently to the ever-changing

and fast-paced world. Donning the new avatar of a dynamism, the company expedited its expansions into new spheres of business.

For a company that carries the responsibility of numerous possibilities on its shoulders, Vinay Electrical Solutions relies a great deal on its main asset, the team. With the onset of new energy post an identity change, the company made several value additions to its team and product portfolios.

A balanced mix of youthful energy and seasoned minds, the team has the unworn confidence of the young generation as well as the wisdom of life that comes with time and maturity. The company’s latest pursuit of excellence was successfully launching Vibe Smart Homes, designed and manufactured in India.

At Vinay Electrical Solutions, networking is not only about adding people. With new plans, the company is now associated with the best and the most reliable players strengthening its trade network with more than 1000 distributors, over 8000 dealers across the country. In addition to this, the company now owns seven depots at strategic locations that enable smooth logistics across India ensuring seamless services of the best products.

As an organization built on human values and as a great believer in inclusive growth and progress of society, passion, innovation and excellence surely have become a way of life at Vinay Electrical Solutions. Being one of the largest electrical and infrastructure solution providers, the company’s commitment has won the trust of millions across India.



The company and its network always endeavor to conquer industry-wide challenges, while steering their way ahead in the competitive industry.

The company has not only progressed in its size but has also evolved with its innovative solutions. With the new identity, the company is inspired and aggressive to lead. We are also committed to aspire to do great things in our lives and in the way we lead.

This steadfast commitment is not just a humbling factor in the company’s journey but also the unshakeable foundation for its ever-expanding horizons to power more possibilities.

With a broader outlook trailblazing ahead with endless commitment, Vinay Electrical Solutions is all set to become one of the top five electrical brands in India.

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[www.vinayelectricals.com](http://www.vinayelectricals.com)



## Siemensstadt, Modern icon seen by three inhabitants



How's life at Siemensstadt, a Modern Movement gem? *Wir Siemensstädter*, by Ofir Feldman, is told through the eyes of three inhabitants: a child of immigrants from Africa, a Siemens worker, and a single mother.  
[www.ofirfeldman.com](http://www.ofirfeldman.com)

## From Osaka to Oaxaca, an intimate portrait of Tadao Ando

Directed by **Fernanda Romandía**, *Just Meet* is an intimate portrait of the Japanese architect Tadao Ando, who is also the narrator. From his studio in Osaka to the Wabi House worksite in Oaxaca, Mexico, for 53 minutes the Pritzker winner discusses boxing, art and his passion for architecture.  
[www.blainsouthern.com](http://www.blainsouthern.com)



## The Swiss engineer who built New York's bridges

Screened last month at the Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam, *Gateway to New York* by Thomas Witz: is about Othmar H. Ammann, the brilliant Swiss engineer who designed the boldest buildings and most iconic bridges in New York.  
[www.afrr.nl](http://www.afrr.nl)



## Bêka & Lemoine, Butohouse

Presented in Tel Aviv and Orléans, *Butohouse*, the new documentary by Ila Bêka & Louise Lemoine, tells the story of Keisuke Oka and his Arimaston Building, an eccentric cement construction he worked on for 13 years. Protesting demolition plans, the former butoh dancer transforms it into a performance.  
[www.bekalemoine.com](http://www.bekalemoine.com)



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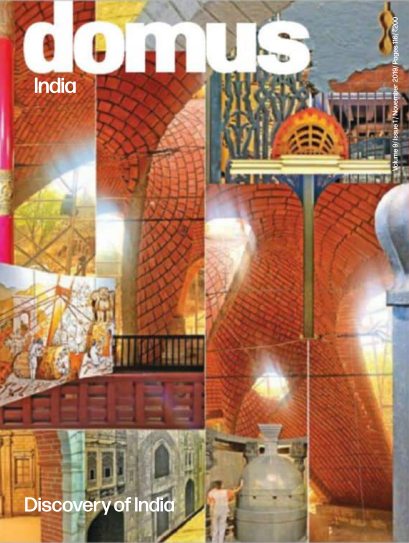
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**About the cover:**  
The cover brings material cultures and objects together in a way as T.S. Eliot says, "Time present and time past, are both perhaps present in time future." Within the crevices and memory of every new idea or building are layers of objects and materials from previous pasts. The brick shell pavilion in Ahmedabad is a discovery of 'India-now' and 'India-past' – a combination of new technologies and existing skills, and direction for the future without positioning the now and past as antagonists but rather as

mutually complementing, superimposed with journeys in a 'discovery of India', in a perpetual state of being. It alludes to discovering the many ideas, argumentations and dialectics that make and shape India – now and in the future, as much as in the past. Keeping with the spirit of the issue – igniting the child or youth's mind with a sense of discovery and learning – we invited a recently graduated, young architect, Parshav Sheth, to develop the cover design.



With this issue of *Domus India* we enter into our ninth year of engaged conversations, discussions, and debates on architecture and design in India. We closed the last cycle with an issue that had ‘Gandhi on our mind’ and we open the ninth cycle with Nehru and his sense of ‘discovery’ – discovery as a journey of explorations – exploring the world, its people, its history and locating the self within that world, history, and people. As independent India’s first Prime Minister, and one of the most dynamic leaders the country has witnessed, Jawaharlal Nehru was keenly interested in design, technology, and architecture and took personal interest in institutional buildings, in housing for the masses, in urban development through the five-year plans, as well as inviting master architects and designers such as Le Corbusier, and Charles and Ray Eames to establish cities, institutions, and setting the tone for a modern India.

We visit two ways in which Nehru explored the world: one through his letters, and the other through his book, *The Discovery of India*, a classic of the twentieth century. As Nehru’s birth anniversary is also celebrated as Children’s Day, we explore three books that talk to children – as young and vibrant individuals ready to soak in the world, with the right values as well as with enthusiasm and humility. There is no world leader today, except perhaps for Dr Abdul Kalam Azad, who invested serious time in talking and interacting with children. All three books we feature here set children off on to a path of discovery, of the world and the self. And that is precisely what Nehru did with *The Discovery of India* – set out on a journey to discover the many voices and minds, ideas and histories that come together to make what we call India. His text was translated into an exposition housed in the Nehru Centre building in Mumbai, and was designed by the National Institute of Design, and we bring to you that visual exploration of time and people, ideas and struggles. History is a meandering path; it is no straight route as many may have us believe, and it is no unified route again as many may have us celebrate! History is complex –

history is about the self, and history is about the vexed relationships we have with other individuals or with nature. In *The Discovery of India* you see that struggle over relationships in an elaborate way, but you also see a sense of that belief and logic around history and the self when Nehru is writing to his young daughter, who is then a child of about nine years.

Architecturally, we look at I M Kadri’s design for Mumbai’s Nehru Centre – a rich, symbolic interpretation of design in India, the country Nehru inherited as the first Prime Minister of a free people, and his own personality. But we also look at an architectural instant that comes from an intense negotiation between digital and computational technology as well as handwork and craft. It is a public building experimented with, developed and designed, and built through the efforts of an educational programme and campus. This structure is history and contemporaneity, this structure is natural to the material world and structured through technological interventions – a fitting example for an issue where ‘Nehru is on our minds’.

The pages of this magazine have constantly been on a path of discovery – discovering the shapes and struggles of contemporary India; drawing out the myriad journeys that different minds take, understanding the diversity of thoughts and the richness of variety in the way design and architecture, culture and discourse around the material world has shaped up. We are in the process of a ‘discovery of India’ every day. India’s distant past as well as immediate past is complex and no one narrative would do justice to it, and this is simply evident in our histories of architecture. What we may call Buddhist architecture, or Sultanate or Mughal architecture is something that had uniquely shaped in the Indian subcontinent through a multiplicity of cross-currents along land and sea routes passing by this geographically diverse subcontinent. Buddhist or Mughal is truly Indian as it shaped through journeys and philosophies that travelled from east and west, through the lands of Iran, Afghanistan, and Kashmir as well as the Himalayan ranges and the Konkan coast, finding homes and shapes in the Gangetic plains or the

sedimentation of the Deccan plateau. Oceans have connected the world and its people as much as land has – travellers, saints, philosophers, poets, kings and their men have all travelled. If there is anyone untouched by the mysteries and impressions of time and space, s/he may please stand up and claim thy self to be an island unto her/his own. Space is touched by travelling time, and time travels through people and ideas, and we all mingle to make our cultures preserved at times, lost at times, locally precious at times, and globally enriched at times. No culture is an island either, and no design or building, poetry or song is ever an isolated speck floating outside time and space. All culture and all material is contextualised and positioned within time and space, and every engagement with culture is a ‘discovery of India’ – a discovery of ourselves, and our times built with sweat and labour of times past, as the poet T S Eliot says in *Four Quartets*:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden. My words echo  
Thus, in your mind.  
But to what purpose  
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves  
I do not know.  
Other echoes  
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?

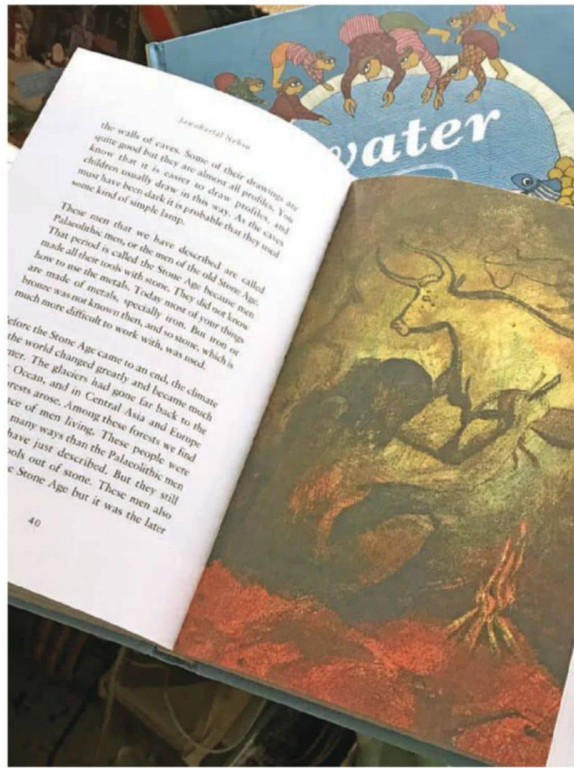
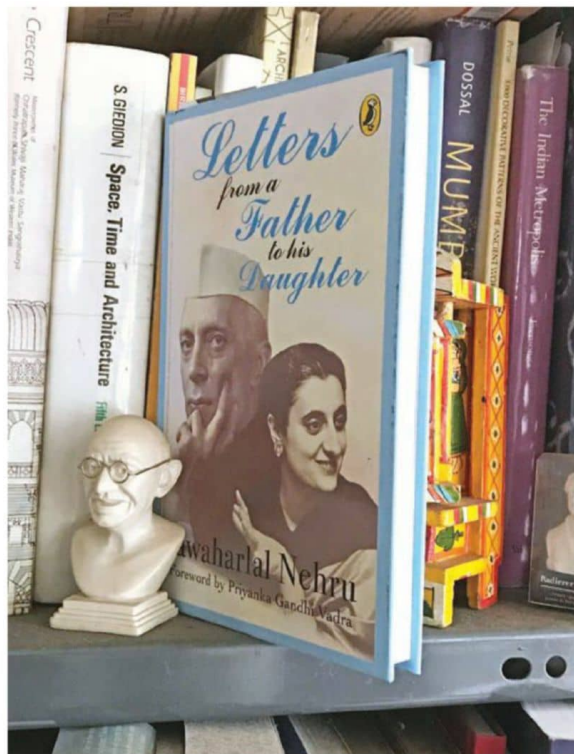
Kaiwan Mehta



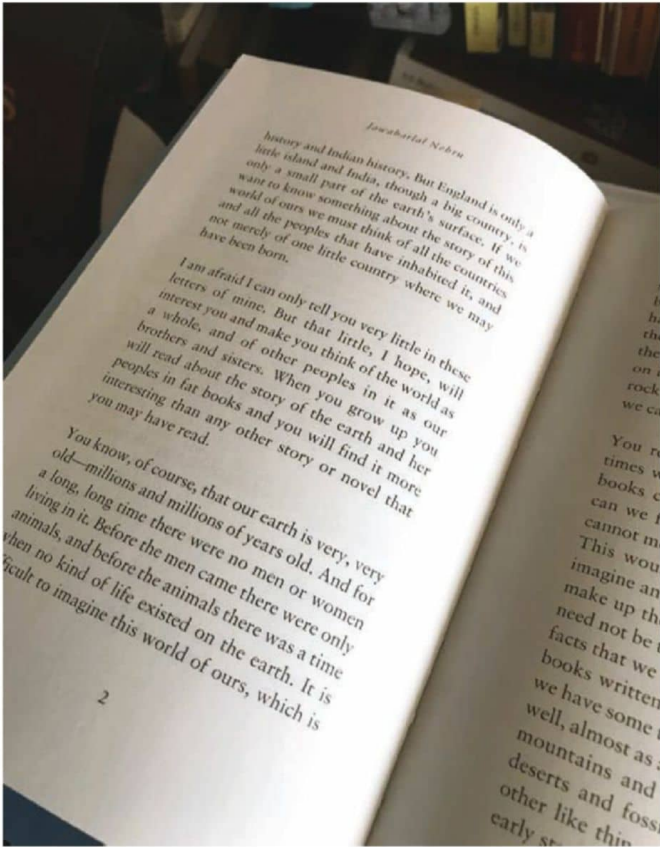
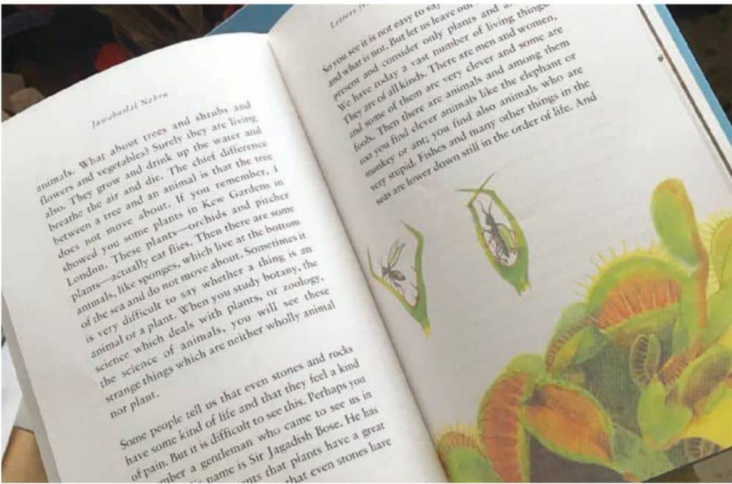


Books
Letters from a
Father to his
Daughter

Text by Kaiwan Mehta



Jawaharlal Nehru wrote a series of letters to his daughter Indira when she was about nine years old, spending her summers in the hills in Mussoorie while he was in the plains in Allahabad. These letters are a beautiful read from a man exploring the world and its history while fighting for India's independence from colonial rule, and searching for himself what it means to be part of people, cultures, and histories as varied as one can find in India. They are, however, written for a child – to learn to explore the world and to appreciate the intricacies and mysteries of human civilisations, languages, and ideas in many details. The accounts bring out the importance of nature – as care and wonder, as education and responsibility towards it. For any child to read them and learn from them would be a valuable education in humility, history, nature, and respect for both the human and natural worlds. The forewords to this book, most recently by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and an earlier one by Indira Gandhi herself, are most touching as much as perceptive – an indication of how these letters seeped into their private and political lives. The world is precious, beautiful, and complex, and we need to talk to our children about it, opening up doors and windows of exploration and discoveries, recognising variety as against unitary imaginations, enjoying the many avatars of nature and history as against slotting them into closed boxes.



Letters from a Father to his Daughter by Jawaharlal Nehru is published by Puffin Books (2004), with a foreword by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and illustrations by Ajanta Guhathakurta.

All three books we feature here set children off on to a path of discovery, of the world and the self. And that is precisely what Nehru did with The Discovery of India



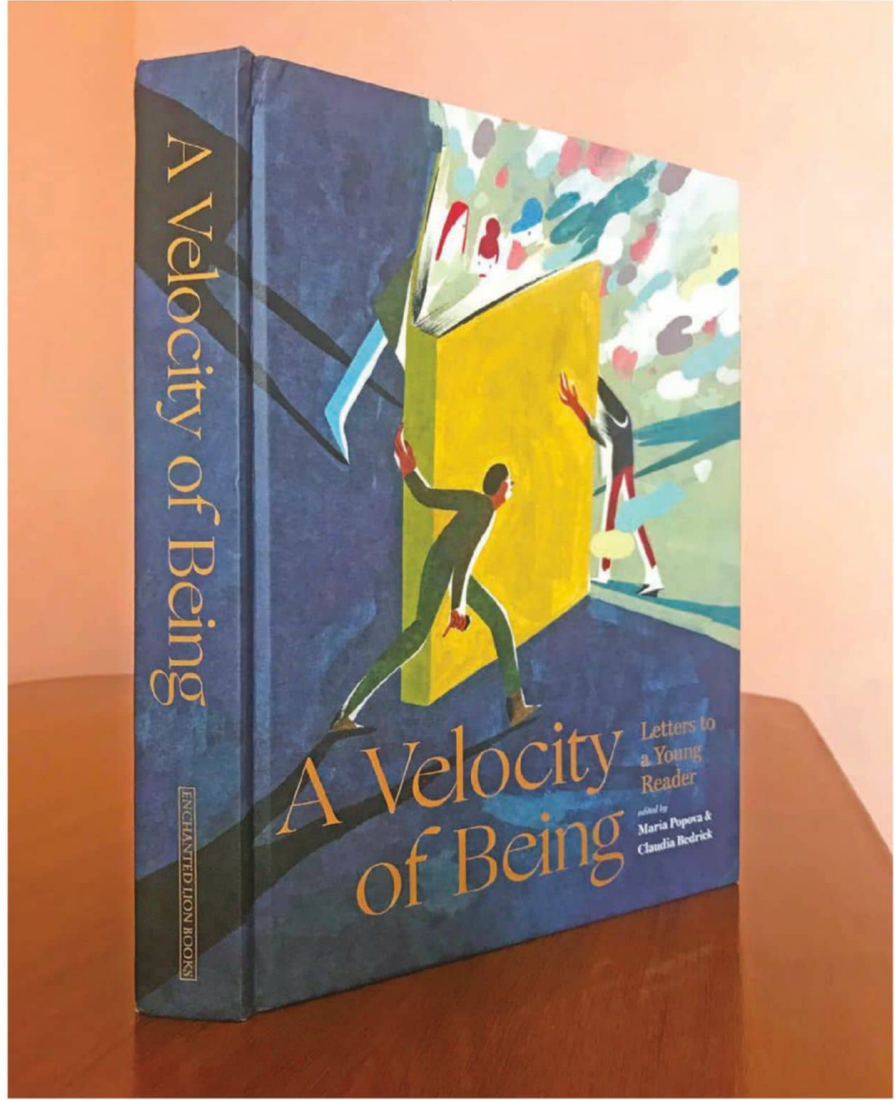


Books  
A Velocity  
of Being

Text and photos by Aparna Andhare

In India, November is the month to celebrate children. November 14, the birth anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, is Children's Day, and social media goes into a sort of overdrive, at the very least; display pictures are changed to childhood photos, wrought with nostalgia. Honouring Nehru's love for children, passion for progress and penchant for writing letters, this month we read *A Velocity of Being: Letters to a Young Reader* edited by Maria Papova and Claudia Bedrick. It is a set of 121 letters, paired with pictures, in a gorgeous production by Enchanted Lion Books, an independent publishing house specialising in illustrated children's books, based in New York.

Editor Maria Papova is the collector of cool, best known for her website, *Brain Pickings*, where she explores and celebrates ideas, books, philosophy, science, music, art and more. Her own book, *Figuring*, is a collection of short essays on inspiring women in science and the arts. Claudia Bedrick is a philosopher, art director and publisher. Together this erudite pair has staged a coup for bibliophiles: the contributors to this collection are some of the best known and loved creatives – writers, artists, scientists, entrepreneurs, musicians, producers, astronauts, teachers, psychologists, academics, and those who straddle genres. While dominated by Americans (or those living in the United States),



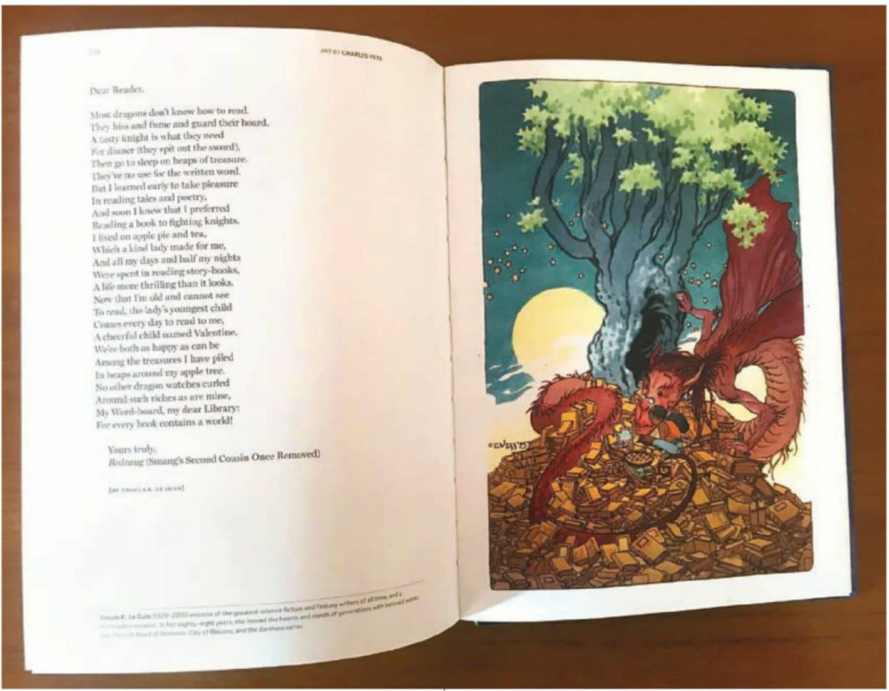
A collection of illustrated letters to children about why we read reveals the agency of words, the power of articulation, and why reading is essential to make a good life, reminding us that language is a delicate yet powerful tool.



A Velocity of Being: Letters to a Young Reader, edited by Maria Papova and Claudia Bedrick is published by Enchanted Lion Books (2018).

the book has representation from Europe and the Middle East, and heads further into Asia with the illustrations. The book is vibrant, thought-provoking, and a visual delight.

*A Velocity of Being* is a passionate manifesto for being lost in books by some of the most successful people in the world. It embraces reading in every form, without discriminating between print copies, e-books, and audio-books. As one would expect from an epistolary collection, it is intensely personal, even serious but with a sense of humour, well-meaning, and never boring. Addressed to children of all ages, it assumes the tone of an avuncular figure without being preachy. For grown-ups who read, it is a reminder of the







many joys and comfort of reading. With words on the left and art on the right, *A Velocity of Being* has word and image in conversation – they’re not simply illustrations, but respond to the letter, add to it, and highlight the essence of prose. It isn’t a graphic novel, nor does it privilege the written word over drawing, but puts artworks and letters in collaboration, allowing imagination to sparkle on each page.

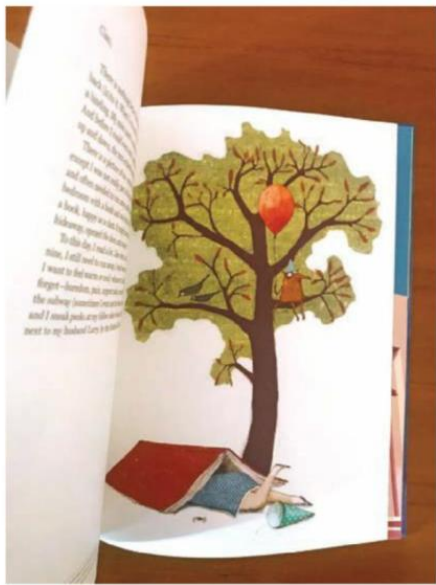
Reading is defined by attention and the production of this book, from cover to cover, pays attention to detail. True to form, even the endpaper has a literary reference: EB White insisted on a beautiful endpaper for the American edition of *Charlotte’s Web*. The marbled endpaper on *A Velocity of Being*, is from one of the first editions of *Tristram Shandy*, perfectly matched with the dark blue hardcover, and anticipates the visual delights inside. It is the kind of book you keep on your desk at all times and turn to for delight and/or encouragement.

While it is tempting to rattle the list of accomplished letter-writers (Mary Oliver,

Ursula K. Le Guin, Richard Branson, Tim Ferris, Jane Goodall, Marina Abramović to name a few), there are some surprise contributors and many of the usual suspects, but it is the themes that dominate the pages that provoke thought and invite the reader to respond: an exclamation of delight, and a nod of agreement.

Addressed to children, the letters deal with reading as kids – the sense of adventure books afford and how time and space is no longer governed by mundane laws. Like Alice, we slip into wonderland, and live several lives. Letters contemplate the nature of truth and how we find it. They think of the notions of fact and how many made-up stories are actually true.

Childhood is a constant presence within these pages. The loneliness of a creative child, and the solace found in books is addressed in several pages – we aren’t alone, we aren’t strange, we aren’t anti-social – these letters will speak to everyone who has carried books to church/weddings/gatherings, and been harassed by well-meaning adults to “socialise”. Even with



childhood far behind, there is a sense of vindication, when perusing these letters. Books aren’t an escape but are an inroad into the complexity of the world, even when dealing with fantasy and fairy tales. Not all books need to help you “improve” but they do so by default. Of course, musician Amanda Palmer in her inimitable style, tells the reader it is fine to not finish books that don’t work for them, while her partner, Neil Gaiman asks the reader to find books that were indeed written for them – books that fit like a glove!

In books we find our tribe, in books we get a sense of belonging, in books we have a place to call our own. Finding this as children, the letters tell you the trajectory of many successful creatives, and how their childhood inspired their practice. Books rescue us, or we rescue them (like one letter that talks about a book left damp and abandoned), and they light up our path. Some letters here make suggestions about where to read – libraries are safe, but you can read in bookshops and bathtubs, even on a tree. In books



we find the joy of words, the beauty of language, and life-long reservoirs of love and strength.

A recurring theme is how reading builds empathy, and allows you to inhabit another’s shoes – as Paul Holdengrabber says – once you were many other shoes, your own won’t fit you anymore. We are better people when we can relate to others, and attempt to make the world fair, acknowledge our differences, make conscious decisions for the collective good. Reading lets us confront the wrongdoings of the past, shows us how to resist, and how to be brave. It is important we fight, and books are a way of showing us how. The agency of words, the power of articulation, words as tools, and reading to make a good life are reiterated, and remind us that language is a delicate yet powerful thing.

Most letters try to answer to the question of why we read – and there are several answers, all of which are true. This book is a testament to the fact that what we read makes us who we are. It is hard to imagine a successful person who won’t read. It is easy to see why most misplaced, misogynistic, racist [insert every problematic stance that thrives on ignorance], grow in places

where books are discouraged. The biggest danger to the world is where the internet and social media are dominant sources of information, and the only way to fight darkness is, as many writers here have suggested, with a torch, reading into the night, reading when forbidden, reading forbidden texts, reading everything.

As we get older, the urge to impart wisdom gets stronger. We want to share our experiences, help little ones avoid our mistakes. While most advice is unsolicited and rarely well-received, perhaps the best way to address this need is to point people to books that will speak to them. There is no occasion, nor any age when books as presents aren’t appreciated. You can count on the book to tickle curiosity not only for the books mentioned here by letter writers, but one is tempted to seek more graphics, illustrations too. Comic books and themes which seem perfect for children, are great for grown-ups too, who find ‘adulting’ a challenge, and long for the comfort and humour of a simpler world. To young ones, and those at crossroads, *A Velocity of Being* proves there can be no better gift than that of words and beauty.



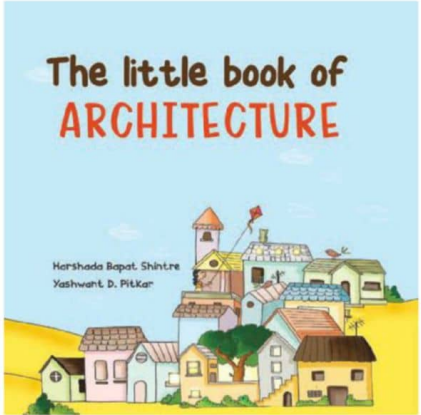
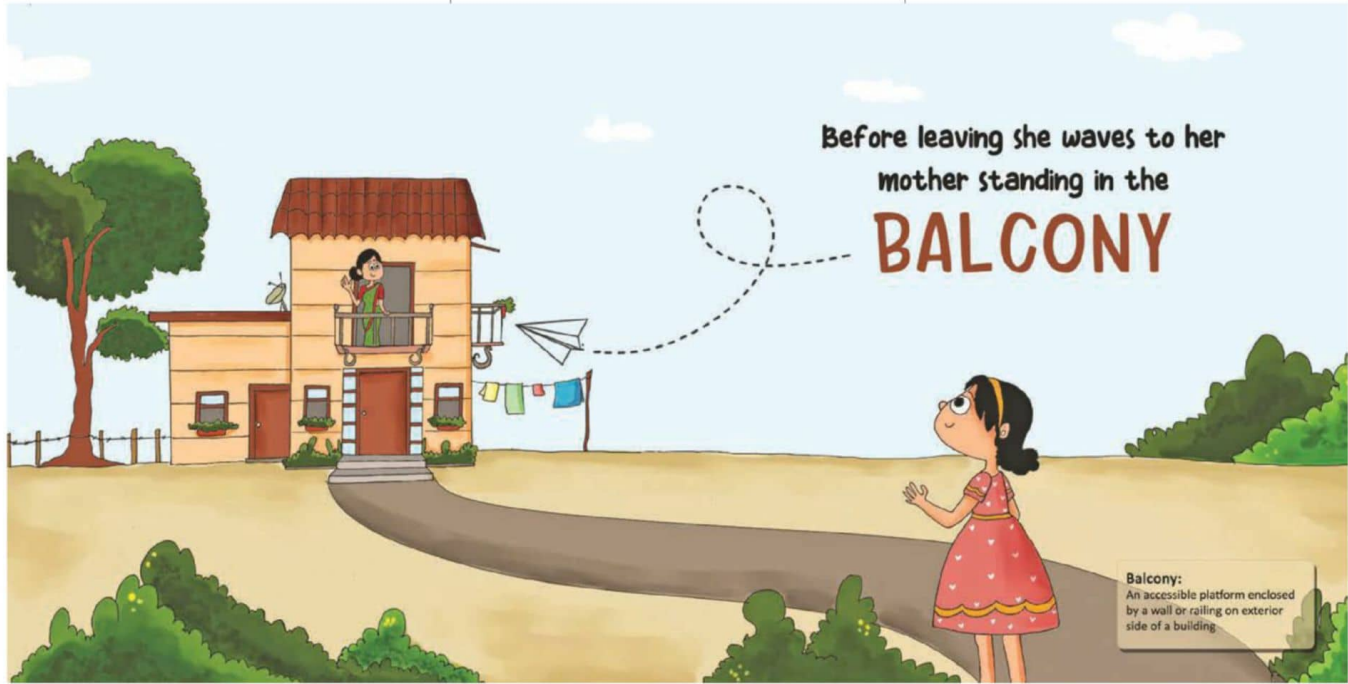
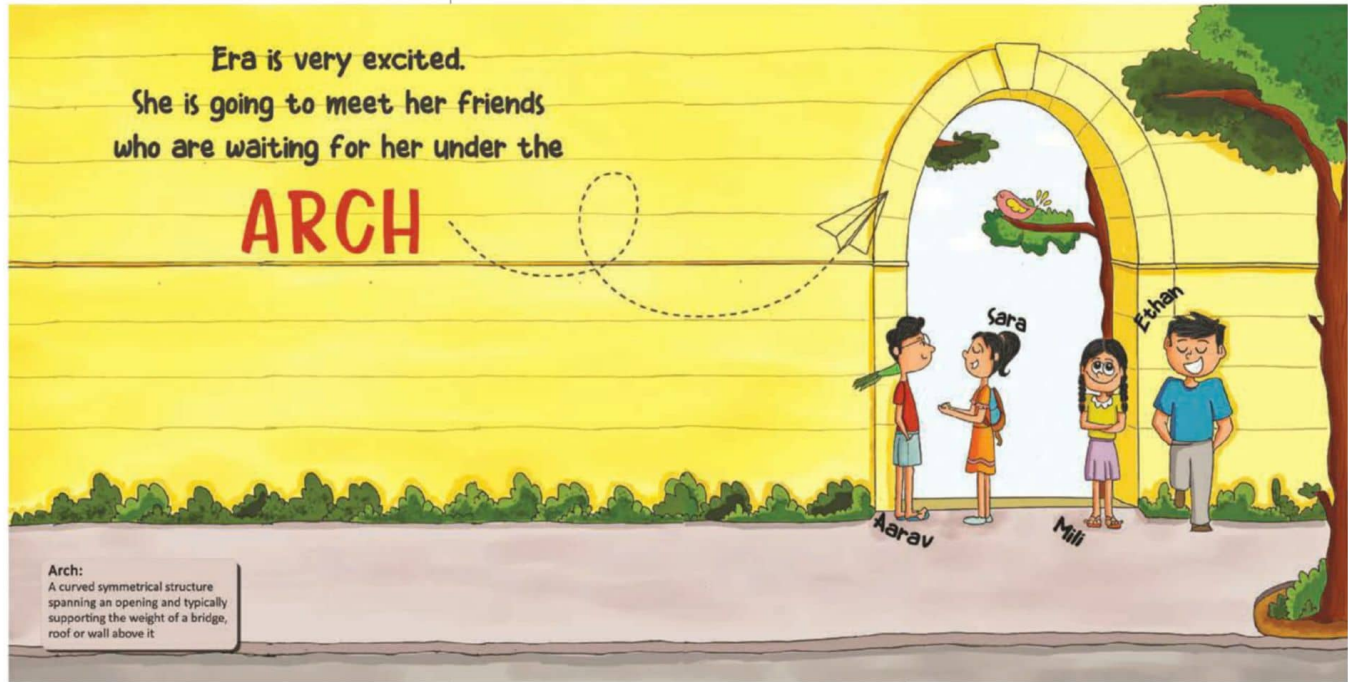


Books

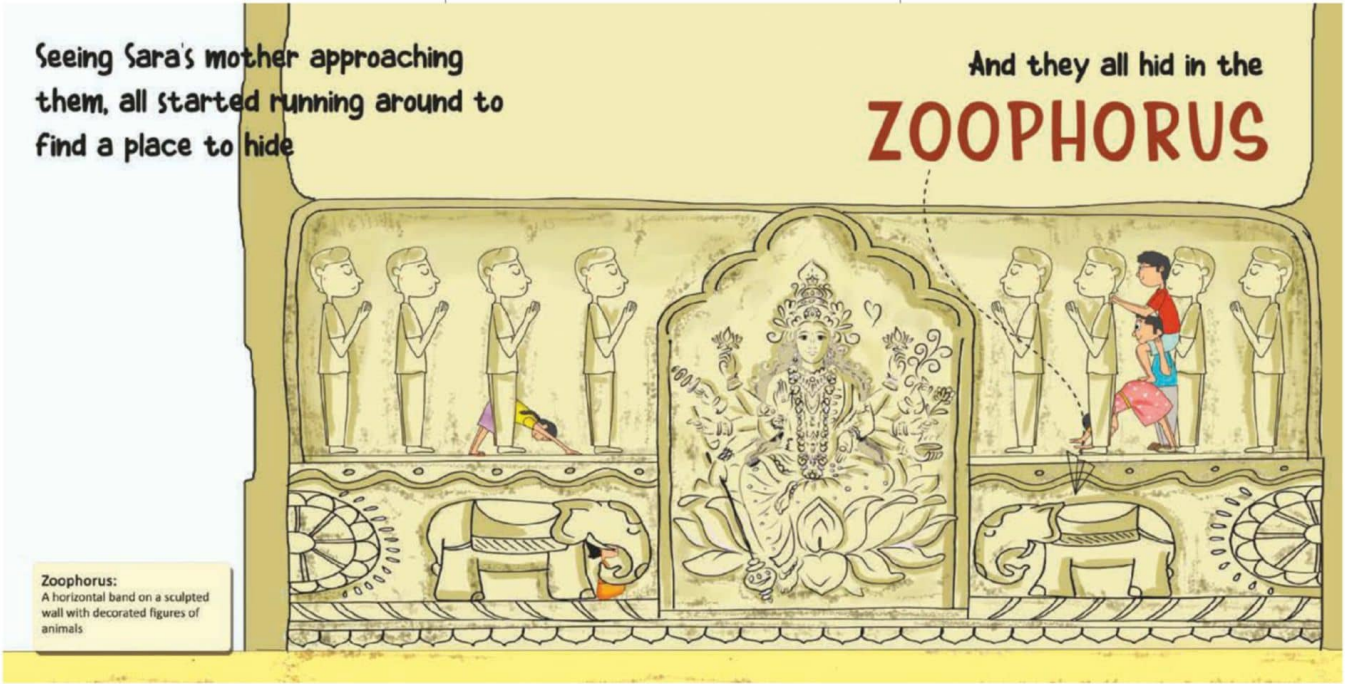
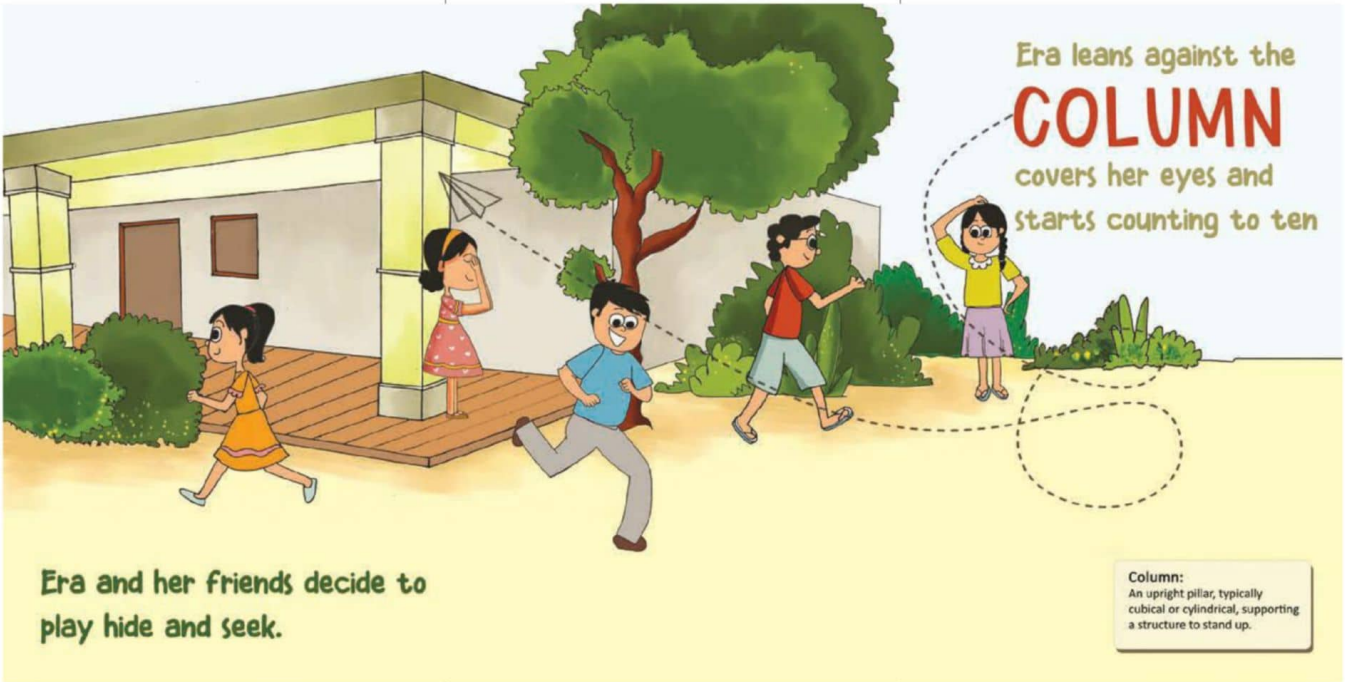
# The Little Book of Architecture

By Harshada Bapat Shintre  
and Yashwant D. Pitkar

As we celebrate Children’s Day this month, on Nehru’s birth anniversary, we take a peek into a new book that uses strong visuals showcasing architectural elements and storytelling devices to introduce children to the fascinating world of architecture and built environment design. We use architecture all the time, it is all around us, but we are rarely conscious of it; nor do we appreciate its uses and implications in our everyday lives. It is omnipresent yet absent! Making children conscious of the shape of their built environment is an important step in generating an awareness of architecture – its realm, as design, and the values of design elements. In a time when we are mourning the loss of architecture as a subject of debate in the public sphere, this book calls for more such attempts to connect people with the built form.

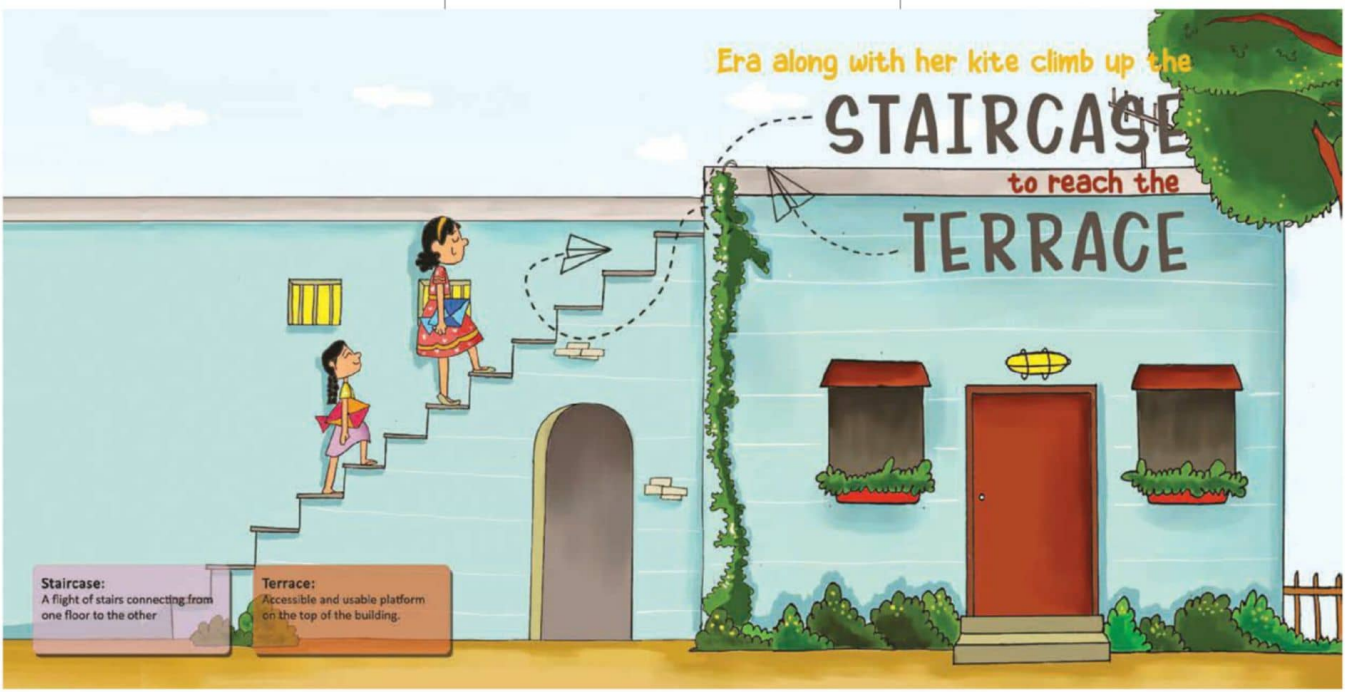
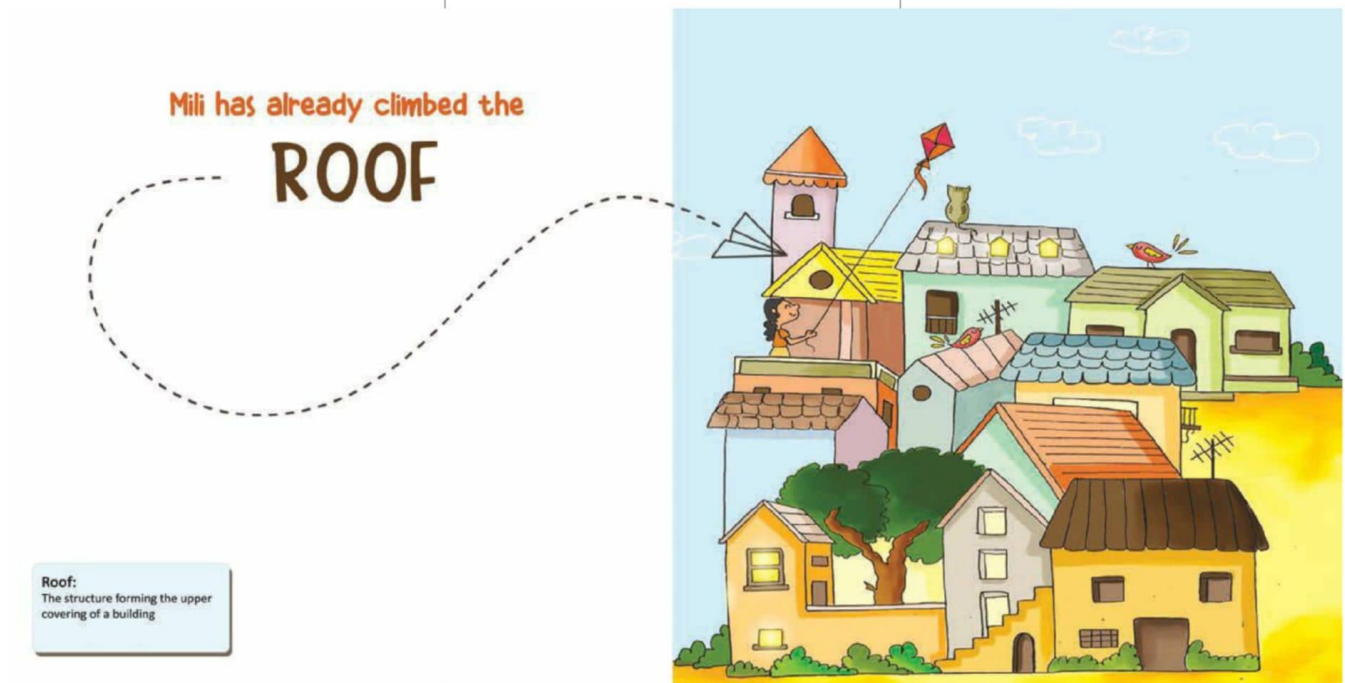
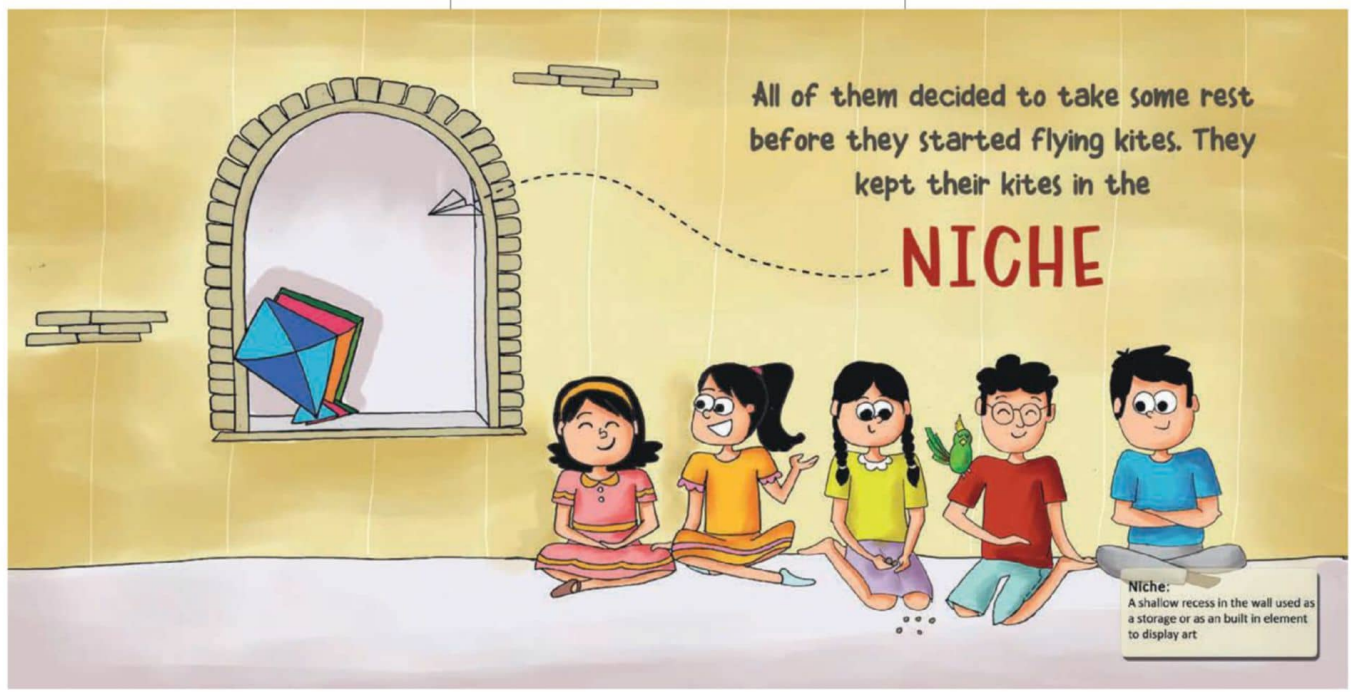
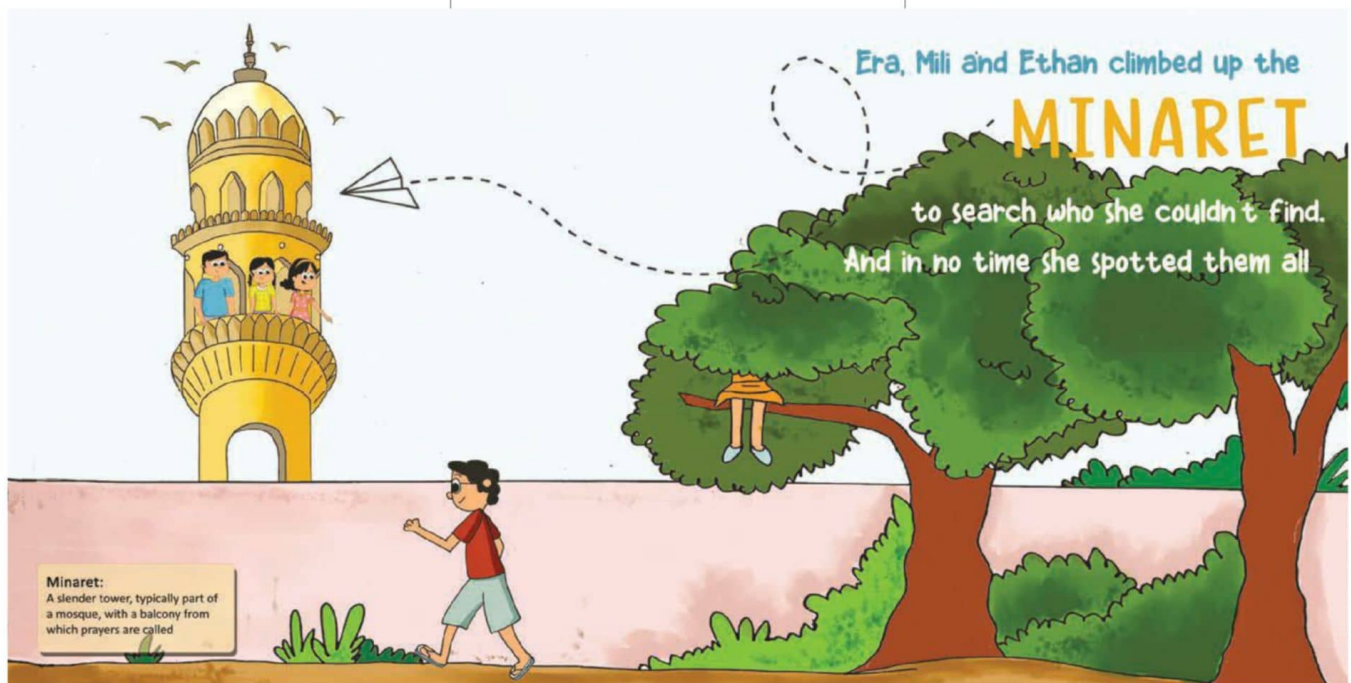


This spread and next: representative pages from the book; right: the cover of the book





The images featured here are from The Little Book of Architecture (2019) by Harshada Bapat Shintre and Yashwant D. Pitkar, published with the permission of the authors.





**Jawaharlal Nehru’s writings stand, alongside the works of Tagore, and the words and life of Gandhi, as expressive acts that brought India into existence. If we are to sustain this extraordinary, logic-defying, intellectual and political creation, we shall need all the imaginative resources we have – including the deep reservoir left by the men and women who dreamed our reality into being.**

Text  
Sunil Khilnani

The India brought into being in 1947 was created not just by deeds, but by words. The fierce imaginations of its leading political actors were also literary imaginations, and as their writings set out a vision of modern India, the texts themselves worked to constitute it. Among the essential texts – Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi’s *An Autobiography: The Story Of My Experiments With Truth* and *Hind Swaraj*, Rabindranath Tagore’s *Nationalism* and *Gora*, and Jawaharlal’s Nehru’s *An Autobiography* – is *The Discovery of India*.

Nehru was of a generation younger than Tagore (1861-1941) and Gandhi (1869-1948). Born in 1889 in Allahabad, then a sleepy upcountry town, his father Motilal was a self-made, wealthy lawyer with overbearing ambitions for his only son. Motilal Nehru saw his son’s future as resting on his capacity to absorb the language and culture of India’s British rulers (a language and culture that, at Motilal’s insistence, pervaded the Nehrus’ own provincial household). And so the fifteen-year-old Jawaharlal, slight in build and shy in disposition, was shipped to England, where he studied first at Harrow and then at Cambridge.

Nehru returned to India in 1912. His experience abroad implanted in him a marked capacity for distance and detachment towards his own country. It also left him, by his own admission, unconnected to the living world of his fellow Indians. Destined for a life expended between days in barrister’s tails and gown, dinners with moffusil English administrators, he soon dissented. By the end of the First World War in 1918, he was attracted to a newly stirring nationalism and entered a lifelong engagement with its startling leader, Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi had himself only recently returned to India in 1915, after almost two decades in South Africa, and had busily invented his own conception of Indianness – his own Indian self-identity – one that managed, unlike any before, to speak to vast numbers of peoples across the subcontinent.

For Nehru, pulled along by Gandhi’s political vitalization of India during the 1920s and 1930s, the crafting of an Indian selfhood was to be a more gradual, vexed and infinitely subtle process – a lifelong journey to which Nehru’s writings bear rich witness. He could not take India, or his own identity, for granted. In sentences that crystallized his ambivalence, he wrote in *The Discovery of India* of how he approached India ‘as an alien critic ... and looked at her as a friendly Westerner might have done. I was eager and anxious to change her outlook and appearance and give her the garb of modernity. And yet doubts arose within me. Did I know India? – I who presumed to scrap much of her past heritage?’

It is a question that immediately resonates with – and is recognizable to – many millions of Indians today, as our young nation struggles to make sense of its choices, to sift the necessary from the indulgent, to connect rapid changes to more enduring continuities.

For Nehru, that quest to know India, and to judge wisely the terms of its transformation, had in fact been a leitmotif of his life since the early 1920s – when he first convinced his father to give up the project of emulating their colonial rulers, and to turn to the struggle of defining for themselves what an Indian freedom might mean. Abandoning their legal careers as well as their western dress and lifestyles for political agitation in homespun khadi, Nehru and his father joined the thousands of Congress men and women who followed Gandhi in going willingly to prison for the cause of India’s freedom. In the next two-and-a-half decades, until India’s independence from British rule in 1947, Nehru was imprisoned nine times, for a total of almost nine years. He used these years to read widely on Indian and world history and politics, and to clarify his thoughts through writing.

The book knowledge absorbed in jail was put to the test when Nehru was out of it – in encounters with the intense poverty of the countryside, with the different regional cultures of the subcontinent, and with the intense religious beliefs of his compatriots. As he travelled the countryside and towns, campaigning for the Congress Party’s vision of Indian independence, he came into contact with Indians of every sort: a susurrating diversity that challenged him to find some harmonizing bond between them. Unlike his counterparts in Russia or China, Nehru did not seek to forge such connections by invoking utopian ideologies of the future – a vision of a community united in perfect communist bliss. And, unlike some of his compatriots, he did not recur to delusive reassurances of ancient lines of blood or clouds of belief, invented memories of racial or religious solidarity. *The Discovery of India* testifies to his recognition that knowing India meant knowing its immense variety – and knowing also that this was its great strength. It is a book that embraces the complexities of India, while searching always for logic and pattern in its long history, a logic that could in turn inform its future progress. Nehru sets out in it the basic grammar of India’s political identity as a nation: a grammar we are still trying to master.

*The Discovery of India* was not in fact the book that Nehru had originally intended to write. *An Autobiography*, published in 1936, had been an unexpected success, securing for Nehru a worldwide reputation as a charismatic leader with a gifted pen – a youthful firebrand, at once impassioned and refined. In 1941, imprisoned once more in Dehra Dun jail (where he had written *An Autobiography*), he began fitfully to work on a sequel. Much had happened in his life since 1936: his wife Kamala had died; in 1937 the Congress had fought and won elections held under the new Government of India Act and, amidst controversy, had governed in the provinces; he had travelled across Europe as war clouds gathered; and war had now come, raising hopes for the cause of Indian

# Embracing the complexities of India

independence. Nehru and other Congress leaders were released from jail at the end of 1941. Soon after, Winston Churchill despatched Stafford Cripps to India on a mission to induce Congress support for the Allied war effort, in return for future self-government. But the Cripps-Congress negotiations collapsed, and with it Indian hopes. Gandhi, Nehru and the Congress leadership were back in jail by August 1942.

For months in prison, Nehru read, conversed, kept a diary – but was unmotivated to write anything like a book. Nehru was rarely averse to self-regard, but now the narcissism of an autobiographical project seemed insupportable. In the spring and summer of 1944, as fragmentary news of the world was filtering through to him in his cell – the Soviet pushback against the Nazis, the Allied landings on the Normandy coast – a new conviction, though, did begin to gather shape. The old order of Imperial Europe, which still held the world and India in its grip, seemed to be moving towards its end. A historical turning point was at hand. ‘My own troubles and self,’ he now wrote in a manuscript that had begun to grow, ‘sink into insignificance.’

What that manuscript would become was a sweeping story of India’s past, a story designed to recover that past for Nehru himself, and to restore it to his compatriots. If the world order was indeed on the verge of change, psychological readiness was now essential for an India that had been doubly wounded by the British – the British had colonized not just India’s physical self, but also its historical imagination, and therefore its ability to conceive future possibilities. India had, in Nehru’s metaphor, to be ‘discovered’ anew by Indians. What was needed was a self-help book for a start-up nation.

He did not abandon the personal element entirely. Indeed, he couldn’t – for Nehru’s discovery of India was intimately tied to his own growing understanding of the nature of his Indianness. Rather, he would use his own life story strategically in the hope it would lend ‘colour’ to what he saw as ‘an objective record and analysis.’ The book opens with poignant, if condescending, reflections about his wife, who in 1936 had died of tuberculosis at a sanatorium near Lausanne in Switzerland. Other events in his life surface through the book. Although often presented as a history of India, *The Discovery of India* feels distinctly modern in its mixing of genres. Memoir is interleaved with political commentary and philosophical musings, and all this is contained within a narrative that spans Indian history from the Indus Valley to the Quit India movement of 1942. It is not a work of original historical scholarship. It is an act of political and literary imagination.

...

Years after the book’s publication, now in office as India’s first prime minister and feeling keenly the lack of time to read or write,

Nehru would regret – only half-jokingly – the fact that he was no longer regularly despatched to jail. In *The Discovery of India* Nehru invoked the poet T.S Eliot’s line in ‘Little Gidding’ about existence at the ‘point of intersection of the timeless with time.’ His cell, he came to feel, was such an intersection. Held a ‘prisoner perforce inactive when a fierce activity consumes the world’, Nehru found the present had acquired the ‘immobility and unchangeableness’ of the past. Still, sequestered from the world, he felt ‘the domination of the present’ – or to use a more current phrase, the urgency of now pressed in on him. Denied the freedom to act in this present, he turned to the past and made it his instrument for acting on the future.

Nehru didn’t know, writing his manuscript, how central his role in that future would be: that shortly after its publication in 1946 he would become prime minister of the country and people whose past he had sought to re-imagine in his book. Political action would henceforth displace writing as his means of changing the world.

The conception of India that Nehru set out in *The Discovery of India* did not stand as a programmatic manifesto for the subsequent practice of the Indian state – it was no *Little Red Book*. For Nehru’s book contains a vision at once too complex and subtle, as well too riven with self-questioning, to lend itself to an ideology of state. What it did offer was an intellectual compass for modern India – an indicator of the direction a new, diverse, disparity-ridden nation would have to take in order to cohere.

Nehru’s subsequent political renown is far from being the only reason to read the book. *The Discovery of India*’s intrinsic qualities place it beside Nehru’s *An Autobiography* as one of the more impressive prose works by Indians writing in English in the twentieth century. Nehru can be sardonically dismissive: of Jinnah he wrote, ‘all attempts to come to understand his positive aspect fail and one cannot come to grips with it.’ He can be darkly reflective, as when brooding over demands for a partition of India: ‘One wrong step leads to another; so it has been in the past and so it may be in the future. And yet wrong steps have to be taken sometimes lest some worse peril befall us; that is the great paradox of politics, and no man can say with surety whether present wrong-doing is better and safer in the end than the possibility of that imagined peril.’ He could also be romantically evocative, as with this description of India, which rightly endures: ‘like some ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously.’ It is hard to think of other modern works that combine political voice with stylistic poise to such compelling effect.

*The Discovery of India* is a long, prolix book, and Nehru’s lack of an editor in prison is manifest. It terminated for no other reason, Nehru

“‘What have I discovered?’ Nehru asked as he drew his narrative to a close – and his answer rang clear – ‘Today she is four hundred million separate individual men and women, each differing from the other, each living in a private universe of thought and feeling.’”



“For Nehru, that quest to know India, and to judge wisely the terms of its transformation, had in fact been a leitmotif of his life since the early 1920s – when he first convinced his father to give up the project of emulating their colonial rulers, and to turn to the struggle of defining for themselves what an Indian freedom might mean.”

confessed, than a very practical consideration: ‘I have almost exhausted the supply of paper that I had managed to secure after considerable difficulty.’ At its heart, though, are a set of clear and direct questions: What is India? How has it kept going as a continuous entity across vast periods of time? And how will it fit into the modern world? These are hardly questions of passing import – indeed, they are still very much our questions, and press urgently on our own choices. The book continues to command our attention because Nehru’s responses are deep and rich. Let me briefly note some of the insights, perhaps less noticed, which the book contains.

Nehru’s responses to his central questions are built around a basic tension. Nehru illuminated what he saw as India’s historical capacity to maintain its identity as a confluence of different world civilizations, out of which had emerged a unique array of cultures, religions and ways of living. In equal measure, though, he urged self-criticism on his compatriots, especially of those aspects of their Indian past that stifled forward movement: the aspects that fossilized the social order into oppressive hierarchies of caste, and extinguished curiosity and creativity.

His conception of India’s history – as a coherent narrative containing and driven by the conflicting internal logics of accommodation and oppression – was innovative and intellectually acute. It was also a political riposte to British instincts. The British had long contended that India’s pre-colonial history lacked unity or particular meaning, and that without British rule to enforce cohesion, there would have been no India to speak of. This high imperial ideology is briskly encapsulated in one of Churchill’s famous slights: that India had no more claim to being considered a country than did the equator.

Nehru’s counterargument worked to establish the integrity of the Indian past – an Indian history independent of British renditions. He sought to show ‘an underlying sense of continuity, of an unbroken chain which joins modern India to the far distant past when the Indus Valley civilization probably began.’ The discovery of India was for Nehru not the discovery of a geographical territory, but of a history that might help unify the people who lived within its boundaries.

Nehru resisted the argument in which nationalist intellectuals in India and elsewhere commonly indulged: the rebuttal of colonial views through evocations of mystical commonalities among Indians, and assertions of age-old ties to land and place. He did, it is true, on occasion write of India’s ‘racial memory’. Such phrases jar today, but

they are symptoms of these terms’ then currency, and certainly Nehru never proposed anything like, say, V.D Savarkar’s views of a Hindu race joined by blood kinship. In fact, in the literature of modern nationalism, *The Discovery of India* is unusual in its refusal of exclusivist habits of mind, whether territorial or cultural, as well as in its sustained cool reflective tone. It is a work of argument and reflection, not exhortation.

As Nehru himself was the first to admit, it was also the work of an auto-didact, writing in jail without access to libraries or historical archives. His prison reading was eclectic, based on books supplied to him mainly by friends and relatives. Apart from works on India’s history, archaeology and philosophy (many of which he refers to in his text), Nehru also read widely in literature and philosophy: the Greek tragedies, Plato, Spinoza, Thoreau, Nietzsche, *Mein Kampf*, Sri Aurobindo, George Bernard Shaw, LinYu Tang, Proust all passed across his desk. Inevitably, the traces of some were more visible than others. For instance, the influence of Henri Bergson, a copy of whose *Creative Evolution* he was able to secure, appear in Nehru’s view of India’s history as one of creative assimilation. Poetry and the Greek classics too sparked ideas, and aside from his reading he drew also from his conversations and debates, conducted in a variety of Indian tongues, with his prison-mates, especially Azad and the socialist Narendra Deva.

...  
‘It was absurd, of course, to think of India or any country as a kind of anthropomorphic entity,’ Nehru wrote, cautioning himself against his natural inclination to do so. He was too easily forgetful of this admonition: ‘[India] is a myth and an idea, a dream and vision... Shameful and repellent she is occasionally, perverse and obstinate, sometimes even a little hysteric, this lay with a past. But she is very lovable...’ (He certainly could disappear into the distance with such riffs.) But on the whole, Nehru refuses to clump the intense diversities he perceived among his countrymen into a single, mythic entity. His deep commitment was to India as a community of individuals.

‘What have I discovered?’ Nehru asked as he drew his narrative to a close – and his answer rang clear – ‘Today she is four hundred million separate individual men and women, each differing from the other, each living in a private universe of thought and feeling.’ Ultimately, to have won through to that recognition of Indian individuality, of myriad private universes of thought and feeling, and to see that

as being precisely the source of India’s strength (and not some mystical collective national feeling or being) – that was Nehru’s great achievement in *The Discovery of India*.

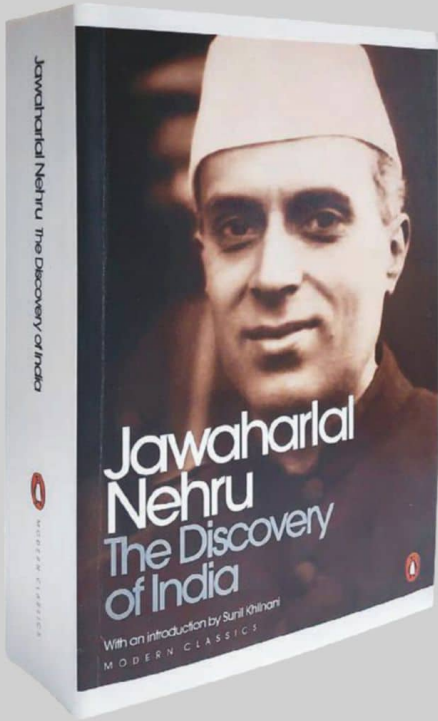
Like its author, *The Discovery of India* has acquired many afterlives. Translated into all the official Indian languages, it has been transformed into a 50-part television serial, *Bharat Ek Khoj*, broadcast on the national network. Children’s versions have been issued. Its ideas and some of its phrases have become the prose of modern India’s selfhood, seeded across the popular culture. And still the words on the page retain their freshness and political charge. Recently, I picked up a pamphlet at a government-sponsored exhibit and was struck by some uncharacteristically fine and moving observations. I turned to the back page to find the name of the writer, and discovered the passage had been reprinted from *The Discovery of India*.

*The Discovery of India* is, above all, a remarkable assertion of an individual imagination trying to give his country a unifying sense of itself. Nehru’s writings stand, alongside the works of Tagore, and the words and life of Gandhi, as expressive acts that brought India into existence. If we are to sustain this extraordinary, logic-defying, intellectual and political creation, we shall need all the imaginative resources we have – including the deep reservoir left by the men and women who dreamed our reality into being.

Today, as the energies of new generations remake our country, it is more important than ever to re-examine the founding texts of modern India: to ask new questions of them, to read them against the grain, and to test their resources in the face of new dilemmas. Equally, though, we should test the new principles we might wish to assert, the new ideas we seek to realize, against the truths and wagers of our founding vision. In the task of building a democracy as unprecedented as ours, the quest to know India – to know its past, to examine its present, to imagine its future – the quest so vividly dramatized in Nehru’s *The Discovery of India*, remains as essential as ever.

*The text featured here is an excerpt from The Discovery of India by Jawaharlal Nehru, with an introduction by Sunil Khilnani, published by Penguin Books India (2010). The text is published with the permission of the author.*

“The book knowledge absorbed in jail was put to the test when Nehru was out of it – in encounters with the intense poverty of the countryside, with the different regional cultures of the subcontinent, and with the intense religious beliefs of his compatriots. As he travelled the countryside and towns, campaigning for the Congress Party’s vision of Indian independence, he came into contact with Indians of every sort: a susurrating diversity that challenged him to find some harmonizing bond between them.”





*The Discovery of India* is a permanent exhibition display at the Nehru Centre in Mumbai. Designed by the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, it is a physical manifestation of Jawaharlal Nehru's magnum opus *The Discovery of India* – a book that was a key text during India's struggle for independence from colonial rule as well as in the shaping of the first decade of independent India. It set the tone for a nation that is inclusive and believed in 'unity in diversity'. An important book of the twentieth century, manifest in the objects and tableaux is alive here in the exhibition, reminding us of its relevance, more so today. Designed and composed using various forms of visual culture – objects, prints, scenographies, cabinet displays and recreations, including the television series *Bharat Ek Khoj* – the displays draw from archaeology, history, art history, architecture, anthropology, thereby shaping an intense experience which is informed, rich and thoughtful. This photo essay, based on the current status of the exhibition, invites one to not only engage with the visual rendering of the text but also with the design of messages and ideas, presented here through some extracts from the book itself.

**The Past in its Relation to the Present**

This urge to action, this desire to experience life through action has influenced all my thought and activity. Even sustained thinking, apart from being itself a kind of action, becomes part of the action to come. It is not something entirely abstract, in the void, unrelated to action and life. The past becomes something that leads up to the present, the moment of action, the future something that flows from it; and all three are inextricably intertwined and interrelated.

Even my seemingly actionless life in prison is tacked on somehow, by some process of thought and feeling, to coming or imagined action, and so it gains for me a certain content without which it would be a vacuum in which existence would become intolerable. When actual action has been denied me I have sought some such approach to the past and to history. Because my own personal experiences have often touched historic events and sometimes I have even had something to do with the influencing of such events in my own sphere, it has not been

Photo Essay  
The Discovery of India

Photographs by Chirodeep Chaudhuri







Opposite page, top: a diorama depicting early cave dwellings  
This page, top: a diorama showcasing the 'Gurukul'  
This spread, bottom: exhibition display panels on the Indus Valley Civilisation



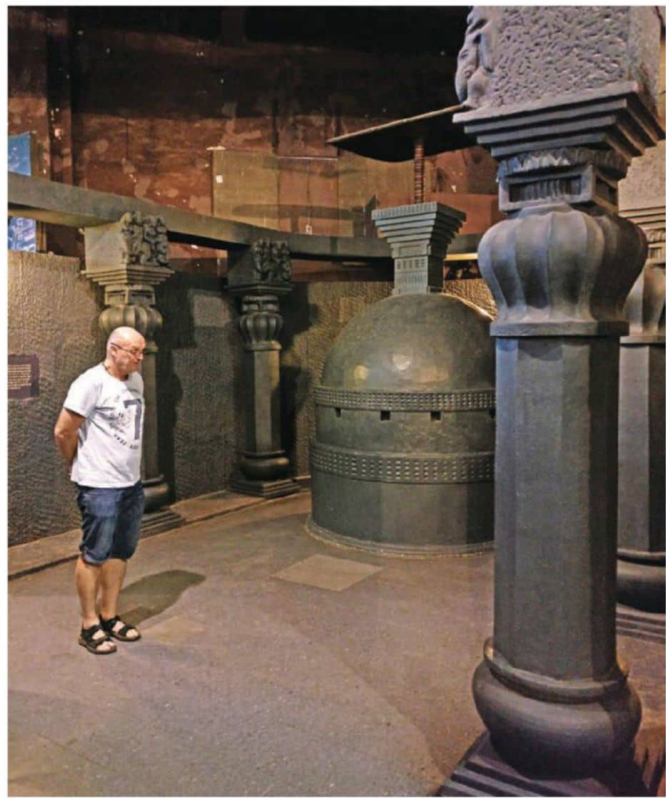


difficult for me to envisage history as a living process with which I could identify myself to some extent.

I came late to history and, even then, not through the usual direct road of learning a mass of facts and dates and drawing conclusions and inferences from them, unrelated to my life's course. So long as I did this, history had little significance for me. I was still less interested in the supernatural or problems of a future life. Science and the problems of today and of our present life attracted me far more.

Some mixture of thought and emotion and urges, of which I was only dimly conscious, led me to action, and action, in its turn, sent me back to thought and a desire to understand the present.

The roots of that present lay in the past and so I made voyages of discovery into the past, ever seeking a clue in it, if any such existed, to the understanding of the present. The domination of the present never left me even when I lost myself in musings of past events and of persons far away and long ago, forgetting where or what I was. If I felt occasionally that I belonged to the past, I felt also that the whole of the past belonged to me in the present. Past history merged into contemporary history: it became a living reality tied up with sensations of pain and pleasure.



If the past had a tendency to become the present, the present also sometimes receded into the distant past and assumed its immobile, statuesque appearance. In the midst of an intensity of action itself, there would suddenly come a feeling as if it was some past event and one was looking at it, as it were, in retrospect.

It was this attempt to discover the past in its relation to the present that led me twelve years ago to write *Glimpses of World History* in the form of letters to my daughter. I wrote rather superficially and as simply as I could, for I was writing for a girl in her early teens, but behind that writing lay that quest and voyage of discovery. A sense of adventure filled me and I lived successively different ages and periods and had for companions men and women who had lived long ago. I had leisure in jail, there was no sense of hurry or of completing a task

This spread: Exhibits in the gallery space are divided both historically as well as architecturally







This spread: The exhibition throws light on centuries of history, right from the migration of the Aryans to the ancient epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata – and the spread of Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent

within an allotted period of time, so I let my mind wander or take root for a while, keeping in tune with my mood, 'allowing impression to sink in and fill the dry bones of the past with flesh and blood.

It was a similar quest, though limited to recent and more intimate times and persons, that led me later to write my autobiography.

As in other prisons, here also in Ahmadnagar Fort, I took to gardening and spent many hours daily, even when the sun was hot, in digging and preparing beds for flowers. The soil was very bad, stony, full of debris and remains of previous building operations, and even the ruins of ancient monuments. For this is a place of history, of many a battle and palace intrigue in the past. That history is not very old, as Indian history goes, nor is it very important in the larger scheme of things. But one incident stands out and is still remembered: the courage of a beautiful woman, Chand Bibi, who

defended this fort and led her forces, sword in hand, against the imperial armies of Akbar. She was murdered by one of her own men.

Digging in this unfortunate soil, we have come across parts of ancient walls and the tops of domes and buildings buried far underneath the surface of the ground. We could not go far, as deep digging and archaeological explorations were not approved by authority, nor did we have the wherewithal to carry this on. Once we came across a lovely lotus carved in stone on the side of a wall, probably over a doorway.

I remembered another and a less happy discovery in Dehra Dun Jail. In the course of digging in my little yard, three years ago, I came across a curious relic of past days. Deep under the surface of the ground, the remains of two ancient piles were uncovered and we viewed them with some excitement. They were part of the old gallows that had functioned there thirty or forty years earlier. The jail had long ceased to be a





place of execution and all visible signs of the old gallows tree had been removed. We had discovered and uprooted its foundations, and all my fellow-prisoners, who had helped in this process, rejoiced that we had put away at last this thing of ill omen.

Now I have put away my spade and taken to the pen instead. Possibly what I write now will meet the same fate as my unfinished manuscript of Dehra Dun Jail. I cannot write about the present so long as I am not free to experience it through action. It is the need for 'action in the present that brings it vividly to me, and then I can write about it with ease and a certain facility. In prison it is something vague, shadowy, something I cannot come to grips with, or experience as 'the sensation of the moment. It ceases to be the present for me in any real sense of the word, and yet it is not the past either, with the past's immobility and statuesque calm.

Nor can I assume the role of a prophet and write about the future. My mind often thinks of it and tries to pierce its veil and clothe it in



This spread: The exhibition display illustrates the confluence of many cultures and how several groups of people and races came in contact with each other to influence India's life and culture



the garments of my choice. But these are vain imaginings and the future remains uncertain, unknown, and there is no assurance that it will not betray again our hopes and prove false to humanity's dreams.

The past remains; but I cannot write academically of past events in the manner of a historian or scholar. I have not that knowledge or equipment or training; nor do I possess the mood for that kind of work. The past oppresses me or fills me sometimes with its warmth when it touches on the present, and becomes, as it were, an aspect of that living present. If it does not do so, then it is cold, barren, lifeless, uninteresting. I can only write about it, as I have previously done, by bringing it in some relation to my present-day thoughts and activities, and then this writing of history, as Goethe once said, brings some relief from the weight and burden of the past. It is, I suppose, a process similar to that of psychoanalysis, but applied to a race or to humanity itself instead of to an individual.







This page, left: highlighting the architectural forms of temples in South India; below: sketches depicting Mahatma Gandhi Opposite page: an exhibition display highlighting the importance of Islamic architecture across India



The burden of the past, the burden of both good and ill, is overpowering, and sometimes suffocating, more especially for those of us who belong to very ancient civilizations like those of India and China. As Nietzsche says: 'Not only the wisdom of centuries - also their madness breaketh out in us. Dangerous it is to be an heir.'

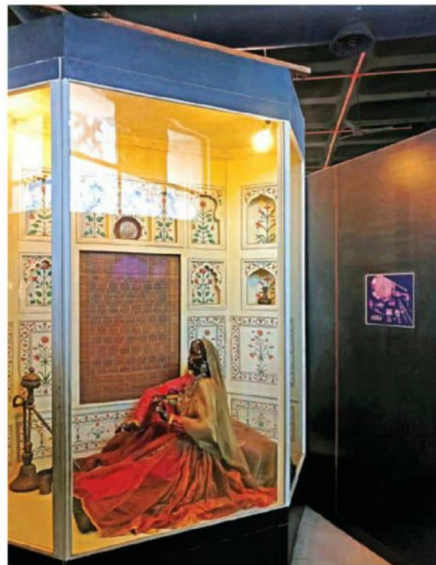
What is my inheritance? To what am I an heir? To all that humanity has achieved during tens of thousands of years, to all that it has thought and felt and suffered and taken pleasure in, to its cries of triumph and its bitter agony of defeat, to that astonishing adventure of man which began so long ago and yet continues and beckons to us. To all this and more, in common with all men. But there is a special heritage for those of us of India, not an exclusive one, for none is exclusive and all are common to the race of man, one more especially applicable to us, something that is in our flesh and blood and bones, that has gone to make us what we are and what we are likely to be.

It is the thought of this particular heritage and its application to the present that has long filled my mind, and it is about this that I should like to write, though the difficulty and complexity of the subject appeal me and I can only touch the surface of it.





This page, right: The display throws light on the intricacies and details of Islamic architecture in India over the years; below: a diorama indicating the types of costumes







#### Introduction to the 'Discovery of India' exposition

A sub-continent with a 50,000-year-old history. A civilization united by its diversity. A complexity contrary to the philosophy of simplicity. The spirit of India has fascinated the world with its very mystique. To understand, to feel, to experience the true essence of India, the words of Jawaharlal Nehru seem prophetic. "The roots of the present lay in the past and so I made the voyages of discovery with the past ever seeking a clue in it, if any such existed to the understanding of the present." It is this thought that serves as the basis for the Discovery of India Exposition. A voyage as seen through the eyes of Jawaharlal Nehru. Leading the explorer through history to establish a relationship between India's past and present. To experience through

multimedia the richness of culture, the glory of the past, the turbulences and the triumphs. The landmarks of each era, the achievements of each age, the legacy of the regime. As you walk through history, through India's geography, through the religious, linguistic and artistic chapters, your interpretation will be your very own discovery. The discovery of India that may take just a few hours but last a lifetime.

*The texts featured here are excerpts from The Discovery of India by Jawaharlal Nehru, with an introduction by Sunil Khilnani, published by Penguin Books India (2010), and from the brochure accompanying the Discovery of India exposition at the Nehru Centre, Mumbai. The texts are published with the permission of the authors.*



This spread: A large section of the exhibition is devoted to India's struggle for independence from the colonial stronghold of the British, including landmark events such as the foundation of the Indian National Congress, the influence of political leaders and freedom fighters, and the Quit India Movement





Weaving the aspirations and struggles of a new nation into a building  
A memorial to independent India's first and most dynamic Prime Minister

# Architecture as symbol and idea

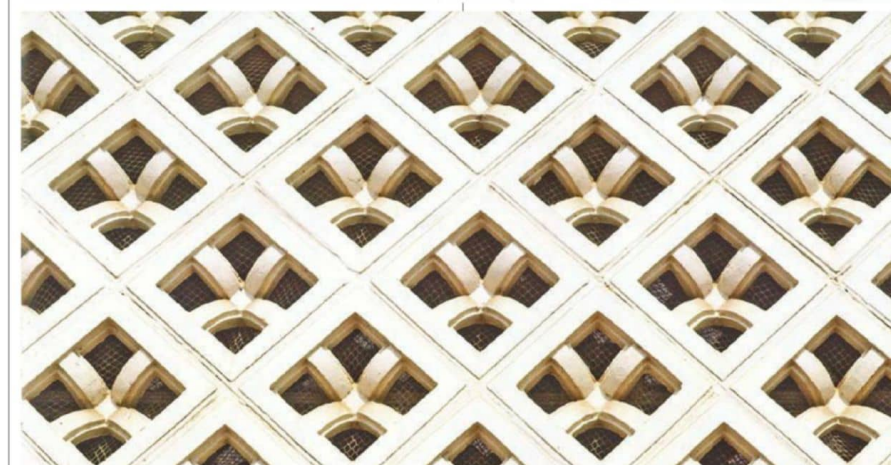
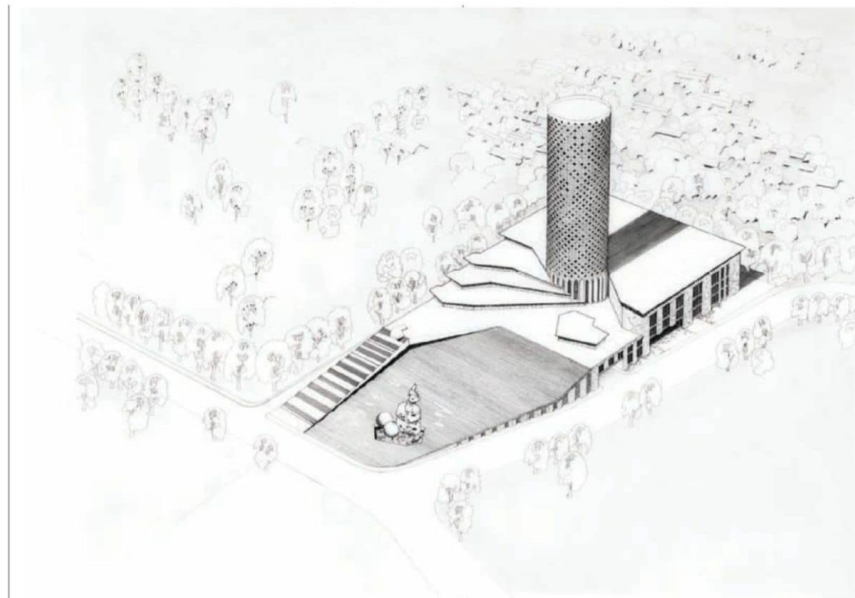
Text by Kaiwan Mehta

Photos courtesy IM Kadri Architects

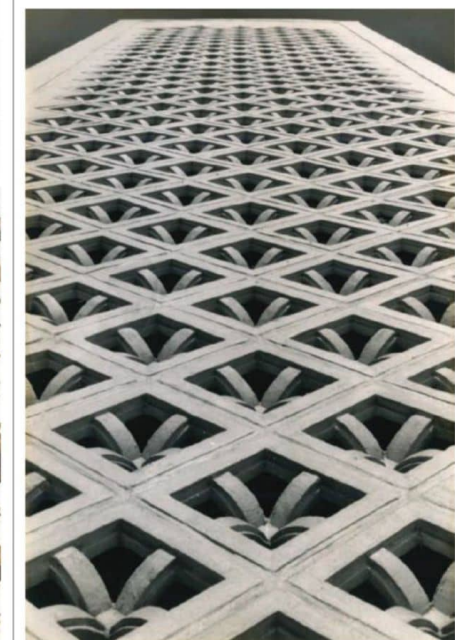


The Nehru Centre in Mumbai, designed by IM Kadri, is a building dedicated to Jawaharlal Nehru and his vision. It consists of a tower defined formally as well as structurally by an exoskeleton of a diagrid; and this tower sits on a podium composed of horizontal plates foregrounded by a sloping structure of a garden. The *jaali* is a crucial element in the design of the structure. The circular tower emerging from three tectonic plates visually defines and represents the churning in a new nation with its struggles as well as aspirations. The *jaali* surfaces, on the other hand, are inspired in their detail from the rose that Nehru always wore, lending form and visual structure to the Nehru Centre building.

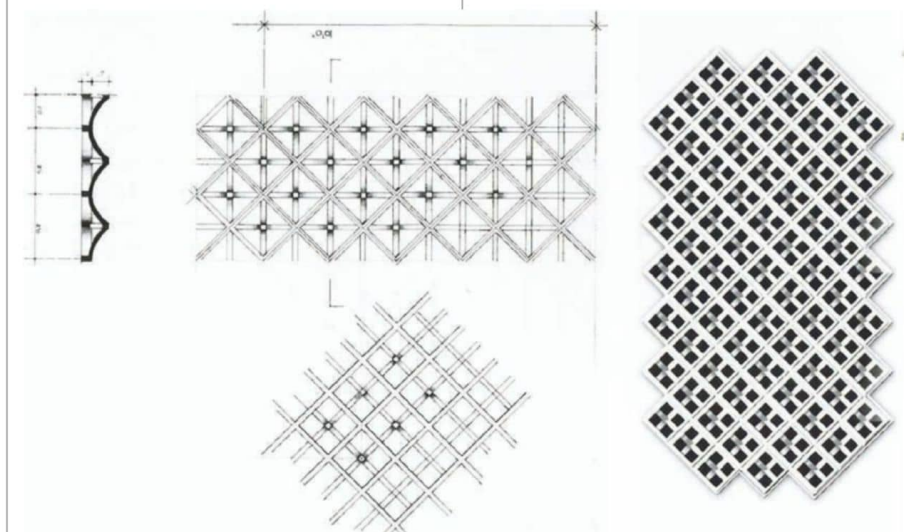
The podium is composed firstly as the sloping garden with references to India's agricultural heritage as well as the Mughal gardens, and secondly as three tectonic plates at the base of the tower indicating symbolically the tensions and creative turmoil in the formation of a new nation. The sloping garden, under which large parts of the programmed spaces of the building exist, is the coming together of two interesting concepts related to the very idea of India – agriculture and the Mughal landscape.



This page: A crucial element in the structural design, the *jaali* surfaces are inspired in their detail from the rose that Nehru always wore  
Opposite page: Completed in 1985 in Mumbai's Worli locale, the Nehru Centre consists of a tower that sits on a podium composed of horizontal plates foregrounded by a sloping structure of a garden



Agriculture was always seen as the economic strength and cultural basis of the vast country and the importance it was given during the early decades after independence is self-evident. On the other hand, the Mughal landscape, which exists either within architectural scenes/landscapes or is enhanced by the presence of architectural objects and monuments within it, has been an important draw as an idea from India's history, besides the fact that it is crucial to the imagination of beauty in architecture. These two aspects of how we understand India's past and future – from beauty to work, architecture to economic development – are all imagined within this one gesture of a sloping garden. The garden becomes the foreground to the building, a set of three stacked plates, visually vibrant as one settles above the other, representing the tumultuous times within which India gained independence and Nehru took the responsibility of being the first Prime Minister. But from this turmoil emerges the creative energy – the tower that tops this architectural assemblage. The garden is the central cue as well as the visual determinant for this building.





# Anchoring Time and History in Verse

Fahad Zuberi in conversation with architect and poet Mustansir Dalvi on the latter's translation of Urdu poet Muhammed Iqbal's epics *Shikwa* and *Jawab-e-Shikwa* as *Taking Issue & Allah's Answer*, and understanding the literary and intellectual challenges through which Dalvi looks at Iqbal's work in today's times.

It has been one hundred and ten years since the prolific Urdu and Persian poet, philosopher, and barrister Muhammad Iqbal – commonly known as Allama Iqbal, recited his epic of Urdu poetry at a poets’ gathering in Lahore. The gathering was aimed at raising funds to support the struggles in Turkey against the Bulgarian uprising – a prelude to the Khilafat Movement in India. *Shikwa* – his complaint to God in the light of the downfall and steep decline of the Muslim world was received as heresy by the religious leaders around the world and subsequently gained him a strong critical response in the form of a *fatwa*. The epic concluded with Iqbal’s subsequent work *Jawab* where Allah responds to his complaint.

Iqbal was heavily influenced by philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe during his academic endeavours in England and Germany and at the same time, he adopted Maulana Jalal Uddin Muhammad Rumi as his spiritual guide. With his exposure to the West and from a critical distance, Iqbal witnessed the Indian subcontinent in a state of subsistence – a state where it was struggling to find its own identity and source of inspiration, and was giving birth to some of the earlier voices of nationalistic fervour. Through his works, Iqbal influenced these struggles, became an important part of these discourses, and crafted a path that traversed analytic and continental philosophical traditions alike.

Having translated the greats of Urdu poetry such as Sahir Ludhianvi and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and authored numerous collections of poems such as *Brouhahas of Cocks* (2013), Mustansir Dalvi – a Mumbai-based architect, academic, author, and poet has translated Iqbal’s epic *Shikwa* and *Jawab* as *Taking Issue and Allah's Answer* for the English world. Dalvi’s book contributes to a long lineage of translations and interpretations of this conversation between a mortal (Iqbal) and his Creator (Allah) and appears at a time when the world, and especially the Indian subcontinent, finds itself polarised into stronger binaries than ever before.

Yet in another time and setting, a new translation would have felt less jarring, as if the recourse to another layer of abstraction to Iqbal’s plaint, and the English language could have flattened the tragicomic effect delivered by *Shikwa* and *Jawab*. But Dalvi manages to retain the essence of the Urdu verse as he establishes strong prosaic relationships between English and Urdu and

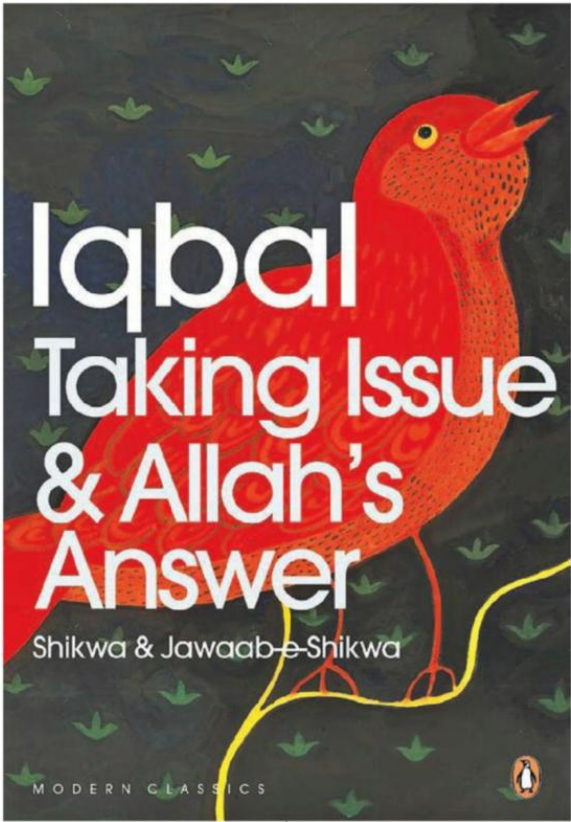
negotiates the literary devices of the rhythmic meter and rhyme. In doing so, he anchors Iqbal’s epic to a multicultural outlook – making it palatable to a wider audience.

As Dalvi drives Iqbal’s narrative through carefully chosen words, he intercuts Iqbal’s chorus of subjects with verses separated on each page where the relish on each word and prose revels in its own individuality. One reads the book with distinct emphasis on each stanza while also being conscious of the two parts – *Taking Issue* and *Allah's Answer* as a whole – complete with a thought provoking introduction that sets the epic in its historical context and informs the reader of the many lives that Iqbal and his works have lived through the century.

It is not an overt comment or critique; it resides and withdraws only as a translation. Ultimately,

beyond any more-direct political and historical agency, it is the nature of the poet as a self-authorising commentator of a cultural and historical space, and of the poet’s biographical appearance within it that Dalvi’s *Taking Issue and Allah's Answer* claims as its subject. This interview with Dalvi investigates the ideas of Iqbal, and tries to understand the literary challenges and the frames through which he looks at Iqbal’s work today.

**Fahad Zuberi: You have been engaged with Urdu and English alike for a long time – comprehensively translating influential poets such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Sahir Ludhianvi, and currently Muhammad Iqbal. Could you elaborate on your linguistic background and influences that attracted you to the language and to these writers?**  
Mustansir Dalvi: I am primarily Anglophone, as far as linguistic background is concerned and



*Kyon ziakaar banoon, sood faraamosh rahoon?  
Fikr-e-fardaa na karoon, meh'v-e-gham-e-dosh rahoon*

*Naale bulbul ke sunoon aur hamaatan gosh rahoon  
Hamnavaa! Main bhi koi gul hoon ki khamosh rahoon?*

*Jurrat-aamoz meri taab-e-sukhan hai mujhko  
Shikwa Allah se, khaakam-badahan hai mujhko*

*Am I then, always  
to remain a victim?  
Forego just dues each time?  
Never be anxious about tomorrows,  
allowed only to mope*

*in lost evenings, entranced  
forever by the bewailing bulbul?  
What am I – a flower,  
to bloom in silence?*

*I take issue with You, Allah!  
My impertinence  
loosens my tongue  
and my mouth fills with mud.*

*Hai bajaa sheva-e-taslim mein mash'hoor hain hum  
Kissa-e-dard sunaatein hain ki majboor hain hum*

*Saazein khamosh hain, fariyaad se maa'moor hain hum  
Naala aata hai agar labh pe to maa'zoor hain hum*

*Ai Khuda! Shikwa-e-arbaab-e-wafaa bhi sun le  
Khugar-e-hamd se thoda sa gila bhi sun le*

*In submitting to You,  
we found our glory,  
in chords of silence  
we now vent our voice.*

*Our song strains at our lips,  
but will not be stifled.  
Hear us out,  
for we have no choice.*

*God! Listen to our plaint;  
we are Your faithful,  
and although we praise,  
we have our grouses too.*

Excerpts from *Taking Issue (Shikwa)*

my own poetry is in English. However, (and this is inevitable, growing up in an Indian metropolis) I am also multilingual and know Marathi, Gujarati and Hindustani. I stress on the latter, as this is the one language we speak in the public realm in Bombay is a mongrel mix of Urdu, Hindi, Dakhani, Angrezi and Marathi. I was introduced to Urdu (Hindustani) primarily through my informal education of watching ‘Hindi’ films and listening to ‘Hindi’ (Hindustani) film songs rather avidly all through my youth. That interest, of course, continues as does spoken Urdu in Hindi films, but, for the purposes of translation I have to access the words through Devanagari.

The attraction to Urdu writing is primarily the *alfaaz*, and the imagery they evoke, which is quite different from poetic writing in English. My introduction to Iqbal came through *Shikwa* and *Jawaab-e-Shikwa*. From my early days, a *sher* from the first has stayed with me:

*Ek hi saf mein khade ho gaye Mehmood-o-Ayaaz  
Na koi bandaa rahaa na koi bandaa-nawaaz*

Shoulder to shoulder, Mahmud and Ayaz  
faced the Qiblah, kissed the earth –  
and there was no more slave,  
and there was no more master.

As I grew more aware I realised how well the essence of the Ummah and Islamic practice is embedded in these two rather simple lines. Reading *Shikwa* for the first time was a rousing experience. I was very taken by the anger and frustration in Iqbal’s words, his angst about the state of Muslims in India and the world and the sweep with which he presents his case to Allah. A lot of Iqbal’s poetry has this quality, but as I read further I began to appreciate his deep love for his country – India, as expressed in his early poems, from *Bacche ki dua* to *Ram* to *Naya Shivaala*, this last from which I quote these stirring lines:

*Patthar ki mooraton mein samjhaa hai tu Khudaa hai  
Khaak-e-watan ka mujhko har zarra devataa hai*

You assume God exists  
only in icons of stone,  
every speck of earth that is my land  
is Divinity itself.

Faiz on the other hand enchants with his gift of mellifluousness and lyricism, and Sahir I liked particularly for the way he presents social commentary, as in his wonderful poem *Taj Mahal*. I enjoy how each poet is interlinked with the other, how they freely quote from one another and even parody each other. So Iqbal channelises Ghalib (*Asl-e-shahood-o-shaahid-o-mashood ek hai*), Faiz channelises Iqbal (*Kutte*) and Sahir channelises Iqbal (*Cheen-o-Arab hamaara*). In the process new and memorable poetry is created.

**FZ: In your latest book – *Taking Issue & Allah's Answer* – you have translated an epic of Urdu poetry. Right from the title, where you have taken**



care to choose the English words ‘Taking Issue’ to represent the Urdu word *Shikwa*; through to the specific verses that contain some of the most challenging and complex Urdu phrases and words that are layered with meanings, what do you think are the linguistic and literary challenges of translating a work like *Shikwa* and *Jawab-e-Shikwa*? How was your experience with the writing process?

MD: Both the poems have been translated before. Two literary challenges foregrounded my own efforts. The first is that the translation had to preserve its tonal integrity in the end language, i.e., in English. The poems from Urdu should read as poems in English. At the same time I sought to find Iqbal’s voice in the translation, which I thought had undergone a certain aesthetisation in previous translations, particularly in the one by Khushwant Singh. *Shikwa* is not exactly a pretty poem. In parts it is a full-blown rant, and that angry voice had to emerge if the translation is to be appreciated correctly. Iqbal here courts heresy, adopting a confrontational attitude with his Maker. Less a supplicant; he presents his case almost as an equal. He is audacious enough to recognise this himself (in Allah’s own voice) in *Jawaab*. This is why I called *Shikwa* ‘Taking Issue’, a phrase chosen with care. Taking issue with Allah is precisely what Iqbal does in this *musaddas*.

While most translators have simply used the word ‘complaint’, for me this is no whining voice; Iqbal is not begging, but asking. It is hardly surprising that when Iqbal first recited *Shikwa* at a gathering of the Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam in Lahore in 1909, he was greeted with consternation and outrage. The other challenge was to unfold the poem and its many allusions and references to Islamic tradition and Islamic history to an Anglophone Indian audience. This was done within the translated lines and also in the notes provided at the end of the book.

**FZ: You have dedicated a part of the introduction to elucidate about the rhyme and the rhythm that the poet has followed in the Urdu verse. Could you elaborate on how you navigated through these literary attributes while translating *Shikwa* and *Jawab-e-Shikwa* to English?**

MD: I have been asked this before, and in part, I have discussed this in the earlier question. Given that Urdu verse follows a certain fixed pattern, and in the case of this *mussadas* in sets of three rhyming *shers*, I should have kept to this structure in English. But we have to accept the obvious that Urdu is not English, and that the translation should hold its ground in the end language. I chose to deviate from the rhyming scheme and from the structure of the *sher* itself, as I had been dissatisfied with previous translations. In translating with rhyme, the words are sometimes forced and either take away from the original text or get mangled into a kind of old-fashioned poesy that does not really reflect the way we speak. Iqbal is, after all, putting forward his suit to the ultimate judge.

*Bu-e-gul le gayi bairoon-e-chaman raaz-e-chaman*  
*Kya qayaamat hai ki khud phool hai ghammaz-e-chaman*

*Ahd-e-gul khatm hua toot gaya saaz-e-chaman*  
*Ud gaye daaliyon se zamzamaa pardaaz-e-chaman*

*Ek bulbul hai ki hai mehb-e-tarannum ab tak*  
*Iske seenein mein hai naghmon ka talaatum ab tak*

The fragrance gave away  
all that was secret. Woe,  
it was the flower itself  
that betrayed the garden.

Now the season of bloom  
is gone, the lute lies broken,  
songbirds have taken wing,  
the branches are bereft.

A lone bulbul remains,  
in thrall of its own song,  
a heart tossed  
upon surging waves of melody.

*Kumriyaan shaakh-e-sanobar se gurezaan bhi hui*  
*Pattiyaan phool ki jhad-jhad ke pareshaan bhi hui*

*Woh puraani ravishein baagh ke veeraan bhi hui*  
*Daaliyaan pehran-e-barg se uriyaan bhi hui*

*Qaid-e-mausam se tabiyat rahi azaad uski*  
*Kaash gulshan mein samajhtaa koi fariyaad uski*

Petals shed,  
now lie scattered and strewn,  
the doves have abandoned  
the cypresses.  
Once trod, garden paths  
now lie forlorn,  
branches stripped bare  
of their vestments.  
Only the bulbul is free  
of the shackles of seasons,  
if only someone in the garden  
could comprehend his prayer.

*Lutf marne mein hai baaki na mazaa jeene mein*  
*Kuch mazaa hai to yahi khoon-e-jigar peene mein*

*Kitne betaab hai jauhar mere aaeene mein*  
*Kis qadar jalwe tadapte hain mere seenein mein*

*Is gulistaan mein magar dekhne waale hi nahin*  
*Daagh jo seene mein rakhte hain wo laale hi nahin*

What pleasure is there in dying?  
Where is the joy in living?  
If anything, we enjoy  
wallowing in our sorrows.

My heart sparkles with the agony  
of myriad passions  
like a looking glass,  
studded with matchless jewels;

but in this garden  
there is no one to witness,  
no bloom that nurses  
a wound within its breast.

*Phir tere naam pe talwaar uthayi kisne?*  
*Baat jo bigdi hui thi who banayi kisne?*

Who raised their swords  
in Your name? We did.  
When chaos knocked at doors  
we put things right.

I wanted that sense to remain. I also tried to pare down the words in my translation in order to retain the spirit of the poem, and found it preferable to break the verses into four lines. Doing so provides an interesting contrast on the printed page, as I have presented a Roman transliteration on the left which allows for English readers to hear Iqbal’s original voice as they read and the translation on the right, which is my own take on it. I tried, assiduously, to avoid literality, a trait that would jump out at the reader and take her away from the immersive experience.

**FZ: You mention in your book how the poet, writer, and philosopher – Muhammad Iqbal, or more commonly known as Allama Iqbal – is a figure whose legacy has lived through time and has interacted with the politics that it encountered on the way. While interacting with Allama Iqbal’s work for this book, what was your focus about him as a literary figure who also contributed immensely to intellectual public life? Where do you place him with respect to his contemporaries?**

MD: Muhammad Iqbal was a towering personality in the undivided country in his own time, and was addressed by several honorifics. ‘Allama’ which means scholar is the one most commonly used. However, he has also been called ‘Shayar-e-Mashriq’ or ‘Poet of the Orient’, ‘Hakeem-ul-Ummah’, the ‘Doctor of the Community’ and later, much after his demise in 1938, ‘Mufakhir-e-Pakistan’ or ‘Philosopher of Pakistan’. Iqbal’s shadow is long as well as broad, casting an influence across disciplines whether poetic, philosophical, spiritual, historical or ultimately political, and we have to see him as greater than the sum of all these parts.

These many aspects to the man are evident in the various ways he contributed to public life in the country in the first four decades of the 20th century. His early poems gained him the adulation of commoners and the intellectual elite alike. We all know him as the one who wrote *Saare Jahaan se Achcha* (*Taraana – e-Hindi*) but his other poems, notably *Bachche ki dua* was sung in schools all over the Hindustani speaking parts of India. I was recently surprised to hear this as the ringtone on a taxi driver’s phone in Bombay, so you can appreciate its longevity in the Indian imagination. Iqbal’s large body of writings on Islam set the tone for Muslims in the subcontinent to regard themselves, but his very influential book *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, was first published in 1930, is still considered part of the canon of writings on Islamic philosophy worldwide. Politically too, he was most active, participating in the Second and third Round Table Conferences on the future

Excerpts from Taking Issue (Shikwa)



state of the Indian subcontinent in 1931-32. So there is an awareness of his presence in the intellectual life of the colonised country and his own efforts to look beyond the imperial presence.

More than placing Iqbal among his contemporaries, I look at his work as part of the poetic continuum that starts to flow from the mid-19th century. To me, he is an extension of the excellent legacy of Ghalib, Mir and Dagh and he in turn is followed by Faiz and some other notable Urdu poets. In his own time the most influential writers in the subcontinent were Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, all of whom knew of his work and appreciated him as one of the finest contemporary Indian poets.

**FZ: With respect to Allama Iqbal's literary position as an Indian poet and intellectual, which other works of his, in your opinion, epitomise this secular and nationalistic identity and position of Iqbal?**  
MD: It is best to look at Iqbal's first published diwan, *Baang-e-Dara* (*The Call of the Caravan Bell*, first published in 1924), which also includes both *Shikwa* and *Jawaab*. It is here that you find poems that really place Iqbal as the poet of India. His subjects span the historical, the religious, the geographical, the political and even the quotidian life of the country. There are no better poems to represent his secular and nationalistic identity than *Ram*, *Nanak*, *Swami Ram Tirath*, *Himalaa*, *Kinar-e-Ravi* and, of course, *Naya Shivaala*. Most notably Iqbal also translated the *Gayatri Mantra* in his poem *Aaftaab* (the Sun), from which I quote these lines:

Woh aaftaab jis se zamaane mein noor hai  
Dil hai, khird hai, rooh-e-rawaan hai, shaoor hai

This radiance itself  
is the light of the world;  
its heart, its sense,  
its intellect and its soul.

After the translations of *Shikwa* and *Jawaab*, it has been my own project to translate several of his poems from *Baang-e-Dara* which I hope to compile in a collection that I call Muhammad Iqbal's India. I hope that these poems will be rediscovered by a broader set of readers in this country, where he is increasingly forgotten. I hope this will once again place him in his proper context, for the one legacy of Iqbal that seems to predominate all others today is his co-option as the one of the Fathers of Pakistan, which, while true in the intellectual and spiritual sense is anachronistic in terms of his life as an Indian poet.

**FZ: Allama Iqbal first recited *Shikwa* (*Taking Issue*) in 1909, a hundred years later, you have brought the verses to a larger English-speaking audience with your own lens. The verse deals with complex issues of the Muslim world – its struggles, its decline, and the causes of this decline. While translations of '*Shikwa*' and '*Jawaab-e-Shikwa*' have been attempted and published before,**

*Dil se jo baat nikalti hai asar rakhti hai  
Parr nahin, taaqat-e-parwaaz magar rakhti hai*

*Qudsiul asl hai, rifat pe nazar rakhti hai  
Khaak se uthti hai gardoon pe guzar rakhti hai*

*Ishq tha fitna'garo sarkashi chaalaak mera  
Aasmaan cheer gaya naala-e-bebaak mera*

A cry from the heart  
is always redressed.  
It may have no wings,  
but still, it can fly.

The plaint genuine,  
looks up to the sky,  
rises from the earth,  
seeks fulfilment.

I am all impertinence,  
my love, bent upon trouble:  
my impudent song  
cleaves an azure sky.

*Peer gardoon ne kaha sunke, kahin hain koi  
Bole sayyare sar-e- arsh-e-bareen hai koi*

*Chaand kehta tha, nahin, ahl-e-zameen hai koi  
Kehkashaan kehti thi poshidaa yahin hai koi*

*Kuch to samjha mere shikwe ko to Rizwaan samjha  
Mujhe jannat se nikaalaa hua insaan samjha*

The keeper of firmaments said:  
Someone is somewhere.  
The planets looked to  
the celestial throne.

The galaxy sensed  
some hidden presence.  
The moon differed: someone  
from the earth, perhaps.

Only Rizwan, at Heaven's Gate,  
could appreciate my grouse.  
He saw me for what I am –  
son of Adam, ousted from paradise.

Excerpts from Allah's Answer (*Jawaab-e-Shikwa*)

*Thi farishton mein bhi hairat ki yeh aawaaz hai kya  
Arshwaalon pe bhi khulta nahin yeh raaz hai kya*

*Taa sar-e - arsh bhi insaan ki taghotaaz hai kya?  
Aa gayi khaak se chutki ko bhi parwaaz hai kya?*

*Ghaafil aadaab se sukkaane zameen kaise hain  
Shokh-o-gustaakh yeh pasti ke makeen kaise hain*

Angels too were astounded  
by this terrestrial voice,  
heavenly beings confounded  
by its mysterious lilt.

Could a mere human  
aspire to the sky?  
An earthman,  
who lacks all graces,

how could this  
insolent dweller of the dirt,  
this speck of dust  
grow wings?

**how is his work relevant today and how do you deal with these complexities? Would you categorise Iqbal as a revivalist who is arguing for an Islamic renaissance?**

MD: When Iqbal wrote *Shikwa* he was intensely conscious of the recession of Islamic influence, both politically and intellectually in the three key places that for several centuries were the acme of Islamic culture – India, Turkey and Arabia. By the turn of the century all three were in decline or under the thrall of colonisers. The last bastion of the Ottoman Caliphate would be broken down by the Balkanization that followed the Great War, the Saudis had been brought to power in Arabia by the British and in India, after the events of the Great Uprising, Kaiser-i-Hind Victoria had exerted her dominion, making the subcontinent her 'Jewel in the Crown'. Iqbal was deeply shaken by these changes and understood its consequences on the Muslims themselves, especially in India.

*Watan ki fikr karnaadaan! Museebat aane waali hain  
Tere barbaadiyon ke mashwarein hain aasmaanon mein*

Worry about your homeland,  
for trouble's a-coming. Naïve One!  
The portents of your ruin  
are writ large upon the skies.

(from *Tasveer-e-Dard*, a Picture of Pain)  
He sought to find the reasons for this, and found, amongst others, schisms within the Islamic world itself. *Shikwa* then becomes an exhortation to his own brethren to make them aware of their own insidiousness in the decline of Islamic influence, and of course not everyone liked what they heard. For Iqbal, the only way forward was a return to first principles, to the values followed in the early years of Islam following the Prophet's death. In order to do so, one had to reject the subsequent years of Islamic antecedence, especially the changes brought to Islamic practices due to regional influences. This rejection of history makes Iqbal a modernist more than a revivalist, but also brings him close to the puritanism that is being espoused in some Islamic circles these days. Which why, I think he is so easy to appropriate. Today, if we are conscious of these possibilities of appropriation, and read him shorn of this, Iqbal's poems still tell us much about the country as well as the Ummah of his time, some of which resonates even today.

*Shikwa* and *Jawaab* are extremely popular even today, especially in their sung versions, as qawwalis by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and the Sabris, or their reworking in the Coke Studio versions, but in all these cases you are presented with a 'greatest hits' version of *Shikwa* and *Jawaab*, by which I mean that only some of the more popular shers of the poems are sung. This picking and choosing can forward a variety of contemporary agendas, not necessarily attributable to Iqbal himself. I am hesitant to call these poems flag bearers of Islamic revivalism, which they have



been used for, obviously. They are far more nuanced and even contemplative, despite all the angst. In our times, these are poems to learn from rather than to rouse, in my reading.

**FZ: Following up on that, I would ask a rather philosophical question – perhaps one which the world of literature and art constantly grapples with. In your translation, are you attempting to bring Iqbal to the present, or are you taking the reader to the past? What consideration do you place on the aspect of time in this book?**

MD: My motivation for the translation was to re-introduce Iqbal to the English speaking reader, especially the Indian English speaking reader, who has perhaps been brought up to believe that Iqbal is a ‘Pakistani’ poet, and who knows little of Iqbal beyond *Saare Jahaan se Achcha*. With *Shikwa* and *Jawaab* and my subsequent translations of his early poems, I would very much like to see Iqbal’s poetry appreciated by a contemporary audience in the manner that we appreciate, say, Tagore today. I am aware that there has been an upsurge of interest in India for Urdu poetry and fiction; Ghalib and Manto are obsessed over today. It would be nice to locate Iqbal back in the canon of Urdu poetry in translation. Of course to the Urdu reader, all this is self-evident, which is why my translations are directed to the Anglophone world.

There has been an afterlife of these two poems since Iqbal recited them publicly, and indeed an afterlife of the legacy of Iqbal himself, particularly in the light of his valorisation in Pakistan. But we have to keep in mind that *Shikwa* and *Jawaab-e-Shikwa* were recited in 1909 and 1913 respectively, and were very much poems of their time. So to attribute events that happened after the poems were first presented to create resonances within the translations would be misleading. I was always conscious of this while translating. It is important that these poems be understood in their own contemporary context, and that is where we can get the most out of them.

**FZ: ‘Allah’s Answer’ opens with God directly addressing Iqbal’s *Shikwa* and the heavens offering their audience to listen to his angst and complaint. In the light of his influences, how do you see Iqbal’s position in this verse? Also, through *Taking Issue and Allah’s Answer*, and keeping in mind these influences of his time and the ones on his scholarly life, where do you place Iqbal within the discourse of modern thought?**

MD: That’s an interesting question. Iqbal’s position in the verse is that of a shape-shifter. He begins by presenting a *vakalatnama*, so to speak, in making his plaint before Allah. He then addresses his own brethren, taking them through the course of Islamic history and influence like a historian. Toward the end of *Shikwa* he appropriates the Sufi metaphor of the devastated garden to present the current state of Muslims in the world:

*Is qadar shokh ki Allah se bhi barham hai  
Tha jo masjood-e-malaaik yeh wahi Aadam hai?*

*Aalam-e-qaif hai, daanaa-e-ramooz kamm hai  
Haan, magar izz ke asraar se na marham hai*

*Naaz hai taaqat-e-guftaar pe insaanon ko  
Baat karne ka saleeka nahin naadaanon ko*

*What kind of pride  
that he rants against Allah thus?  
Is this the same Adam  
before whom angels genuflected?*

*Knowing this  
and that and the other,  
yet showing not  
the slightest humility.*

*There is a conceit in men,  
in their facility to speak,  
yet these boorish ones  
know not how to.*

*Aayi aawaaz: ghamangez hai afsaanaa tera  
Ashq-e-betaab se labrez hai paimaanaa tera*

*Aasmaan-gir hua naaraa-e-mastanaa tera  
Is qadar shokh zabaan hai dil-e-deewaanaa tera*

*Shukar shikwe ko kiyaa husn-e-adaa se toone  
Humsukhan kar diyaa bandon ko khudaa se toone*

*The Voice rang out:  
Your story is filled with grief,  
like a goblet brimming  
with unspilled tears.*

*Your passionate lament  
has rent the sky. How silken  
is the voice of your besotted heart,  
its wily ways*

*make gripes sound like praise.  
Your eloquence  
gives supplicants sanction  
to speak with their Maker as equals.*

Excerpts from Allah’s Answer (Jawaab-e-Shikwa)

*Ahd-e-gul khatm hua toot gaya saaz-e-chaman  
Ud gaye daaliyon se zamzamaa pardaaaz-e-chaman*

*Ek bulbul hai ki hai mehbe-tarannum ab tak  
Iske seenein mein hai naghmon ka talaatum ab tak*

*Now the season of bloom is gone,  
the lute lies broken,  
songbirds have taken wing,  
the branches are bereft.*

*A lone bulbul remains,  
in thrall of its own song,  
a heart tossed  
upon surging waves of melody.*

Here of course, Iqbal is the lone bulbul himself crying out about the state of the garden. In *Jawaab*, on the other hand, his presence is meta-textual. You have to remember that when he first recited *Shikwa*, he riled up his audience and his readers, many of whom might have found his audaciousness to be borderline heretical. Aware of these brickbats, he represents himself in ‘Jawaab’ first through babble of heavenly voices who berate him as an upstart to speak with Allah thus. He is then exonerated by Allah, who appreciates the words by which Iqbal has presented his claim and elevates him as an equal.

*Aasmaan-gir hua naaraa-e-mastanaa tera  
Is qadar shokh zabaan hai dil-e-deewaanaa tera*

*Shukar shikwe ko kiyaa husn-e-adaa se toone  
Humsukhan kar diyaa bandon ko khudaa se tone*

*Your passionate lament  
has rent the sky. How silken  
is the voice of your besotted heart,  
its wily ways*

*make gripes sound like praise.  
Your eloquence  
gives supplicants sanction  
to speak with their Maker as equals.*

This position is equally brash, of course but this time *Jawaab* assuaged the very critics of *Shikwa* and Iqbal was once more the darling of the masses.

I find Iqbal’s location in modern thought challenging, as I do Iqbal’s modern stance on what Islam should be in the contemporary world. While the notion of the worldwide Ummah is central to the appreciation of Islam as a religion of collegiality sans frontiers, I am concerned about its homogenising impulse, primarily through ignoring both its developments through iterative practice over a period of time and its specific cultural accretions because of syncretic interactions in a specific place. Islamic cultures have never been monochromatic, and, while accepting its central tenets as sacrosanct, there have been diverse practices and cultural productions throughout the world. Iqbal’s modernising vision did tend to put these aside for a return to

first principles. For example, Iqbal was very critical of Sufi practices and the veneration pirs and the creation of dargah’s which he found blasphemous. Denying the Sufi way of thinking denies one of the central notions of a syncretic India, where the Sufi and the Bhakti traditions are often synonymous. This is primarily the problem of modernism at large, which over the years has been critiqued and confronted. This needs to happen with Iqbal as well.

**FZ: What other works of literature are you currently engaged with and what do you foresee as your upcoming areas of interest?**

MD: Like I mentioned earlier, I am now translating several of Iqbal’s early poems from his first published book *Baang-e-dara*. I have chosen poems specifically dealing with India and Iqbal’s view of his country around the turn of the century. I translate Faiz, quite simply, to translate Faiz. Other than from the Urdu, I also translate from the Marathi. I have also completed translating Arun Kolatkar’s book of poems *Chirimiri* from the Marathi. Translating the ‘Post-Globalization’ poems of the noted Marathi poet and friend Hemant Divate is an ongoing delight. I am also in the process of compiling selected essays on Bombay and its urban situation that I have been writing for various publications (including *Domus India*) over the past many years.



The processes of design development and construction are locally contextualised in different parts of the world based on the available technology and resources. This feature presents a craft-based approach to computation and its contribution to support artisans in India. Such solutions attempt to establish a methodology which makes complex geometry constructible in the country today, even when access to digital fabrication methods are evolving and expensive.

Text  
Urvi Sheth

# Bridging the Gap: Computation for Construction in India



In the era of the Second Digital Turn, designers and engineers have easy and equal access to computational tools across the globe. With the highest development of technology at a global level, the processes of design development and construction are locally contextualised based on the available technology and resources. A craft-based approach to computation and its contribution to support artisans' development in India is demonstrated here through ongoing research on customising bricks and utilisation of a computationally generated asymmetrical Catalan Vault. The challenge of constructing the computationally generated form by architecture students is completed by the craftspeople and students of craft. The research elucidates gaps at various levels from design to construction. Craft-based solutions bridging these gaps establish a methodology which makes complex geometry constructible in present-day India when access to digital fabrication methods are still evolving and expensive.

Today, designers and engineers have easy and equal access to computational tools across the globe. Data-sharing and advancements in digital fabrication with a six-axis robotic arm have revolutionised design thinking and making. Robots are being trained to sense information, provide feedback on the process and take independent decisions, just as the craftspeople of the pre-industrial era.

The hands of craftspeople have had cumulative wisdom of materials, tools and techniques. A craftspeople's hands are directly connected to their minds. When craftspeople are introduced to new ideas (in this case, complex geometry), tools and techniques (Catalan Vault), the construction process is as precise as machines. Additionally, a craftspeople possesses the knowledge and sensitivity to material, bringing an inherent quality without any pre-programmed instructions. This feature is a paper that is part of ongoing research on customising brick. It looks at bricks with two simultaneous yet separate approaches.

The first approach: parts to the whole,

focused on the development of customising a building block (brick). Individual masonry blocks are customised to enhance the quality of the existing brick. The aim is to make construction without mortar and/or add one of the qualities such as acoustics, thermal insulation, light and shadow on the facade, integration of the plantation, and so on. The customisation of the block can also be based on self-assembling complex geometries.

The second approach: whole to parts, is based on a funicular structure. Here, the form is computationally generated and the parts are considered as standard blocks available in the market. The focus is to design and build an asymmetrical vault at an affordable cost in India. The project conferred here is built based on the second approach.

## Concept Design

### Form finding

The project was conceptualised by students during a three-week-long (Winter School 2016) course, *Digital Crafts: Customised Bricks 1.1*, conducted at the Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University, Ahmedabad. Students were free to choose a specific site and programme on the Sabarmati riverfront. A bounding box was 30 cubic metres (3 x 3 x 3 m) in volume, with the possibility to stretch the box, keeping the volume constant. This changed to 270 cubic metres (10 x 6 x 4.5 m) while developing the design. RhinoVAULT, which is the Plug-In to Rhinoceros, emerged from research on structural form-finding using the Thrust Network Analysis (TNA) approach to intuitively create and explore compression-only structures introduced as a generative tool. The number and type of supports were site-specific. Five different designs were generated by students working in groups of two. Out of these, the children's play area was chosen to develop further.

### Design development

The plan footprint of 9.5 x 6 m with five boundary supports, two central supports and two cut-outs were fixed. Two central supports were used to include the details inspired by the





teardrop columns (Frei Otto). The allowable maximum height was limited to 4.5 m. Height in some portions was further reduced to 1.8 m so that the children can climb on the roof and slide down from one of the central supports. The form was iterated until the headroom clearances were achieved with respect to the maximum allowable height, and the aesthetics of geometry were resolved.

#### **Prototyping (Scale 1:5)**

A step-wise sequence of construction was referred from the laaC pavilion (BRG). Step 1: Making a visual guide using cardboard; Step 2: Constructing boundary curves using scaffolding; Step 3: Building a masonry shell using MDF bricks between the boundary curves with a visual guide only (without scaffolding); Step 4: Begin construction from ground to top from all five outer support points; Step 5: Begin with central support once the masonry work from the outer support has reached the maximum limit of the cantilever without scaffolding; Step 6: Complete the masonry shell on the top. The students agreed to build a scaled prototype (scale of 1:5) following the set sequence of construction to

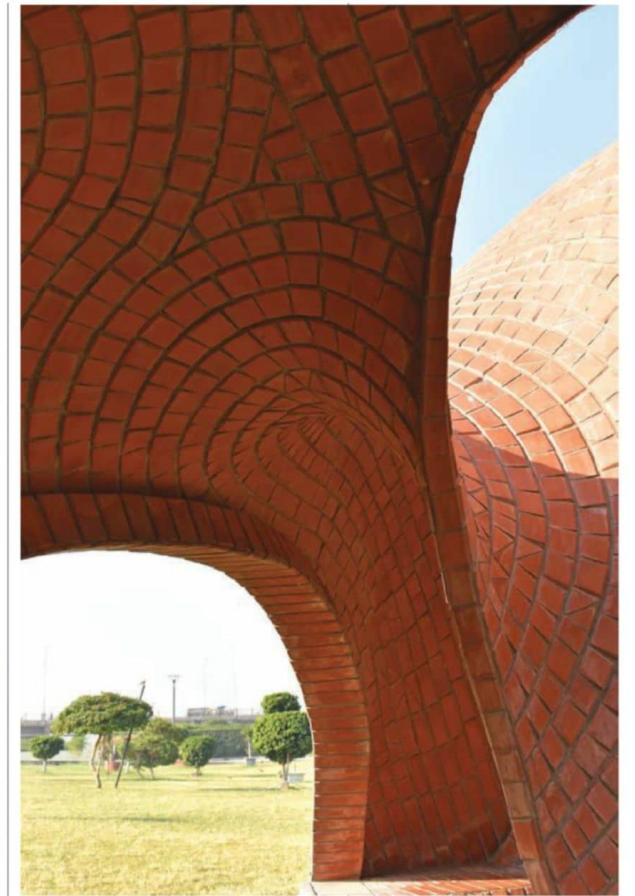
understand shell behaviour during the construction. The cardboard visual guide was removed and the prototype was presented in the exhibition. This marked the end of Winter School.

#### **Legal direction: academia to practice**

The outcome of Winter School was presented to the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). The authorities appreciated and encouraged the research by offering land to build a permanent structure at Shahibag Riverfront Park, located on the eastern bank of the Sabarmati. However, the city engineer demanded us to submit the following as regular formalities for building permission:

- Structure stability certification along with the report describing load calculations and test results by an authorised engineer. (Dead load, Live load, wind load and seismic load)
- Fulfill safety norms for such structures in the public domain.
- Detail 2D working drawings including the cross-section detail showing multiple layers of construction and material specification.

The submission requirement is based on conventional construction and a socio-cultural context.



#### **Challenges**

At this point in the research process, there were three challenges: firstly, getting a detailed structure design and certification by an authorised engineer; secondly, find craftspeople to build the Catalan Vault without scaffolding; and thirdly, limited funds.

#### **Detailed structure design and certification by an authorised engineer**

Funicular structure is a very well-taught theoretical concept among engineering schools in the country, yet uncommon and risky to certify in practice. The Auroville Earth Institute has excelled detailing structure design and construction of a symmetrical catenary vault in compressed earth blocks. The only simultaneous ongoing project of this time in the country was by sP+a which used RhinoVAULT to generate asymmetrical form. It's construction also faced similar challenges. For a detailed analysis and for verification, the mesh of the generated geometry was transferred to STAAD.Pro — a software most commonly used by engineers in India. The results were found common and safe, yet there was a doubt because

Previous spread: Detail of the teardrop-shaped column (Prototype Scale 1:1)

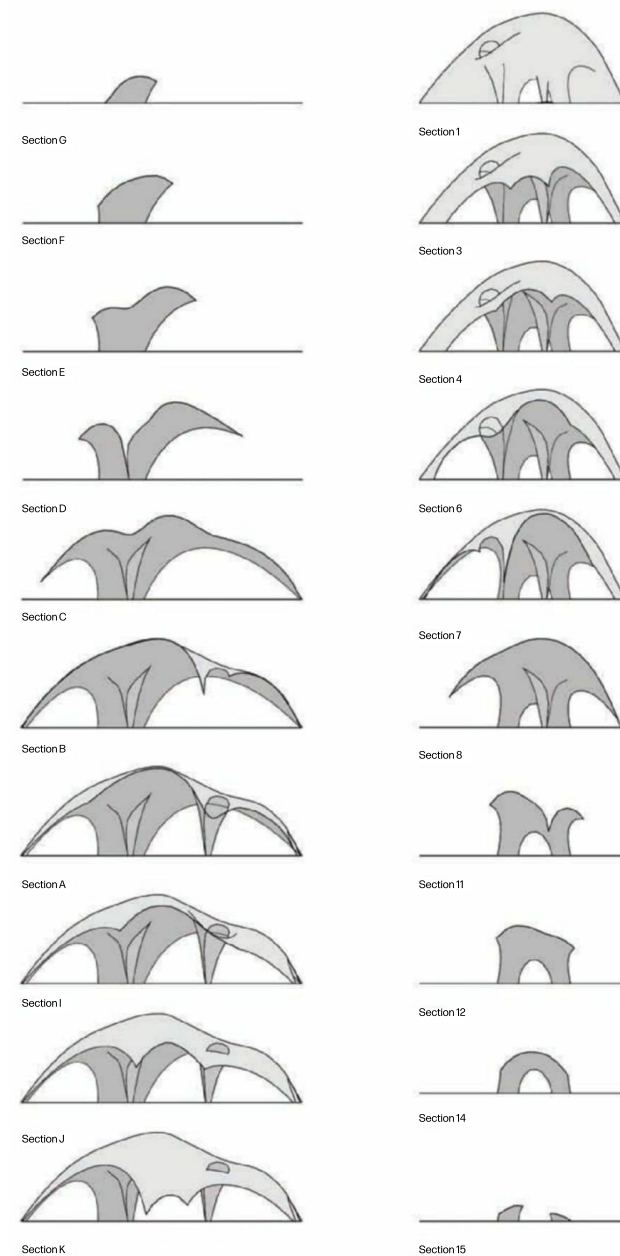
Opposite page, top: the east-side view of the pavilion at the Riverfront Park along the Sabarmati river; bottom: puncturing the shell, the teardrop-shaped column almost brings the sky into the pavilion

This page: The double-curved complex surfaces are crafted by cutting rectangular tiles into smaller square pieces. They are then shaped like triangles to add fold-lines whenever necessary. A laying pattern for the top and bottom layers is worked out to stagger joints with respect to the middle layer. This results in a visual flow of lines similar to existing forms in nature. Variations in the thickness of the arch and the edge of the column are directly related to the forces transferred





This page, top: Scale 1:1 Prototype under load-testing. Utmost care is taken to avoid any arbitrary loads on the structure. An exoskeleton of H-frames is built to make sure that all the live load (people) and dead load (sandbags) travel through this; bottom: construction of the first layer of the shell on site



there was no such structure built and tested. Thus, the engineer who verified calculations did not certify the design for structural stability.

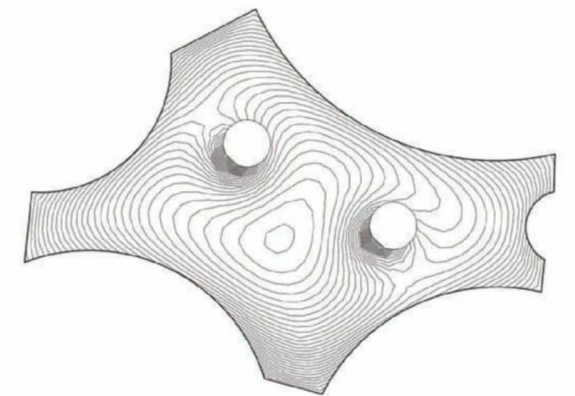
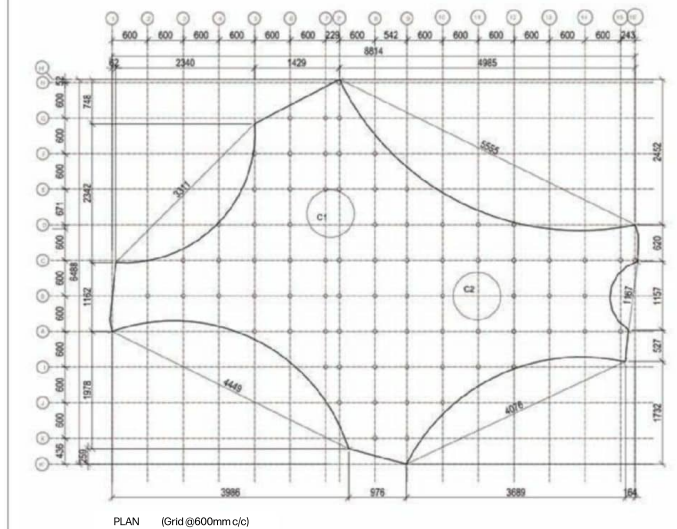
#### **Finding craftspeople to build the Catalan Vault without scaffolding and reinforcement**

Masons have excelled constructing domes by corbelling bricks, and this technique is mastered over generations. Very few masons can build shallow domes using the Catalan Vault techniques. This involves construction within a continuous boundary condition. Such domes

don't rise above eight inches. These are most commonly used to construct brick slabs. Finally, Philippe Block (from Block Research Group) was contacted by the author to guide construction. The answer was, "[The] construction of the Catalan Vault without a scaffolding and reinforcement is highly dependent on skilled masons. If one doesn't find [them], one has to train them".

#### **Limited Funds**

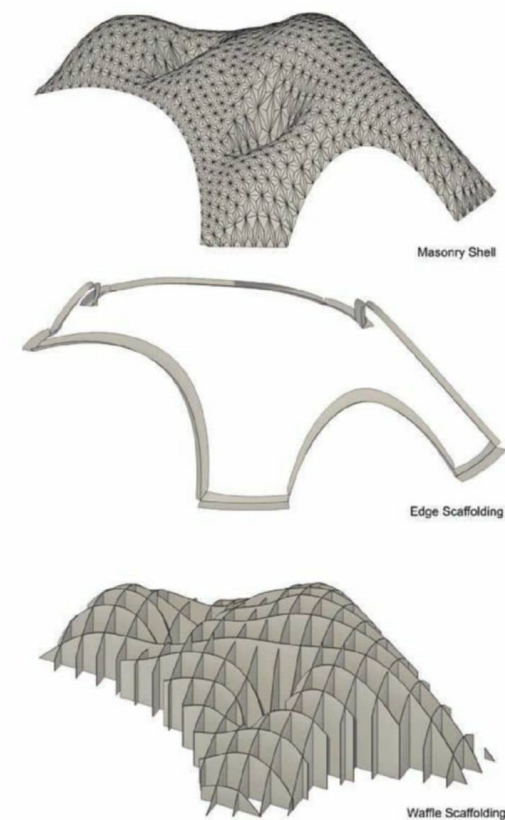
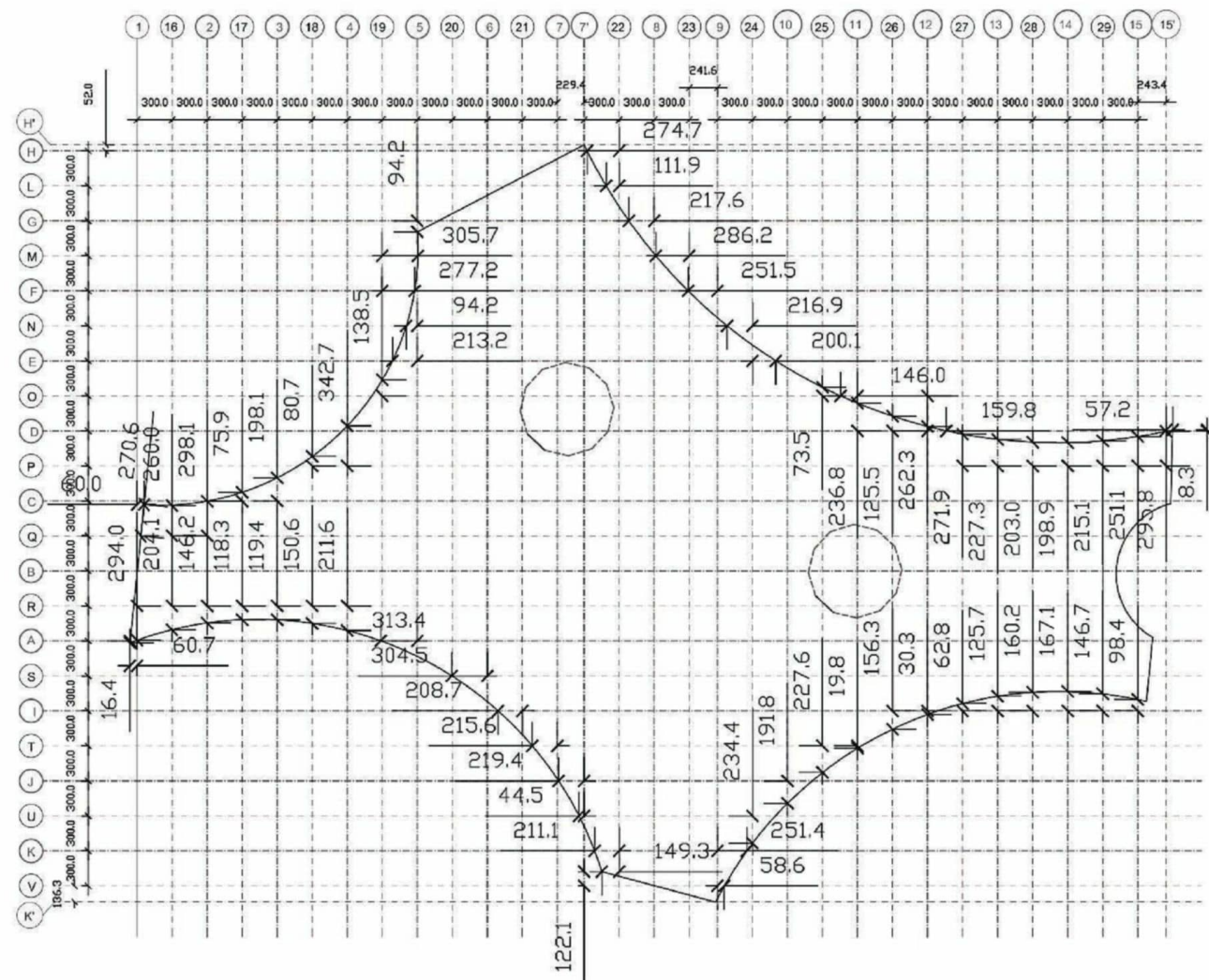
So far there have been no dedicated funds to conduct research in architecture, specifically in the



CONTOUR PLAN (Top View)

This page, top: a drawing representing the Drone Port Pavilion; left: an indication of the perpendicular distance from the ground to the required surface at the intersection of the grid





This page: Design options generated in RhinoVAULT. (Top) paper models 1, 2, 3 & 6 are made using Ivy for Grasshopper; Model 4 is made of MDF blocks, and Model 5 is printed in 3D

in Gujarat. The institute was also researching on Catalan Vault construction during that period. Masons of Karigarshala were trained to build smaller (1.5 x 1.5 m), symmetrical vaults. The failure pattern was studied by physical load-testing. Joint research between the two institutes was also established.

### Data transfer

Along with the 3D model, a set of 2D drawings were given to the team. One of the interns at Hunnarshala was also trained to design 3D models in Rhino. The curvature of each section was studied for structural analysis.

### Material and Construction detail

The first change was the choice of material. It was recommended to use thin clay tile (fired) measuring 230 x 75 x 12 mm instead of the standard brick module which is 230 x 115 x 75 mm. This was simply to reduce the dead load of the structure. An assumption was made that a minimum of three layers of construction will be required. The first layer would comprise clay tiles and gypsum mortar to achieve the desired shape. This will be plastered with 25mm-thick cement





mortar on both sides. The second and third layer of tiles on the top and the bottom was to be constructed with fine cement mortar (ratio 1:2) to achieve the desired strength and to protect the first layer from weathering or collapsing. More layers could be added, if required, after load-testing.

#### Prototype (Scale 1:1)

The decision to build a prototype (scale 1:1) to train the masons as well as for physical load-testing was to follow. The construction sequence pursued by students to build a prototype (scale 1:5) was explained to the team of craftspeople and students of the craft school.

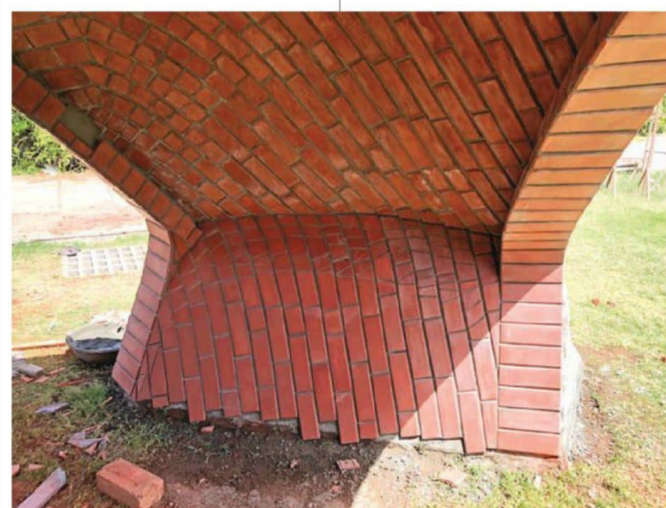
Referring to the Drone Port Pavilion, the making of the visual guide differed from the earlier one made in cardboard. The advantage of the visual guide made of pipes was that it allowed workable space from the bottom.

#### Training Masons

Due to the asymmetric geometry and sharp curves in the form, it was further required to increase the precision of the visual guide. Therefore, the plan grid at 600 x 600 mm was revised to 300 x 300mm. The perpendicular distance from the ground to the required surface was given at the intersection of the grid. Arches were built first, followed by the surface, starting from all five outer

ground points at the same time. Tiles were precisely cut and shaped wherever required to achieve accurate double-curved surface. Preparation of small portion of gypsum mortar was vital to hold tiles in their locations. The construction of teardrop-shaped columns required a special set of drawings to build the geometry. A total of six tonnes of load using 300 sandbags weighing 20 kg each were uniformly distributed over the surface area of the structure. Measuring tools were set at the centre of each arch and at regular intervals inside the structure to monitor deflection. The set-up was left undisturbed for seven days. A deflection of 3mm was documented.

This page, top: A visibly dramatic change in the space owing to the pulling down of the surface from roof to column; below: the cladding of the footing continuing the structural language



The same was confirmed to have matched with the computational model. The entire process from the foundation to load-testing was documented on a daily basis. An extensive structural report was made for the local corporation.

#### On-Site Construction

Area of intervention was barricaded for safety of people visiting park on daily basis. The construction on site followed exact same sequence as earlier. Individual foundation for each support was done in brick with a waterproof plaster.

#### On-Site Decisions

Decisions regarding the orientation

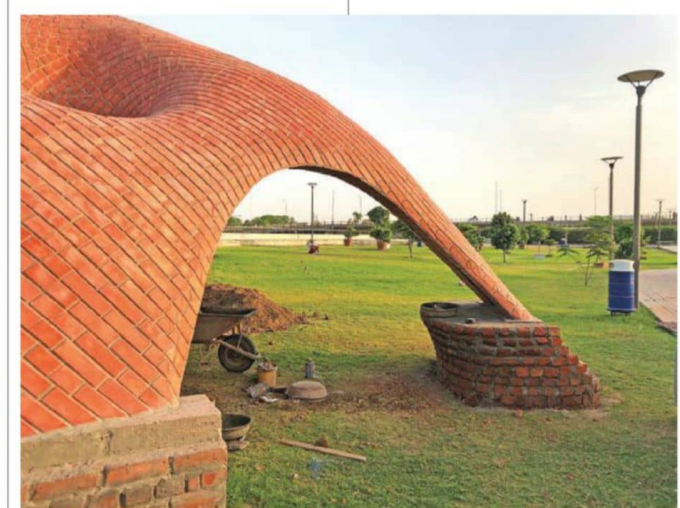
of the pavilion in the park with respect to Sabarmati river, the view from a nearby bridge, the entrance area and an adjoining pathway were made on site. Addition of seats, details for rainwater drainage from the teardrop-shaped column, the surrounding landscape, and pockets for lighting were also made on the site. All the additions made were due to the experience of craftspeople, building from just a sketch. No working drawings, models or details were produced for this.

#### The Way Forward Construction Industry and Cultural Acceptance

Though India is known for its

contribution to information technology, it takes a decade or sometimes, even more, to percolate technological advancements in architecture and the construction industry when compared globally. India is now in the first digital turn yet is a labour-intensive construction industry. The cost of digital fabrication is still too high when compared to the cost of manual labour (craftsmanship). Often, the time taken to complete a project is not considered as the biggest resource. At present, it is most efficient to establish a balance between digital fabrication and craftsmanship to build a project with complex geometry.

This page: Documentation of the step-by-step process – finalising first sectional curve of the seat on site; laying the top layer of bricks to form an oval-shaped seat around the column; cutting tiles to fit the in the triangular gaps; precise cutting of bricks; and the integration of the seat along the footing







## Architecture, Engineering and Craft Education

Awareness of the advancements in technology and shared tools among designers/architects in India is relatively on par with the world. Architecture and design schools conduct full-time courses and/or specialisation in the field. Architectural practices also began to accept the digital turn positively. However, there is a clear demand for updating civil and structural engineering education. Analytical methods taught and practised by the engineers are extensive, accurate yet not enough to be able to share mutually between designers and engineers. These methods are limited to symmetrical shapes. To be able to calculate the structural behaviour of asymmetrical free-form without digital tools today will demand alternative methods, similar to the one used by Antoni Gaudi, Frei Otto and Felix Candela.

Vocational training imparted by Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) in India and skill-development schools like Hunnarshala must include construction craftsmanship like masonry, fabrication, carpentry and other related subjects. Skilled labour and educated craftspeople can change the face of the construction industry in India.

## Acknowledgements

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*The photographs and drawings featured here are courtesy Urvi Sheth and the students of CEPT University, Ahmedabad.*



This spread: Images showcasing a piece of craft, marking the end of training the masons and starting the construction of the prototype. The discussions involve architects, engineers and craftspeople (CEPT University and Hunnarshala)





Landscape  
Ecological violence  
Air pollution from  
a chocolate bar  
The social politics  
of destruction

Oil palm plantations  
Text  
G raud Bablon, Timothy Ravis,  
Benjamin Notkin, Rui Su

# Stop this



**73,000,000 ~**  
tons of the world  
production of palm oil

**56%**  
of global production  
in Indonesia

**28%**  
of global production  
in Malaysia

**7,330,000**  
ha total area of cultivation  
in Indonesia in 2008

**12,300,000**  
ha total area of cultivation  
in Indonesia in 2017

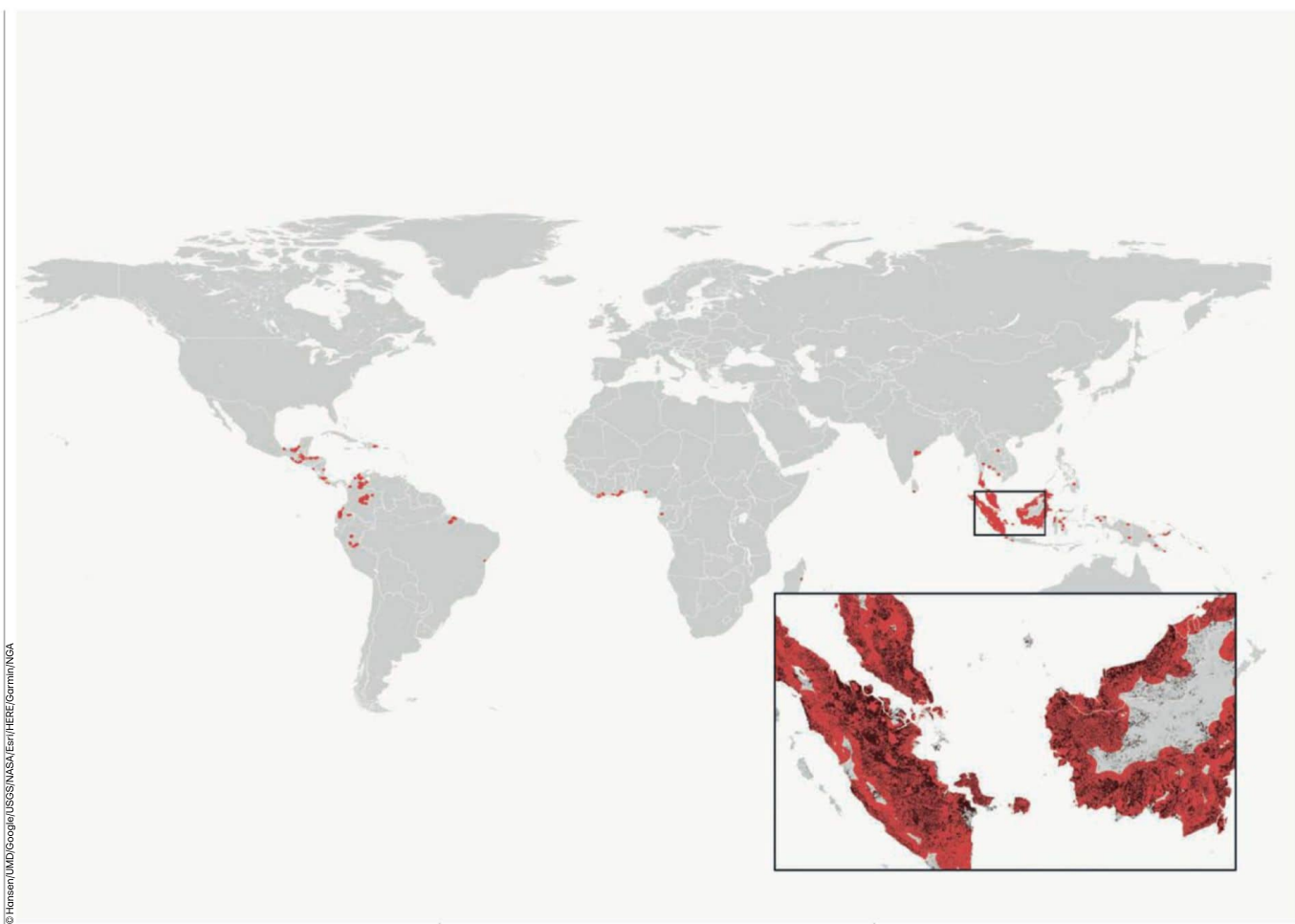
**174**  
tons of carbon, mostly  
as CO<sub>2</sub>, to covert 1 ha of  
rainforest to plantation

**71%**  
of produce used for the  
food industry

Sources: USDA, Government  
of Indonesia, Statista database

Photo   Edward Burtynsky, courtesy of Admira Photography, Milan / Nicholas Melville Gallery, Toronto





## The exponential increase in the production of palm oil is causing grave damage to the environment and rural communities in areas of cultivation

In the photo on the opening pages, *Clearcut #1*, amorphous crop circles hint at an alien power as they consume a verdant forest. The landscape is a scene of opposition — artifice and nature, the virginal and the ravished — yet the antagonists in this conflict are faceless. The photograph reeks of human touch, without evidence of who wreaks it.

Plantation agriculture is ecological violence. Globally, oil palm plantations have razed 27 million hectares of forest, an area the size of New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> Given the crop's equatorial growth zone, these monoculture plantations replace some of earth's most biodiverse rainforests. In Indonesia, the world's main producer, fires lit to clear forest for planting triple the country's

net carbon emissions. Annually, they drape a toxic smog over Southeast Asia, killing 100,000 people in 2015.<sup>2</sup>

Palm oil's rise is staggering: a 23-fold production increase from 1970 to 2010,<sup>3</sup> now set to repeat in just a decade. As the cheapest fat to produce, palm oil is put in most processed foods. Refined into oleochemicals, it gives soaps and detergents their lather. In the 2000s, the US and the EU created a massive new market for the crop by increasing the share of biofuel added to gasoline. Recognising palm oil's ecological damage, the EU tightened its regulation of biofuel sourcing in 2016. But with the consumption of processed goods rising globally, the market for palm oil is booming.

A consumer in Singapore does not know the chocolate bar in her hand is the reason she has to remove her face mask to eat it. Oil palm can be four times more productive than other oil crops, but achieving this requires a precise supply chain. Seeds, cross-bred in laboratories to create the high-yielding *tenera* variety, are germinated in controlled conditions before the sturdiest seedlings can be planted. It will take three to five more years of investment before the trees yield fruit. A plantation worker harvests several hundred 10- to 40-kilogram

Previous spread: Edward Burtynsky, *Clearcut #1*, Palm Oil Plantation, Borneo, Malaysia, 2016. The photo was part of the *Anthropocene* project, created by Burtynsky with Jennifer Baichwal and Nicholas de Pencier, recently on show at MAST in Bologna. This page: world map showing palm oil production areas. The darker zones of the image in the box indicate the deforestation under way since 2000. Opposite page: a fire on the outskirts of Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, to make way for an oil palm plantation, November 2015



Photo: Uat Honsasi/Getty Images

fruit bunches a day, which are then trucked to a nearby mill. The fruit must be milled within 24 hours to avoid growing acidic. From here, oil goes to a refinery for processing before being shipped off to the factory.

The 24-hour limit for bringing fruit to mill is materially inscribed on the landscape, in paved roads and industrial sites. So too is the meticulous regime for forest management, with trees spaced to optimise yields, and simplify fertiliser and pesticide application. Enormous patchwork grids of palm across Sumatra, Borneo and the Malay Peninsula can be seen from space.

Critical geographers use the term “planetary urbanisation” to describe the ways corporate production and extraction subsume territories far beyond city limits.<sup>4</sup> Cities may appear as isolated dots on a map, yet their continued growth demands ever-larger zones of support. In Indonesia's Riau Province, 28 per cent of the total land cover — half, in some sub-districts like Rokan Hulu — bears the texture of palm cultivation. *Clearcut #1* captures this process of urbanisation, but its aerial perspective cannot tell the full story. Outside the frame are the labour camps, empty villages and plantation offices. Confronted with the spectacular plunder of nature, we forget that the forest is also deeply human;

there are people under the canopy. The displacement and precarity of a new labour regime emerge before us. We must interrogate the social politics of this destruction, and descend from the bird's-eye view to indict ourselves.

Oil palm plantations are lonely places. One labourer works six to eight hectares; housing blocks sit isolated. Older villages, stripped of their cropland, are mostly empty. Companies prefer labourers brought in from afar, who lack ethnic or kinship ties and are less able to organise for better working conditions. Malaysia's palm oil estates employ an estimated one million migrant workers, mostly Indonesian. For two dollars a day, they carry out the back-breaking, dangerous labour of spraying toxic chemicals and carrying fruit bunches; their job tenure is kept precarious, releasing employers of their responsibility for workers' rights or benefits. To oppose these conditions is to court death. In Colombia, which leads oil palm's expansion into Latin America, land rights activist Hernán Bedoya stood up to palm oil companies and was one of dozens of activists brutally killed in 2017.<sup>5</sup>

Bulldozers do not carve this social order out of virgin landscapes. For centuries, indigenous communities in Indonesia have practiced swidden agriculture in the forest, cycling between hill rice,





Photo Nicky Loh/Singapore/Getty Images

cash crops and jungle harvests, and leaving plots fallow between uses so they could regenerate. But legal frameworks in Malaysia and Indonesia only recognise this customary tenure on tenuous grounds. Fiscal decentralisation has pushed district governments, in their search for tax revenues (and personal kickbacks), to deliver indigenous lands to agro-industry. Therein lies the human violence of oil palm: every new plantation erases rural livelihoods and cultural practices, and displaces communities. It lays bare the brutality of development rhetoric – of the supposedly inherent spread of urbanisation, hauling the globe’s most rural areas into modernity.

There are alternatives to plantations. In the 1960s, Malaysia and later Indonesia set out to become the world’s core suppliers of palm oil. Both followed World Bank advice to promote smallholder farming – a challenge, given the crop’s set-up costs and demand for expertise. Development organisations endorse family farms for promoting better ecological practices, and more equally distributing wealth and profits. Globally, smallholders make up 40 per cent of oil palm production today.<sup>6</sup>

Those first smallholder schemes were generous. Villages granted their communal

lands to plantation operators and, after repaying the operator over five to ten years, received back 80 per cent of the newly planted lands. The rest comprised the plantation’s core. Neo-liberalisation gradually disfigured Indonesia’s smallholder policies, as district governments had to compete for funds. In Kalimantan, where palm oil has only grown since the late 1990s, villagers recoup just 20 per cent of the land invested, if any at all. Moreover, they are considered “shareholders” on the lands: in the name of efficiency, the company manages the land in their stead, paying “dividends” as salaries to putative smallholders who are closer in practice to wage labourers.

By contrast, Riau Province’s earlier smallholder schemes have produced a class of small farmers with the skills and networks to conduct their own cultivation. Corporations control smallholders’ seeds and inputs, and set the purchase price. When the palm oil industry inevitably encounters a downturn, it is smallholders who will lose their land to shock sales, a sort of insurance for the oil companies. This pattern is evident, where rising land prices from the palm boom push the most precarious farmers to sell their land and means of livelihood.

Top: pedestrians shrouded in smog at Marina Bay in Singapore with the central business district in the background. The smog was caused by Indonesian forest fires, which were started to expand the oil palm plantations, September 2015. Opposite page, top: the effects of a forest fire in Bukit Tigapuluh, Sumatra, Indonesia, started by producers of palm oil; bottom: pickers of oil palm fruits on the plantation of Kuwala, a village in the Kutalimbaru district, Deli Serdang, North Sumatra, Indonesia, January 2017



Photo Universal Images Group/via Getty Images

“De-ruralisation” is the corollary to urbanisation.<sup>7</sup> As the accumulation of people and capital in cities reconfigures and exploits rural zones of support, it expels people from their rural livelihoods. Their displacement leaves them with little alternative but to migrate to cities. This unrelenting expulsion and exodus, more than any urban allure, drives the growth of urban informality – of expendable labour that produces consumer goods at subsistence wages and of surplus labour that cannot find work.

Not to be defeated, subcontract workers in Colombia – a labour group with scarcely any legal rights – successfully bargained a collective agreement with the country’s major palm operator in February 2019, by striking and risking their livelihoods. Grassroots organising by the most vulnerable can produce small but significant transformations.

But to expect this crisis to be resolved at the site of extraction is to off-site our own responsibility. We cannot reconfigure these zones to redeem an unsustainable system, scapegoating the rural for our urban sins. Capitalism does not produce an “ethical” palm oil. We must remain acutely aware that everything we consume has been produced, and not let the violence of production dissipate in the distance between plantation and city. There are people beneath the trees in Burtynsky’s *Clearcut #1*, but it falls on the viewer to make them visible.

**Géraud Bablon, Timothy Ravis, Benjamin Notkin and Rui Su** are students at Harvard Graduate School of Design and affiliates of Harvard’s Urban Theory Lab under Sai Balakrishnan and Neil Brenner.



Photo Jifri Barqun/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

<sup>6</sup>Rainforest Rescue, <https://www.rainforest-rescue.org/topics/palm-oil>.

<sup>7</sup>D. Byerlee, W. Falcon, R. Naylor, *The Tropical Oil Crop Revolution: Food, Feed, Fuel, and Forests*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2017, p. 217.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup>See N. Brenner, *Critique of Urbanization: Selected Essays*, Bauverlag Gütersloh/Berlin and Birkhäuser, Basel 2016. Inviting us to think of urbanisation not as form but process, the authors point to transformations that include the blurring out of metropolitan regions and the disintegration of rural areas into “operational zones” of extraction for industrial urbanisation.

<sup>10</sup>Mongabay Environmental News, 15 Dec 2017, <https://news.mongabay.com/2017/12/colombian-community-leader-allegedly-murdered-for-standing-up-to-palm-oil/>.

<sup>11</sup>D. Calderón, C.A. Pérez, *Smallholder oil palm producers contributing to peace and sustainability in Colombia*, in *ETFRN* (European Tropical Forest Research Network) News 59, *Exploring Inclusive Oil Palm Production*, 2019, <http://www.etfrn.org/file.php/441/21calderon-perez.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup>Farshad Araghi’s forceful concept of “depeasantisation” describes how global development policy actively eradicates traditional livelihoods – contributing to the labour precarity and informality that characterise much of the world’s poorer nations. See F. Araghi, *Global Depeasantization, 1945-1990*, in *The Sociological Quarterly*, 36(2), 1995, pp.337-368.



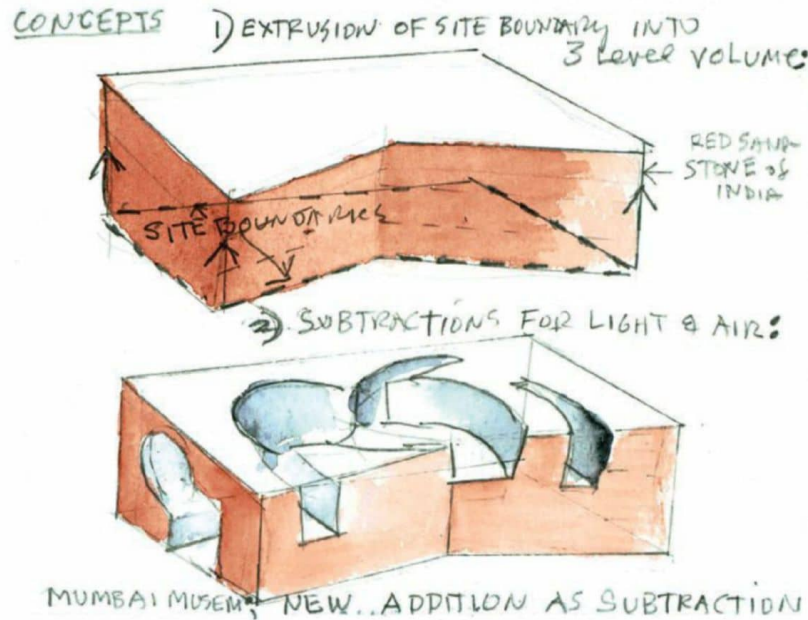


Malcolm Reading's company, founded in 1996, provides guidance in organising international competitions. He sees himself as the pilot of a ship, setting the route and enabling clients to take the right decision

In most countries, public projects are tendered through official procedures. The EU member states have all agreed to use a competitive open tender procedure, and in many other parts of the world governments and city councils organise such tender procedures, often executed as competitions, by themselves. In Germany, the Netherlands, Britain and some other Western countries, governments can fall back on the help of professional organisations and sometimes even architecture and engineering practices who organise these competitions for the public client. In the world of these public competitions, Malcolm Reading Consultants is the unquestionable industry leader.

**Jan Knikker: Can you explain how you ended up organising international competitions?**  
Malcolm Reading: I was trained as an architect and practised for a few years. I was always interested in the communicative part of architecture and I was very privileged around the time of my graduation to meet the Russian architect Berthold Lubetkin. His practice, Tecton, mixed social commitment with a sort of energy about architecture and aesthetics. I realised that it's simply not a profession in which an architect designs something in isolation – architecture is a reflection of the social product of the era. After this I worked for the British Council, which is a cultural embassy for Britain. During my six years in this job, I realised

something curious to me: that most people who commission architecture do so only once in their lives. I am not talking about developers but about institutions, museums, arts facilities and education. So there is not a great deal of knowledge about how architects and their clients get together. That realisation was the crystallisation of my company. We are a small but energetic and entrepreneurial team.  
**What I thought was fascinating about the projects on your website was the diversity, and I wondered what these client organisations bring to you. Do they write the tenders or do you? If the client wants a swimming pool, would you add the right amount of changing rooms? How far does your influence go?**



This spread, left and top: a rendering and study sketch of the extension project of the Mumbai City Museum (North Wing) by Steven Holl Architects, 2016, winner of the first international competition for a public building in Mumbai





This spread, top-left: Dietmar Feichtinger Architectes, finalist project for the Tintagel Castle Bridge competition, Cornwall; above: the Halley VI Antarctic station, designed by Hugh Broughton Architects, winner of the

competition for the British Antarctic Survey (BAS); top-right: the project by Haas Cook Zemmrich STUDIO2050, a finalist in the competition for the Guggenheim in Helsinki



It's a mixture really. Many clients come to us simply to find an architect for their project. In addition, I have many clients who had a previous experience in which they had not matched with the right architect. We do two things: my wife Catherine, a director of the company, is a writer and a poet, so her mission in life is to capture what clients are thinking and to put together a narrative about the project. Then we have other people in the office, for example an architect, who puts all the technical requirements around the narrative. So we help the clients to visualise a project without giving them a concept.

**So if the curator of a museum approaches you with a programme that lists five museum halls, do you question that?**

Yes. We do a lot of our work upfront with clients. I think this is probably the main difference between our method and other forms of procurement where the brief is often just one page and architects are supposed to read into it, and therefore what one gets back are a lot of disconnected concepts which are difficult to assess.

**So you don't usually get these detached or perhaps more daring concepts in which the architect designs something totally outside the brief?**

No, to be honest we haven't had those in years. I know what you mean. I believe strongly that if an architect meets a client and they do get on well together, you don't need a competition. So the competition process is more for when there is a requirement, there is a budget, there is a

programme. We don't experience that architects answer a competition with a proposal that basically proves the brief wrong.

**Let's discuss the evaluation process. You do a lot of work upfront, all the proposals come in and are valid, so how on earth do you assess them?**

From the outset, we tell firms how their work will be evaluated, and we ensure that the jury has this same perspective. Also, it's important to bear in mind that not all the jury consists of architects. Taking great care in the selection of jury members is important and I don't think that a majority of the jury should be architects. If we discuss a museum, why not have a curator, why not have a conservator, why not have a world-leading expert in archaeology? I prefer to see us as the pilot of a ship; we try to help a lot of people to take the right decision. We make sure that there is a qualified panel and that we guide them through the decision-making process by having all the information available. We like decisions to be consensual and they are usually unanimous.

**Really, the decisions are unanimous?**

Yes, I can count the ones that weren't unanimous, over 25 years, on one hand. I think that's because of the way we set the competition up. Everybody has to send the same material in. In this way, there is a level playing field, especially for young practices who cannot afford fancy graphics.

**Let's discuss entrance criteria. I would like to hear your opinion about this because it turns around innovation. Architects are often requested to show up to five exact references, which of**

**course makes it impossible for young firms to build up a portfolio. What's your take on this?**

Aye, this is my favourite subject. This is the impact of European Union rules and how they are often misinterpreted by clients.

**Oh no, I had hoped to avoid discussing Brexit...**

(Laughs) It's extraordinary that the default of lots of public organisations who should know better is that if they commission, say, a library they need to see five reference projects of completed libraries to enter. Or if they have a building project of, say, 20 million euros they demand an indemnity insurance of 20 million euros from competitors. It's a total misunderstanding of risk on a project. The bar is raised so high that only big practices can enter. We are sympathetic about this and we organise a number of competitions that we aim specially at emerging practices, such as colleges in Oxford and Cambridge that are exclusively for younger emerging practices. In another model, we demand lead architects to involve emerging practices in their team. We have another tactic to involve young architects by turning the term around: instead of relevant experience (i.e. the five libraries) we ask for experience that is relevant to the project brief. We learned that from the competition for a British research station on Antarctica, Halley VI. How do you find an architect who has done five of them already? Instead, we asked competitors to explain their experience of working in exceedingly difficult conditions. Eventually, the competition was won by the

young and talented Hugh Broughton, an emerging practice with only nine people when they won.

**Do you see it as your mission to support young architects?**

Yes, personally and as a company I think that's what the future is. I tell my clients that no matter what size the practice is, throughout the life of the project they will only see, in any case, up to eight people from the practice. They depend on a small component of a company, so why not make it a small company? But we don't insist; we recognise that some projects need deeper resource or long-standing expertise and may not be the right scale. We always match our advice to clients to match their particular circumstances.

**So helping young architects is part of your mission. But on a more general level, what is your raison d'être?**

I love architecture and appreciate that there are many contributors to making great buildings. When Lubetkin opened his office with five young architects in the early 1930s, they each brought a different specialism but collectively they created outstanding architecture. I feel that I also bring a specialism; I am part of these projects and we have a role to play by making sure that they launch in the right way and by creating a serious brief that can be delivered. Somebody said to me once that we are like a film producer. It's about setting things up. There are other people who are more creative, but we set the stage for them. In the end, there is magic.





## Malcolm Reading's tips on how to be successful in competitions

- It's much more difficult to get onto the shortlist, so there should be a lot of care at this stage. More efforts should go into being shortlisted; if you are not on the shortlist, you are not at the party!
- During a selection process, mistakes in the submission (such as spelling mistakes or obvious duplication of text from another project) are deadly as they make the entry seem careless.
- Read the initial tender material and answer it directly. Be honest: is it for you? Think this through: you may have to compete with up to 100 of your global peers just to get on the shortlist.
- The jury will notice if there is no personal touch and if there is not someone passionate about the project. Don't trust the business development team to write the bid.
- Architects are not very good at writing but they are very visual; why not do less writing and more sketching and drawing?

## Malcolm Reading on the Guggenheim Helsinki competition

"The criticism that the Guggenheim Helsinki competition caused a significant amount of wasted labour is perfectly reasonable, as more than 1700 people spent a lot of time. But many competitors saw this as an opportunity. Participants told us afterwards they felt privileged to be able to participate in this competition. The competition website had five million hits and it is still considered a pivotal moment in architecture culture. Others, young architects, told us that they started collaborations that continued after this competition, so they used it as the start of their practice. So I accept the point that there was a lot of effort, but it was not all wasted and it was a unique moment that changed people's professional lives. Indeed, the young winners, Moreau Kusunoki Architects, have recently made it to the shortlist of the AUS \$400-million Powerhouse Precinct design competition in Sydney."

Opposite page, top: submission by Asif Khan, finalist in the competition for the Helsinki Guggenheim; below: Marvel Architects finalist proposal for the 2015-2016 competition of Gallaudet University, Washington, DC, won by Hall McKnight



**1996**  
foundation of Malcolm Reading Consultants

**1700**  
competition entries for the Guggenheim Museum in Helsinki

**144**  
entries for the Science Island, Kaunas, Lithuania (from 44 countries)

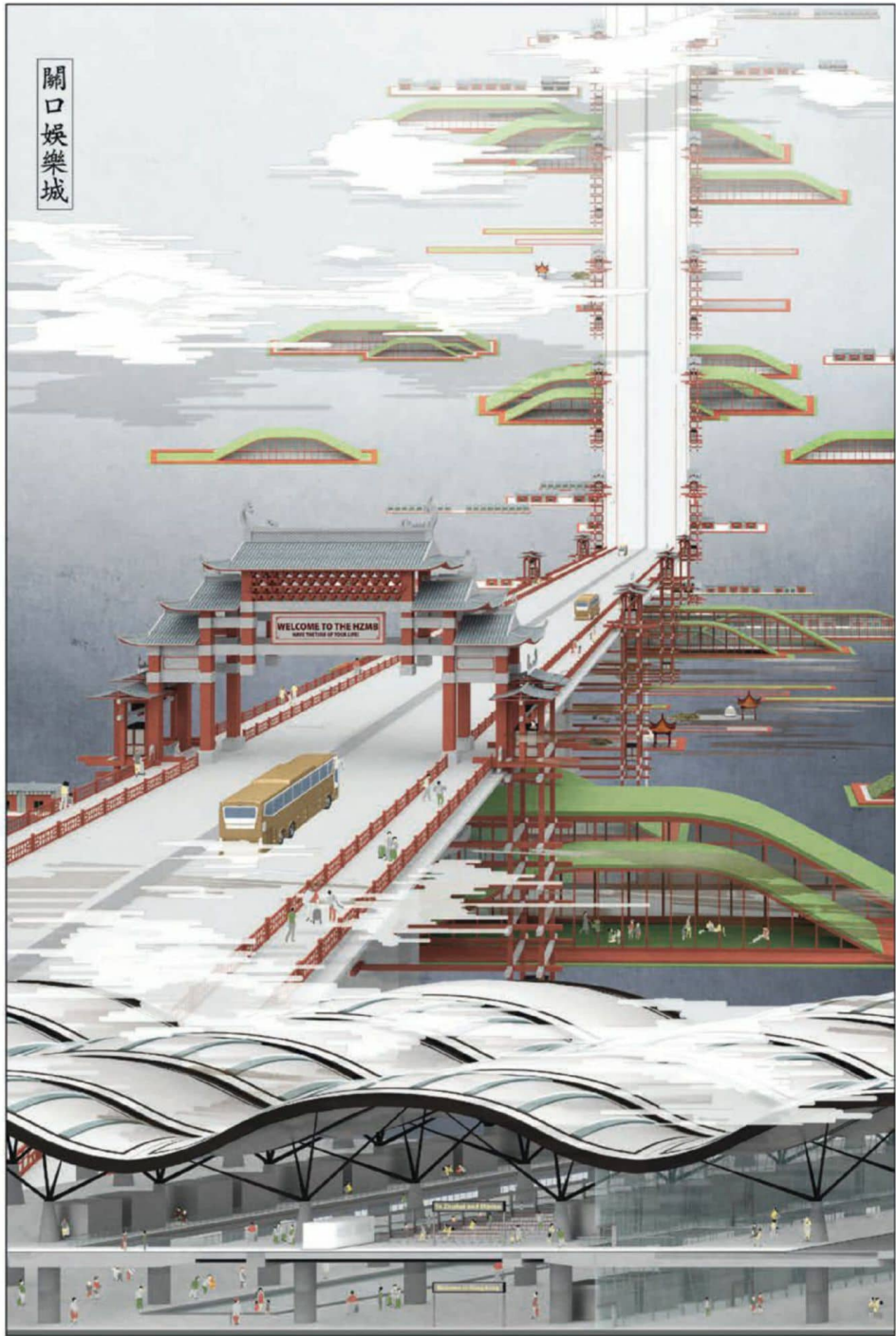
**137**  
submissions for the Tintagel Castle competition, Cornwall (from 27 countries)



Future city agents  
The urgency to act  
on the city  
New schools for  
future cities  
The school of real utopias

On design education

Text  
Nasrine Seraji  
Projects  
Hagai Ben Niam, Mikhail Frantsuzov,  
Bosco Jun Yin Ho, Yunxiang Peng,  
Jennifer Yi Kwan Yip



2020  
THE BEGINNING

In response to the over congested station in Tung Chung due to the lack of facilities and programs in the cross boundary facility, the cities will deploy entertainment infra-structures on the water underneath the bridge so that it brings the consumers of the Greater Bay Area to this part of the body of water. They can find all the luxury shops representing HK, entertaining shows and carnivals representing of Macau, and the beautiful natural scenery representing of Zhuhai in a form of Chinese garden there. This then resolves the local disputes happening and also makes the visitors from both side of the delta happy as they can now consume all they want.

This spread: the work of Bosco Jun Yin Ho, Hong Kong University, proposes to transform the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao bridge (HKZM) into a colossal three-dimensional strip of land connecting the three cities. It is an urban project planned for a variety of possible uses, with timed ownership by each country until 2047. As a result, the bridge will become an instrument capable of generating capital. The drawings show different possible scenarios, using a vocabulary familiar to the Chinese public: a painting on a vertical scroll parchment. Each scene is independent, but taken together they demonstrate the bridge's use over 30 years

Make cities, not buildings



2025  
CHINESE CONSUMER'S REPUBLIC

Chinese brands have gained a lot more credibility and popularity with the younger customers. With the increasing interests in premium experiences and services being so high in demand, the developed entertainment infrastructures offers Chinese companies to provide their services and sell the products under the bridge at a low cost. By having both tenants and customers receiving what they both wished, the cities are able to earn a lot more and thus accelerating the fund to build more infrastructures to cater on the remaining segments.

562,000  
architects in Europe  
+24%  
increase in the number of  
architects in Europe  
(2008-2018)  
5,000,000  
Erasmus students  
since the launch  
of the programme in 1987  
300,000  
Erasmus students (2018)  
25,000  
Erasmus Mundus  
students from 183  
countries, since 2004  
80%  
of Erasmus graduates  
are employed within three  
months of graduation  
1  
first ranking position of the  
The Bartlett School of  
Architecture, UCL, London  
among the world's top  
universities of Architecture/  
Built Environment (2019)

Sources: Erasmus+ annual report 2017,  
© European Union 2018; Architects'  
Council of Europe, *The Architectural  
Profession in Europe 2018, a Sector  
Study*; Quacquarelli Symonds (QS),  
*World University Rankings*, 2019.





**A new type of architecture school is gaining ground, a school of reflection that works on the web creating “new newness” and producing critical observations of the city through original modes of representation. The projects by the five students presented here reveal the breadth of reflection on the landscape and the city underway today**

Warning: the following text offers no answers to the urgent question about the city or urbanism and its predicaments. It is written with the intention to generate a sense of urgency to act on the city; it is addressed to those schools which still think that architecture is merely about the making of beautifully detailed objects for the bourgeoisie.

#### Once upon a time

There was an article in *The Independent* of 4 April 2011 titled *The death of architecture*. In the article, Jay Merrick began by saying, “Unless you’re a starchitect, chances are you’ll end up creating mediocre glass-clad hangars. Does the problem lie with the profession, or the politicians in charge of our towns and cities?” Ever since, warnings have multiplied. The famous *Trois rappels aux Messieurs les architectes* [Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture*, ndr] chimes again and again – and by the way, many women are still kept at a great distance from the active scenes, though there have never before been so many women admitted to schools of architecture.

For almost twenty years, many similar assertions from architects such as Rem Koolhaas (the paragon of Modern Architecture after Le Corbusier) have directed our full attention to the city as the ultimate platform for the exercise of architectural performance.

Hundreds of urgent issues regarding cities worldwide (with different degrees of urgency) are rising to a point of no return. Schools interested in the city are popping up everywhere. Architecture’s scale has grown to be only relevant when on the scale of infrastructure and territorial constructions. New towns are emerging everywhere, and consequently ghost towns are forming from the remains of thousands of cubic kilometres of failed architecture and urbanism.

#### Thirty years of teaching – what has this taught me?

That schools are one of the last bastions of criticality and one of the few institutions where one can be political.

I have had many incredible opportunities to work in some of the most prestigious schools of Architecture. The Architectural Association



Project by Hagai Ben Niam

Opposite page: an overall representation of the scenarios proposed by Bosco Jun Yin Ho for the HKZM bridge.

This page: with a series of drawings and models, Hagai Ben Niam brings to life the history of the sacred tombs of the Sephardic Jews of Tiberias. Speculative and purposeful at the same time, the four large detailed drawings depict the city through the four seasons and stress the need to introduce the temporal dimension into architecture and urban planning

(where I studied in the late ’70s and early ’80s), at Columbia University, Princeton, Cornell University, the École Nationale Supérieure d’architecture Paris Malaquais, and now the University of Hong Kong. From the west to the east, a full revolution is in motion.

The burning question at every architectural gathering (and at every biennale around the world) is how do we do things differently in schools of architecture? How do we nurture the disciplines of landscape and urban planning within architecture?

What do we “really” teach students? How do we engage the students’ intelligence toward understanding the complexities of cities and their spatial, socio-economic, and political urgencies? How do we teach them to work toward equality and equity without resorting to sameness and repetition? The question of why is rarely debated.

The new Independent School for the City in Rotterdam launched its inauguration party with a series of lectures, and among the speakers was Oliver Wainwright, the famous, celebrated young critic. *The Guardian* not

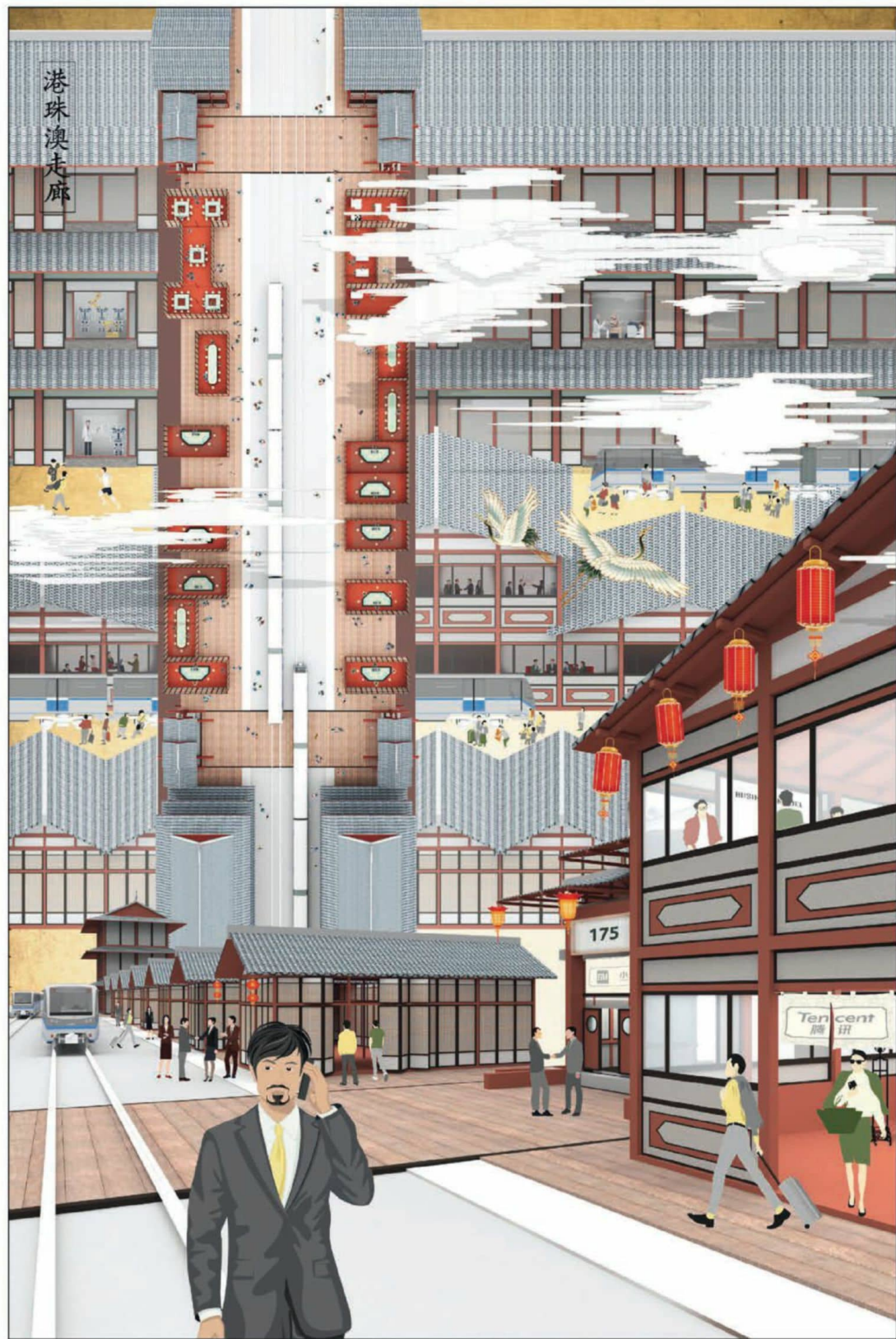
only has brilliant critics that write about architecture, it also has a section dedicated to the city.

The power of the daily news has never been so present in architectural discourse. There has never been so much light shed on our profession, yet the feeling of impotence is like a cloud over architecture and urbanism. Why?

It was in 1995 that Rem Koolhaas suggested that the 20th century has been a lost battle of quantities. He deliberately talked about the territories of action that interested him: Lagos, China, etc. Meanwhile he compared urban designers or what he calls the “professionals of the city” to chess players who lose to computers; he declared the death of urbanism due to architects taking refuge in the parasitic security of architecture, which results in disasters as more substance is grafted on what he called the “starving roots”. He went on to say that if “urbanism is to survive”, or even simply to be revived, since it is already dead, urbanism needs to imagine a new newness.

I have ever since been asking myself what is this “new newness”? Which schools around





## 2035 CORRIDOR OF PRODUCTION

At first denial, only later do they acknowledge its relevance and significance the programming of the bridge can lead to such a great premise for a high economic output. The line of production on top of the highway will allow a very efficient system for each of the cities to work on their main economic industry. More collaborations and agreements will be made, thus the bonding between the cities have will further strengthen.

Project by Bosco Jun Yin Ho



Project by Mikhail Frantsuzov

Opposite page: the HKZM bridge, imagined by Bosco Jun Yin Ho in 2035. This page, right: Mikhail Frantsuzov's reinterpretation of Superstudio's 12 cities is a delightful image of the relevance of utopian idealism. Frantsuzov designed 12 proposals based on posters by architects (among others, Alison and Peter Smithson, Rem Koolhaas and Victor Gruen) and the unforgettable Dziga Vertov, the film director who was crucial to 20th-century architecture

the world are producing it? Where is it being taught and how are the students responding to this "new newness"? An almost impossible task.

A new school is urgently needed if there is to be "new newness". It will have to probe its members to actively change the spatial, cultural, political, and financial status quo of our cities.

Its students design through thinking and incisive analytical drawings that are clear descriptions of critical observations of inhabited environments. Existing models of density, proximity, programme hybridity, and juxtaposition are investigated and tested through a series of innovative narrative drawings. Graphic novels and new radical positions are put forward as probable scenarios for future cities.

### Generation Y and Z

Most architecture students of these generations are extremely anxious. They have seen society's incapacity for social justice, they have witnessed global disasters such as climate change, and have experienced the extremist right-wing tendencies of many governments. They are neither cynical nor optimistic about

the future. They are instead ironic and, in most cases, interested in problem solving. Contemporary architecture and the city are very rarely platforms where speculative projects propose changes in the collective mindset.

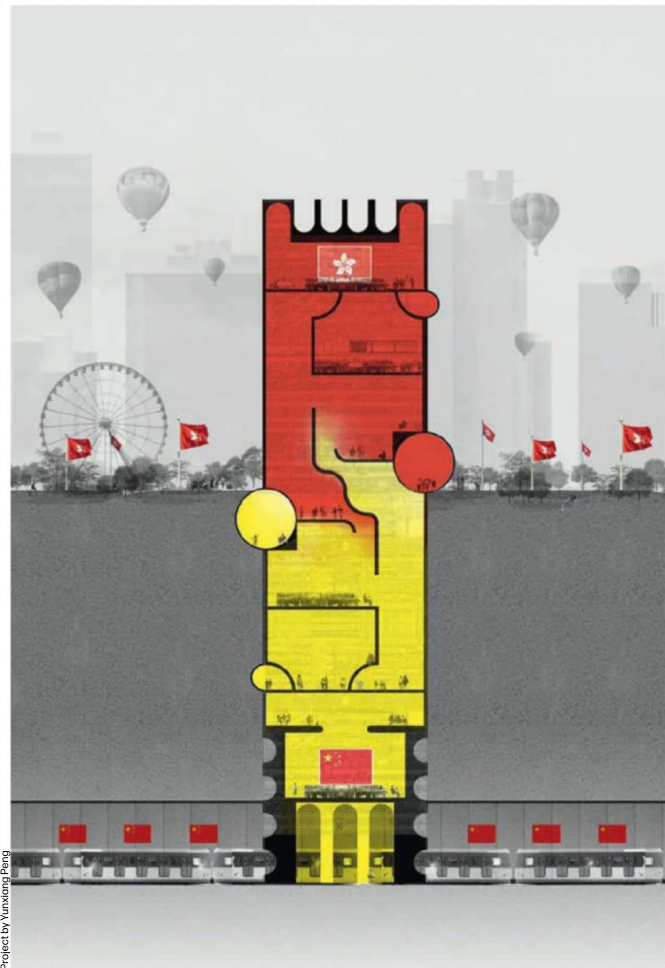
The department of architecture at the University of Hong Kong has a very diverse body of students all sharing one major quality: the belief in Hong Kong as the new model for the 21st-century city. Through three thesis projects and one exchange student attending my "Real Utopias" elective class at the department of architecture at HKU, I demonstrate the wide span of their thinking on landscape and the city.

Together with the work of a former student, Hagai Ben Na'im from ENSA Paris Malaquais, I confront the European and the Asian visions of the Y+Z generations and their take on the description of urgencies regarding cities.

### Epilogue

The following extracts of theses and the graphic novel by Micha illustrate our discussions, debates and ideas on future cities.





Project by Yunxiang Peng



Project by Jennifer Yi Kwan Yip

Jennifer Yi Kwan Yip (HKU, 2019) speculates and critically examines the government-led project to extend Lantau Island in Hong Kong through land reclamation. She proves that this is not a solution to the shortage of housing and that the pure unsustainable act of reclamation is extremely dangerous for the natural ecosystem and the indigenous species of the island.

Yunxiang Peng (HKU, 2019) proposes an architectural strategy for the urban renewal of West Kowloon train station. An extra-large horizontal skyscraper, through its sectional arrangement, will allow the cohabitation of citizens of Hong Kong and Chinese nationals (those without visas to enter Hong Kong). They can if they choose to co-exist in the same vessel prior to 2047, when Hong Kong will be fully a Chinese city. Bosco Jun Yin Ho (HKU, 2019) and his manifesto for the Capital City examines the production of obsolete infrastructures and the reprogramming of obsolescence as the Asian linear city of the 21st century. Mikhail Frantsuzov (HKU, on exchange from IE University-Madrid campus) reinterprets Superstudio's 12 cities creating a delightful reality of the relevance of utopian idealism.

Hagai Ben Na'im (ENSA Paris Malaquais, 2016) revives the lost history of the sacred tombs of Sephardic Jews through the reanimation of the city of Tiberias. He graduated in 2016 and is working freelance in Israel. There is a "speculative school" hidden in the luscious layers of this very small planet Earth. Its locality is not important or known. Its Dean and Chair and faculty are in the form of a network: they are not attached geographically to one place, they do not "jet teach" and hence do not travel incessantly to various locations, yet they are not sedentary.

#### In city they trust

They all believe in the circular and dynamic construction of history, they also believe in multiple authorship and concinnity is their method of work. In the school of real utopias, we read through drawings, we describe with drawings and we propose and project through drawings.

**Nasrine Seraji**, architect and professor, served as the Head of the department of Architecture at the University of Hong Kong where she is currently professor in Architecture.

This page, top-left: the Yunxiang Peng's project designs the urban renewal of the West Kowloon railway station with an extra-large horizontal skyscraper allowing Hong Kong and Chinese citizens without visas to coexist in the same space before 2047; top-right: Jennifer Yi Kwan Yip critiques the plans of Carry Lam's government to expand the island of Lantau and instead proposes to transform it into an ecological paradise. Opposite page: Hong Kong in 2047 (on expiry of the Basic Law) in the project by Bosco Jun Yin Ho



#### 2047 ONE COUNTRY, ONE SYSTEM

On July 1, 2047, the one country, two systems will end and that Hong Kong will be fully integrated with China. By then because of how this bridge already shows that the merging of the 3 systems within a country can lead to such great economic benefits, the citizens of Hong Kong does not protest but instead rejoice on the bridge, looking forward to the bright future this new identity can bring.

Project by Bosco Jun Yin Ho



Architecture  
Berlin's Acropolis  
completed  
Two centuries of add-ons  
The lightness of  
the minimal

## James-Simon-Galerie, Berlin

Project  
David Chipperfield Architects Berlin  
Text  
Klaus Englert  
Photos  
Luca Girardini

# Parthenon 3.0





With the elegant colonnaded pavilion by David Chipperfield Architects Berlin, the master plan for Berlin's Museum Island reaches completion, 20 years after its formulation

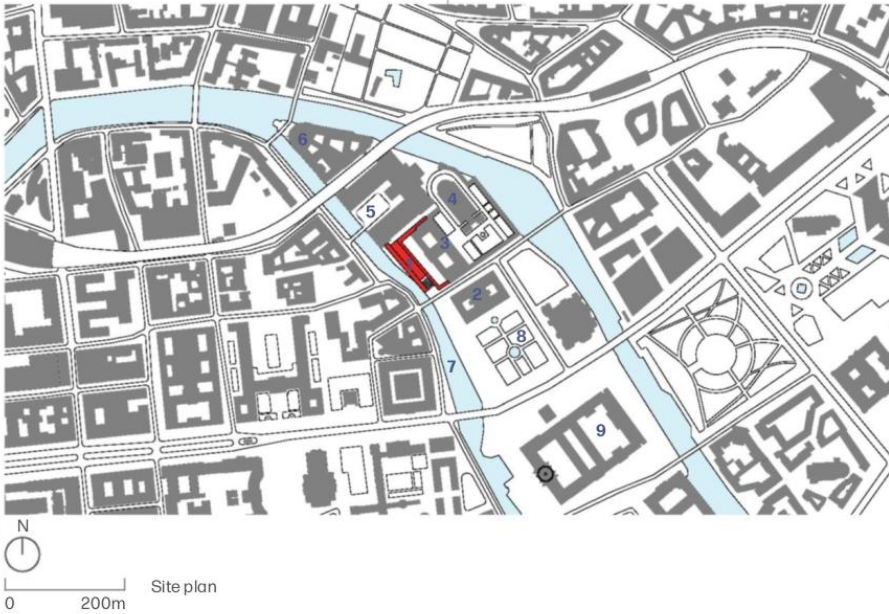
Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, a former president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz), once called the James-Simon-Galerie an architectural “key to the treasures of world cultures”. The statement clearly conveys the building’s crucial role. The gallery was intended as the finishing element in what Frederick William IV of Prussia conceived as “a refuge for the arts and sciences”. In 1828, Karl Friedrich Schinkel completed the first step with the Königliches Museum am Lustgarten (the Royal Museum overlooking the so-called Lustgarten park), and in 1930, Alfred Messel’s Pergamon Museum was the last building to be erected on Museumsinsel (Museum Island). Almost 90 years have passed since then, awaiting the memorable final piece in the mosaic that Lehmann so eagerly wished to see.

Now, at long last, that final component has been set in place with the completion of David Chipperfield’s James-Simon-Galerie. Consequently, the years ahead will reveal how well the archaeological promenade works with entrances to the Neues Museum, Altes Museum, Pergamon Museum and Bode Museum. A bright and welcoming gallery, named after the influential

Jewish collector and patron of the arts James Simon, it prompts visitors to forget for once the infinitely complex and continually interrupted process of building on Museum Island. Now we see that Frederick William IV’s “refuge” has finally become the unique place that the king of Prussia imagined back in 1840: an urban ensemble devoted to culture and bounded by the course of the Spree and Kupfergraben (the canalised northern arm of the Spree). The image the king had in mind was the classical model of the Acropolis set on a hilltop surrounded by a cluster of subordinate museum buildings. Hence his design was still articulated in a strongly hierarchical way, with the sanctuary-acropolis at the centre and a clutch of lesser temples beneath it.

Fulfilment of the monarch’s coveted artistic project was hindered by conservative tendencies during the *Vormärz* and the restoration of the age-old powers, which he energetically supported: Prussia, Russia and Austria. It was only in 1859 that Friedrich August Stüler was able to complete the Neues Museum, arranged transversely to Schinkel’s Altes Museum and oriented towards the tip of Museum Island. Soon after, Stüler and Johann Heinrich Strack built the Alte Nationalgalerie

Previous spread: the main façade of the new building  
Opposite page, top: a 3D model from 2015 simulating the future configuration of Museumsinsel and the Humboldt Forum;  
bottom-left: the Kupfergraben canal viewed from the south;  
bottom-right: the integration of the James-Simon-Galerie in its urban context



- |                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 1 James-Simon-Galerie  | 6 Bode-Museum  |
| 2 Altes Museum         | 7 Kupfergraben |
| 3 Neues Museum         | 8 Lustgarten   |
| 4 Alte Nationalgalerie | 9 Castle       |
| 5 Pergamonmuseum       |                |

on an adjacent site. In front of it they laid out a ceremonial courtyard and an open colonnade bordering both museums. In about 1875, August Orth examined how the island might look if it were completely built over, and also considered ways to erect a building near the Kupfergraben that would serve as an entrance to the museum complex, which was then being enlarged. It turned out that further construction was hindered by the Packhof am Kupfergraben, a complex erected by Schinkel comprising various elements: a utilitarian building on rather unstable ground, with the function of a port depot, transhipment yard, control station and customs house. Hence the enlargement of Museum Island was strongly conditioned by Schinkel’s works.

Subsequently, Ernst von Ihne built the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum on the north end of the island

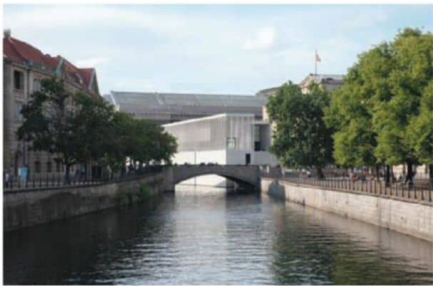
to house Wilhelm Bode’s collection of sculptures and paintings, and soon afterwards Alfred Messel finished the adjoining Pergamon Museum. The two constructions involved the gradual demolition of the customs complex, since it stretched from the bank of the Spree at the tip of the island to what is now the Bodestrasse, where the James-Simon-Galerie stands today.

It is surprising that, whatever the political system, discussion always continued about how to use the old customs-house area on the difficult Museum Island site to build a unified entrance to house reception services and host exhibitions. Even as East Germany was collapsing, a design group at the State Museums was exploring the issue. In 1992, a restricted design competition defined the objectives that were then adopted: restoration of the Neues Museum, a connection

with the Pergamon Museum and another link leading to the Neues and the Altes Museum.

In the late 1990s, David Chipperfield was favoured over the Californian Frank O. Gehry and won the commission to restore the Neues Museum. Heavily damaged in the war, it had been closed for 60 years. But for the time being the problem of a fitting entrance structure remained unresolved. Finally, in 1999 the master plan adopted by the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation decided that the James-Simon-Galerie should be built as an entrance hub connecting the adjoining museum complexes. It was to be erected on the southern part of the customs complex which had been demolished in 1938, and whose foundations had already subsided considerably.

Work on designing and building the new centre took 20 years in all. The long planning phase





included some serious setbacks. Chipperfield's first design in 2006 consisted of a cluster of transparent steel and glass cubes, clearly in keeping with the formal vocabulary he had worked with until then. Predictably the insertion of this kind of architecture on Museum Island, with its strongly neoclassical character, would have created problems. It was widely criticised because Chipperfield was planning to build a sixth "solitaire" on Museum Island, a building never intended to function exclusively as a museum.

Criticisms also came from ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, with its president Michael Petzet complaining, "There is a lack of visual integrity in relation to the neighbouring buildings." The Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation also distanced itself from the project. Quite clearly, Chipperfield had designed the building, meant as an entrance hub and visitor centre, as Museum Island's sixth independent structure, which was deemed contrary to the spirit of the 1999 master plan.

Shortly after this, Chipperfield became intrigued by a sketch that Frederick William IV had drawn of his "refuge" and he excerpted the serial motif from it, which he identified in the colonnade of the Temple of the Muses. The serial order has the merit – according to the project director Alexander Schwarz – of creating connections between the earlier classical architecture of the spaces on Museum Island. The colonnade built by Stüler along the Alte Nationalgalerie and the Neues Museum was to be carried on beyond the neighbouring Neuer Hof in an interpretation adapted to the times. In doing this, Chipperfield was probably inspired by the colonnaded extension that Messel had continued as far as the Pergamon Museum, from which corridors were planned to communicate with the Neues Museum. Chipperfield had in mind a characteristic formal continuity for the whole of Museum Island that would free the James-Simon-Galerie from its purely functional uses, developing it into a

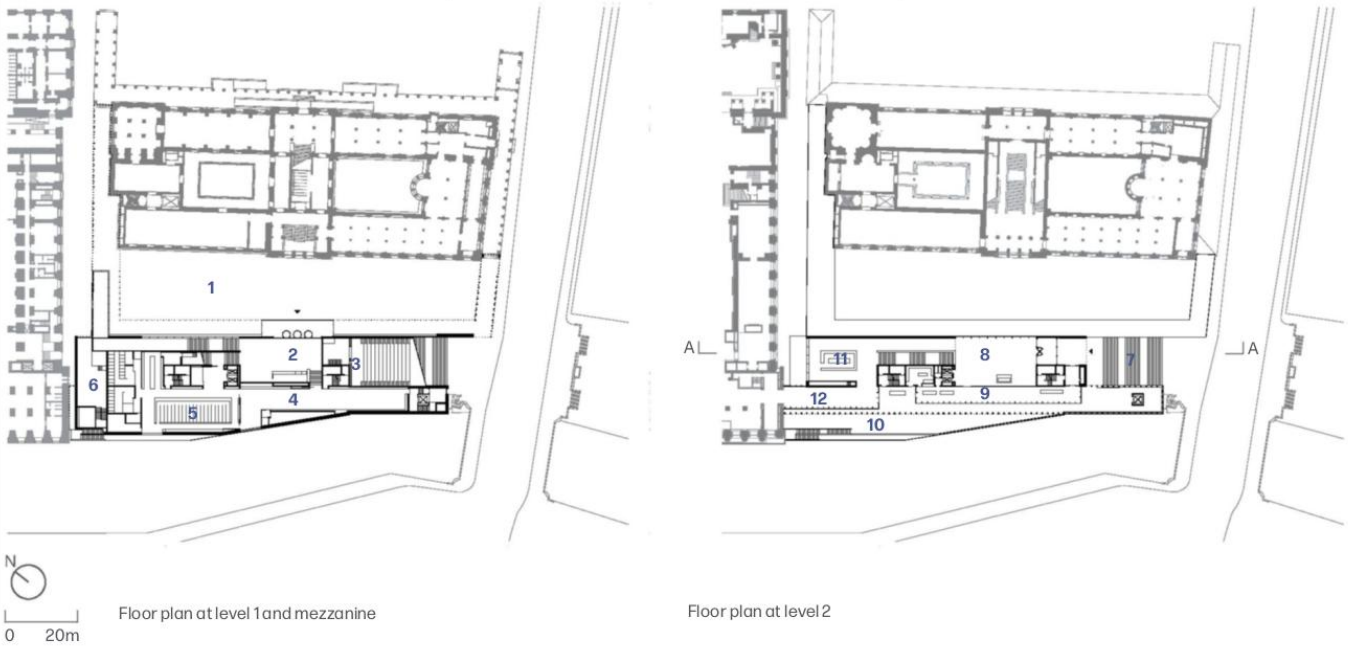
very open and easy-to-use building oriented towards the city. Although the colonnades recall the Marbach Literaturmuseum, on Museum Island they add a strong spatial reference to the city, which is why Alexander Schwarz speaks of it as a "built landscape".

This built landscape also features echoes of Schinkel's Altes Museum. Behind the double colonnade, which structures the portico like a forest of columns, an external staircase extends transversally to the open exhibition space. Chipperfield has expressed his admiration for the Altes Museum with its open construction system, which made it the "first public cultural museum". And he stresses how much a drawing by Schinkel influenced him in the new design of the James-Simon-Galerie. "Visitors walk about in the loggia and they're already inside the museum without ever having passed through a doorway." So in 2007, the task was to build a modern temple with delicate, white concrete pillars and a projecting staircase opening out to the urban space. What supported it in an understated way was the creative and tenacious spirit of the design, in no way intruding on the great names present in the museum.

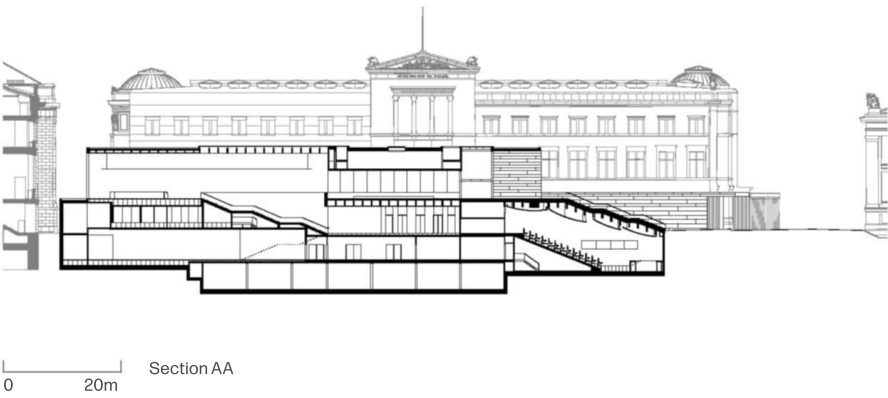
The James-Simon-Galerie encompasses a broad range of services, combined with spatial qualities that have a seductive and profoundly aesthetic effect. They include the ticket office for the adjacent museums, the reception, bookshop and a cafe with slender hanging lamps. Its tall concrete base comes into immediate contact with the stone plinth of Messel's Pergamon Museum. It is also worth exploring the building by passing in front of a backlit marble wall as far as the picturesque embarkation port on the Kupfergraben canal, where boating is now forbidden. This is at the very least a brilliantly romantic idea by the British sea-loving architect. It's equally worthwhile taking in the view from

the lower display floor onto the colonnaded courtyard (Kolonnadenhof) or from the upper floor onto the Kupfergraben. Not to mention the striking auditorium set directly beneath the external staircase. Here the minimalist suite of materials, such as concrete, walnut and felt, is very impressive. This shows the importance of the sensuous aesthetic of materials in the Chipperfield office. The flooring, for example, was laid with prefabricated concrete elements with Saxon marble embedded in it. "We build with materials, not products. It is from this that the building derives its great quality," acknowledges Alexander Schwarz. We could argue endlessly about which is the most authentic attraction of the James-Simon-Galerie. Perhaps the most truly absorbing pleasure will be just to let your eyes wander across the grand complex of terraces with high colonnades running along the Kupfergraben and Museum Island.

**Klaus Englert** (1955), architecture critic, writes for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and German, Swiss and Austrian radio broadcasters. His latest book, *Wie wir wohnen werden*, Philipp Reclam, jun. Verlag, Ditzingen, was published in May 2019.



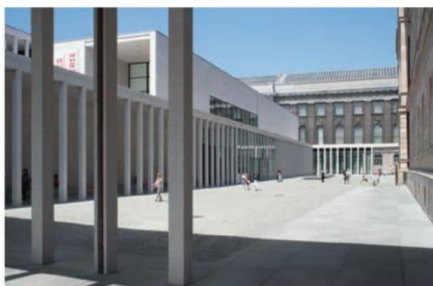
- 1 Colonnaded courtyard
- 2 Lower foyer
- 3 Auditorium
- 4 Bookstore and museum shop
- 5 Cloakroom
- 6 Deliveries
- 7 Outside staircase
- 8 Upper foyer
- 9 Café and restaurant
- 10 Terrace
- 11 Tickets and info
- 12 Connection to Pergamonmuseum



The relationship between the gallery's lightweight volume and the rear façade of the Neues Museum, whose restoration was overseen by David Chipperfield Architects Berlin and completed in 2009

All project materials  
© David Chipperfield Architects Berlin



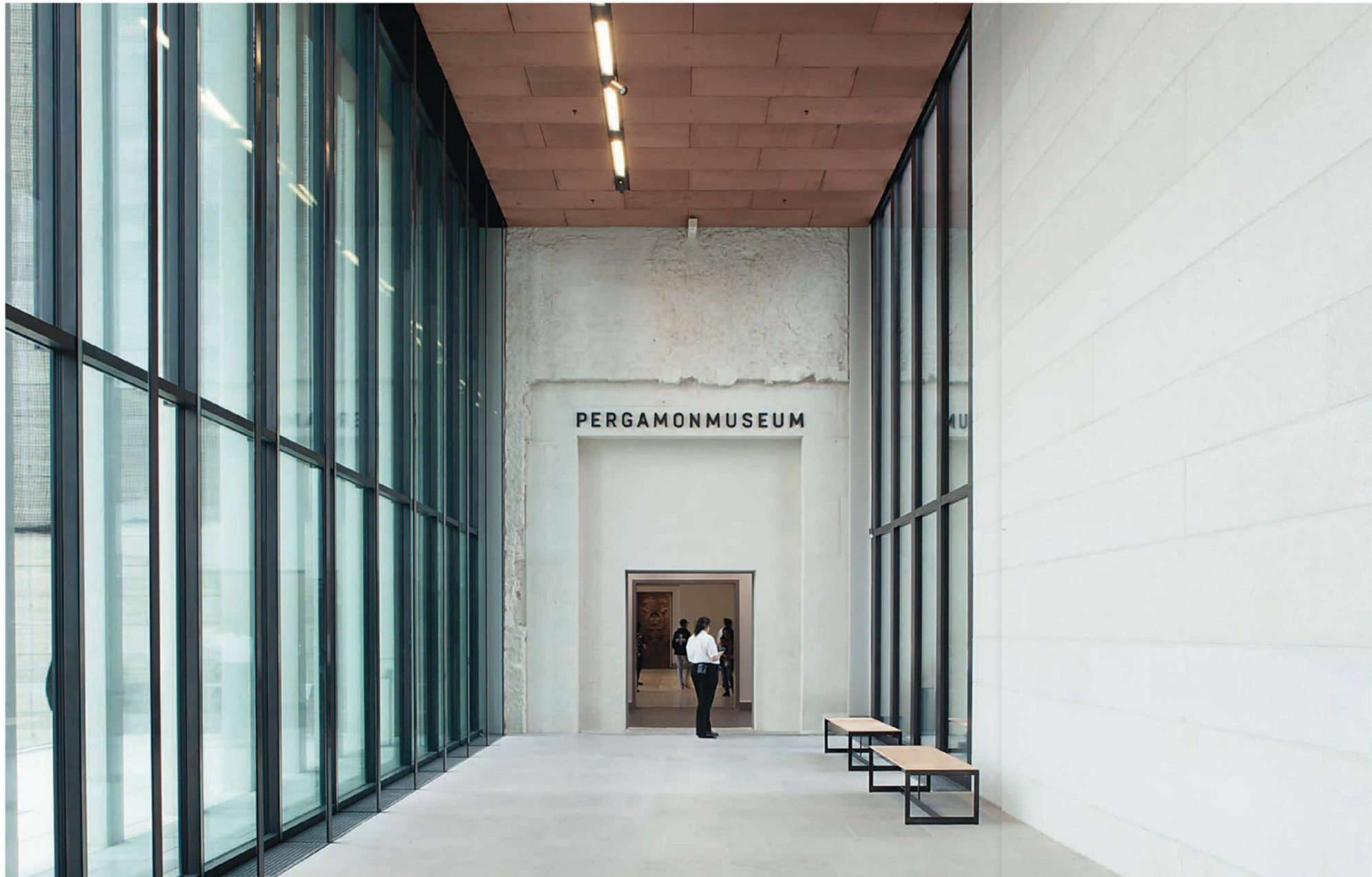


Top: the delicate point where the new pavilion is attached to the Pergamonmuseum highlights the architects' attention to the historical surroundings; centre: the continuity between the gallery's colonnade and the 19th-century Kolonnade that flanks the Neues Museum and the Alte Nationalgalerie; above: the courtyard providing access to the base level of the new building

Right: the spacious entrance platform at the top of the steps leading to the main floor offers a broad view towards the Altes Museum by Karl Friedrich Schinkel (on the left), the Lustgarten park and the castle (in the background), currently under reconstruction







The James-Simon-Galerie acts as an entrance building to Museum Island. The connection with the south wing of the Pergamonmuseum has been created on the piano nobile (above), while the other pre-existing buildings (the Neues Museum, Altes Museum and Bode Museum) will be reached via an underground archaeological promenade, which is currently only partly

operational. As a service pavilion, the gallery also hosts a space for temporary exhibitions (left), housed in the base level, an auditorium and a bookstore as well as a cafeteria with terrace on the upper floor overlooking the canal. This page, top-right: the stairs leading from the lower foyer to the main floor look towards a refined back-lit marble wall



## James-Simon-Galerie Museum Island, Berlin

Client: Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, represented by the Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung – Miriam Plünnecke (project management)

Project controlling: Ernst & Young Real Estate GmbH, Berlin; Kemmermann Projektmanagement im Bauwesen GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin

User: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Project: David Chipperfield Architects Berlin – David Chipperfield, Martin Reichert, Alexander Schwarz (design lead)

Project architect: Urs Vogt

Design team: Mathias Adler, Alexander Bellmann, Thomas Benk, Martin Benner, Alexander Corvinus, Maryla Duleba, Matthias Fiegl, Anke Fritzsche, Dirk Gschwind, Anne Hengst, Paul Hillerkus, Isabel Karig, Linda von Karstedt, Ludwig Kauffmann, Mikhail Kornev, Astrid Kühn, Thomas Kupke, Sebastian von Oppen, Torsten Richter, Elke Saleina, Thomas Schöpf, Eberhard Veit, Anja Wiedemann; Dalia Liksaite, Jonas Marx, Antonia Schlegel, Ute Zscharnt (graphics and visualisation)

Quantity surveyor: Christine Kappei

Executive architect: Wenzel + Wenzel – Christoph-Phillip Krinn (project management)

Structural engineering:

IGB Ingenieurgruppe Bauen

Services: INNIUS DÖ GmbH; Inros Lackner AG

Building physics: Müller-BBM GmbH

Lighting consultant: matí AG

Landscape architect: Levin Monsigny

Landschaftsarchitekten

www.davidchipperfield.com

6,000

m<sup>2</sup> site area

10,900

m<sup>2</sup> gross floor area

2,700

visitor capacity of the building

340

m<sup>2</sup> auditorium

350

seating capacity of auditorium

134

columns in courtyard

92

tall columns in raised wing

28 x 28

cm profile of columns

15

m height above ground level

3

floors above ground level

2

floors below ground level

1,200

load-bearing pillars with small diameter

24

cm diameter pillars

50

m boring into the ground for the pillars

1999

project commences

2018

completion of work



In the photo: Gobetto Dega® Energy is a magnetic resin. Enhanced with pigments and fibrous, quartz and metallic additives, this resin coating has magnetic properties

## Surfaces



**Aided by ink-jet printing** that has revolutionised the decoration industry in a relatively short time, over recent years we have been seeing a great many examples of surfaces that emulate other materials – from wood, portrayed in all its different species, to natural stone, concrete and resin, along with interesting incursions into the world of textiles. Alongside this trend, an aesthetic trend that recurs frequently in recent collections of finishes sees a decisive return to the use of colour in decoration. Many of the collections of finishes published in the following pages are distinguished by their intrinsic materiality that is expressed through surfaces treated and articulated in terms of colour, texture and visual effect.

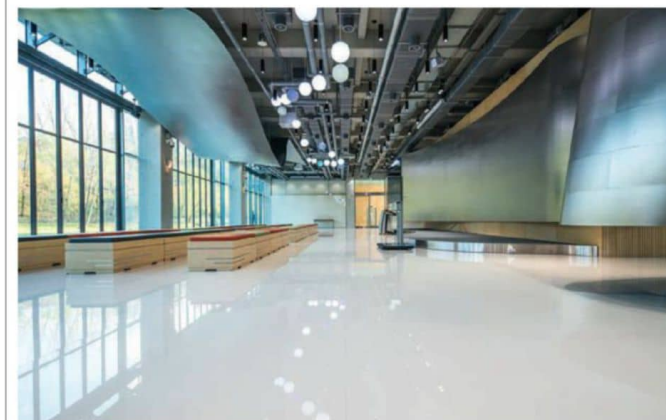
This aspect combined with a wide range of formats generates complex decorative systems with a distinctive appearance. Finally, biggest driver in the sector of surface finishes in the near future will be technological innovations and the capacity to endow surfaces with additional physical properties with respect to those that the material possesses by nature, so we will see photocatalytic tiles that can regenerate themselves, magnetic resins and intelligent panels that store energy.



### Texfloor

Instabilelab  
[www.instabilelab.it](http://www.instabilelab.it)

**Covering or resin?** Texfloor is a coating for floors, a high-performance covering that enables walkable surfaces to be adorned in very simple way with any design or graphic pattern from the company catalogue. Made from Fibratex and resin-coated with a self-levelling resin, Texfloor is resistant to fire and water, lowers noise levels, does not fear the wear and tear of footsteps and can be washed just like any resin floor.



### Lapitec® Lux

Lapitec  
[www.lapitec.com](http://www.lapitec.com)

**Postech.** The Pohang University of Science and Technology is a small, private polytechnic located in Korea realised by the designers from Kukbo Design who specified Lapitec® for the interior floors of the public areas and lecture theatres. While the classrooms have been made even brighter by the use of Lapitec® in Polar White with Lux finish, for the public areas the Polar White has been alternated with darker bands of Nero Antracite.

### Even: Optical

Panaria Ceramica  
[www.panaria.it](http://www.panaria.it)

The **porcelain stoneware** surfaces in the Even collection offer six plain colour variations in the 35 x 100 cm format and a wide choice of decorative patterns. Three light and neutral shades ranging from white to ivory and dove grey, along with sage green, airforce blue and oxide red recall the fluid tones of the 1950s. In the photo: Optical a pattern inspired by the traditional square or hexagonal tiles of the early 1900s.



### Grandi superfici Large surfaces

Target Group  
[www.target-group.net](http://www.target-group.net)

**A brand owned by Target Group** dedicated to large surfaces, Fuoriformato combines extra-large stoneware tiles with a bold use of colour. An extensive array of decorative options that range from plain colours produced in neutral shades to digital designs on neutral tiles (smooth or textured) and hand-worked finishes in which the tile is enhanced with layers of precious materials, metal powders and colours.





Ceramic slabs

Laminam  
www.laminam.it

**Available** in a large format of 100 x 300 cm with a reduced thickness of 3 and 5 mm, Laminam ceramic tiles combine high physical and mechanical performance with a sophisticated appearance that becomes the distinctive hallmark of a building. This material was used by studio Gatti Piu to refurbish a private house in the historic centre of Cagliari, looking to create a white marble effect that enhances and brightens the spaces.



Marvel Dream

Atlas Concorde  
www.atlasconcorde.com

**Marble** is the source of inspiration for this series of large-format tiles in porcelain stoneware (120 x 278 cm). The palette of natural stone is enhanced by the addition of colours that do not exist in nature, conceived to play down the more classical appearance of marble: blue lapislazuli from Afghanistan for Ultramarine, the forest green of Brazilian labradorite Brazilian for Brazil Green and the transparency of amethyst for Crystal Beauty.



Premium Highker

Porcelanosa Grupo  
www.porcelanosagrupo.com

**Premium Highker ceramic** from the Nantes range offers even more possibilities with the addition of three new colours: Arena, Caliza and Acero. Conceived for large houses and the retail sector, this flooring comes in a 120 x 120 cm format that is distinguished by its eclectic style and minimalist look. The understated grey, that predominates in the Acero version (in the photo) is inspired by 20th century industrial style.



Dekton®: Stonika

Cosentino  
www.cosentino.com

**A mix of raw materials** such as glass, quartz and porcelain, Dekton® results in an ultra compact surface with advanced technical properties. The most recent collection, Dekton® Stonika, includes four new colours: Olimpo, Bergen, Arga and Korso. In the photo: Arga that presents the iconic pattern and warmth of the quartzite from the Taj Mahal. The cream-coloured background emphasises the veining and accentuates the pattern.

Passepartout Pink

Ceramica Fioranese  
www.fioranese.it



**Walls are saturated** with single colours through the use of volumetric ceramic panels in full-body coloured porcelain stoneware. Passepartout, a design in a 30 x 60 cm format by Davide Tonelli for Ceramica Fioranese, is the start of a journey that explores ceramic by skilfully combining pattern and colour.

Creos: Coral

Ceramiche Refin  
www.refin.it

**With solutions** in porcelain stoneware from the Creos range, Refin brings to porcelain stoneware the aesthetic appeal of resins with irregular surfaces that convey a sense of movement, defined by alternating slightly glossy areas with more matt zones of colour that resemble the effects typical of the drying process of artisan resins. The soft and delicately structured texture is articulated in five different neutrals – Bride white, cool greys Dorian and Shadow and two warm tones Cookie and Mud – and three original colours – octane blue Bluebay, Coral red (in the photo) and a shade of Lime green. An extensive the range of sizes is available, including a maxi format of 120 x 278 cm that with a thickness of 6 mm, is proposed in combination with the new collections with their multiple textures, as well as finishes already in the catalogue.



Forme

CP Parquet  
www.cpparquet.it



**Geometry** and dynamism are the key words that characterise the decorative style of the new parquet in the Forme collection. Textures are created using elements in wood in different colours and shapes that are rearranged in attractive modular layouts, carried out by hand during installation.

PerfectSense Matt

Egger  
www.egger.com



**PerfectSense Matt** surfaces have been used for the Störmede Manor in Geseke (Germany), extended to include a hotel with fifty-five rooms. The same pattern, U727 Pietra Grigia has been adopted for both the wall finishes and the furniture with the aim of creating an effect of seamless continuity.

Tailored designs

Grandinetti  
www.grandinetti.it

**Mixes of cement** and powder additives offer endless decorative possibilities. For Grandinetti, the technique used to produce these tiles, completely by hand, makes use of the same moulds kept for over a century and production methods that remain unchanged since the inception of the product.





## Classroom Furniture



DUAL DESK



## Lab Furniture



## Library Furniture



## Pre-Primary Furniture



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