

Constructed in context

IT'S TIME FOR THOSE IN ARCHITECTURE, TO CREATE BUILDINGS THAT ARE NOT JUST ICONIC, BUT ALSO RELEVANT, SAYS LEADING ARCHITECT AND SPACE DESIGNER SANDEEP KHOSLA

BIG PROJECT: Water Villas is set on a 12-acre pearl-shaped island in one of the South 'Atolls' in the Maldives



● JULIE SAM

Sandeep Khosla describes architecture as a "change from the rational to the poetic" and believes it has the ability to "set narrative experiences that evoke instinctive emotions within us" It was with this belief in architecture that Sandeep founded his independent practice Khosla Associates in 1995. Two decades later, his portfo-

lio boasts of luxury projects like The Water Villas at Jumeriah off a remote island in the Maldives, private luxury houses, the DPS Kindergarten School in Bengaluru and hospitality spaces like the Hard Rock Café, Shiro, Carbon, Loft 38 and The Tower Kitchen among others.

A graduate in architecture from the Pratt Institute, New York, Sandeep says he "stumbled into" interior design. "I got the opportunity to work on some hospitality interior design projects early in my career and this led to further interior projects, which I really started to enjoy. The process of working on both architecture and interior design simultaneously is exciting because both disciplines feed off each other. And we now look at all projects very holistically as we believe that the boundaries between architecture and interior design are quite blurred," Sandeep says.

Sandeep was joined at Khosla Associates by Amaresh Anand in 2000 and they've established a successful partnership in the time since. One of their earliest projects in the hospitality space was called 180 Proof, located in a prominent 100-

year-old Colonial building. The Water Villas at Jumeriah in the Maldives 16 over water luxury villas, 400 metres out into the ocean from the main resort built around a coral reef, were another milestone as was Cliff House—a holiday home commissioned by a client in London, which was perched 200 feet high on a cliff with a view of the Arabian Sea.

Sandeep became conscious of the aesthetics of design early on his home in Kolkata forms his earliest memories of a beautifully designed space. He says, "We lived in a colonial bungalow with high ceilings, exposed steel girders, black and white chequered marble floors with some rooms in a beautiful red oxide, louvered wooden shutters with French windows. My parents were house proud and had a lovely sensibility; they filled the house with eclectic objects from their travels."

Sandeep also had the good fortune of working with the late Charles Correa. How was it working with one of the best minds in the industry? "Honestly, it was a difficult time as Charles was a taskmaster!" says Sandeep. "But my learning curve at his office was very steep. I had just returned from the Pratt Institute, where the work we did was conceptually sophisticated yet largely disconnected from issues such as economy, culture, historical context, materiality and climate. At Charles' office, I learnt how to draw inspiration from our history and tradition, and developed a strong contemporary design language. I understood the importance of permeable spaces, voids and open-to-sky spaces such as courtyards and verandahs in our tropical

environment."

Apart from Charles, Sandeep is inspired by the late Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa ("His work shaped the way I think about space," he says), Vo Trong Nghia from Vietnam, Dutch designer Marcel Wanders, and Japanese architect Shigeru Ban.

Sandeep is a little concerned about the growing number of what he calls "starchitects" in the industry. He says, "The time has come in architecture to create buildings that are truly 'relevant' and not just 'iconic'. Concerns of buildings should be driven by the need (social,

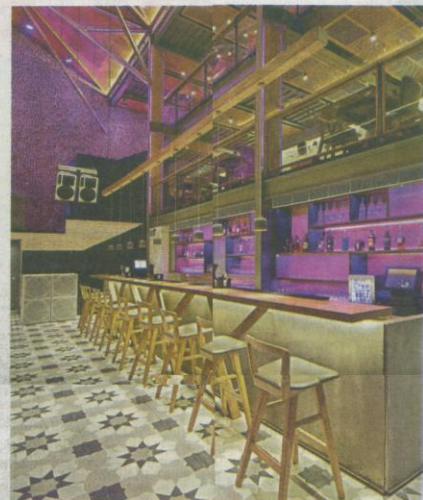
economic, cultural, environmental, local) rather than only an image. A major part of the architecture in our urban environment has been put up by developers and sadly in their case, it's really about building an image and selling an aspirational dream. Hence, ideas from distant parts of the world are transported and replicated in a cut-and-paste way into our urban fabric with absolutely no sense of context. There are, however, also a new breed of developers emerging in our cities who are hiring the best of our architects and creating some relevant projects."



Sandeep (right) with Amaresh



THE VIEW: The spectacular Cliff House at Chowira, a fishing village, 30 minutes from Thiruvananthapuram, in Kerala



EVENING OUT: Loft 38 was built to capture Bengaluru's vibrant music culture