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WORLD NEWS OF ARCHITECTURE

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To promote and appreciate architecture, ICI Dulux, the market leader in the Pakistan paint industry, covers the distinctive style and work of a renowned architect every month.



**Architect
Sandeep
Khosla**



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Lotus-inspired Artscience Museum opened



Lotus-inspired Artscience Museum opened at Marina Bay Sands complex in Singapore. Moshe's Safdie's ArtScience Museum opened as part of the lavish Marina Bay Sands complex in Singapore. The first building in Singapore to be constructed using Glass Fibre Reinforced Polymer (GFRP) – a material regularly used in the manufacture of high-performance racing yachts – the design of the Museum takes the form of an open lotus flower and

aims to capture 'Safdie's philosophy that art and science together can excite and inform visitors in a new way'. The form is grounded on a circular base with ten individual finger-like projections extending outwards with skylights in the 'fingertips'. With the tallest 'finger' standing 60m from the ground, the 4,800 sq m facility comprises a vast array of uniquely curved interior spaces. Dubbed 'The Welcoming Hand of Singapore' by

Sheldon Adelson, the visionary chairman of Las Vegas Sands Corp, the ArtScience Museum features 21 gallery spaces which are naturally lit and will host a wide range of temporary exhibitions alongside the facility's permanent exhibition, 'ArtScience: A Journey Through Creativity'. In the centre of the ten projections is a dish-style roofing system which channels rainwater into a central cylindrical waterfall and reflection pool. Some of this water

is then reused in the Museum's restrooms as part of Singapore's Green Mark programme. Moshe Safdie comments: "From the inside out, every element in the design of the ArtScience Museum reinforces the institution's philosophy of creating a bridge between the arts and sciences. The building combines the aesthetic and functional, the visual and the technological, and for me, really represents the forward looking spirit of Singapore."

Architects and planners criticised "high-density development" law

By **CHEREE FRANCO**

Shehri-CBE held a seminar regarding "The Sindh High Density Development Board Act 2010" at the IEP auditorium, Karachi. "We think we're going to build castles on top of dung heaps? Karachi is a katchi-abadi city, a city of squatters, slums," said Roland deSouza, an engineer and speaker at a seminar by the urban activist group SHEHRI-CBE. Architects, engineers, city planners, students and journalists gathered at the Institute of Engineers Pakistan to ponder the implications of pending changes to the Sindh High Density Development Board Act 2010, passed last June by the Sindh Assembly. An advisory committee,

appointed by the Karachi Building Control Authority and composed of architects and infrastructure personnel, opposed the Act. Although high density refers to the number of people per square feet, high-density development is often shorthand for vertical development, or high-rises. The law gave the government permission to designate "high-density development" areas anywhere in Sindh. Architects and planners criticised the law for being vague and ignoring the problems that could result from indiscriminately placing commercial, highly trafficked buildings in residential areas. Now lawmakers are attempting to clarify the Act with a set of rules and procedures which have not yet been voted into law. The rules

would give the government permission to build anywhere in the city, with no height or size restrictions, no zoning boundaries and no sort of institutional approval process. Perhaps the government hopes to save time and avoid expensive bureaucracy. According to architect Husnain Lotia, a speaker and member of the advisory committee, President Zardari envisions Karachi as the next Dubai, with 100-storey buildings that would ignite the city's depressed economy. The SHEHRI speakers had different takes on the matter, but they all agreed that high-density development without long-term planning would further devastate the tense, chaotic sprawl that is contemporary Karachi.

"It's better to develop vertically than horizontally. It's less of a strain on resources than low density," said Lotia. "So fine, build high-rises. But have a supreme authority, a board that represents all the stakeholders of the city." He recommends that architects, engineers and organisations such as the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency and Karachi Transportation Ittehaad be incorporated, echoing the committee's original proposal. "The architects did a good job of making a report, but it did not suit the government, so they removed all the checks and balances," said Nooruddin Ahmed, an engineer. "And if we play fast

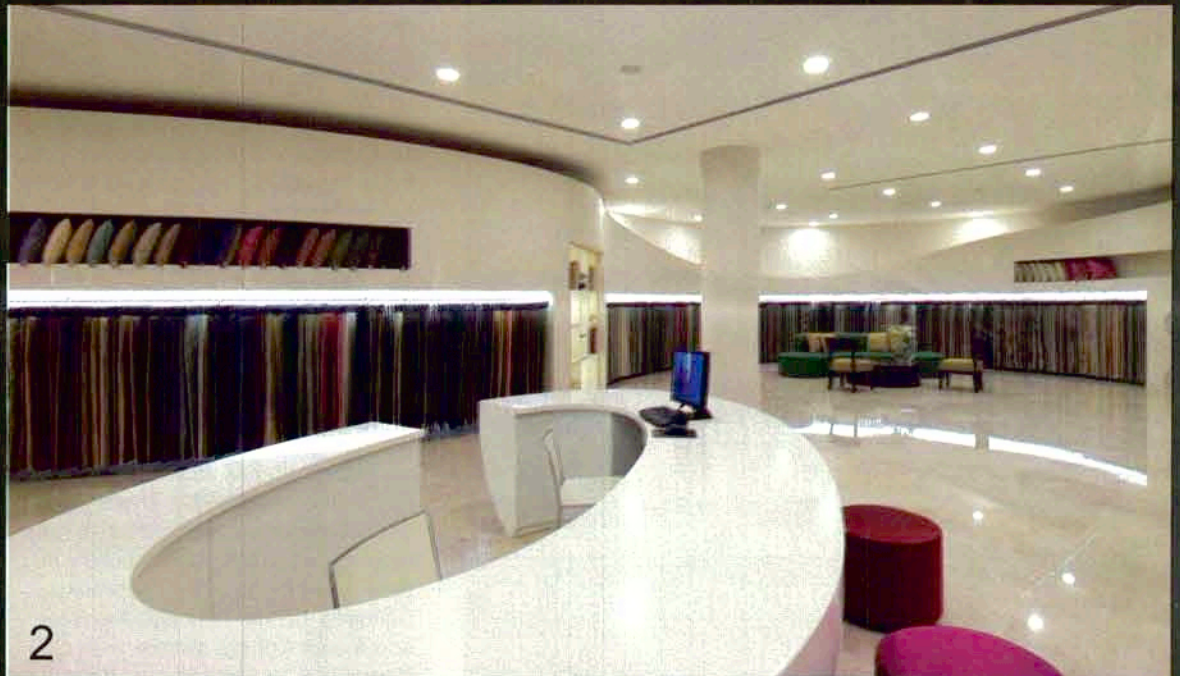
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For the Professionals...

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SANDEEP KHOSLA SPEAKS ON ARCHITECTURE

“ There is no doubt about the fact that there is some sensitive and thought provoking architecture emerging from our country but the majority architecture you see in the urban environment has been put up by developers and sadly in their case, whether residential or commercial projects it's really about building an image and selling an aspirational dream. Hence ideas from distant parts of the world are transported and replicated in a cut and paste way into our urban fabric with absolutely no sense of context. India is a rich and varied culture from which contemporary architects have much to be inspired by, yet it's sad to see that majority of architecture we see is blindly aping the west, being slapped down with curtain walls and glass. A lot of architecture here doesn't respond to the environment in which we are living. Having said that I would like to add that there is also a new breed of developers emerging in our cities who are hiring the best of our architects and creating some relevant projects.”



1. Roxy, Park Hotel, Kolkata
2. Atmosphere Showroom, Dubai
3. Himatsingka Seide Corporate Office. Bangalore
4. Touch, Hyderabad

SANDEEP KHOSLA



“We are contextualists who believe that architecture should be rooted in one's environment and to a particular site. I always ask the question after seeing a particular site, "What building does this site really want to see?" While we work with an international style, we draw inspiration from traditional concepts, craft as well as local material. Our architecture is experiential and attempts to modulate space to create beautiful, peaceful or dramatic spaces. There is a certain romanticism to our work, a narrative quality that leads the viewer into varied experiences, and we enjoy creating work which references the old while being wholly contemporary and innovative.”



PASSION FOR ARCHITECTURE

TEXT: AR APURVA BOSE DUTTA
 PICTURE COURTESY: KHOSLA ASSOCIATES

PROFILE

When you meet Indian architect Sandeep Khosla, it's hard to believe that under the simplicity and humility lies a designer who because of his dynamic contemporary interpretation of traditional architecture has attained so much recognition worldwide. There is a distinct ideology followed in all of his projects which are rooted solidly in their own specific contexts. Sandeep is the Principal Architect and founder of his sixteen year old Bangalore based Khosla Associates, a leading Architecture and Interior Design firm in India and co heads it with Architect Amaresh Anand. With work ranging from architecture and interiors of residences and corporate offices to retail and hospitality spaces, Sandeep is one of the youngest architects in India to have achieved such fame worldwide.

Khosla Associate's distinct style of tropical residential architecture uses local materials and concepts, but reinterprets them with an innovative and contemporary design sensibility. Their varied palette of interior projects includes corporate offices for Nike, ING Vysya and MTV amongst others, to lounge bars and restaurants around the country such as Shiro, Touch and Roxy. In the retail segment, the firm has redefined new looks for major brands such as Hard Rock Café,

Café Coffee Day, KFC, Pizza Hut, Wrangler, and Ritu Kumar and have designed a significant travelling exhibition called 'Global Local' for the British Council.

Sandeep's architecture bears a very international flavour much attributed to his international education. It is creditable that once back in India Sandeep set out to devise his own style of merging the traditional Indian architecture with his 'international' exposure. The architect has the distinction of being picked by India Today magazine as one of the fifty men and women under the age of 35 from various fields of enterprise who are poised to be leaders of tomorrow, by Home Review magazine as one of India's eight leading designers and by Construction World Magazine as one of the countries' top architects. He was also part of a select group of designers invited by the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London in 2004 to showcase the firm's work. His firm, in the past 16 years of practice has won 13 National Awards.

Apurva Bose Dutta (ABD): Please familiarize us with your professional education and background. What inspired you to take up architecture?

Sandeep Khosla (SK): I was in a small Liberal Arts College called Bard in upstate New York where I was studying Fine Arts (which included drawing and painting) and economics, but was also exposed to classes in Philosophy, music and

literature. In my second year I was introduced to architectural history classes which really spurred my interest in architecture. That prompted me to transfer out into architecture school.

I was always inclined towards the Arts from the very beginning and I felt architecture was a great opportunity to express this inclination further. I found the process of drawing and painting fulfilling yet too personal and introverted, I thought Architecture could be more all-encompassing, possibly combining all the arts and reaching out to people formally and experientially. Hence, in the second year I transferred out into a professional five year architecture program at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York.

Prior to my experience at Bard, I was at the Doon school in Dehradun (India's premier all boys boarding school) where I was very involved with the arts and music and was the Secretary of the Art and Music departments. There was always an interest to pursue a creative profession and I did consider architecture, but the Indian education system does not allow you to apply to architecture school in India if you are not a Math and Science student. These kind of restrictions don't exist in US where you can be in the creative arts and then do architecture.

After my graduation I had the choice to either work or pursue a master's degree due to limited resources. I decided to plunge myself into practice. I graduated in

1992 at the time when US was in recession and there were no jobs for architects. I did get a job in a large architectural firm with 150 employees where I was pushed to the back on a drafting table, working on construction details as part of a large team. The experience wasn't very fulfilling; I clearly projected myself in a role as a designer and did not see it happening in the foreseeable future. Back home in India where the economy was starting to open up, my family was beckoning to come back. It didn't seem to make sense to be working in a hyper developed city such as New York when I could be part of the change in a rapidly developing India. So I moved back to India and identified whom I wanted to work with. At that time there were the two masters - B V Doshi in Ahmedabad and Charles Correa in Mumbai whom I met and showed my portfolio to. I finally decided to work with Charles Correa.

ABD: Did you ever think of receiving your architectural education from India?

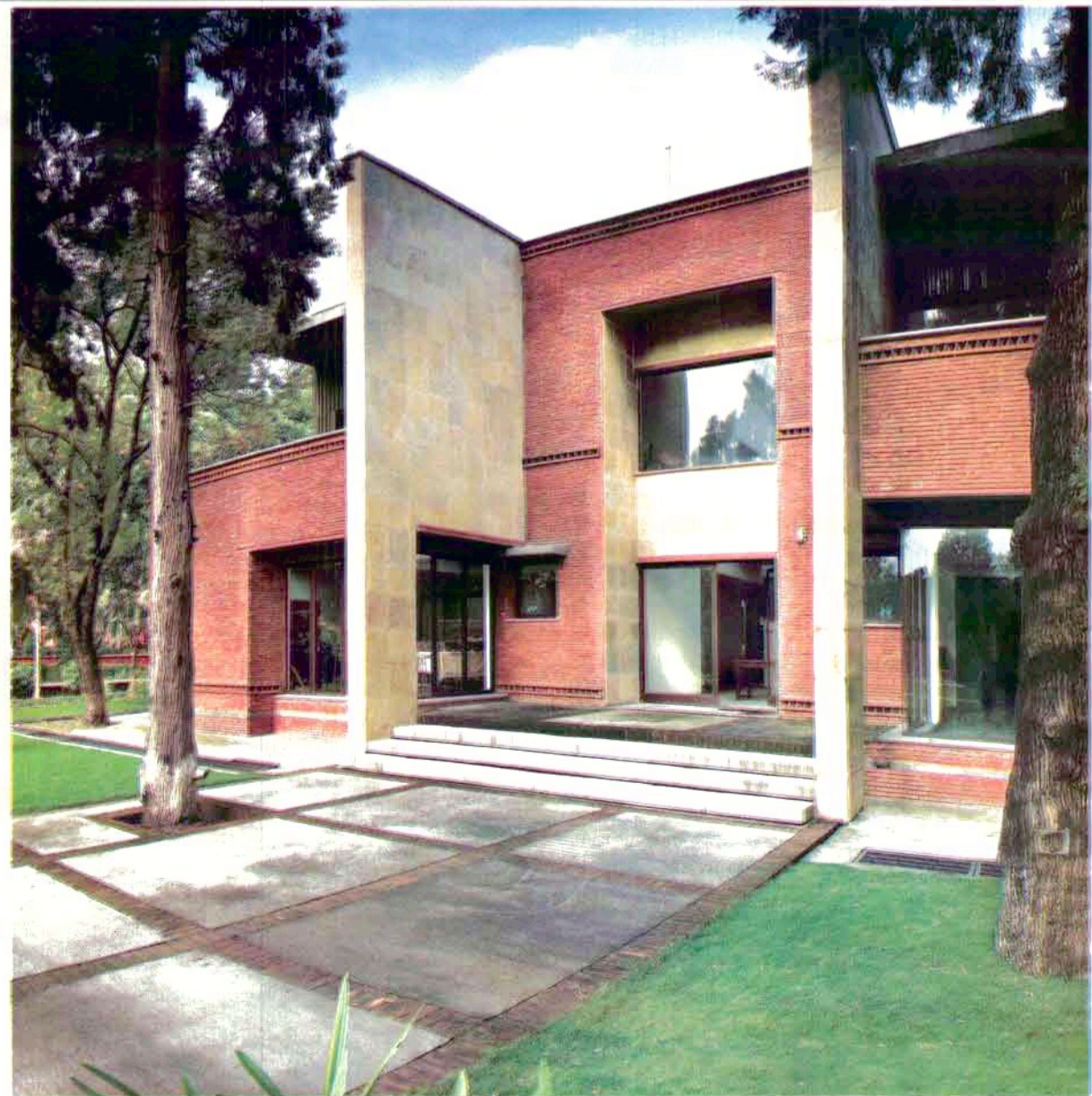
SK: I didn't have much of a choice of getting an architectural education in India. I was not eligible to apply for an architecture program here as I was not a maths and science student. I think when one gets out of school and has to decide on one's profession at the age of 18 years, one can go very wrong. I really value the Liberal Arts System of education in America which prompted us to take different sub-

jects for the first year or two before committing to a particular field. I took classes in music, economics, philosophy, literature and Architectural History and explored everything that I wanted before choosing my profession. In India a lot of people come under pressure from their parents to take standardized professions like Law, Medicine, and Engineering etc. and 10 years hence they find themselves in a profession they don't love. Fortunately for me, and I can speak for Amaresh too - we are extremely motivated by what we do - architecture for us is a passion and I feel blessed that we get paid for what we love doing. It's a different way of approaching work where I come in the morning and am excited about the work we are doing. Monetary gain is not the prominent driving force for our work but it is a genuine thirst to innovate and create an exciting body of work.

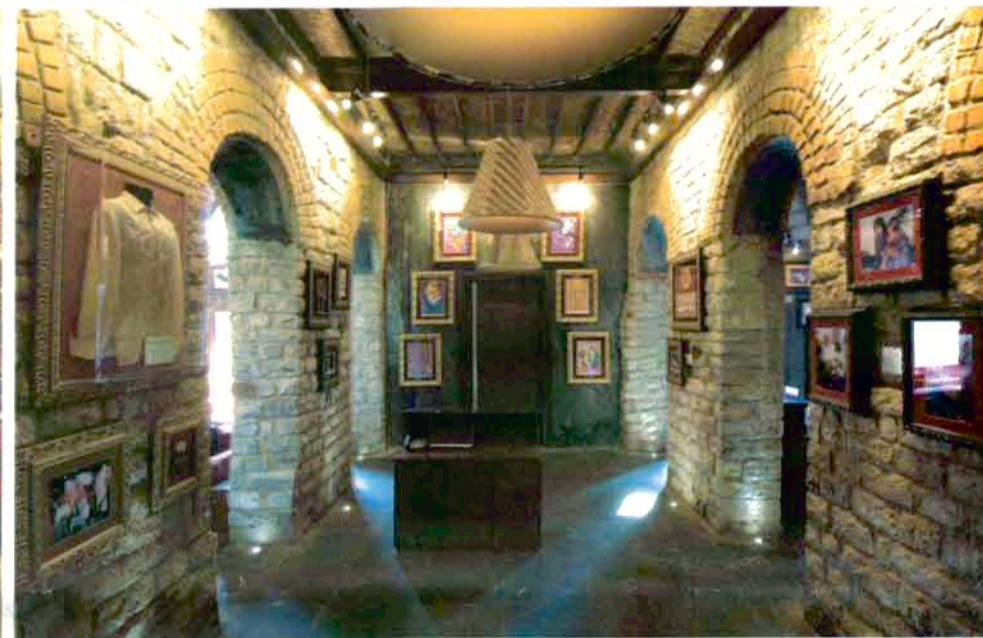
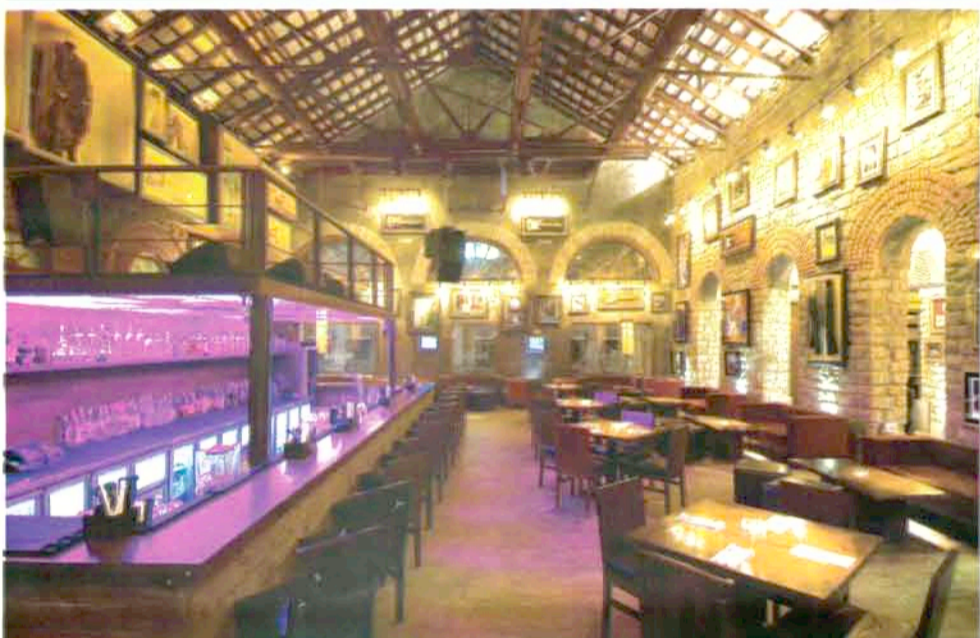
One of my shortcomings would be that I haven't been able to give back to the architecture profession w.r.t education. I still consider myself young and hopefully one has a good number of years to practice and to teach too someday.

ABD: How would you define 'your kind of architecture'?

SK: At Khosla Associates, we are contextualists who believe that architecture should be rooted in one's environment and to a particular site. I always ask the question after seeing a particular site, "What



Arts & Media Centre at the Doon School, Dehradun



Hard Rock Cafe, Bangalore

building does this site really want to see?" While we work with an international style, we draw inspiration from traditional concepts, craft as well as local material.

Our architecture is experiential and attempts to modulate space to create beautiful, peaceful or dramatic spaces. There is a certain romanticism to our work, a narrative quality that leads the viewer into varied experiences, and we enjoy creating work which references the old while being wholly contemporary and innovative.

Living in a tropical environ-

ment, our architecture is climate sensitive and often blurs the boundaries between indoors and outdoors making spaces permeable. The relationship/dialogue between built form and the external environment/topography is very important.

At the office, Amaresh and I head the designing and ideating process. Concept design emerges from my desk and we both sit on design development before the work goes to a team under our supervision for construction drawings and details. Both of us get

involved in a hands-on way in the construction phase, working closely to customize solutions with the contractors, masons, stoneworkers and carpenters. The process of making is sometimes as rewarding as the process of conceiving.

Our palette of projects are varied and range from tropical climate sensitive residential and resort architecture to the interiors of hotels, bars, clubs, restaurants and offices; so we have to wear different hats while designing these spaces. We enjoy the variety and

alternate between the disciplines of architecture and interior design.

ABD: Out of the genres of architecture you practice, you seem to have great affinity for hospitality projects. Are there any specific reasons for the same?

SK: We do enjoy hospitality design, and it is one of our areas of specialization. I started my career with one project and it led to several others and before we knew it, we were working on a plethora of bars, restaurants and nightclubs. I think one can really stretch one's imagination in these projects. When my wife and I had moved to Bangalore

from the States in 1995-96 our first project was a bar in Bangalore whose clients were a young couple who had also moved in from New York. They wanted to open a first of its kind American style lounge bar in a city filled with traditional English pubs. The result was "180 proof" which recycled a 100 year old colonial tudor style building; it was also the first example of adaptive reuse of Bangalore's colonial buildings. The project was an instant success and gave us our first break into the hospitality segment and for that



Manwaring House, Bangalore



Cliff House, Kerala

matter into the world of interior design! Being trained as an architect, I had no prior experience in interiors but it was the restorative aspects of the project that appealed to me. The same building has been recycled and restored by our firm thrice and it now houses the iconic Hard Rock Café.

We continue to enjoy the scale and intimacy of bar and restaurant projects but have also developed into designing larger hotel and resort projects over the years.

ABD: You have worked under the legendary architect Charles Correa. What are the important aspects of architecture that you imbibed from him? Were there any more inspirations in your architectural journey?

SK: I worked with Charles Correa for a year and a half before starting off my practice. What I imbibed from my education at Pratt were strong concepts and ideas and understanding the architectonics of space. Building methods in North America are different from those in our part of the world. Residences are mostly in timber in the US while we build here with RCC and masonry. So the idea of working with Charles Correa whom I respected was to understand how an intelligent practice has learnt from traditional ideas and then developed them into a contemporary design vocabulary. When I came back from the States I was literally like a child who was flung into the ocean since the method of building was very different here. So in a sense I had to unlearn and relearn everything in terms of actually how one would approach

construction. At Charles' office I

understood the importance of voids, and open-to-sky spaces in Indian Architecture.

The experience with Charles and then moving on and exploring what other south Asian architects were doing was very valuable. I visited Sri Lanka and I got the opportunity to meet Geoffrey Bawa before he passed away. I visited all his projects which left a very positive impression on me. It really chartered a way forward for me - making me understand the kind of architecture I wanted to practice - one that was respectful of tradition, history, climate and context yet was innovative and contemporary. We have over the past 16 years tried to develop our version of an "Indian Modern" sensibility and have played with permutations of those early ideas that I absorbed when I returned to India.

ABD: Khosla Associates has had the honour of being the only firm to be featured in India amongst 114 architects in an important Architectural Book "Hatch- The New Architectural Generation" by Kelran Long (Lawrence King Publishers 2008). As the flag bearer of a new contemporary India, where do you think the Indian contemporary architecture is heading? Also, who are the architects in India whose architecture you can relate to?

SK: There is no doubt about the fact that there is some sensitive and thought provoking architecture emerging from our country but the majority architecture you see in the urban environment has been put up by developers and sadly in their case, whether residential or commercial proj-

ects it's really about building an image and selling an aspirational dream. Hence ideas from distant parts of the world are transported and replicated in a cut and paste way into our urban fabric with absolutely no sense of context. India is a rich and varied culture from which contemporary architects have much to be inspired by, yet it's sad to see that majority of architecture we see is blindly aping the west, being slapped down with curtain walls and glass. A lot of architecture here doesn't respond to the environment in which we are living. Having said that I would like to add that there is also a new breed of developers emerging in our cities who are hiring the best of our architects and creating some relevant projects.

There are several architects and designers whose work I relate to and respect, and if I were to name a few, there is relevant work coming in from Ahmedabad (Matharoo Associates, Aniket Bhagwat), Mumbai (Brinda Somaya, Bijoy Jain, Samira Rathod, Kapil Gupta, Rahul Mehrotra), Delhi (Stephan Paumier, Morphogenesis, Lotus Design services), Bangalore (Nisha Mathew Ghosh, Shahrulk Mistry, Sanjay Mohe). Though I have named just a few, there is continuous fresh work coming out of India but catering to a very niche audience. The problem in India is that there is no rigorous process which qualifies one to practice Architecture. You could have graduated from any college in India where education may not be top notch and start practicing by just showing a degree certificate. There is no accreditation or licensing exam as there is in most countries

abroad. I have some young architects coming out of my office and when I talk to them two years later they say that they are teaching. That really reflects on where colleges or architectural education is heading in our country.

ABD: What are the elements that you have imbibed from traditional Indian architecture?

SK: Most definitely the architecture of the past and the learning from it is very crucial, and as contemporary Indian architects, we have much to be inspired by our architectural heritage.

I think the central notion of pavilions that the Mughals brought with them, the open-to-sky courtyards or *aangans* of the *havelis* and traditional houses and the colonial verandas are all very useful concepts for our climate.

I find it important to extract useful concepts and ideas and then contemporize them to suit our present needs. Colonial homes usually had a wrap around veranda which was a wonderful place to sit, sheltered from sun and rain, yet able to look out into nature; however the veranda wrapping around the entire house would block out any natural light to the centered living and dining spaces.

Learning from the traditional Indian science of Vaastu can also be useful, and we have designed several homes extracting the essence of the science yet with a wholly contemporary expression. However, I do believe that we need to imbibe only elements that work with our current lifestyles and environment. Morning east light is wonderful and Vaastu prescribes that we wake up to this light, and block or shield the

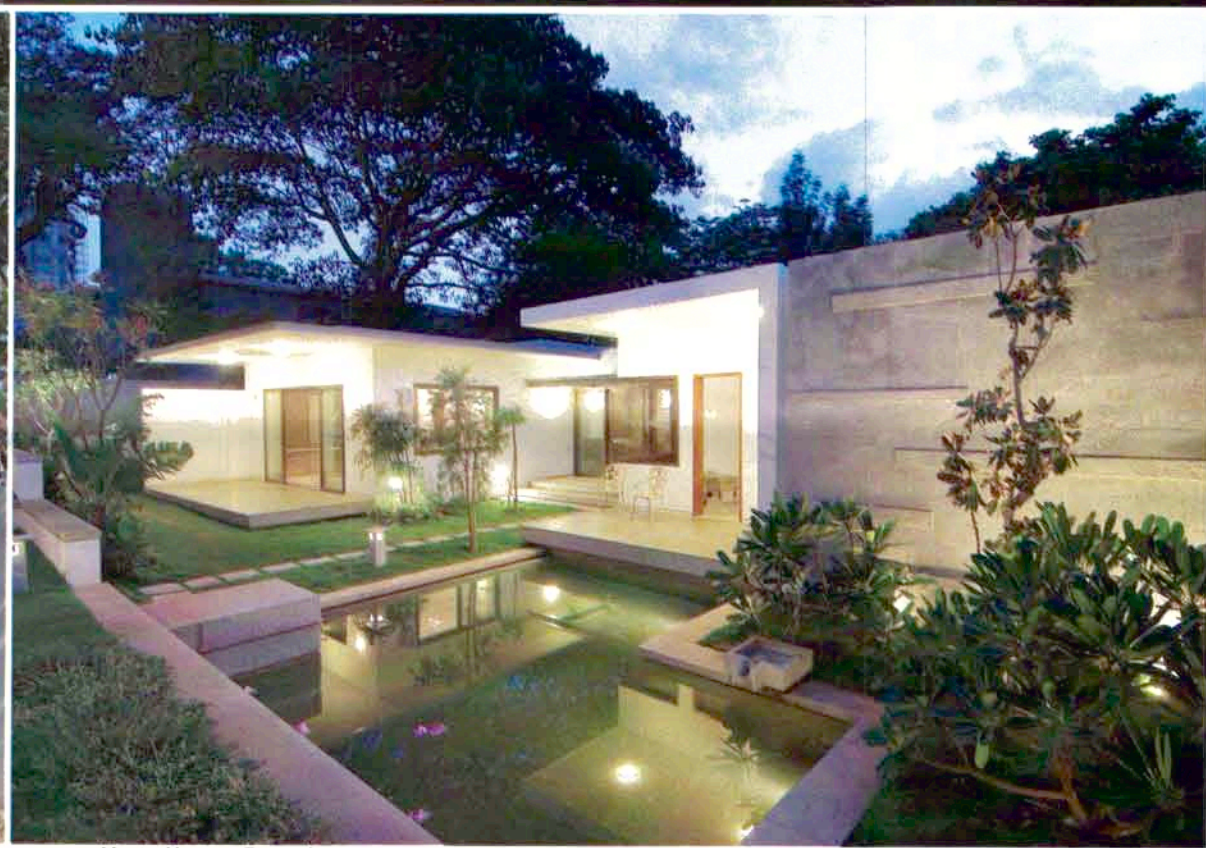
harsh western and southern sun. It also prescribes that we have few or little openings on the south and western sides which blocks the wonderful southwest breeze. Likewise Vaastu prescribes that water should be in the north east, but with a current demand for swimming pools, a north pool usually does not get enough strong sun and is usually too cold most of the year to swim in.

ABD: You have redefined the look for major brands in the retail sector like Café Coffee Day, KFC, Pizza hut, Barista, Wrangler etc. Architecture and retail have come along to share a very important association. What would you like to say about it?

SK: Everyone wants to look good. Indian companies want to look global and Multinational companies want to adapt to India. India is a big market and so there is a huge amount of activity happening here. Especially if we see in malls, branding today has become so important.

Interior design and architecture has only a partial role to play in the retail space. What is equally important is the brand identity and visual merchandising which is beyond our scope of work.

I have to say though that the retail format has become less exciting for us. We have been instrumental in redefining major MNC's and brands, but after the initial template is set, the work becomes exceedingly repetitive. Five or six years back we were involved with groups like Pizza hut, KFC, Café Coffee day and did enjoy the experience of learning the retail game, but gradually lost interest in duplicating tem-



Vastu House, Bangalore

plates across the country.
ABD: You have always been very careful about the use of local materials and how they should be able to interpret your designs. Since you believe in doing more of customized projects with private individuals, how smooth is the designing process with the clients?

SK: I believe in using local materials wherever we can. Not only do we have a wealth and spectrum of local materials in our country, it also makes sense to use material that is readily available to us rather than transport material from across the world, especially when the world is facing such an energy crisis.

Having said that, we work with a variety of clients, situations, programs and projects and each has a unique set of concerns. Since we work regularly with the hospitality industry and sometimes with the Corporate Industry in India that wants to feel global, brand image becomes increasingly important and we have to resort to a spectrum of materials from across the world to fulfill this requirement. However my personal preference is still to use local materials wherever we can.

ABD: As a small niche firm that takes pride in its small size

to create more customized projects without much association with developers, do you sense a threat today from developers taking over the architecture aesthetics?

SK: That is predominantly what we can see in the past decade or so. Developers hire architects to realize their dreams and a lot of the times the dreams are guided by what will sell, which can result in gimmicky architecture. But I do need to add that mindsets are changing fast. We have to give credit to the handful of developers in every city who are breaking the mould and commissioning good architects to produce serious architecture. Increasingly these developers are thinking of the value additions to giving their clients a quality lifestyle and product.

ABD: You have helped in getting the Indian architecture a foothold in the International architectural scene. How would you compare Indian architecture to the countries abroad? Which country/city do you appreciate for its architecture?

SK: I would like to mention Sri Lanka where there are architects like Channa Daswatte, Anjalendran and several others who have upheld the legacy of Geoffrey Bawa and arrived at an

indigenous contemporary Sri Lankan language that is simple in materiality, draws from its colonial past, and is extremely responsive to the climate. There is a strong Sri Lankan design aesthetic that has thus emerged.

Unlike a small country like Sri Lanka where influences can spread easily, India is a vast country where climate, culture, people and context vary immensely. However, a majority of architecture in our cities wants to ape the west - look global instead of local. There are however architects who have developed a contemporary Indian sensibility but this architecture has not proliferated the urban fabric of our cities.

ABD: Khosla Associates has achieved a lot in a span of 16 years. What are the changes that you have seen in your own practice over these past years?

SK: I think our work has got more complex in terms of the nuances involved. The work has got richer and the vocabulary has developed as we have grown as architects and adapted to a changing world. We might still be doing some of the scale of the projects which we were doing when we started while there are others that have grown in scale too. We have always prided ourselves to be a small office, a boutique firm and we

have always enjoyed getting our hands dirty and working with a cross disciplinary approach. There are architects, interior designers and product designers in the office in a studio like environment. Tania (my wife who is a graphic designer), myself and Amaresh are currently working towards a new product line for the home. The idea is not to get into a trap of one kind of work. Some years down the line I would like to look back and feel that we have managed to explore different typologies of architecture - the basic value or issues in architecture remain the same whether you are doing a hospital or a school. Everyone wants light, open spaces, cross ventilation but what is exciting is interacting and influencing different kinds of people.

We always look for new challenges and the one thing that keeps us going is the will to keep experimenting, innovating and not to repeat ourselves. The ideating starts at my table where I personally think over the initial ideas on every project and then discuss it with Amaresh. The initial sketches from me then go to design development (Amaresh's table). They are then fed into the computer and they are given to project teams. We have 3-4 project teams, each with a team leader who then report back to us.

ABD: From your vast repertoire of projects is there any one project, which has given you the biggest challenge? Also, is there any unrealized project, which you regret the most?

SK: We recently completed two very exciting and challenging projects in 2010, a house on a cliff in Kerala, and an Arts and Media Centre at The Doon School, Dehradun.

There were several challenges while building the Kerala project. Since the design was complex, the contractors and local agencies (used to more traditional structures) found it difficult to comprehend our drawings. Moreover, the client was in London; we as architects were in Bangalore, and the site was in a fishing village in Kerala! It became increasingly difficult dealing with unprofessionalism in Kerala, labour unions, bureaucracy with permissions etc to build. We finally had to change three contractors to complete the job. It was therefore a very difficult job but the outcome has been worth the heartache and the house is getting a lot of attention in architectural circles internationally.

The project to do an Arts and Media centre at the Doon School at Dehradun has been very rewarding, especially since I am



Shiro, Mumbai



an alumnus of the school and was very involved with the arts while in school. This was a great way to give back to one's school. The project was challenging: as a contemporary building had to weave the topography and natural environment of the school, had to be sensitive to the brick architecture of the historic campus and had to interface successfully with other English renaissance inspired buildings. The result has been a huge success and the boys at the school I am told, love the building.

I do not like to regret unrealized projects, but we worked on a scheme for over two years for a spa resort in the Maldives. The initial vision was for us to complete the Architecture and Interior design, but due to various reasons we were only able to get involved in the Architecture. The resort which is the Jumeriah Maldives, is on a 12 acre secluded island and gets complete in a few months time.

There have been a couple of unrealized projects in which I would like to mention a museum which we did for Sarnath and it was close to the Stupa complex in Uttar Pradesh. We were working with a NGO and we did extensive work on the scheme but it never got realized due to various reasons.

ABD: From residences, hospitality projects to restoration projects, is there any specific kind of project left that you desire to create today? What are your ongoing projects?

SK: Our projects are currently

catering mostly to the luxury segment, be it residences, boutique hotels, restaurants and bars. We now would look forward to more institutional projects (schools, museums, cultural centres) that can contribute positively and celebrate the life in our cities.

We are about to embark on some exciting new work this year. We will design a public school in Bangalore for 4000 students, a boutique hotel in Bangalore, and office complex for a textile mill in Coimbatore.

Last words

The first impression of Architect Sandeep Khosla made me realise the passion, the conscientious approach he exemplified towards his work. The rest of the meetings not only strengthened this realisation but also spoke volumes of the 'love' he has for his work which rises much beyond the attachment merely for a 'profession'. Extraordinary designs aside, Sandeep possesses an intrinsic natural expression to put into words his thoughts and his creations. The serenity in his designs is a true reflection of the composure he possesses. Sandeep's unique and respected place in the Indian architecture in a short span of time and at a young age is definitely attributed to his ingenious conceptual insights that he offers in each project, each of which has a story to tell. An inspiration for youngsters and a pride for the rest of the Indian architecture fraternity, we all have much to learn from him.



Meradhoo Spa Resort, Maldives

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