

Ar. Amit Khanna,
Founder & Design Principal, AKDA

Architects & Projects

‘Architecture is not really a profession to me but it is a manner of experiencing life,’ shares Ar. Amit Khanna, the Founder & Design Principal at AKDA (Amit Khanna Design Associates) - a design firm that integrates the disciplines of architecture, interior design, furniture, lighting and product design.

Fascinated by one of his parent's friend's life who was an architect by profession and with whom he spent his childhood in Kenya, Ar Amit always wanted to be an architect what seemed to him at that time, an interesting life and which later also proved to be very interesting to him indeed. After graduating from the School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi in 2002, he established his own design studio AKDA in 2004 and heads the same, combining day-to-day involvement in design with his primary responsibilities for the strategic direction of the practice.

He loves building things and unlike some of the more theoretical practitioners today, he derives most of his joy from the actual process of construction. He is of the opinion that 50% of the world's population now lives in urban areas, putting incredible pressures on resources. “Sustainable Urban development and mitigating climate change are going to be the key challenges of the current generation and this must reflect in our individual decisions about design, architecture, and the way we choose to build.”

His design philosophy is ‘to make regional specificity and sustainability intrinsic to the design process

and product.’ Every object produced at the studio, be it a 60,000SF office building or a 0.5sf light fixture, undergoes the same scrutiny of process and exactitude – A process that is founded in suitable materiality and innovation, irrespective of appearance. “In the quest for absolute quality, we follow a unique system of design development, wherein we allow ourselves to learn and imbibe from the skills and experience of people who actually craft the buildings and objects that we design. Their early involvement acknowledges them as equal stakeholders in the process, and allows us as a studio to better predict construction outcomes and quality control,” explains Ar. Amit.

He apprises, “Each project has its own challenges and site forces. It is that unique combination that allows us to invent customized solutions for each project. We try not to look at others, or even our own earlier projects for inspiration, but allow the design process to unfold.” Currently, Ar. Amit is working on some institutional projects that embody several Low Carbon and Energy Efficiency strategies to create a building that will be able to generate most of its energy needs on-site. “All buildings will have to become resilient and dynamic enough to supply their own energy needs.” After travelling to many architectural masterpieces over the years, he realized that none has left a more memorable impression on his mind than the Kimbell Art Museum at Fort Worth which is one of Kahn's finest buildings and certainly one of the finest buildings of the 20th century.

Ar Amit is a recipient of the Moira Barrie Award (UK) & holds a Kellogg Scholarship at the University of Oxford. As a student, he won a national design competition for the concept of a Highway Resort, 2000 (ArchiDesign Perspective). He was chosen as one of the only five architects among 20 designers in India under the age of 35 to exhibit his work in February 2013 (DxD, Alliance Francaise), selected as one of the Young Designers of 2013 and one of the Superstars of Design in 2014, besides he got shortlisted as one of the top 50 emerging architects in the country (iGen, Mumbai).

Apart from these, Ar. Amit serves as a teacher at his alma mater, the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi with diverse responsibilities related to design, research and theoretical exploration. Through his initiatives in education, he engages in research as a tool for design innovation to craft buildings that work with the local environment, both at the school and the studio. Moreover, apart from being an acclaimed photographer, he writes extensively for both online and offline media. For him, mantra of a successful life is: Eat plenty of chocolate and do what you love every day.

Cuboid House, New Delhi



At a Glance

Typology: Houses

Name of Project: Cuboid House

Location: New Friends Colony, New Delhi

Principal Architect: Amit Khanna

Site Area (sqft&sq m): 4500 sq.ft. / 418 sq.m.

Built-Up Area (sqft&sq m): 15000 sq.ft. / 1394 sq.m.

Start Date: Feb 2011

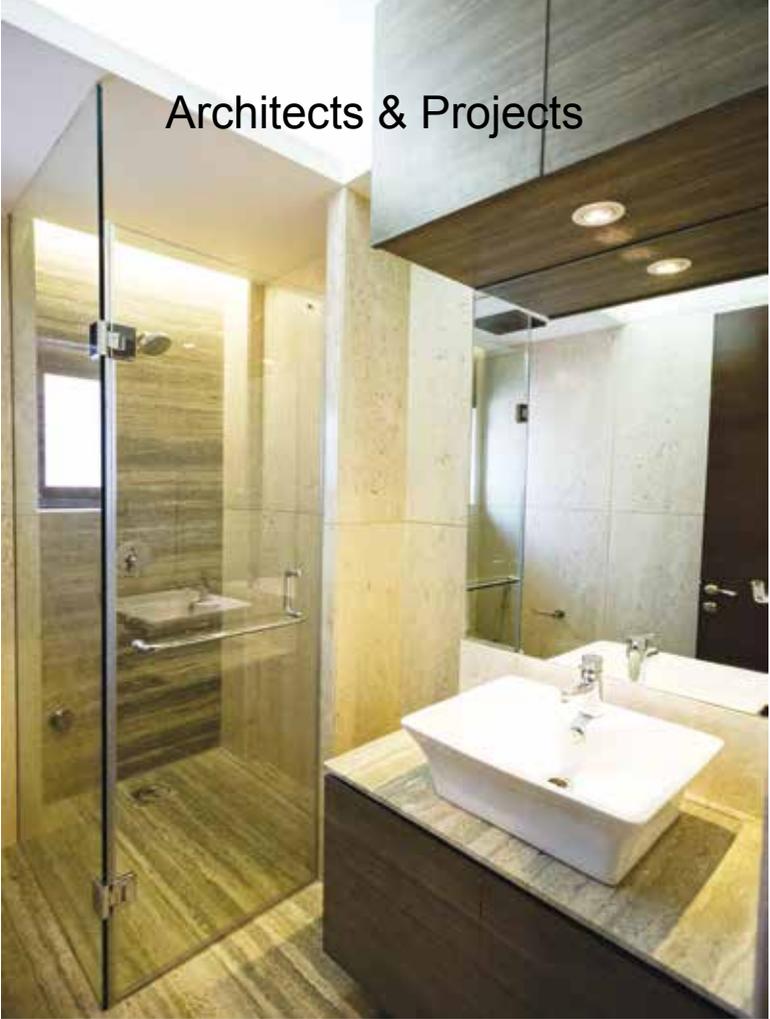
Completion Date: Oct 2012

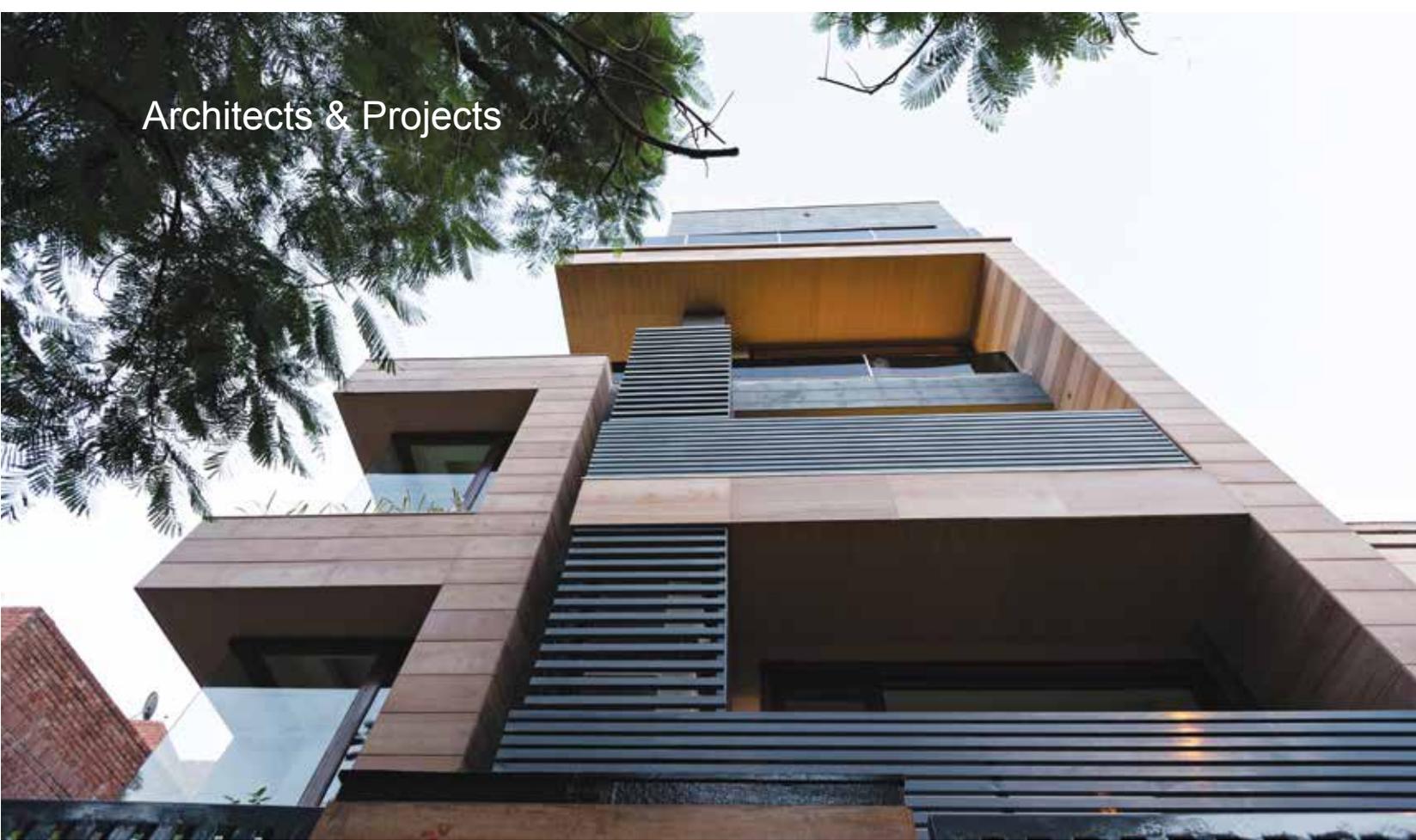
Photographer: Akshat Jain / Amit Khanna

The project attempts to demonstrate the possibility of affirming some 'principles'; some elementary yet precise rules. A series of spatial sequences are structured around minimal architectural events distributed throughout the house. These events are meant to be merely the background for the life of the future occupants and therefore recede into an almost imperceptible variation of light and shadow.

Developer-driven apartment blocks have completely overtaken the immediate context and most of urban Delhi. These apartment blocks typically occupy the complete







permissible envelope and then embellish the peripheral walls with whatever is currently most fashionable. The resulting urban condition is one dominated by forced facades that are 50ft/15m tall, punctuated only with unusable three feet balconies and large expanses of inoperable glass with little or no protection from the climate.

In contrast, the Cuboid House strategically optimises all of the area permissible by local code, but redistributes it amongst the various floor levels. The lower service floors are extended to the perimeter to allow for a larger ground floor and to maximise the parking at the road level. However instead of stacking upper plans above each other, the building steps away dramatically as it rises, giving way to a series of decks that open up to views on the north-east.

This strategy helps bring light deep into what is essentially, a narrow thin building. To further add to the luminosity of the interior spaces, two light wells are placed in the main living space. Equipped with operable windows, they not only bring light, but also draw out air from the floors and vent from the terrace. The deep recesses for the windows and large overhangs temper the fierce climate of Delhi and recall sustainable building traditions, while allowing for views from within. Two local stones, one grey (cudappah), the other sandy brown (jaisalmer teak), are used to emphasize the cubic volumes that give this house its name and form its most distinctive visible element.

