



"Architecture and interiors are not separate and thus the spaces and its objects need to contain the same philosophy of life. It is an idea of imprinting memories, of nostalgia and of detail."

AR. AMIT KHANNA,
Amit Khanna Design Associates

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The desire to create



a different space for one's self in a 21st century context seems very like the desire to stay close to Earth. There seems to be an almost primeval longing to cocoon oneself in an approximation of something 'Earth'; trees, bark, stone, rock or wood. In some instances, this is underscored by the double container, where Earth is both container and contained, as in the reflecting surface that covers the box home in the Sweden (page 45). Am thinking, what drives us then to do this sort of thing? A very understandable need to be free of the material chains that cloy and bind? The need to rediscover something less plastic? The need for complete immersion into Nature, which in this case translates to suspension or insertion into a shell of trees or rock or air.

Freedom in the context of an increasingly screen-connected society seems to imply a complete disconnect from screens and 'the other' as more and more ecologically-aware builders and creators ideate and create living spaces that keep them away from the hurly burly of life and its continuum of demands. So while it is perhaps a mark of human perversity that desires an escape from the things that gave us the capacity to create the escape, its also a creative force that has spawned the strange and lovely spaces we show in this edition of IFJ.

For those of us who might not be able to create escape spaces, may we gently suggest to the Powers-that-are in political residence that they can help with supporting shared green spaces for children to play in and for us to enjoy a moment of grass-under-ones-feet and moments of quiet (yes of course its possible ! with a simple mandate to appropriately schedule noise-producing things such as trucks, or even televisions). If this is all too Big Brother, and one can't really create one of these fabulous spaces for ones self, one could carve out a moment as a gift to oneself, and exult in the rejuvenating power of Nature, silence and screenlessness.

I look forward to hearing from you.
Please send your thoughts to me at sylvia@ifj.co.in

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ifj : the indian review of world
furniture, interiors and design

editor & creative head

sylvia khan
sylvia@ifj.co.in

deputy editor

alpana lath sawai
alpana@ifj.co.in

ifj writetank

editorial & interactions

simi kaur
simi@ifj.co.in

pr manager & editorial correspondent

sneha kanrar
sneha@ifj.co.in

studio head

harish raut
harish@ifj.co.in

asst. graphic designer

saif sheikh
saif@ifj.co.in

subscription support

sharon rahatwal
sharon@ifj.co.in

to subscribe

jasmeet kaur
subscribe@ifj.co.in

to contribute editorial matter

edit@ifj.co.in

to advertise

jyoti agasti
jyoti@ifj.co.in
+91 98924 85290

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t : 91 22 2830 2870 / 71 f : 91 22 2821 6140

Editor : Sylvia Khan.

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corporate office

Index Media Pvt. Ltd.
401, Sanskriti Park, Commercial Block,
50B, Mahakali Caves Road, Andheri (E),
Mumbai - 400 093, India.
t : +91 22 2830 2870 / 71
f : +91 22 2821 6140

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AKDA, AMIT KHANNA DESIGN ASSOCIATES

ar. amit khanna

an unwavering confidence in design thinking and solving complex layered problems has stood this firm in good stead



Two factors influenced

the young Amit Khanna to choose architecture as a profession. The first was his growing years in the East African climate, which left a lasting impression on his young mind. Secondly, the belief of a close family friend (who was himself an architect) that architecture is a fulfilling profession led to Ar. Khanna, Design Principal, AKDA, New Delhi, pursuing his Bachelors of Architecture from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi.

The impressive campus aided the process of self-discovery for this learner, who sought refuge in the library to read and draw. Ar. Khanna explains, “I devoured Vitruvius, Corbusier and Correa in equal measure, but what did stay with me was the consistency of the problems in design – that the issues that Bernini and Borromini grappled with, were similar to those affecting FLW and Mies, and that Doshi and Rewal were also searching for answers to similar issues.” Soon after a short stint in an architectural office, the opportunity to design a private residence offered Ar. Khanna the opportunity to be accountable for his decisions while developing his design vocabulary in terms of “Working on the fundamental anatomy of the building, getting the scale right and getting the choice of materials right.”

Ar. Khanna believes in engaging with the three influential parameters: efficiency, craftsmanship and longevity, in every act of design. He says,

“If we mould our buildings in a singular image, the building will consistently perform better than its peers in the areas of energy efficiency, daylighting, waste management, ease of maintenance; and these goals will define the architecture.” He goes on to make a strong pitch for sustainability. “Having a sense of surrounding and a relationship with open spaces is necessary to reduce the dependency on built forms, which makes the construction reductive since its very inception, and that becomes sustainable. It also informs the inhabitants and gently guides them through a lifestyle that incorporates the same values whereas technological advancement serves as an invaluable aid to such sustainable design processes.”

Ar. Amit Khanna feels the current architectural practice in the country is on a path of rediscovery. He explains his point, saying, “It is driven on a largely Western-centric preconceived aesthetic ideal that does not take into account

our local resource economy, our climate and our vast traditions for creating passive solutions to complex, nuanced and diverse spatial concerns.” But he is sanguine about the future. “I hope to see a thriving contingent of people involved in defining an architecture that is deeply rooted in the country’s regional vernacular and is aware of its craftsmanship and spatial traditions,” he says, adding, “I am of the opinion that young people should be willing to work in rural areas and be able to engage with stakeholders at all levels while learning many methods of creating spaces. My advice to fresh graduates is to spend their time travelling to observe cultures, climates and local architecture.”

Though the firm has been credited with hundreds of projects to date, Ar. Khanna still aspires to design a net-zero building. “We hope to build one such building in this decade, and that will certainly be our favourite,” he explains.

House X

Location:

Uttar Pradesh, India

Design brief:

Conceived as a composition of primary volumes, this three-bedroom house is designed for single family use with the possibility of adding a fourth bedroom when the need arises.

Design elements:

- The overall plan is designed to minimize heat gain in summers and the house is envisioned with three main design elements on the front façade - a circular drum as a living space juxtaposed against a triangular wedge that contains the services and a rectilinear cube establishing the boundary conditions.
- In order to amplify the scale of the living areas and maximizing spatial planning, no partitions divide the living and dining areas; the use of a perforated brick screen provides shade along the front surface of the wedge.
- An existing 'Ber' tree (or *ZiziphusMauritiana*) towards the rear of the site has been retained, with the rear bedroom and dining space being orchestrated around and creating an external courtyard that acts as a shaded spill-out zone.
- An oculus over the stair washes the entire space with sunlight, illuminating the central part of the house. Large windows with thin black metal frames allow the internal living spaces to flow into the front and rear spaces at the ground floor level.
- Light grey, locally available Kota stone is used for the flooring; LED lighting and low-flow faucets enhance the energy efficiency of the building. Soft paved surfaces around the house allow for ground water recharging and reducing reflective glare into the building.





Ridge House

Location:

New Delhi, India

Design brief:

Creating a five-storey building on a foundation of pure rock was one of the immediate challenges of this project. The client also asked for the upper floors to be residential, and for the lower levels to be used for parking.

Design elements:

- The building outline creates a double-shared courtyard; this communal open space was designed to be mutually beneficial with the possibility of growing trees in the central space in the future, a rarity in the otherwise cheek-by-jowl approach of local residential developers.
- Each of the residential floors has been treated differently to extract the maximum buildable volume, while ensuring plenty of open space, light and ventilation.
- The ground floor was maximized and split into two apartments arranged around the courtyard with independent access from the parking level, and hence has been designed specifically for tenants.
- The first floor becomes a single apartment meant for the grandparents, while the lower residential level is designed with an intention to be rented out to tenants. The three-bedroom penthouse on the top floor was to be occupied by the client and opened up to the generous terrace, meant for entertaining, complete with a bar counter and water landscaping.
- The exterior has been designed in brick and substantial portions of the facade are screens created by combining regular sized bricks with thinner ones to create an irregular pattern of openings that modulate the fierce exterior light.
- Custom designed double glazed windows with protective dust seals in the openable shutters are used throughout the building. LEDs that are used for all lighting, while double insulation on the roof ensures minimum heat gain for the upper floor and the brick screens mitigate the solar gain from the elevations.



Automated Warehousing Facility

Location:

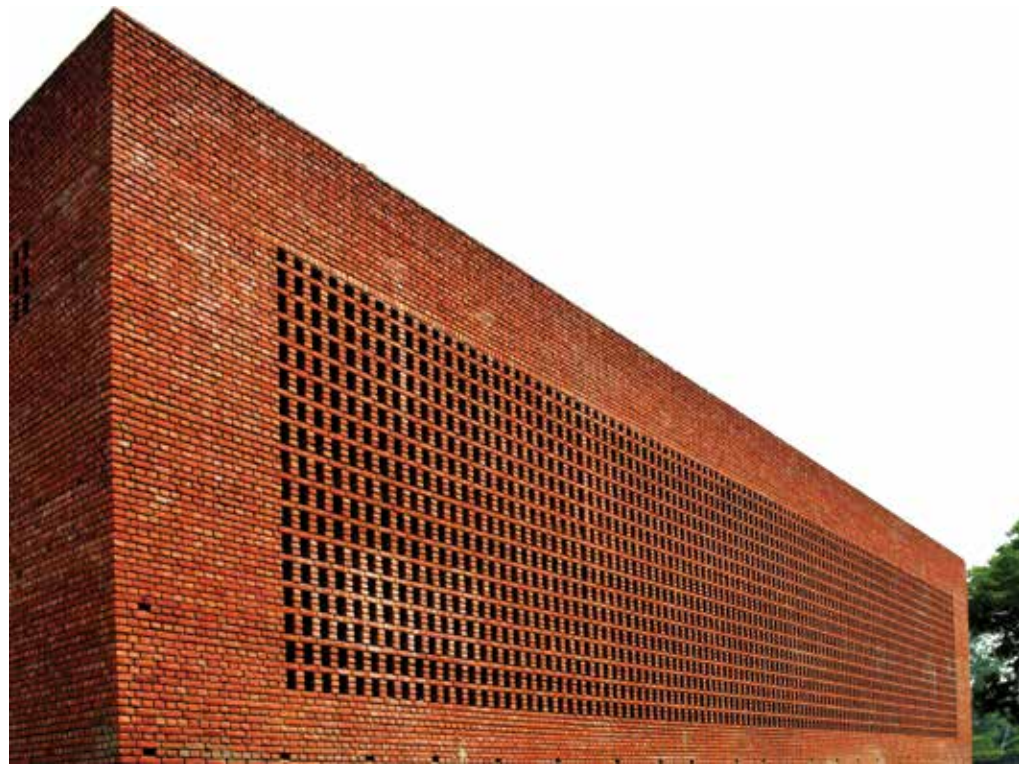
Faridabad, India

Design brief:

The project brief was to create a large warehousing facility that would be equipped with a high degree of automation.

Design elements:

- Planned in three incremental phases, the 140,000 sq ft structure is programmatically divided into three parts – the warehouse, loading bay and the north-facing office block, which is interlocked with the other two.
- Each block is designed from within, the individual requirements dictating the overall dimensions. The office is thin and narrow, facing the north through a glazed wall that brings in optimum daylight.
- The warehouses are largely square to enable efficiency and the dimensions of robotic arms and stocking pallets dictate the spatial planning, including the 20' high ceilings. The loading bay provides the interface between the two elements and also the exterior cargo area.
- The warehouse and loading bay are wrapped in a perforated brickwork screen. This screen shades a glazed dust barrier, recessed by 1200mm from the south and a north facade, creating a buffer zone that cuts glare, serves as a utility zone and provides a high degree of passive insulation. The glazed barrier can be opened during good weather for ventilation and during extreme weather to allow for mechanical ventilation.
- The west facade is mostly blank, with only a sliver of brick screen near the ceiling to permit evening illumination, and the completely blank east façade faces the loading bay.
- Additionally, the building is set nearly 4m within the ground, allowing for the parking, mechanical and canteen spaces to be naturally illuminated while the adjacency to the ground provides thermal insulation.
- The surrounding site is sloped away from the subterranean floor, saving costly retaining walls and providing views from within. These sunken areas catch rainwater for harvesting which is diverted to a local well.
- The roofs are covered with reflective tiling to minimize heat gain and a slim courtyard between the office block and loading bay helps draw out hot air from within the building.



One By One

Location:

New Delhi, India

Concept:

The client wanted an extensive renovation to accommodate the needs of an expanding family that required both proximity and privacy.

Design elements:

- The existing 2½ storey building was completely rebuilt from the inside out with only the exterior walls retained as part of the building footprint.
- An additional staircase and lift core was inserted at the rear corner of the building, providing additional access to each floor.
- Each floor is designed to suit individual requirements. The ground floor was completely gutted; 40 years old load bearing walls were replaced by a complex system of structural steel and it enabled the building to be completely transparent to the exterior. Upper floors were extensively updated with new bathrooms, kitchens, flooring, false ceiling, air conditioning, doors and windows.
- Local granites in two shades of grey were chosen for designing the façade and the rest of the building was reimagined in a contemporary aesthetic; an arcade on the first floor was retained and emphasized with local yellow granite. An aluminium screen on the staff annexe provides privacy, while ensuring adequate light and ventilation.
- The project emphasized several sustainability strategies- LED lighting, rainwater harvesting, double insulated glass, thermal insulation for exterior walls, reusing existing building materials (old wooden frames were reused to create wooden flooring) and conserving embodied energy. ifj

