

TRENDS

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AHEAD OF THE GAME

Amit Aurora and Rahul Bansal
on the effect of intrinsic values
and belief systems on design



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IF might could be measured in terms of names, this issue would be counted among the mightiest. But that's not how I've ever looked at things. Name dropping isn't an art I can ever boast about being good at – and there are those who are accomplished at it, no?

Sigh! Well, I'm not one of them. For me, value has always come from what's intrinsically appealing and weightage has seldom been about outward appearances. Coming back to this issue, it's special because more than the names, it's their featured work that had my eyes twinkling. In fact, it's the work that makes them GOAT, so to speak, period. In straighter terms, it's the work that makes the names shine! Agree?

And so, with the stellar lineup of names, we have packed this issue with some of the most incredibly designed spaces and concepts of our time. What we've enjoyed most about working on this issue is the priceless education it affords us, rendering us a vantage that allows us to purvey the incredible trends by which we design and build our homes, and perhaps even live.

And more so, let's forget about the names and bring the focus back on the works that makes the names big enough to be remembered. Let me know what you think...!

Ronitaa R. Italia
Editor in Chief

DESIGN IN CONTEXT

*Handpicked products that blur the
lines between art and functionality*

Text **AVNI RAUT**

INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

Here is a simple concept executed with utmost clarity and precision to make a lasting impression, visually and functionally. FLIP, a pendant lamp designed by Sebastian Herkner for the Korean brand AGO, embodies an intuitive and interactive design. Two enclosing forms embrace each other, with the light source placed within the resulting enclosure. The act of partially rotating the two components changes the direction of light as required for different functions. For instance, the flow of light can be focused downwards for reading purposes and for other activities that don't require task lighting, the flow can be channeled upwards, with one simple movement. ►

IMAGE: AGO



A DISTINCT *perspective*

Amit Aurora and **Rahul Bansal**
of groupDCA get candid and
reveal how their dual vision has
resulted in a partnership that
combines traditional values with
contemporary approaches

Art Director **SHALAKA SHINDE**
Feature Coordination **NEERJA KAPADIA**
Profile Images **GREY FRAMES**





Architecture is everywhere...in the form of spaces, design and details. It's been so enriching to be part of this process and actually be able to make a difference.

— **Rahul Bansal**, Partner, *groupDCA*

Somewhere in the midst of chasing submissions and bunking classes in the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, in the latter half of the 80s, we realised a synergy and alignment in our design ideologies and ethics. Today, as we recall those days through a cloud of nostalgia, it is easy to understand that those experiences allowed our shared friendship to effortlessly transition into the partnership we have today.

Our practice groupDCA was formally launched in 1996, in an India that lacked much scope for architects or designers. That India was different; the concept of design itself was seen as a luxury and functionality prized above all. However, over the years, we've witnessed a dramatic evolution of the profession in the country alongside the changing Indian lifestyle and our ability to travel and desire to be entertained. In the early days, our goal was to introduce as much aesthetic value into the functional prerequisites as we could. As we grew, our design principles began to solidify, and we realized that one of our core values has always been practicality. We started out when resources were limited; sustainability was a default setting rather than a debate and we've carried that value with us through the decades. The gimmicks of design are something we've intentionally shied away from.

We would much rather produce a design that resonates with a client's lifestyle or value system than try to keep up with what's fashionable. This can be seen clearly in one of our projects... the Khurana residence. A strong, maximalist home built for leisure, it was designed for a large joint family in Amritsar, who are extremely keen on bringing multiple generations of relatives together regularly... an accepted Indian practice. The site was locked in by buildings all around, so we brought in nature through the introduction of the vertical double-height garden wall that greets you in the living room. A larger-than-life doll house keeps the kids entertained. Strategically placed water bodies help punctuate the structure



with a certain fluidity and combat the extreme weather that the city faces. These unexpected re-interpretations have been pieced together to create a home that is treasured by each user. We are a modern firm for traditional people.

Culture is a recognised touchstone of our society and when we design around it, we don't necessarily take the direct route and use traditional materials. Our preferred method is to push the aesthetic as a whole to reflect an inherent belief system or behaviour that needs to be catered to. As part of our contemporary approach, we embrace materials and techniques that are Indian ►

The practice comes with an in-depth knowledge in the prudent use of materials in design, bringing a durable, yet aesthetic brilliance into all its projects. The partners also take the effort of working towards conscious and sustainable methods.



The Khurana residence is a luxurious multi-functional home, integrated with sustainable design solutions. The chic and modern aesthetic blended with traditional elements appeal to the residing family spanning generations.



IMAGES SURAN/DANG

to create contemporary solutions, a value that we honour as architects. It's the perfect blend we're chasing after... of new-age and local materials, the latest technologies as well as locally available craftsmanship.

We're in the business of crafting an amalgamation of those sensibilities that are best suited for a project. Our store for the well-renowned Sanjay Gupta by Tibarumal Jewellers in Hyderabad poses a fine example of this. With exquisite ornaments that have adorned the city's elite for decades, the brand sets the standard for impeccable design in and of itself. Determined to keep their rich cultural history alive in the new store's interiors, we displayed their prized collectibles and various antiques, juxtaposing them against recently fashioned bespoke elements with details that pay homage to their time-honoured legacy. Marrying technology and tradition is a part of our skillset and lighting is a great arena that enables us to do that. We're keen on incorporating state-of-the-art lighting technology into all our projects, and this one was no exception. Here, the crowning glory is the chandelier, hanging front and central, embellished with 100-year-old components and curios from past fixtures. The addition of these iconic symbols brings in a touch of authenticity that builds trust with every generation of clientele.

In today's India, there is perhaps no such thing as fully traditional or fully modern. As lifestyles are everchanging, so is design. The modern Indian wants a contemporary yet Indian solution that will enable them to balance traditional lifestyle of today and the way of life he aspires to live in a few years from now.

In those instances, our role as a firm is to act as enablers and help drive their projected vision. We worked alongside homegrown sweets and snacks mega-brand Haldiram's to perceive a fresh brand identity catering to modern India while retaining their roots... a new destination that would essentially transition their perception to a wholesome experience, with a recognisable, enjoyable atmosphere. At this flagship outlet, a



trademark signage adorns the entrance and also heads the display counters stacked with all their authentic, customary fare. Placing it upfront establishes them to the present demographic while maintaining a connection to their illustrious past. Placed further into the store are seating areas with a warm ambiance for groups to gather and enjoy a meal together, or for individuals to be able to work from the space. Material wise, the muted tones, accents of brushed bronze and terrazzo flooring all work together to present the brand as one that has ►



It has been a journey full of love and passion, of things architectural and non-architectural, of learning and unlearning and of the sheer joys of finding simple solutions to complex issues.

— Amit Aurora, Partner, groupDCA



An integral part in helping a fresh brand identity for Haldiram's, the dynamic duo has created multiple stores for the brand, catering to modern India and yet, preserving their Indian roots. This results in a wholesome experience for visitors.



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IMAGES KAPIL KAMRA, AJIZ AMIN

steady roots in long-gone eras but has definitely arrived in style at the current culinary scenario of a modern Indian city.

While at work on a project, especially the ones with such high impact, a positive rapport with the client enables us to understand them better, encouraging innovative solutions and effective design. Building good relationships with clients, colleagues, and vendors is an integral part of the job. A real-life depiction of this ideal exists in our own office space housed in a converted warehouse. The space is a visual testament to our values and relationships... a true representation of our evolution as designers. We're both passionate about antique furniture and along with the necessary elements such as work desks and meeting rooms, we've ensured that it is a showcase of our best selves, ones that we're proud to present to our clients. It is practical, mindful of the needs of the team and a great atmosphere for ideation. The development of our workshop wing has also contributed to our success, in that it introduces us as people who can execute the unexpected ideas we're advocating for.

Our firm began with a simple philosophy... 'create impactful spaces.' That means we focus on individual and appropriate solutions that are sustainable...exclusive, well balanced, and contextual. A conscious effort is made to use local material and technology that reinforces



traditional crafts and skillsets of the craftsmen. Sticking to that early principle has allowed us to grow organically. We grew up valuing frugal resources and cherishing our relationships. Our current philosophy of "traditional values and contemporary approach" is the fruit borne out of many years of nurturing these inherent qualities have helped define us as individuals and as a design practice, all the while fuelled by our simple passion for timeless, relevant design. To do something modern is fast becoming a new tradition, and we're ready for it. **H&DT**

A paradigm on adaptive reuse, groupDCA's workspace is the result of a transformed warehouse into a vibrant commercial building. Retrofitted according to the needs of its users, the office is a wonderful representation of the duo's design expertise.



IMAGES SURYAN/DANG



A melange of the sheer diversity of the type of work undertaken and executed by groupDCA displays their design prowess with utmost intricacy, proving that they are not just one, but several steps ahead of the curve.



IMAGES RICKEN DESAI

