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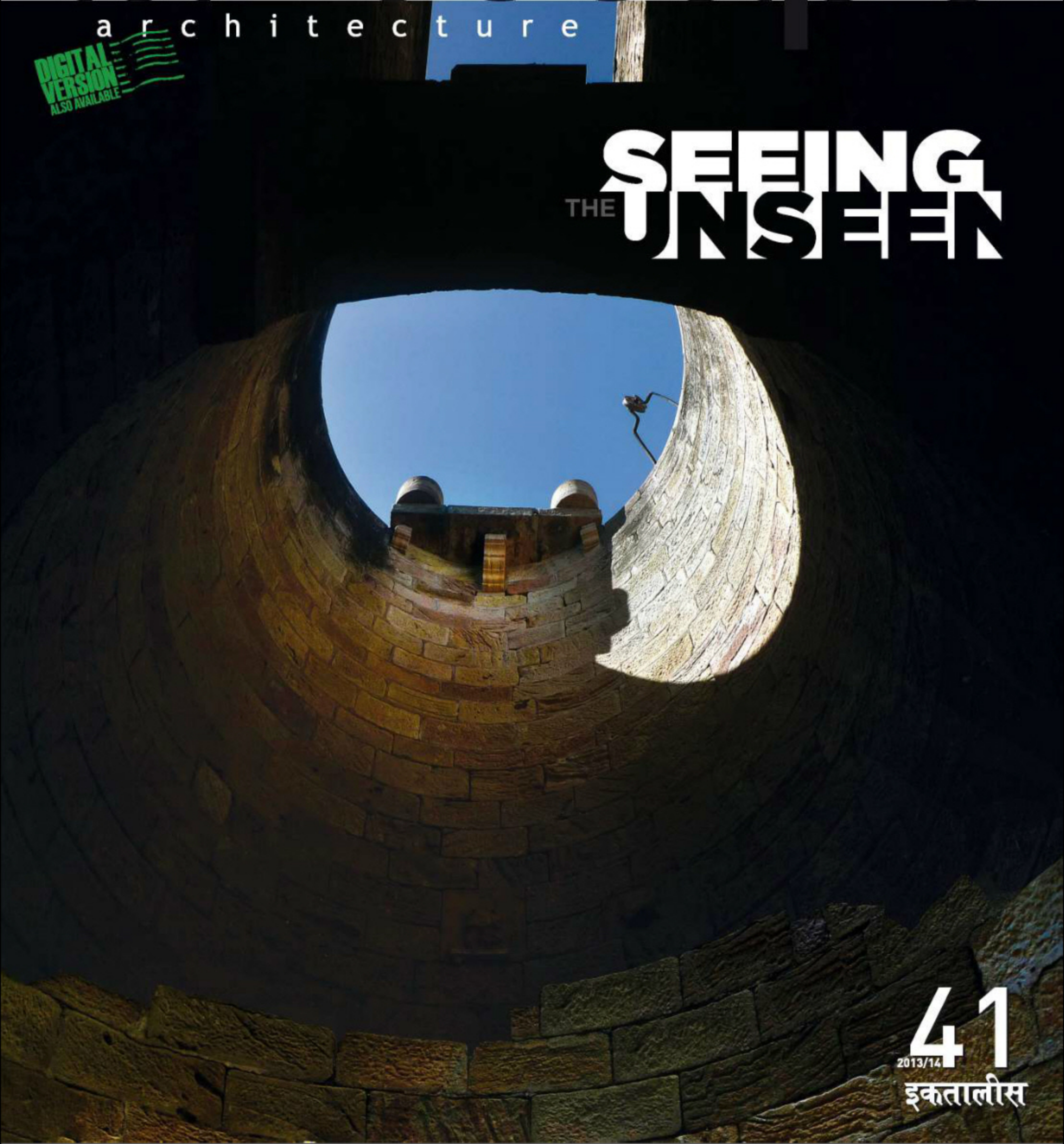
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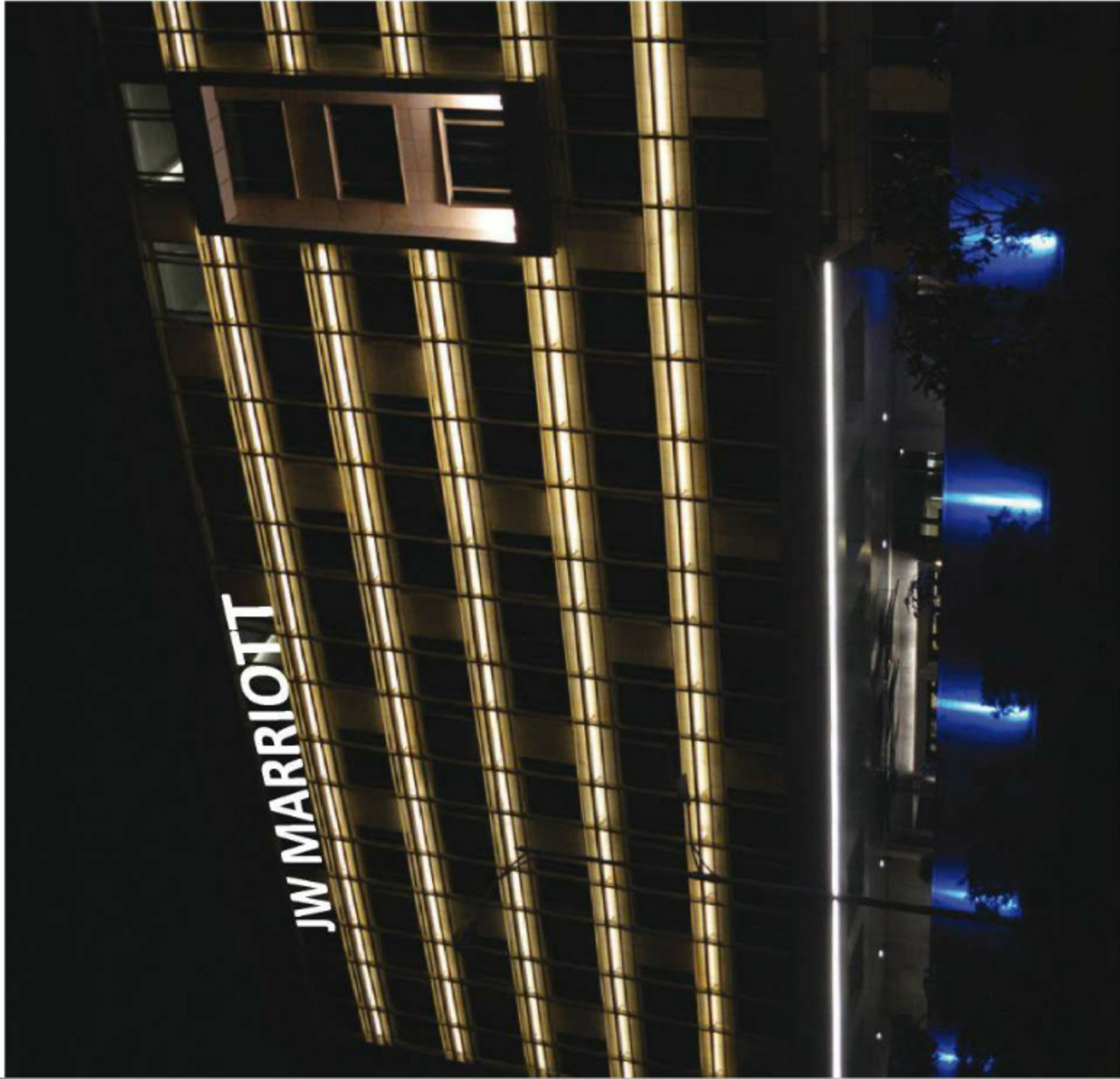
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Addressing the idea of “sense of place” in today’s rapidly changing world where most of us are intentionally or unintentionally shedding our cultural identities to become global citizens is a great challenge. It acquires a complex dimension when discussed in the realm of landscape architecture where indigenous models of design are still to be established in a nuanced way and at a variety of scales.

The Indian Society of Landscape Architects ISOLA Conference in New Delhi was organized this year around this very theme. A range of speakers deliberated on theories in spatial design and literary fields and presented examples to illustrate the idea of *genius loci* in a sensitive yet pragmatic way. In this issue, Jan Woudstra, one of the

speakers at the conference, builds upon this theory and quotes different examples of places that have acquired the “sense of place”. We are thankful to ISOLA Delhi NCR Chapter for facilitating our interactions with some of the speakers for interviews and articles.

In his interview, Jack Ahern underlines that the appropriate addressing of the ecological layers of a site plays a crucial role for creating a “sense of place.” He discusses the role of landscape architects, interdisciplinary approach to planning and new concepts like scenario planning and role of GIS.

With a thought provoking article on the theory of landscape design, Mohammad Shaheer resumes his regular section in the journal.

The journal has, over the years, provided a platform for various point of views, from the public and private sector, including architects and contractors, about the status of landscape architecture practice in India; these include past special issues on Professional Practice, Emerging Practices and Landscape Survey. Taking this further, Neelkanth Chhaya shares some of his views regarding various new and altered contexts of

working environment of a spatial design professional in present times. At the time of his retirement from CEPT, he shares his experience of working in one of the premier educational institutions in India with strong intellectual and social values.

In a completely different context, *Landscape Manifesto* by Heidi Hohmann and Joern Langhorst lists a set of issues confronting landscape practices in the United States. Although the two contexts are culturally and economically quite different, there are striking similarities in some of the concerns listed which our readers might find interesting.

The Green Landscape Rating System was launched by Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) about a year back. Energy efficient development field’s experts and a landscape practitioner review various aspects of the new and the existing rating systems. The features discuss specific and focused ideas for further evolution of these rating systems in Indian context.

With the broad idea of exploring the regional literary sources and creative arts for indigenous knowledge about the relationship of nature and culture, we introduce a new regular section titled *Seeing the Unseen*. We look forward to the contribution of readers in this exciting area of thought and artistic endeavour.

Neelkanth Chhaya

EDITORS | contact: lajournalindia@gmail.com

THIS PAGE: “Experience”. En Route / Rahul Gupta

COVER PAGE: Rampura rooadside well, Gujarat “Underground” / Jeroen van Westen





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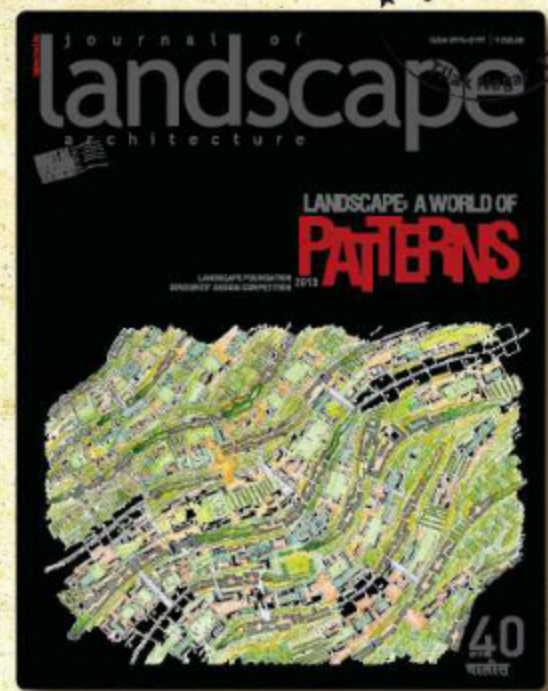
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Two features by senior professionals (the article 'A Bond with Nature' by Dulal Mukherjee, and presentation-talk 'Attuned to Nature' by Ravindra Bhan) underline the one single most cardinal aspect of good, sensitive and appropriate design – respect and reverence of Mother Nature. No wonder then that both these stalwarts of the profession—one in architecture, and the other in landscape architecture—have led and succeeded in the works they have done. It is their "intense affairs" with nature that has contributed to their projects aging beautifully and growing better with time.

— Inaya Sabri

I found the article 'In Partnership' (Geeta Wahi Dua) interesting and appropriate. As a small water feature and pools company, we end up providing lot of technical documents and drawings to architects and designers at the start of the projects. We often also undertake design aspects for them. At times, the architects claim good payments from their clients for these. Unfortunately, later at the time of execution of the jobs, these very architects seem reluctant or unsure of awarding the projects to us. It seems the industry really works in a very different way and we do need to change our working style and attitude towards sub-consultants and vendors. Each project is a collaborative effort with contributions from all involved, and we need to respect the other's space and capability.

— Raj Nayak, New Delhi

A Landscape For You

8th European Landscape Biennial
25th-27th September 2014 | Barcelona, Spain
Rosa Barba International Landscape Prize

8
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Since its first edition, the European Landscape Biennial has focused on study and discussions on landscape interventions, as much from the perspective of landscape architecture as from other disciplines that are linked to its study and evolution. The Biennial has been consolidated on a European scale in its six previous editions, however, by the hand of its international Rosa Barba landscape prize, this edition will broaden its scope to world wide contemporary international landscapes architecture.

Barcelona will open itself to international landscape architecture in a symposium adapted to contemporary circumstances. This symposium will last three days and will include talks, presentations by those finalists competing for the Rosa Barba Landscape Prize, papers, roundtable discussions, exhibitions and samples from which we will be able to track and discuss the evolution of landscape architecture world wide.

THEME

Due to our circumstances most territorial and cultural disciplines are ranging from anxiety and emergence. Thus, the VIII Biennial of Landscape Barcelona claims to be both a catalyst for doubt and a driver to illusions and changes in the field of Landscape Architecture. The announcing of this year's event suggests interest in discovering new ways of action, while exploring inhospitable areas and guiding discussion towards rethinking old certainties and providing new sensitivities certitudes. A *Landscape For You* would discuss what should be the landscape design and planning nowadays, aiming to provide a plausible (and exciting) future.

ROSA BARBA INTERNATIONAL PRIZE

The Rosa Barba Landscape Prize will be announced within the framework of the Biennial. The prize is open to all kinds of landscape projects and planning created worldwide from 2009 to 2014. The Prize winner and the finalists will be presented during the symposium. The projects selected by an International Jury will be on display in the Rosa Barba Prize exhibition.

For further details: http://www.coac.net/landscape/default_eng.html



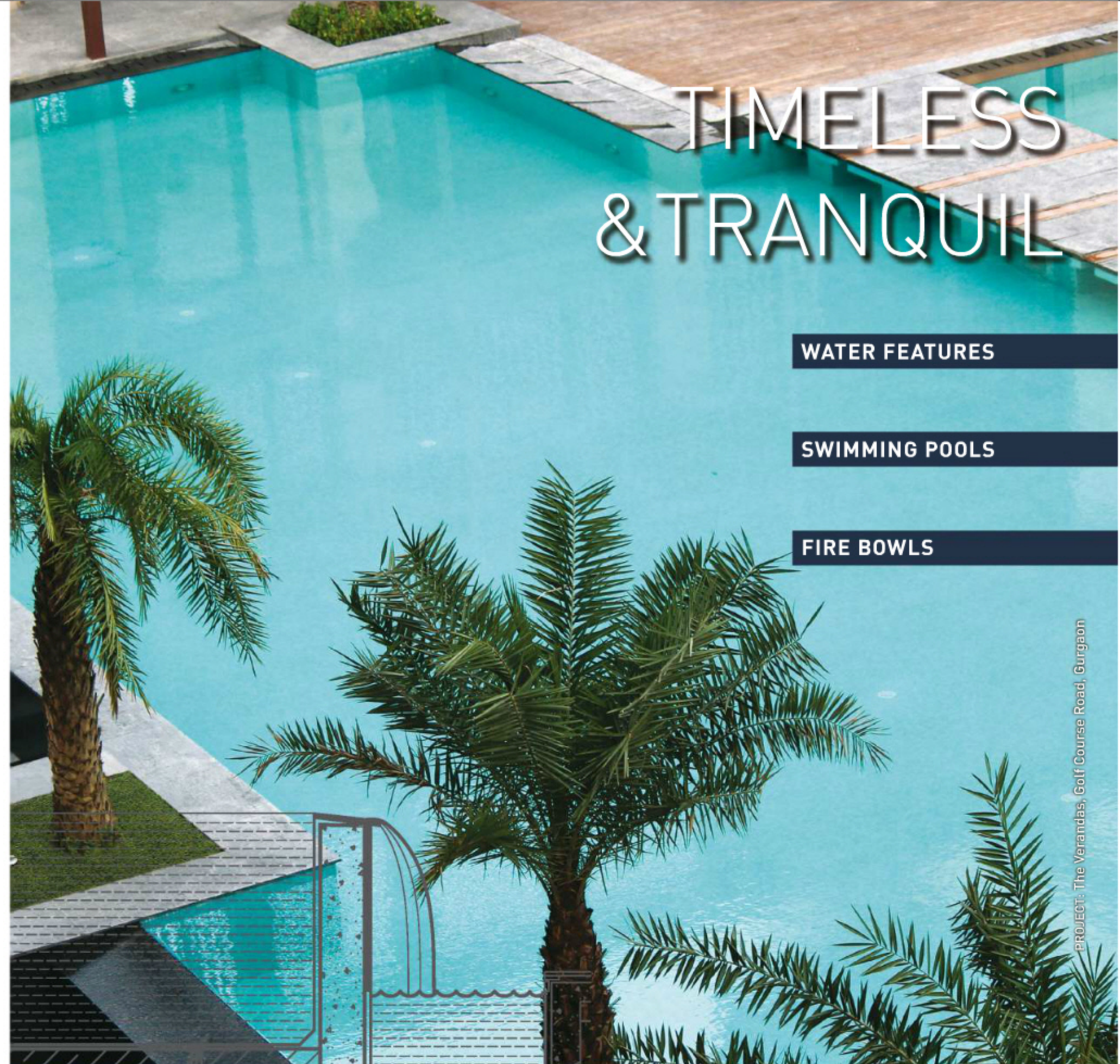
ASLA Annual Meeting & Expo

21st-24th November 2014 | Denver, USA



ASLA Annual Meeting & Expo is scheduled to be held in Denver, USA later this year. The four-day event being billed as the "largest gathering of landscape architecture professionals and students in the world", would include Special Events, General, Education and Field Sessions, Workshops, and ASLA Student and Professional Awards Ceremony.

For further details: <http://www.aslameeting2014.com>



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To feature the profession of Landscape Architecture and showcase the skills required, ISOLA was approached by the organizing team. Since this is a reality show, it was planned to showcase the entire

process of landscape design right from conceptualization to execution, in some possible way.

ISOLA proposed to do it by way of a student competition, whereby 22 students of first year of Masters of Landscape Architecture program, from School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, were divided into four groups. Each team was assigned a senior landscape architect as a mentor – Dr. Surinder Suneja, Dr. Rommel Mehta (both faculty members of the Landscape Department, SPA, Delhi) and landscape architects Nupur Prothi Khanna and Shree Naik.

The students were given a design brief of a residential courtyard. They were to select a parcel of land of around 10m x 10m (at the farm display of Vis-à-vis, which provided

the space, lighting and outdoor furniture for the competition). They worked out a concept based on climatic, functional, aesthetic and site-based requirements and executed it on site. The plant material for the design was supplied by Greenways Nursery, Chhatarpur.

Each design was judged by a jury comprising of Sachin Jain (ISOLA President) and Savita Punde (ISOLA Past-President). The criteria for selection of winning entry included site selection, design conceptualization, appropriateness of plant material, function, overall aesthetic and merit of theme.

The team mentored by Shree Naik was declared as winner. All the teams were given certificates of merit by Hunnarbaaz.

Photograph courtesy the Author.

The episode featuring the entire process is likely to be aired on June 22, 2014.



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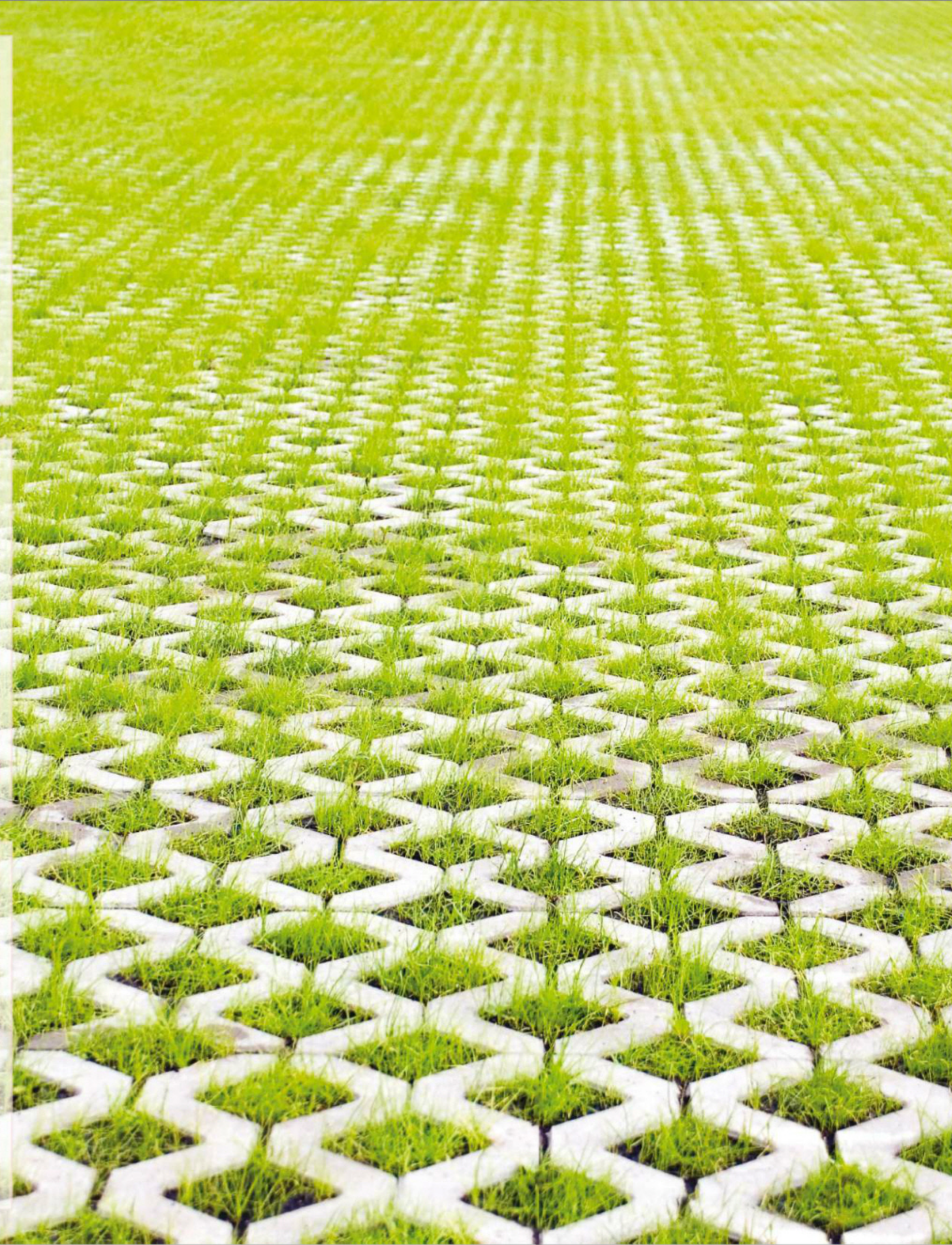
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361° ARCHITECTURE & IDENTITY

February 19-21, 2014 | Nehru Centre, Mumbai



↑ (L-R) Sangeeta Merchant and Sanjeev Panjabi from SPASM DESIGNS (India), Minakshi Jain (India), Carin Smuts (South Africa), Rick Joy (USA), Emre Arolat (Turkey), Lars Muller (Switzerland), and Paulo David (Portugal) engaged in a conversation with the audience during the second open mike session.

361°

The seventh edition of the 361° Conference 2014, titled 'Architecture & Identity' presented an opportunity for a conglomeration of several prominent architects from around the world, setting the stage for thought-provoking dialogue between the speakers and the delegates present at the event on the theme.

Presenting a kaleidoscopic view of 'identity' and its meaning in architecture, the assortment of speakers consisting of the panel this year were B V Doshi (India), William J R Curtis (France), Aniket Bhagwat (India), Héctor Fernández Elorza (Spain), Dominic Sansoni (Sri Lanka), Kashef Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Channa Daswatte (Sri Lanka), Lars Müller (Switzerland), Minakshi Jain (India), Paulo David (Portugal), Rick Joy (USA), SPASM DESIGN (India), Emre Arolat (Turkey) and Carin Smuts (South Africa). Diverse perspectives and opinions stemmed from the ensemble of presenta-

tion made by speakers belonging to varying backgrounds, providing insights to the audience, of countries far away and cities perhaps unvisited otherwise. The focus of the conference was on people and practices whose work and philosophy takes a stand on architecture and identity within the context of their region and thus, to introduce the delegates to issues like history, politics, economics, religion, principles, methods, sociology, landscape, conservation and environment across a spectrum of scales and contexts.

Marking the opening of the three-day consortium, Balkrishna Doshi discussed the ideas of spontaneous place-making and its expanse beyond the physical attributes of any place. Following the presentation, architectural critic, academic and historian William J R Curtis's presentation "Transcending cultures between nations" spanned through timespans, tracing iden-

tity through history, community and individual beliefs giving a brief account on the historic architecture of Gujarat and the works of Louis I Kahn and Le Corbusier. Aniket Bhagwat touched upon the multiplicity of Indian identity and his philosophical interpretation through his own works saying "India has too much history and our architecture is often conversations with this history", while Héctor Fernández Elorza spoke of the strength of centered concepts and subtle material interventions in architecture with selected works of his one-man practice. Dominic Sansoni, an internationally acclaimed travel and architecture photographer, who has majorly worked in Sri Lanka and in close collaboration with Geoffrey Bawa, showcased architecture as seen through the eyes of a person untouched by its theoretical complexities. The photo-recital was an honest and peaceful pause to the intense discourse.

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- ↳ Dr B V Doshi (India) delivering the Icon Lecture at the 7th Edition of 361° Conference 2014.
- ↳ Carin Smuts (South Africa) relating cultural diversity and issue of identity in terms of socio-economic construct.
- ↳ (L-R) Channa Daswatte (Sri Lanka), William J R Curtis (France), Dominic Sansoni (Sri Lanka), Kashef Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Aniket Bhagwat (India) and Hector Elorza (Spain) engaged in a conversation with the audience during the open mike session.



In tandem, Channa Daswatte, also from Sri Lanka, a close associate of Geoffrey Bawa, reflected on “memory in architecture”, and “design as a part of landscape” and vice-versa, defining architecture as an assimilation of “contextualism and the anticipated choices of the occupants”. Kashef Chowdhury, eminent contemporary architect from Bangladesh and a former Aga Khan Award recipient elaborated on spirituality as the core of religious architecture, simplicity as the essence of social spaces and relevance to the place and function as the key to building spaces that resonate their spirit, in a poetic recital on contemplative regionalism.

Lars Müller from Switzerland, a famous publisher with an interest in architectural publications, emphasized on the importance of ecological building and the need for well-read professionals or “a citizen” as he termed it, in modern-day society.

Of a completely different background in terms of work, Minakshi Jain, conservationist and academic in historic preservation of Indian architecture, shared some of the highlights of her career such as the Nagaur Fort restoration project which won her the UNESCO award of excellence and a nomination for the Aga Khan Awards for 2013. Paulo David of Portugal, Rick Joy of Arizona and SPASM DESIGNS of Mumbai (represented on stage by Sanjeev Panjabi – principal architect) put forth their anthology of projects, their musings and afterthought on projects, aesthetic inclinations, struggles, failures and successes, and the entire process of building in small intimate studios where most of the work is done by the principals themselves, reaffirming the aspirations of young students and professionals.

In the end, testimonies of Emre Arolat of Turkey and Carin Smuts of South Africa, gave insights into the socio-economic and

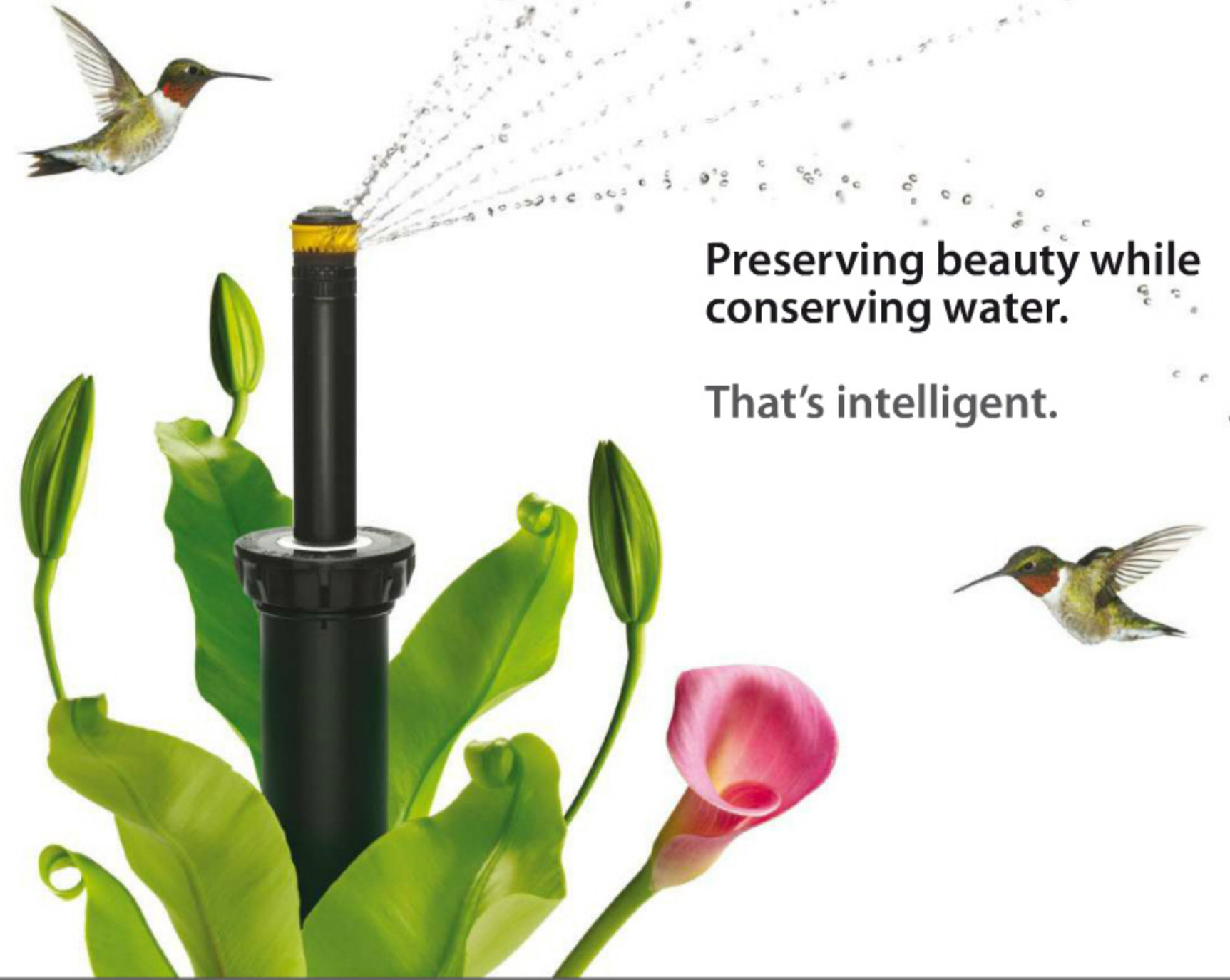
political constructs of their nations and a perspective of architecture as a ‘tool to aid’ growth and development, rather than a mere iconic statement. The plethora of knowledge and information served through the three days gave the delegates the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the minds of sensible international architects and to reorient their own philosophies in turn.

All photographs courtesy 361° Bureau.

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Ayla Khan



A SENSE OF PLACE

9th ISOLA Annual Conference

February 28–March 1, 2014 | India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

(L–R) Ashok Vajpeyi, Vandana Shiva, Sanjay Bhattacharya, Shyam Khandekar, Mohammad Shaheer, Narayani Gupta, Jan Woudstra, Fiesal Alkazi, Amita Baviskar, Dr Bret Wallach, Neera Adarkar, Shovana Narayan, Kishore Pradhan, Nimesh Patel, and Abhay Wadhwa



The 9th Annual Conference of Indian Society of Landscape Architects, hosted by Delhi NCR Chapter was held on 28th February and 1st March 2014 in New Delhi. It brought together various ideas and thoughts regarding the core idea of 'A Sense of Place' in spatial design and social disciplines. Speakers from diverse fields were invited to share their thoughts and experiences for the theme – poet, theatre director, artist, geographer, historian, urban researcher, urban planner, social activist and, of course, practitioners. This gave a broader perspective of the theme and opened several windows of sharing and learning new thoughts and ideas from each other.

Noted poet and literary figure Ashok Vajpeyi, in his inaugural address, defined the idea of *sense of place* as an ability to connect with what is around us in an imaginative way. In traditional aesthetics of

India, there is a key concept that envisages that all arts including literature are rooted in *desh kaal* – space and time. Defining the mediums of poetry and music, he stated that both are creative endeavours to express manifestations of space which emanates from place. While poetry creates *place* through words, music does it through notes. In the act of communication, they both liberate the reader/ listener from her own place and relocate, for the time being at her in another "created and discovered" place. A *place* is a more concrete manifestation of space; space visibly and seriously emanates from place. Space is wide, amorphous, complex and multi-layered while *place* gives it a local habitation as it were. In spatial designs, a sense of place and memory need not be generated only by physical settings and structures but also by other means that import memories from history creative fields and experiences. He termed all landscapes as

"in landscapes", and called upon the professional community to work for the idea of demolishing distance between "inside" and "outside" and to work on this relationship in a meaningful way.

Fiesal Alkazi, in his keynote address, called upon the need to design and plan new Indian cities differently hence creating sense of places that have different imageries and meanings which are closer to realities and are not based on, in case of India, colonial memories.

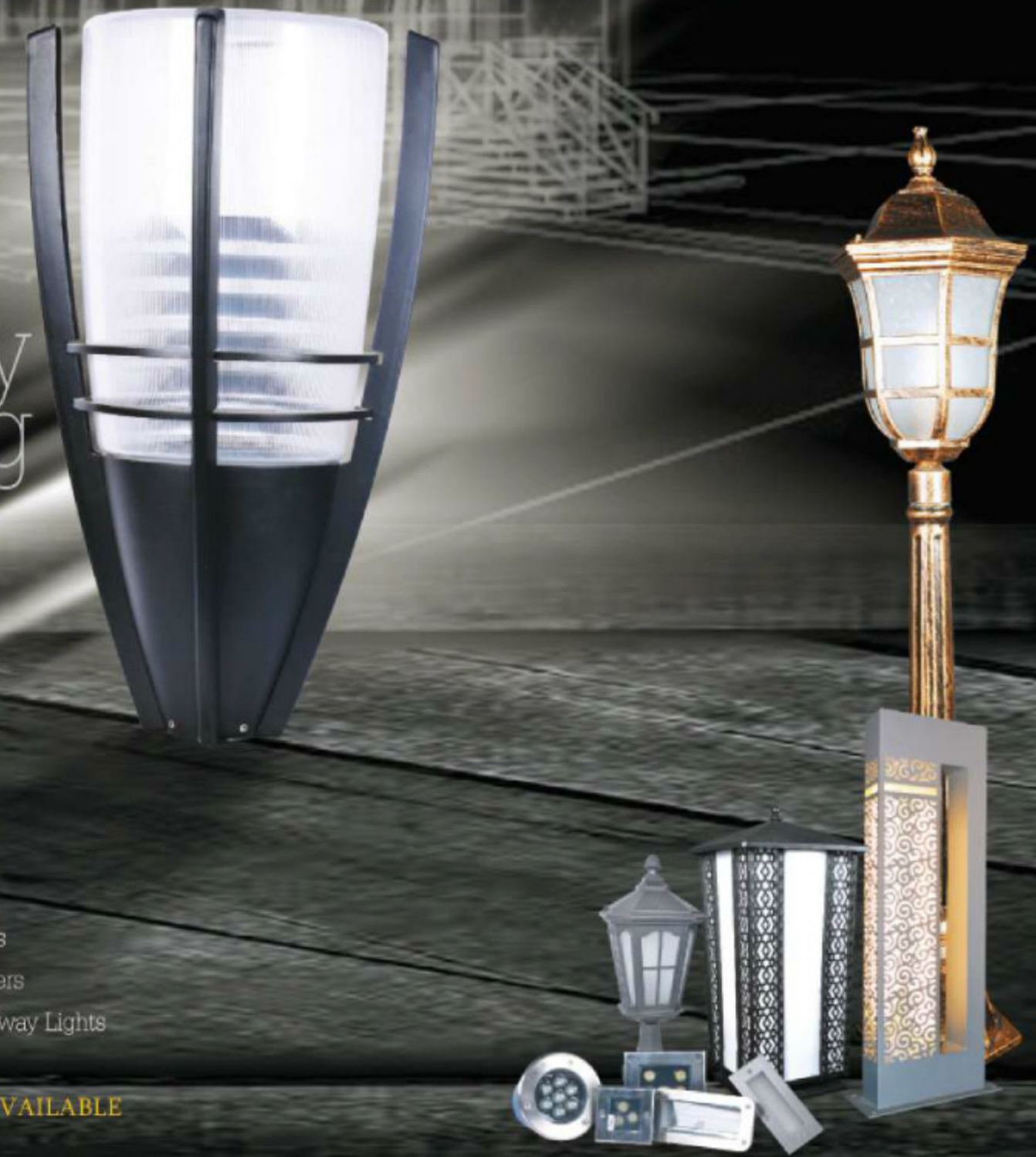
In the first session of the conference *Region*, Vandana Shiva, social activist looked at the idea of *sense of place* through the prism of ecology and urban issues. She noted that the ecological health of a place is a strong indicator of the sense of place of the region. She made a strong note about many urban issues as well. She stated that the fate of cities is intrinsically linked with

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the fate of villages. She observed that India has taken a disastrous path of urbanization which has followed as village to city, and now city to city of consumerism and production. It has changed the idea of society to "live" to society to "make money". Urban Planner Amita Baviskar raised the issue of commodification of nature in the capitalist market. Efforts for conservation are undertaken only after the devastation. Cultural essence of a place can be protected, working together with agencies for a united quest for change. She cited the example of Dongaria Kondh community in the Niyamgiri hills of Orissa which play a vital role in conservation of natural resources of hills and forests that is part of its cultural practices being followed as per the sacred belief. These communities are now living under the threat of devastation of forests caused by mining projects of big industrial houses. Civic rights, sacred beliefs, and ecological sciences are amongst the constructs to invoke to deconstruct commodity fictions where lie the spaces of hope. In this context, Dr Bret Wallach, geographer observed that the world "made for money" is now the dominant cultural landscape of the planet. In this fast changing world we may forget to conserve or preserve such cultural landscapes and sites, examples of vernacular architecture as we are so engulfed with the idea of "world made for money".

In the second session *City*, Narayani Gupta, eminent historian in her presentation made observations about the transformation in the *sense of place* of the city, over a period of time. She observed that the city of Delhi has undergone a long journey of changing landscapes that are shaped by nature and man, with each phase deriving new meanings. She called upon the professional community to come forward in documenting these changes in the perception of places. In her talk, Neera Adarkar, social activist and urban researcher based in Mumbai, presented the case study of Girangaon mills (now part of Central Mumbai). A premise comprising of a cluster of sixty mills, Girangaon had the mill workers community living in the neighbouring *chawls*. The community fostered a unique and vibrant culture which shaped Mumbai at the turn of the twentieth century. In early eighties, most of the mills were shut down due to the Great Bombay Textile Strike. The decline of the mills created unemployment, but to claim their sense of belonging and place, the mill workers kept up their struggle to reclaim the land.

Shyam Khandekar's talk commenced with the idea that creating a sense of place is making an identity. Quoting theories from Barry Schwartz's book *'The Paradox of Choices: Why More is Less'*, he said that the

availability of choice is in plenty which is beneficial in most disciplines but too many choices in the field of design is a major reason for the inability to create a *sense of place* for many designs in our cities. He talked about design elements that contribute to the idea of sense of place like use of locally available building material which is also a step towards sustainability. He cited the examples of Peak District National Park in England and that of an old prison in Dusseldorf, Germany in this context. He concluded that his practice philosophy is based on ideas that culture of a place is determined by climate, topography and built form and environmental considerations in a built form contribute towards sustainability and in giving a sense of place.

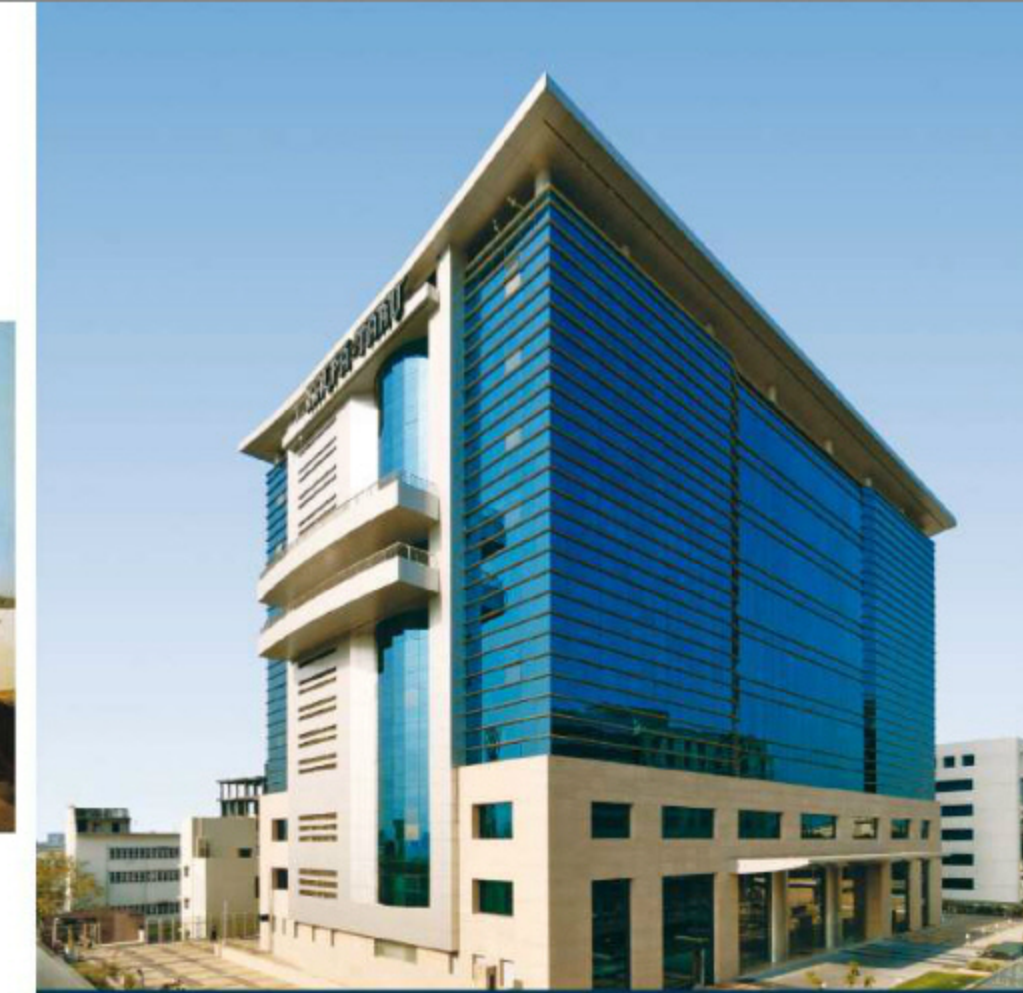
Jan Woudstra, University of Sheffield in his presentation referred to French anthropologist Marc Augé, who coined the term '*non-places*' in 1992. He associated with spaces that do not hold enough significance, emotion or memory to be regarded as places. The idea, Woudstra suggested can now be extended up to modern day landscapes. He raised concerns about the banality of new landscapes that look so same. To put across his idea of sense of place, he presented case studies from modern history and present times, located in various loca-

(L-R) From the presentations:

- ← The Landscape of Institutions (Mohammad Shaheer)
- ← Consulting the Genius of a Place (Jan Woudstra)
- ← Making of 'A Sense of Place' (Nimish Patel)
- ↑ Kolkata & Shantiniketan through the Eyes & Lens of a Painter (Sanjay Bhattacharya)

tions including Derek Jarman's garden on shingle shore near Dungeness nuclear power station. He emphasized the need to have different places that encourage belonging, '*rootedness*' and civic engagement, and which also respond to the context.

Sanjay Bhattacharya, artist and painter while showcasing his paintings inspired from the rural Bengal landscape was concerned about new physical intrusions in terms of building construction, new design typology in Shanti Niketan, thus changing the imagery of the place forever. Mohammad Shaheer, landscape architect stated that a place becomes a place because of its history. His presentation titled, '*The Landscape of Institutions: Joseph Stein and the making of a few Places in Delhi*' elaborated on salient features of few landmark buildings and precincts in the capital city of New Delhi which are able to convey a sense of spirit and place to the area like the precincts of Mandi House. He further elaborated on different design attributes, of the institutional buildings designed by Joseph Allen Stein where the idea of sense of place is strongly conveyed. Various examples cited in this context were India Habitat Centre, Ford Foundation and Triveni Kala Sangam. He observed these institutions are vital to the life of a city and it is important that they be a part of the city and not gated communities.



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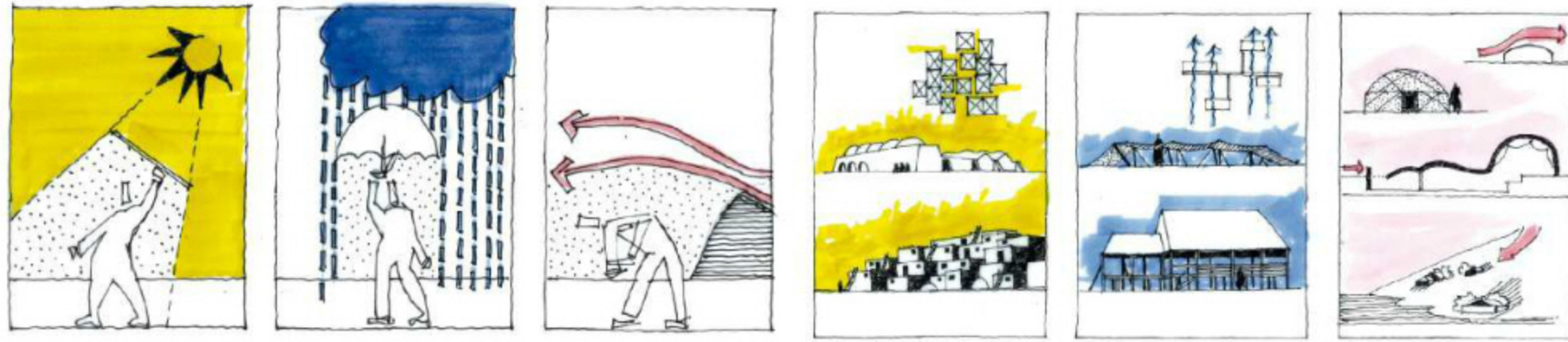
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↑ From the presentation: *Creating a Sense of Place* (Shyam Khandekar)

In the concluding session, *Perspectives*, Abhay Wadhwa, lighting expert said that different cultural and climatic situations influence lighting design. While introducing the philosophical and symbolic association of light, he stated that both darkness and light embrace the space to generate engaging landscapes. Kishore Pradhan, landscape architect, took the example of a courtyard in various world cultures and demonstrated the idea of the sense of place as successfully achieved by many of them. He stated since these urban spaces are created for people therefore courtyards and plazas should be experienced and judged when being used by the people. Nimesh Patel in his presentation cited various examples—Washington Memorial, Trafalgar Square, Central Park and in Indian context Connaught Place, Marine Drive—having a strong *sense of place*. He observed that many interesting spaces exist in traditional towns and cities like the Adalaj vav at Ahmedabad, streets of Madurai which though cannot be judged through notions of aesthetics but the multiple experiences make them excellent examples of areas with a high *sense of place*.

Panorama section showcased presentations on the theme prepared by young landscape professionals working in various parts of the country. These included short documentary '*Dastan-e-Barapullah*' (Department of Landscape Architecture,

School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi), '*Picnic*', sketch feature (Shree Naik, New Delhi), '*Importance of symbols in creating a Sense of Place*' (R H Rukhmann, Chennai), '*Landscape Architecture for Humanity*' (Ryan Aldrich, Bangalore), '*Deriving a Sense of Place at Historic Gardens*' (Ayla Khan, New Delhi) among others.

Dance choreography by Guru Shovana Narayan and her troupe explored the landscapes of identity created by man through Ramdhari Dinkar's evocative poem '*Darpan*'. ISOLA Professionals and Student Awards under various categories were also presented on the occasion. As part of the conference, Heritage walks were organized that familiarized the delegates with the historic areas of Humayun's Tomb, Safdarjung Tomb and "Steinabad" (the area comprising of Ford Foundation, INTACH, IIC and other buildings with the close proximity of Lodi Garden). A two-days graphic workshop, BE LOOSE by graphic designer and landscape architect Mike Lin offered unique opportunity to have a first hand knowledge of the various techniques and skills of making presentations and sketching.

The next ISOLA Annual Conference is scheduled to be held in Pune in 2015.

All photographs courtesy ISOLA Delhi NCR Chapter.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

NARAYANI GUPTA

There is a general sense of history to places which is not nuanced. We need to work on this impression very importantly. Landscape architects need to be more assertive in taking on social urban issues. They need to work more and more in public domain, define and elevate public spaces that people can be proud of. There is not enough engagement of the profession with present realities on ground.

SHAYAM KHANDEKAR

We definitely need more landscape courses and departments. We are too meagre in numbers. There is a need to take an interdisciplinary approach towards our works which means that we need to talk to professionals from other disciplines in our works.

NEERA ADARKAR

The idea of space is a highly gender sensitive subject. We need to discuss the idea of sense of place from the gender perspective. Not much is being taught in schools and colleges.

MOHAMMAD SHAHEER

The idea of sense of place is not purely an aesthetic issue but also social and psychological issue of making spaces available for use to all genders, organising physical space to give a feeling of comfort and security.

For more information / details:
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A G Krishna Menon



Photo source: <http://archives.lenechos.fr>

FRANCIS WACZIARG

1942 - 2014

Francis Wacziarg, who passed away on February 19, 2014 in New Delhi, was a protean individual: he grew up in different parts of the world and pursued a variety of careers during his life. In sum, he left behind a rich legacy in varied fields and friends everywhere to celebrate his achievements.

He came to India in 1969 to report on the growing revolutionary left-wing political movements transforming the country's future (both the violent Naxalbari version and the democratic electoral process), which were catching the world's attention. He stayed on to revolutionise how the country conserved its past, which has also caught the attention of the world. He came to India a stranger, but left a proud citizen, fully engaged with the economic and cultural milieu of the country.

In between Francis Wacziarg was a banker, businessman, management consultant and successful entrepreneur, but, in the

conservation discipline, we remember him primarily for the path-breaking work he undertook to transform old palaces and forts into beautiful hotels and thereby create a significant niche brand of tourism in India. Along with his partner, Aman Nath, he established the pioneering Neemrana Group of 'Non-Hotels', which now number twenty nine, located around the country.

His vision, and determination to follow it, was abundantly clear to me when, in the mid-eighties, Aman Nath and he took me to inspect the ruined fort of Neemrana, which they had then recently purchased impulsively, to advise them on its restoration. I took one look at what appeared to me was an impossible task – dealing with a mountain of a ruin with little resources – and advised them against sinking good money into what I predicted would be a bottomless pit. Of course, they ignored my well-meaning advice and set about painstakingly restoring the fort using local masons and materials in the best traditions of indigenous building practices. I highlight the use of indigenous practices because, contrary to international orthodoxy, they relied on the vernacular building systems and knowledge to imaginatively rebuild, restore and add to the original fabric of historic buildings, and thus compellingly demonstrate, on the ground, the viability of such indigenous practices that I and a few others were trying to propagate in academic journals, seminars and conferences.

Certainly, part of my hesitancy in being positive about their project was a subliminal feeling about how the new owners of the fort would handle the central issues governing orthodox conservation practice. I did not then have the courage of my convictions, which was strengthened by absorbing the Neemrana experience. The Neemrana fort as it exists today is much larger than its original footprint and certainly quite different to what the original builders intended it to be. Is it good conservation or innovative new architecture? Perhaps it will never be taken seriously by doctrinaire conservation architects steeped in the dogma of universal ideology, but the ironic fact is, that the process of renewing the fort for its present use has perhaps done more to give a new lease of life to the traditional building processes of the country than the dogmatic adherence to the principles of the Venice Charter by conservation architects conserving historic buildings. While conservation architects tried to conserve historic buildings the Neemrana strategy initiated by Francis Wacziarg and Aman Nath conserved the historic ways of building. That, in the field of architectural conservation, was the contribution of the itinerant 'foreigner' who made India his home.

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Mohammad Shaheer

ABOUT THEORY: LANDSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE CULTURE

In a conversation about the relationship between architects and their landscape consultants, Neelkanth Chhaya spoke of an intriguing notion that he had once thought of trying out on an actual project: of inviting the landscape architect to develop the architectural concept, whilst he, as the architect would try his hand at the site planning and landscape.

In the event, it did not actually happen. Still, it represents an exceptional way of investigating the collaborative process—when it exists—between architect and landscape architect and shows how it differs from that with other members of the team; imagining this exchange of roles with a building services consultant or even the interior designer is obviously problematic.

On the other hand it's quite realistic to stretch this idea to other partnerships and alliances in which the landscape architect works – with the urban designer and the city or campus planner for example. But to reach beyond the mere negotiation of inter-disciplinary edges, to fully work together towards better environments there has to be an assumption of mutual trust and more than a passing familiarity with concepts and techniques across disciplines.

It's a new way of looking at the landscape architect's role—it is placed on an equal footing with that of the planner, architect or urban design expert—without any assumed primacy of decision-making or design action assigned exclusively to the latter.

Language

Of course there are considerations of professional responsibility and the other complex working realities involved, and any technical encroachment into each other's territory is definitely not implied. Chhaya's idea is about an experimental technique to get two—or more—disciplines to communicate in a design-related language meaningful to both.

Language is not only fundamental to theory, it is inseparable from it. Its content—being just words and sentences after all—is always open to argument and interpretation. Given the diversity of the contemporary world and the ease of transmission across cultures and contexts, it's quite possible that a concept acknowledged as being profoundly sublime in one place may be neglected as quite ordinary, irrelevant even, in another. It all depends upon where you are, or 'where you're coming from'.

So, an all-encompassing 'formula' to satisfy the intellectual demand for order in the design process (and also the design product) can hardly ever be free of subjectivity; it remains elusive and always a fit topic for study and debate. It's been said that theory is just that – a theory, or a speculation about how the world works, to guide us in our response should we accept its rationale. In the modern world, theory can rarely be prescriptive, in the way that techniques or methods are:

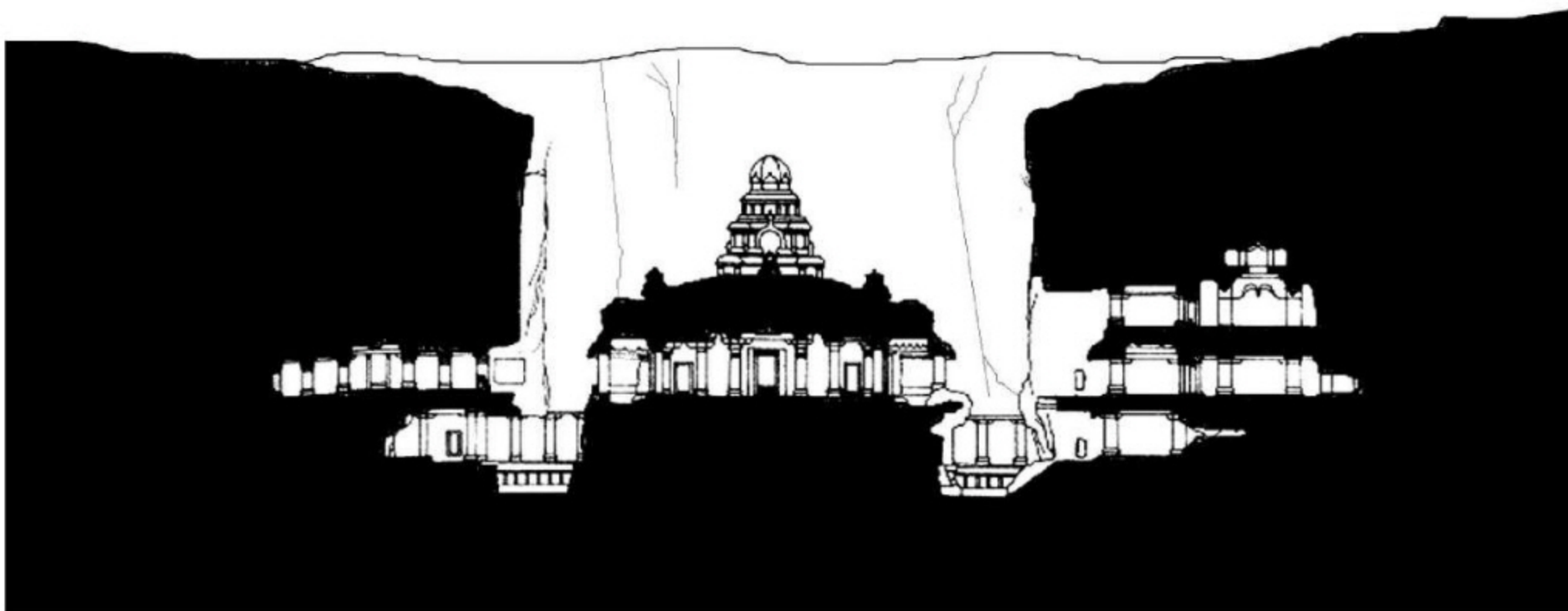
"Theory's original mediatory role between the human and the divine, the immediate and the eternal, appears to have ended. Theory today has been functionalised into a set of operational rules and proce-

*dures... design methodologies, typologies, linguistic rules of formalism, functionalism ... and so on."*¹

These 'linguistic rules' seem to extend to a specialised vocabulary virtually unique to each related field, deeply meaningful to the initiated but whose significance is always in danger of never really registering, not only with other participants of a collaborative effort but also with its sponsors and clients, not to speak of the people who will inhabit and move in the environment being designed.

Take for example, a writer² quoted in a compilation of theoretical writings on landscape who distinguishes between what he refers to as 'deep' form and 'shallow' form: 'in deep form is a meeting of appearance and reality, mind and nature, art and science'. And again, in reference to landscape designers, complains: 'too often they have responded to nature by shaping pale limitations of her forms in the picturesque tradition and in so doing have produced shallow form'.

Now, apart from depending on subjective assumptions about the meaning of form and its genesis, and of course 'nature', these precepts are difficult to decipher, much less act upon. This is how the design process begins to be misunderstood as an esoteric exercise in fine art rather than a robust engagement with the physical and social reality of the site. That's why it's important that the philosophical basis of the design be intelligible in some easily seen way to most users of that landscape.



SECTION OF KAILASH TEMPLE, ELLORA

The connection of art and environment is monumentally evident.

Source: www.greatbuildings.com



At Kailash in Ellora the connection of art and environment is monumentally evident: landscape becomes architecture, and architecture is also sculpture: a temple in honour of a mountain carved into a mountain. In another era and an entirely different socio-political context – in the grand concept of Lutyens' Central Vista of Imperial Delhi many centuries later – architecture, urban design, town planning and landscape merge one to the next. The language quite explicitly erases – or to stretch the linguistic metaphor, deconstructs³ – the edges

between these separate disciplines. The diffusion of barriers allows one kind of conceptual construct (in this case a design discipline) to flow into another.

Method

Does the current desire for an overarching 'manifesto' of theory about the scope and content of landscape architecture stem from the huge gap between the ambitious agenda that the fraternity has set for itself, and the disappointing reality met with in everyday

practice that is so clearly inconsistent with this theoretical vision?

Yes. It has a lot to do with the expectation of an extraordinarily wide range of competencies that seem to have accumulated on the shoulders of the landscape architect since the mid-1960s of the last century. Implicit in writings on the subject is the idea that apart from conventionally accepted expertise in dealing with outdoor space, the landscape architect's canvas should now include activities as diverse as concep-

tual and installation art, environmental activism, and a central role in urban design and city planning, infrastructure development, regional planning and conservation. It's all to the good of course, because there is always the possibility of diversification and specialisation; yet the range, since it extends from the scale of square metre (garden) to that of hundreds of square kilometres (region) is without parallel in allied disciplines.

Not surprisingly, landscape architects are sometimes seen as being overwhelmed by the demands of a unified conceptual framework for this vast prospect: "landscape architecture [still] is 'a discipline in intellectual disarray' and with 'a deficiency of theoretical discourse'. Of all the modern arts none has displayed such a meagre command of analytical, including rudimentary philosophical, language as landscape studies..."⁴

Yet the last half of the last century has also seen what is probably the most comprehensive statement of landscape theory in the modern era⁵:

'Where the landscape architect commands ecology he is the only bridge between the natural sciences and the planning and design professions, the proprietor of the most perceptive view of the natural world which science or art has provided.'

Ian McHarg's seminal essay 'The Ecological Method' (1967) summarised an agenda whose basic premise was that since form, certainly landscape form was the product of process—of natural

processes specifically—it was logical that decisions in landscape architecture and regional planning emerge from a close analysis of the ground, and the processes that shape it.

That's been the way landscape architecture has largely gone since then. But the acceptance of a theory does not ensure that it will always be effective when applied. The ecological method, neat as it is, demands a purposeful structure of legislative administration, precise technical cooperation across disciplines, and real political will to face the environmental issues of the day. Without these its powerful principles are mostly confined to the classroom and only rarely if ever seen fully in action at the urban or regional scale, at least in this country.

This unfortunate variance between practical reality and theoretical intent could be the reason that some writers⁴ propose devaluation—if not rejection—of deductive logic as a means of generating form even in smaller projects. They favour instinct, allusion and metaphor as formative triggers. But really, this sense of opposition between what is popularly called S.A.D. (Survey, Analysis, and Design) and 'the metaphorical approach' is soon revealed to be somewhat imaginary.

It is inconceivable in today's world that one would accept as an exemplary approach the proposition that the ground itself is a featureless recipient (victim?) of the designer's will (whim?) and its own qualities have little say in what is to happen on it.

The sequence of survey and analysis is inescapable, but of course these two never ever were the direct route to a design. Instinct, the designer's cultural sensibilities about history and metaphor, and his creative skill whilst interpreting the programme to match and exploit the characteristics of the site – these are the intangible but most crucial considerations that occupy the space between site analysis and the delineation of a concept. Ian McHarg's ecological method, of which S.A.D. is an abbreviated adaptation, is broad enough to easily include these subtleties – perhaps as another letter of the alphabet inserted between A and D depending on whether it is instinct, metaphor or any other name by which we might like to know the creative gesture.

Matrix

Landscape theory emerges from an understanding of land in all its aspects, and what the land signifies to the people who inhabit and use it. The answers to questions such as 'What to do' or 'how to do it'⁶ are in the realm of method and technique and follow from principles that various theories might propose.

The earliest cultures saw their landscape as the abode of the gods and the source of all existence, human life and its artefacts being entirely shaped by this belief. For example, the dominance of the 'mountain' and the 'water' is fundamental to Chinese landscape theory since about five millennia.⁷ Landscapes of imperial and



other religious significance express this very emphatically, either in actuality – with vision lines on an axis extending over tens of kilometres, or on a smaller scale in symbolic fashion.

Ancient Indian tradition attributes sacred power to all aspects of the landscape, to the extent that the meaning of a spiritual landmark is virtually congruent with the splendour of its landscape setting, with instances too numerous to be listed. From the literature of the second millennium B.C. we learn of an implied unity between gardens and the

natural world, gardens within the larger garden of the world in a sense, not apart from it.⁸

The Persian and later Mughal tradition in the Indian plains would have the garden as a retreat. It is said to be a representation of heaven, a refuge closed to the outside world, but this exclusion probably had much to do with its origins in the arid and desert-like regions of West Asia.

Landscape design in 17th and 18th century Europe is viewed by scholars

as being 'based on the Ideal Theory of Art'. Practitioners used the Neoplatonic axiom that 'art should imitate nature'.⁹ At the time, the word 'nature' meant 'essence' in the sense of the transcendental, non-material ideal of Plato's Theory of Forms, or the 'ideas' of things rather than substantive shapes. The gardens of the period are a product of this theoretical construct, from the pattern and use of 'perfect' mathematical shape (divisions with the square, circle or triangle, spherical or pyramidal topiary) in the formal arrangements of continental Europe, to the artificially pastoral visions

←

The dominance of the 'mountain' and the 'water' is fundamental to Chinese landscape theory and is expressed emphatically either in actuality or on a smaller scale in symbolic fashion.

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One can then state as a fundamental principle: When two fields have a common border, and one is seen as figure and the other as ground, the immediate perceptual experience is characterized by a shaping effect which emerges from the common border of the fields and which operates only on one field or operates more strongly on one than on the other.

Rubin's Vase: Bi-stable, two dimensional forms developed by Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin in his work "Synsopplevede Figurer" (Visual Figures). Source: www.cres.org



of the English landscape style – all imagined as the worldly representation of the Platonic ideal. In seeking a connection to classical antiquity they were also landscapes of allusion, myth and metaphor.

Even a sketchy and admittedly insufficient outline of landscape theory such as this does at least tell us that in the radically changed circumstances of today's world, 'the ignorance or cavalier disregard of history is part and parcel of a larger poverty of discourse...'¹⁰ and precedents from the distant past can

tell us something useful if we examine them in a particular way.

Simple illustrations that explain human perception in terms of Gestalt theory make use of the 'figure-ground' relationship to show how the outlines and proportion of dark and light within a frame actually affect what the observer sees. Usually, the 'figure' is an arrangement of objects which are seen as a pattern dominant over a receding and seemingly less important 'ground'. To make a landscape related analogy, the 'figure' equals objects or buildings

and the land on which they are placed would correspond to 'ground'. The comparison fits quite well, because that is how landscape has generally been viewed for the past two centuries, consigned to being a tray-like surface on which the tea-party of objects will happen.¹¹

Some variations of these diagrams are also used in explanations of deconstruction theory. Applied to spatial design they graphically demonstrate the simultaneous perception of two realities in the same picture, because the

figure outlined has an equally significant counterpart in the ground. It forces the observer to remove the perceptual boundary between figure and ground and to perceive both as simultaneous realities. One meaning 'leaks' into another because what defines one from the other is considered negotiable, not definite.

Now if you think of landscape in that way, what you have is a balanced emphasis between the land—or literally the 'ground'—seen as a matrix, in close interaction with activities and developments that originate, develop and are contained by it. That is partly the role McHarg and others (notably Brian Hackett) sought for landscape planning and design; it is also contained in the idea of 'landscape structure' and more recently 'green infrastructure' and landscape urbanism.

And until the beginning of the industrial age, this was how landscapes were made, only that they were based on theological or metaphysical¹² precepts, consulting the 'genius of the place' for example, *xing-sheng* (*feng shui*) in China, *vastu shastra* in India, the ley lines of ancient Britain¹³ and many other ways for a culture or individual to find an identifiable place within their larger social and spiritual environment.

It's possibly worthwhile for theory to pursue a quest for the contemporary

equivalent of this landscape culture. One insight that ecology offers, and the landscape amply demonstrates is that its world is held together by edges; that edges are not dividing boundaries but strong and vitally important connections between plainly dissimilar formations – river/ bank, valley/ridge etc. – so everything is interlocked and each is as important as the next.

For the city to be visualised or described as a landscape (as it sometimes is nowadays) that's the kind of integration it would aspire to. In the eastern hemisphere certainly, the matrix of landscape can expand beyond the physical 'green infrastructure' to embrace other traditions and culture-specific concepts of theological or metaphysical origin which find resonance in local practice.

Beyond Illusion

What will connect this traditional wisdom to modern practice? One of the insights gained from a multi-faith symposium at Vrindavan¹⁴ some years ago about what role spiritual belief could play in the protection and conservation of the environment flowed from the observation that though faith assigns a sacred place to landscape and its constituent parts, hardly ever does the visible reality of this landscape come even close to matching the perfection embodied by its symbolic meaning. In

societies where the metaphysical bond with environment and landscape has been a living tradition for millennia, a rationale directed towards closing the gap between the symbolic (eternal) and the material (immediate) landscape would be a worthy objective of theory.

As we have seen, in the historical panorama of man's interaction with the land, landscape design has generally served as a *medium*: for the expression of ideas about the metaphysical world, for example, or representations of the material world in the idealisation of nature, as an arena of myth and metaphor, or again as a theatrical setting, to create the illusion – of order, of the expansion of space or of wilderness, and lately in today's crowded urban spaces a proxy for the landscapes we've lost and may never regain.

The practice of landscape design does not have the autonomy of art, but it can certainly question, as art did at the beginning of the last century, the whole premise of its 'being' in this new and interconnected world. For art it was the historic 'moment of cubism' in John Berger's memorable phrase, the move from representation – of the object or the scene – to the exploration of the surface and materials of the medium itself. For landscape architecture, the answer to the question of what the next step will be is also the subject of theory.

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14. 1998 at Sri Chaitanya Prema Samsthan, Gambhira, Vrindavan, convenor and chair: Sri Srivatsa Goswami. Sri Srivatsa's explanation of Vaishnava teachings: According to him Krishna, by his own example, rejected the ritualistic worship of a 'God in the clouds' in favour of an earth-based religion which recognised the sacred in the everyday relationships between human beings and their environment.

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Jan Woudstra

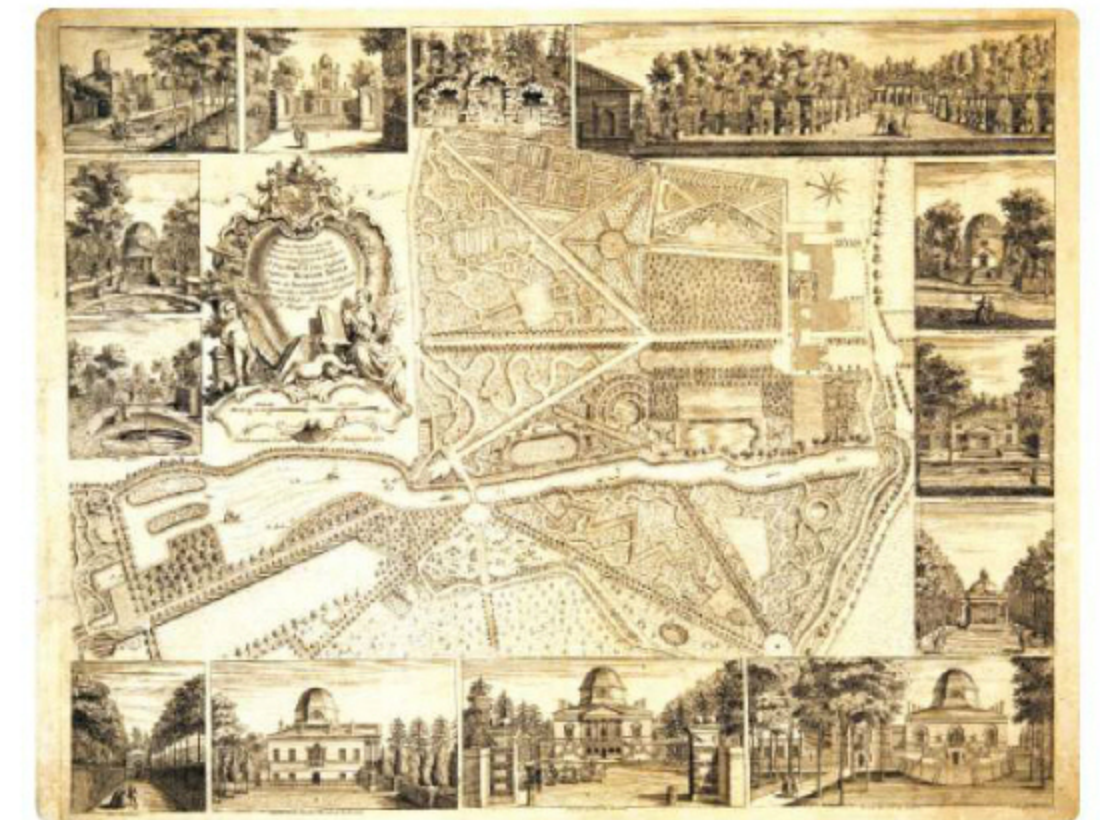
THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE



When the French anthropologist Marc Augé, coined the word 'non-places' in 1992, he associated these with those meeting certain ends; transport, transit, commerce and leisure, and included as examples airports, railway stations, hotel chains and leisure parks and large retail outlets.¹ These do not hold enough significance, emotion or memory to be regarded as places, and this terminology can equally be extended to landscapes.



The innovation of the early eighteenth century garden of Chiswick House Grounds was to not regularise the stream, but to leave it more or less as it had been created by nature. This worked well with Pope's dictum of consulting the Genius of the Place (Plan by Jean Rocque, 1736).



Augé himself lists motorways and high-speed railways; it also applies to certain modern urban squares that have been created more as a statement of power of city fathers than places for people. The issue is the banality of many modern spaces and that all places are becoming the same. Clearly there is a need to have different places that encourage belonging, rootedness and civic engagement, and which also respond to the context. Places thus help us to create meaning in our lives, inform our sense of identity and facilitate inter-human relationships.

Over time there have been different traditions of place making. Within all traditional societies there is a desire to explain, validate human existence and shape ethics through myths, one of the aspects being to appease and honour appropriate spirits, sometimes to every aspect of life. This can be seen, for example with the identification of sacred places by the aboriginals in Australia, the worship of American Indians, the search for *qi* in China and spirit houses in Thailand. It was also the case in pre-Christian Europe where household gods provided the ethics for daily life.

1. Marc Augé, *Non-Places: an Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995, pp.64, 79)



In all, these helped to provide an environment that was auspicious, until Christianity –with its single god-determined that these were superstitious. This must also have been the case in the early eighteenth century when Alexander Pope translated classical literature; as a Roman Catholic he would have objected to the various gods implied in references to the spirit of the place, and yet somehow these provided what he was looking for. To him the inspiration for the classical world also came from seventeenth century Dutch landscape (or *landskip*) paintings. These showed dramatic landform of valleys and prominent rocks, with ruins, groves and single trees. They provided a mostly contemporary reinterpretation of such landscapes that emphasised the physical rather than the spiritual. This must

have been the context when Pope composed his famous dictum to ‘Consult the *Genius of the Place*’ in his epistle to Lord Burlington, who was transforming his grounds at Chiswick House.

This dictum has often been quoted as an objective for designers of places, primarily in order to satisfy man’s physical needs, in order to provide him with a dwelling place, which he can identify with, and orientate himself. In trying to separate the sacred from the profane, designers have endeavoured to make the most of the context, and by identifying and highlighting characteristic or distinctive features. Indeed, in absence of the sacred understanding of place, it is very difficult to design places on sites without existing features, and the best places are those that celebrate

them by highlighting their specificity and uniqueness. The following three cases are modern examples of places that have done this well for different reasons.

When in the 1950s the modernist architect Dimitris Pikionis was asked to provide plans for making the Acropolis accessible to encourage tourism to Greece, he had to deal with a site that was both denuded of vegetation and extensively dug over by generations of archaeologists. His plans foresaw the place as a number of journeys that led to historic viewpoints and presented and celebrated the various monuments. These journeys were conceived upon a pavement that was formed with irregular stone and archaeological fragments that reflected the more recent, but also

the ancient history of the site. In fact the paths were constructed mainly with demolition materials from Athens but appeared as if they had always been there, and should be there only. Strategically located vegetation helped to conceal and surprise.

In making his garden at a fisherman’s cottage at the south coast in Dungeness, Kent, England in the 1980s, the filmmaker Derek Jarman utilised found objects that had been washed ashore, and local plants adapted to the meters thick shingle layers. Without any soil, he gardened with living and dead objects creating a sculptural garden that reflected the environment, but also expressed the dilemma of the illness of which he ultimately died.

For a competition entry in the late 1980s on what to do with a derelict industrial area near Duisburg in the Ruhr area of Germany, the entry from the landscape architect Peter Latz sought to retain and open up the spectacular built structures associated with iron melting and production of steel, instead of demolishing them and redeveloping the site. His notion was not only to celebrate these as objects, but also to provide opportunities to engage with them, to inspect and re-use them, to provide an ecological and sustainable framework. This was done by leaving as much of the existing infrastructure intact; so for instance Latz did not restore the meandering stream that had led through the area prior to industrialisation, but he did remove the concrete



The pathways around the Acropolis created by Dimitris Pikionis encourage one to linger, pause and contemplate; the journeys are contrived to communicate the essence of the place.



The garden at Derek Jarman’s fishing cottage in Dungeness conveyed the extraordinary conditions of the location, as well as the artist’s own concerns and predicament.



Peter Latz turned a derelict industrial area near Duisburg into a landscape park that retained industrial buildings by re-using them for other purposes, while ameliorating the environment with ecological processes, thus retaining a sense of place.

channel that had contained it, encouraging ecological processes to take place once again. It is this combination of restoring ecological processes, encouraging social engagement, celebrating and re-using that have made this project such a success, not only to new users, but also to those who worked here in the past and to whom this place has retained relevance.

It is clear from these international examples that the spirit of the place can be touched in various ways; in Pikionis's project he extracted the essence from

the place, without in any way 'restoring' it, and providing a link with the past that was both physical and sentimental. Jarman's project created a garden that both was a sympathetic response to the environment, and a personal artistic statement that provided him with both solace and emotional release that can be felt in layout and form. Latz's ambitious project sought to regenerate a region by engaging natural processes and adding layers, instead of reshaping them, thus retaining and reinforcing a sense of place.

All photographs courtesy the Author.

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PRACTICE, LANDSCAPE & SOCIETY

IN CONVERSATION WITH **NEELKANTH CHHAYA**

With a firm belief in the core idea of a symbiotic link between man, culture and nature, **Neelkanth Chhaya** has addressed variety of the interpretations of this relationship in his research and practice. He has been associated with one of the premier educational architectural institutes – Center for Environmental Planning and Technology CEPT, Ahmedabad for more than two decades as a senior faculty member and later as Dean of Studies. We invited him for an intellectual engagement about his ideas of architecture theory and practice in the changing times.

PRACTICE

In the environmental history of India, traditional wisdom has played a significant role in the sustainable living and conservation of natural resources in the country. In the present development model in which economics plays a predominant role can contemporary development, especially in urban areas learn lessons from past?

Perhaps "economics" has to be understood in a broader and more comprehensive spirit. At present, we account mainly for financial costs and benefits, and many unquantifiable costs remain unaccounted for. Economics should include the costs of what we do to our environments and to ourselves, and

then try to find a balance. As long as we consider only the financial costs and tangible benefits, we will not be able to conserve resources or live in a sustainable manner. There is, however, a more fundamental difference between traditional wisdom and current viewpoints. Today, we work on the assumption that all value is convertible to measurable standards. In other words everything can be "evaluated" finally in terms of money. Tradition postulated that some values are beyond measurement. Further, such immeasurable values were the most important aspects of human life, and the measurable arrangements were simply tools with which to make the manifestation of the immeasurable possible.

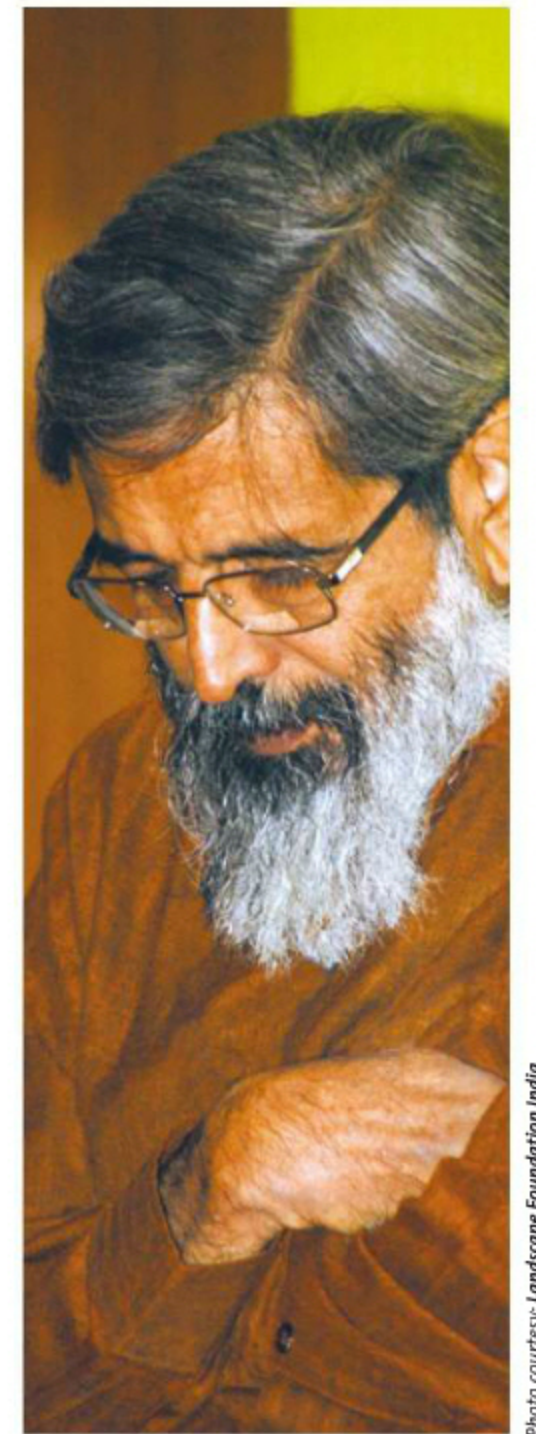


Photo courtesy: Landscape Foundation India

if by innovation, dynamism and flexibility we mean the “looks” of an object or architecture, we are not really solving the problems. It is not a choice between processes and components, rather it means a simplification of need, and an articulation of activity based on human capacity rather than on artefacts and servicing systems.

Compassion, care, concern for life, acceptance of the limits that nature sets, a sense of wonder and humility – all these were part of the immeasurable which gives meaning to everyday existence. Therefore the most important learning from the tradition is that the immeasurable is the ground of meaningful existence. If we accept the vital importance of establishing meaningful existence, and we accept the fundamental importance of the immeasurable, then we will see needs themselves in a more modest light, and care for the earth will guide our framing of tasks to be done. Our work could then aim to solve the limited measurable needs for providing the basis of the immeasurable. As designers, we cannot control the overall aims of a project. Yet we need not be bound only by considerations of profit. The quality of our work can bring about a connection with nature, appreciation of its nuances, can afford better human interaction, and can help save resources.

Current trends suggest that the modern generation looks for innovative spatial and urban forms expressive of dynamism, flexibility and change. Can we do this, and at the same time carry forward traditional values and systems and address emerging resource and cultural challenges, to create models of habitation that have affinity with our past and present aspirations?

What is innovative? Innovation would be a new, perhaps better, way of solving some needs. I see no opposition between innovation and cultural learnings. The word traditional sometimes confuses people because they think it means “old” and “obsolete”. There may be valuable insights in knowledge and systems that have evolved in a place over a period of time, that is, “traditions”. These insights need not be jettisoned. Dynamic, flexible and changing systems can be of many kinds. Our historical approach has been to minimise the complexity of artefacts, that is, to simplify the physical provisions, leaving the space or building relatively neutral and anonymous, so that change could be accommodated. We trained the body, changed food, clothes, daily and seasonal schedules rather than have a close-fit solution which could not adapt. I would think that this equally worthy of consideration, where not the space and form as a product but rather the whole use pattern is made dynamically responsive. If by innovation, dynamism and flexibility we mean the “looks” of an object or architecture, we are not really solving the problems in front of us. It is not a choice between processes and components, rather it means a simplification of need, and an articulation of activity based on human capacity rather than on artefacts and servicing systems.

How important is the word “participatory” in the new urban realm? We generally don’t see this being addressed in larger projects although we have very good examples at a small scale, especially in the realm of urban rural paradigms. How can a sustainable format be evolved for this aspect of development?

I think the question of participation is connected to politics. The architect is a privileged individual as per present definitions. The patron equally is free to exercise his individual desires in a liberal democracy. And the state behaves as if it is an individual with the right to independently project needs. Most architectural projects as well as urban plans are made by specialists and commissioned by singular patrons or the state. In this situation participatory design is most difficult. We have just begun to explore modes of a more inclusive design process. Both the design process as well as the political institutions that support our actions will have to keep trying to find appropriate forms. We need to consider the majority which is poor and has little access to the products of “development”.

And again, how do we, as the world becomes smaller and smaller, adopt the beneficial influences of other cultures and societies while attempting to retain our identity?

the founders {of school of architecture, cept} nurtured distinct and diverse intellectual and methodological viewpoints that became definite traditions and “schools” of thought. a great variety of orientations, sometimes at divergence and even in opposition to each other, were allowed to contest the intellectual space.

I think this would happen automatically if we pay close attention to our tasks, and try to find the best ways of shaping our environments, in response to the actual situations, which include distinctly local aspects that include geography, climate, and customs to name a few, as well as more remote parameters such as finance, economics, and other factors. We should stop being self-conscious about our identity, and act in the best possible way in all given situations, with attention to the micro and macro implications.

Tell us about your unique experiences related to practice in few of your projects.

My experiences of practice have been deeply rewarding when a close contact developed with the users. This relationship, of trust and mutual respect, can develop when the architect and the patron both remain open to possibilities, and can listen to each other with sympathy and care. In most of my projects I have worked hard to develop this relationship, and have had an equally intense response from my clients. This is the most satisfying aspect of practice. In a way this can be called a unique experience, given the image that architects generally have of “creative freedom”. In the same way, those who actually build the buildings are also partners in a joint learning process.

This came dramatically home to me in the project to rebuild an earthquake-shattered community in 2001-2. The distress, the pain and the intense fear and insecurity that permeated the community were deeply moving. In that situation the architect, if he worked only as an impersonal professional, would be either overbearing or frustrated. Both ways would lead to failure. Over the year-and-a-half of working there, working with the families, we built up enduring friendship built on mutual respect.

I believe that the title *Architect* is undergoing a change, and professional competence and responsibility, as well as artistic and ecological sensitivity, are being redefined. To me these have been the defining experiences of practice, which lead to an alternative attitude and working method, both in practice as well as in teaching.

CEPT, AHMEDABAD

Since the completion of your professional education, you have been involved in teaching. You have been now long associated with the tradition of CEPT, both in teaching and practice with mentors such as Balkrishna Doshi, Kurula Varkey, and Kulbhushan Jain. How do you define this tradition? Is it distinct from other institutions? If yes, in what ways?

I have been fortunate and privileged to be a student at CEPT, as well as a teacher. I do believe that the School of Architecture at CEPT has built a unique tradition of learning and teaching. The founders concentrated on nurturing distinct and diverse intellectual and methodological viewpoints that became definite traditions and “schools” of thought. A great variety of orientations, sometimes at divergence and even in opposition to each other, were allowed to contest the intellectual space. What held them together was the conviction that close attention to the particulars of our context was necessary in order to make appropriate architecture. This atmosphere gave teachers the freedom and responsibility of creating their own teaching content and style. This respect for the teacher’s intellectual and ethical space was the key to the intensity of that learning atmosphere. The school also brought together many disciplines. Even fields which are not normally part of an architecture learning environment were either formally integrated into the teaching programme or informally became part of the milieu. The school has been a hub of meetings for poets, authors, musicians, theatre people as well as scientists, economists, social scientists etc. The environment therefore connected the student to all aspects of culture.

we open minds and hearts with our creations. towards what shall we open them? towards continual unlimited “progress” and lordship of the earth? or shall we try to let the earth rise in us, through us, and flower and spread the fragrance of gentle human participation in its fecundity?

I believe this distinguishes the school – rather than defining architecture as a narrow profession or expertise, it defined architecture as a cultural activity and product carried out by responsible citizens concerned for the state of their society and culture.

India as a country has undergone much change since the economic boom of early 1990s. Has the education in the institute responded to the changing environs around? How do you think it has evolved over the past few decades?

I think the changes in Indian society are often viewed in a one-sided manner. While economic liberalization has led to a more consumerist society, it is also true that environmental conditions, especially for the poor, have remained unacceptable or have even deteriorated. Our cities have become more difficult to live in.

At the same time, skills and abilities that exist in our society have been devalued and perhaps in some cases marginalized. Local knowledge and forms of practice languish. Thus we could be faced with erosion of many useful and appropriate aspects of our societal resources.

So while the School of Architecture at CEPT has looked at the challenges of new forces and methods, it has also

striven to familiarize the student with the cultural resources that might still work better for the larger mass of Indian society.

LANDSCAPE & SOCIETY

Could you elaborate on ideas that you presented in the keynote lecture delivered at ISOLA Conference, Bhopal September 2012, on the theme: Place of Nature in Tomorrow’s City, and which are quoted below:

“It is time to ask whether we should think of our work as the use of knowledge to bring about these predictable results. For us at this gathering today, the question we could pose is: should we continue to design cities as human impositions on nature, allowing some pieces of the “natural” to relieve the hardness of our impositions? Or should we consider that our cities should be a form of participation in what is given to us by existent reality, an expression of being one of the forms of life inhabiting the environment, in a delicate and responsive balance with other forms, with ties of mutuality between them?”

“Now armed with more experience and a larger array of tools and methods, could we dare to act with a renewed sense of the poetic unity of nature, ourselves included? The poetic sense of wonder of being in the world yet having the capacity to experience, remember and imagine it is the real anti-entropic, life-affirming action that

only humans can initiate. Will we accept the challenge of initiating such action, as poets and artists have done?”

Until the hiatus of the age of reason upturned all relations between weak humans and awesome nature, this was how we did whatever we did. Is this a backward step into unknowing superstition and a life based on fear? On the contrary, I suggest that it is a step forward into full and conscious participation in world process. The thinking in recent science has moved towards affirmation of that unity. Art and poetry are returning gradually into their home in house of the wonder and awe.

Only politics and economics lag behind. Based still on philosophies which feed on crude sciences of “dead” matter, psychologies of programmed behaviour, on zoologies red in tooth and claw, of “practical” economics of self interested agents in play in the market, in the competitive instinct as sole basis of valuation, our governance and transactions are rooted in old dogmas and superstitions.

Here is where the role of the professions is the most serious. We open minds and hearts with our creations. Towards what shall we open them? Towards continual unlimited “progress” and lordship of the earth? Or shall we try to let the earth rise in us, through us, and flower and spread the fragrance of gentle human participation in its fecundity?

architects, landscape architects, planners, urban designers and other spatial design practitioners can evolve ways of using resources and space in ways that facilitate a more equitable and just participation of all. this is the crux of our professional task.

At any time, not just the present time, we should create arrangements and artefacts that support actual and real needs in a wise manner. Those such as architects and landscape designers who make things and environments should do so in a manner that cares for the balance of nature that allows us to survive and flourish. This is the specific task with which they are entrusted. For doing so a holistic outlook is needed. Such an outlook cannot fully evolve in linear logic, but is deeply embedded in the poetic. This sensitivity to the larger-than-measurable or larger-than-explainable character of existence informs careful and joyful stewardship and participation. In the absence of that, we follow a self-destructive course.

In this context, with the increasing population and hence pressures of development, is it a manageable proposition for India to be an economically and environmentally progressive nation at the same time?

I think the question to ask is: *Can we afford to ignore the consequences of mindless growth and “development”?* Increasing population will need greater care in the distribution, conservation and wise use of resources, not less! “Development” will have to take into account the need for being participants in natural process, rather than being oppressive and exploitative masters of objectified “nature”. This is not only manageable, but imperative.

Have we in India developed or are we on the way to develop an approach of addressing the issue of development not only practically, that is aspects of real estate, finance, and other tangible benefits but also emotionally, the intangible components such as poetic, experience, memory and philosophy?

The idea of development – growth at all costs, the market as the arbiter of appropriateness, consumption overriding all other factors – that we have adopted in recent times claims to deal with the practical aspect. The ideas of equity and justice, as well as the need to ensure environmental stability cannot be included in this scheme. Therefore there is a degree of violence inherent in this model. Surely this would affect our existential need for being at peace with our world. We did have some significant thinking on this during the pre-independence period, which may well resurface to allow a more modest and more inclusive agenda for development. As far as architecture is concerned, recent times have seen an increase in the showy media-driven mode. At the same time, some projects attempt to deal with the complexities of situations, paying close attention to patterns of inhabitation and to appropriateness of means, trying to wrest the poetic expressive content from this.

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Yet these are exceptions rather than a direction or method. In the fifties and the sixties and into the mid-seventies there were serious and genuine efforts all over the country to find an appropriate language of architecture. We need to study our recent history to pick out strands of thought that point towards possible course corrections.

How can architects, landscape architects, planners, urban designers and other spatial design professionals, with their limited role in governance and politics, become effective agents to address the issues of social disparity and help promote equitable societies?

Architects and all those involved with the physical environment, in their professional capacities, cannot be agents that bring about a just and equitable society. As citizens they can work in that direction.

Yet architects, landscape architects, planners, urban designers and other spatial design practitioners can evolve ways of using resources and space in ways that facilitate a more equitable and just participation of all. This is the crux of our professional task.

FROM AN ENVIRONMENTALIST'S EYE

IN CONVERSATION WITH JACK AHERN

With a holistic understanding of "landscape" coming from his varied experience and educational background of environmental science and landscape design, **Jack Ahern** discusses the role of landscape architects, challenges of developing countries in the realm of environment and much more.

My understanding of the word "landscape" is formed by where I studied. In my undergraduate, I was at University of Massachusetts where the degree was called Environmental Design and had a strong landscape focus. So I learnt to appreciate the concept of landscape as a physical as well as a cultural entity.

At my graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, I studied with Ian McHarg, who was the leading academic in landscape planning at that time. I learned a lot of physical and biological science but we learnt it within the context of landscape architecture. McHarg described his ecological planning method as a "layer cake" – the suite of factors that determine and define a place, starting with geology, soils, plants, animals, human, and land use history. This landscape perspective and McHarg's method had a profound influence on me. At Penn, the work was often on a broad scale, like watersheds, and that appealed to me.

I brought this perspective on landscape when I came to academia at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. At

that time, in the late 1980's the field of landscape ecology was evolving rapidly, both internationally and in the United States. It was inherently interdisciplinary with the concept of landscape being fundamental. Landscape ecologists shared a definition of landscape among a very diverse group of academics, ecologists from biological, geographical and landscape planning backgrounds. It became a very rich environment for interdisciplinary research and for advancing interdisciplinary theories. So here I am today – a landscape architect who practices landscape ecology.

I started teaching with woody plants – identification and ecology. This kept me grounded in the physical environment at the scale of human experience and perception, to see and touch the plant, to see how plants grow in different types of soils, under different light conditions. Learning plants is like learning to read and their composition and condition can reveal deep ecological knowledge – if one can read it! Learning plants was a way for me to have an ecologist's eye on the world, for reading a landscape.

landscape architects, having the facility to understand complex spatial relationships are well trained to find solutions for complex spatial environments.

Role of landscape architects

Landscape architects, having the facility to understand complex spatial relationships are well trained to find solutions for complex spatial environments. Every city is a complicated place. We can't simply paint it green with urban landscape. We have to find solutions that are compatible with other urban functions; people need houses and structures to live and work in, and transportation systems.

Landscape architects look at the world through the lens of spatial organization and I think the best can always see the pattern and the process together, in an integrated way. Pattern is the physical organization of things, and process is what happens there. Process is the shorthand for ecosystem services, what landscapes do. Water moves through them, people move through them, energy moves through them, materials move through them – that's a basic landscape ecology concept. Landscape pattern and process are complimentary and inseparable concepts, and what the landscape does will produce a certain pattern, and a certain landscape pattern will influence how the landscape functions. Scientists are usually passive

to observe, analyze and study these relationships. But we are design professionals, and we are actively changing things. If you think about it, one way to describe what landscape architects do is, we change landscape patterns. Every time you plant a tree, every time you remove a tree, move the earth, change the water flow, you are changing the landscape pattern. Good landscape architects understand what are the consequences of the changes they are instigating. There are always consequences. There is no simple answer regarding what is correct, or what is best. It is a matter of understanding the consequences and making an informed evaluation based on various options – and always with trade-offs and compromises.

Challenges of developing countries

India is in much better shape than other parts of the developing world. The challenge for developing countries is to avoid the mistakes that the developed world has already made. The United States went through a period of rapid industrialization in the nineteenth century. We systematically destroyed our

environment. In my region of the US, our rivers used to run with different colors, because we made fabric dyes that were drained off in the rivers. Now we are paying the price to fix them, to clean them up, and to replace them with functional ecological systems. We built a society that was dependent on automobiles and now we are stuck with that. Now we have an unbelievable investment in infrastructure, in automobile transportation, and it is not sustainable.

This is the challenge for India. To build a modern urban infrastructure without making the same mistakes that we made. The Chinese are doing it even faster than you are – with mixed success. They have some innovative, ecologically-inspired projects, but they are also making large parts of their environment inhospitable and unsustainable.

You will have to find places for new cities in India, and space for expansion of existing cities. The question is what you sacrifice in the process; there will always be impacts when you transform a non-urban area into a city – a lot of its ecological functions may be lost.



Photo courtesy: Jack Ahern

good policies don't mean much if they don't result in beautiful and successful built environments – and successful environments often don't have the possibility to arise if the policies are not there to promote and support them.

Population is commonly the driver of change. Population is one of the most common aspects to start the planning question or discussion. The next question is how much it is going to change and how do you accommodate this change, and then it starts to become a spatial problem. The developing world, if you think about it, has a chance to do things from new, *de novo*. It's not that simple to say that we are not going to use cars, but you can think about pedestrian-friendly functional urban environments, because people are healthier when they can walk a certain amount every day. Trying to adopt certain principles of good urban planning and design, that might be learnt from the First world, from the mistakes that have been made, and to take the best ideas and adapt them to your culture and put them into practice is the best way forward.

An interdisciplinary approach to design

Landscape Architecture and Planning are natural and complementary allies. It is not always integrated in a complimentary way in our University culture. At the heart of it is the belief that there

is a continuum from policy to design and construction and management and the environments need to be understood and managed and planned and designed across that continuum to be successful. Good policies don't mean much if they don't result in beautiful and successful built environments – and successful environments often don't have the possibility to arise if the policies are not there to promote and support them. In the world of professional planning and design, it's very often more competitive or fragmented in terms of these professional roles.

I like to think that the world is headed towards a more interdisciplinary direction; I think the tendency for specialization was a hallmark of the industrial modernist paradigm or thinking. In a post-modern view of the world, we realize that no discipline can do everything. We need to collaborate, respect other disciplines, and learn to cooperate, not because it's a dogma, or a faith. I am not a person of faith, but I am a person of logic. Good planners intrinsically and inherently create opportunities for good design. Designers make planners look good, and planners make us look good, I think it's more logical to cooperate and work interdisciplinary

than to work in a professionally fragmented mode. I think that successful firms, successful cities; and successful countries will be practicing interdisciplinary thinking, rather than specialization in isolated thinking.

The relationship between rural and urban

The city has the potential to realize efficiency. Cities can be sustainable, because these are the places where the people are very efficiently packed together, so they don't need so much space, so much energy, and so much material. Synergies can be created through good planning and design. But the cities also need to depend on urban rural surrounding, landscapes for other types of resources.

The landscape concept is broad and is well-suited for understanding heterogeneous regions. Richard Forman, the prominent American landscape ecologist, doesn't talk so much about cities, but of urban regions. Urban regions include all the areas directly connected to cities. Where do people go for recreation on weekends? Where does the drinking water come from? Where is the

there cannot be a truly balanced path, as a balance implies two extremes that can be equalized. Balance implies a stable condition which rarely exists in complex systems.

food coming from locally? This is the larger sphere in which the city needs to be managed. The challenge is to get the best of both worlds. To keep a low density in the agricultural landscape so that it can be efficient and productive for agriculture – and to keep a higher density in the cities, so that cities can realize the efficiencies of urban living.

I always argue that planning should be done at multiple scales, it can never be done at one scale. Ideally, planning should be done at a minimum of three scales – the scale of concern, the broader area in which it exists, and the finer-scaled areas within it. If the scale of concern is a University, then you can't understand the University campus without understanding the neighborhood around it. You also cannot understand the scale of the University without understanding its surrounding neighborhood.

Scenario planning for environment versus development

There cannot be a truly balanced path, as a balance implies two extremes that can be equalized. Balance implies a stable condition which rarely exists in

complex systems. Scenarios however, can be developed to demonstrate the likely consequences of specific policies or actions. For example, what will happen to the city if a new metro system is built?

Many times when landscape architects do scenario planning work, they take a neutral position, not advocating for any particular solution. Rather they ask, and answer, a series of "what if" questions. *What if we put the new town there? What if we not put the new town there but made this town twice as big? What if we put all the new development on the tops of hills? What happens if the climate changes?* With scenarios as these logical alternatives can be explored and examined.

The new field of *GeoDesign* is the cutting edge of GIS technology that brings very powerful GIS tools, almost in real-time into the process of urban scenario planning, rural planning and design. It's like *SketchUp* on steroids – having the functionality to not only "show" what building masses might look like, but also their functional parameters as well – how much energy does a scenario use, or how much runoff does it generate? What if we change the zon-

ing and let this be higher density development. *GeoDesign* can illustrate this with the 3D model of the building, and way more than that, it will have a spreadsheet which will take care of the taxes and count the population. It will keep track of the traffic generated, the water run-off and water consumption and the waste. It is a very robust tool to explore alternatives that can address this challenge to make sustainable urban systems. It doesn't propose or predict a certain type of development; it allows you to explore any kind. It's a big advance in a digital tool to support planning which ultimately it points to a solution, but allows you to explore alternatives.

Exploring options in urban planning involves urban density, configuration of development, but with some more green thinking, it could start the other way. Start by designing a green system and then looking at the places where you can put the development – that would be the bases for an alternative "green" scenario. When scenarios are done, the typical approach is to start with the trend scenario, or the usual businesses. What happens if we keep doing things the way we do? With then current trends, rules and regulations,

landscape architecture has a history of service to the privileged, the nobility, and to the affluent classes. but you could say if we are going to play an important role in this new challenge of sustainable cities, we have to be socially engaged, which is a fundamental dimension of the city.

this is a good way to get the attention of everyone. This is the way to get the people to say – we don't want that. When public has been engaged by understanding the limits of its current planning, other options can be considered. What if we make a bunch of satellite cities? What if we make another sister city, a big city? Then you can look at the impacts on agriculture, water supply, landscape, transportation.

The concept of balance implies that there is a right answer. But cities are too complex to have a simple correct answer. The correct answer for *whom* depending one perspective we can call the stakeholder, the real estate developer has a perspective based on economic gain and they can realize from building new real estate. The environmentalist has a perspective based on how much landscape can be preserved or protected in a particular way. Socio-planners might be interested in how much this housing will cost, and what kind of people will be able to live there, so if it's reduced to too few parameters, it becomes not a legitimate exercise. So the social, economic, environmental, ecological, all of these factors need to be integrated into a decision making process and that's the

potential of *GeoDesign*, that's exactly what it tries to do – by bringing very powerful tools into the discussion of the people considered on the table of designing an alternative.

In the idea of adaptive planning, the process doesn't stop with the plan. By definition the planning process is continuous and constantly evolving. That is another reason where the digital database, robust GIS systems can help to make that happen.

Landscape professionals as activists & transdisciplinary approach

There is a potential. I don't think that all landscape architects will chose to do that. Landscape architecture has a history of service to the privileged, the nobility, and to the affluent classes. But you could say if we are going to play an important role in this new challenge of sustainable cities, we have to be socially engaged, which is a fundamental dimension of the city. If you have two individuals living on an extensive area of land to make a beautiful private garden, there's no social dimension to that work. But if you are

trying to design a neighborhood to be sustainable and also economically viable and culturally healthy, then it needs to be fully engaged with social issues.

I don't fully understand the ecology of the subtropical monsoon environment of this part of India. I don't really know how that works, but I intuitively believe there are significant challenges for the water management, maybe it's more extreme scenarios. Where I come from we have water distributed throughout the year. But in India, you have a lot of water in short times and then long periods of drought. Water is almost always the root and the basis for all physical environmental planning. As population increases the stress and need to clean the water will become greater, the need for flood protection will become greater, so it's inescapable.

And not to deny the social aspect of it, I certainly appreciate and respect those but I come from an ecological orientation and don't work in that area. I am not arguing that that's the only way. It is my choice and I think it's a part of the solution. I am humble enough to acknowledge the social

needs to be fully integrated. There's one more concept that I haven't got into – the idea of transdisciplinary. The evolution goes from disciplinary, where you have different fields working on problems independent of each other and may be contribute to a solution, in inter-disciplinary where these fields work together towards a common goal. In transdisciplinary the same disciplines work together, but also have groups of stakeholders and decision makers involved throughout a process or planning exercise. It not only takes input but gives input and receives, continuously throughout the process, it's an argument for different way of working that is very highly integrated and definitely goes beyond interdisciplinary. So having the stakeholders involved in the process is essential for sustainable environments.

I believe that this is the appropriate way to work in a sustainable system. If the world we build isn't sustainable then maybe the way we build that world isn't the best way to be sustainable.

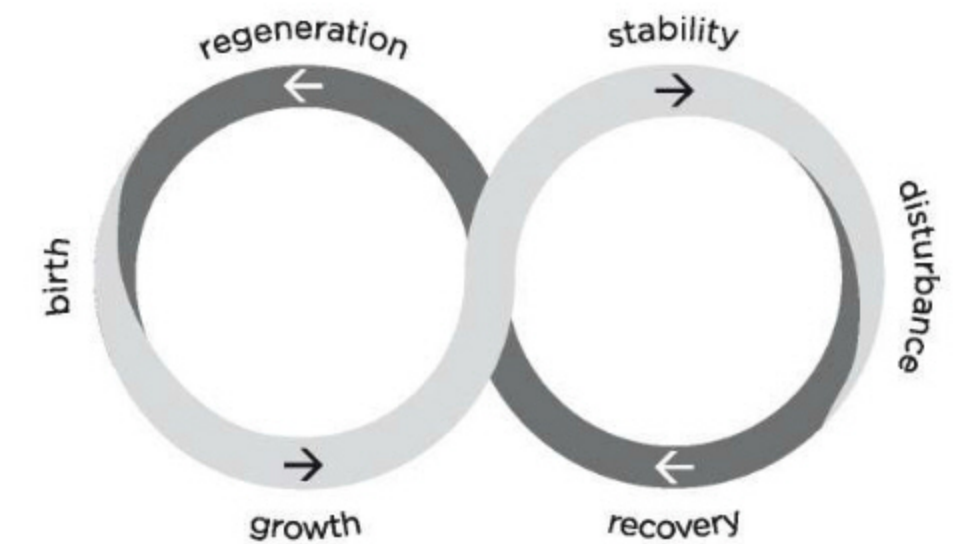


Diagram by: grafiniti

Concept of resilience

Resilience is the concept of systems that have the capacity to respond to disturbance without becoming completely changed or destroyed. A good example is human body, we get a cold, or illness over time but we have the capacity to recover. Urban resilience is an intriguing concept, because in earlier thinking about sustainability, the impulse is that to be sustainable, the city has to be strong so that it doesn't break – durable, indestructible and permanent. But ecologists know that systems, including cities, go through cycles of birth, maturity, destruction and recovery.

So this is the cycle of resilience – beautiful diagram shows as the figure '8', with the four cycles of birth, growth and stability, disturbance, and then recovery and regeneration. So this is a powerful concept in ecology and it's been demonstrated in many systems, economic systems, social systems and

ecological systems. Now urban theorists are thinking – can this apply to cities? Can cities be resilient? Should they be resilient? It is not about protecting a city from disturbance rather it's about building the capacity for the city to recover when there is a major disturbance, which could be a flood, earthquake, fire, economic crisis or war.

If one accepts the inevitability that disturbance will happen, what you can do to prepare is an intriguing concept. What can you do to build the capacity to recover from disturbances that you cannot predict? What they will be? When they will be? Resilient systems should have multi-functionality. If you have systems that do one thing so when they break, the whole function falls apart, but multi-functional systems are more likely to survive. Bio-diversity is another part of resilience because living systems have capacity to recover as they are living and they are adaptive, they can adapt and change.

The interview was conducted after a presentation-talk by Jack Ahern, organized by ISOLA on 'Green Infrastructure: Performance and Best Practices for Building Urban Resilience' at the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi in January, 2014. The Editors are thankful to **Samir Mathur** for facilitating the interview.

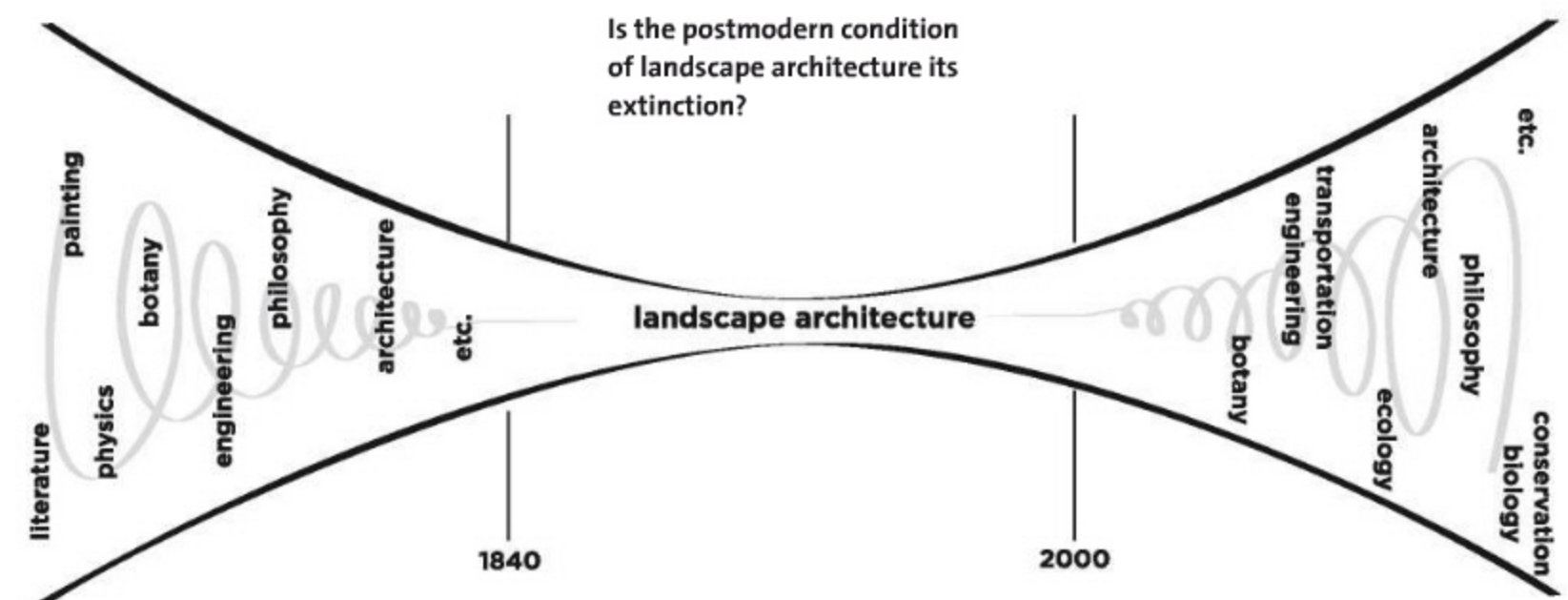
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Heidi Hohmann and Joern Langhorst

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: AN APOCALYPTIC MANIFESTO¹

Though the article, written around a decade ago, comes from—and focuses on—a country where the profession of landscape architecture was formally established over a century ago, landscape professionals here will be able to see many reflections of their own scenario in present times in the Manifesto. There could not be better place in the world to address issues like relationship of landscape architecture with culture and literature other than culturally diverse India. The observation of present landscape practices being trapped in the ideas of repetition, pretty drawings, utility and comfort and of course speed, and hence lack of any central unified value can very well be appreciated in Indian realm. This may be an appropriate moment to ponder on various issues and concerns that have been raised here and look out for some forward directions...

1. Rem Koolhaas has said "The fatal weakness of manifestos is their inherent lack of evidence." (*Delirious New York*, 9). The authors agree with this statement. However, since landscape architecture is generally lacking in manifestos, we thought that maybe it was time for one.



A Terminal Case?

At the start of the 21st century, landscape architecture is a troubled profession, more distinguished by what it lacks than the qualities that it actually possesses. It has no historiography, no formal theory, no definition, direction, or focus. A vast schism currently exists between its academics and professional practitioners. In universities across the nation, researchers poach methodologies from other, more vibrant disciplines. Meanwhile, in professional offices, designers yoked to the bottom line crank out pedestrian design.

We believe these problems are pervasive and chronic. They indicate that landscape architecture is not just troubled, but sick. The condition of the patient is critical, requiring immediate attention.



A Widening Gyre: Six Symptoms

Proof of landscape architecture's decline can be found in the following six symptoms:²

Landscape architecture has lost its roots in intellectual thought, culture, and literature.

Landscape architecture hardly resembles its former incarnations. This loss of identity has occurred mainly because of its loss of vital connections to other fields. Historically landscape architecture maintained integral and dynamic relationships to a variety of pursuits, from painting to sewerage. These relationships were not static or one-way streets; rather, they included an exchange of information that allowed the fields to dynamically play off each other, to evolve and expand. In 18th century England, for example, landscape architecture was, in concert with painting and poetry, one of the three graces, which together influenced broader artistic ideas. In the 19th century, landscape architecture was tied to literary ideas and transcendentalism; practitioners like Olmsted and Cleveland worked alongside Emerson, Longfellow, and Thoreau, extrapolating literature and philosophy into built form.

Landscape architecture today has no such reciprocal connections to current music, literature, or even popular culture. Unlike 18th century practitioners in the Kit Kat Club, whose ideas were central to artistic discussion, landscape architects today are relegated to the sidelines. Even professional connections to art and architecture are weak: Landscape architects may imitate the land artists of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, but these artists do not look to landscape architecture for inspiration. Similarly, architects still largely view landscape architects as mere helpmates, to be ignored and abandoned when the economy is tight.

The relationship of landscape architecture to its allied professions is today parasitic rather than mutualistic: it takes more than it gives. Landscape architecture has replaced original and inventive thought with shameless, superficial borrowing from other, seemingly "cooler" and more "cutting edge" disciplines, often without really under-

the relationship of landscape architecture to its allied professions is today parasitic rather than mutualistic



standing what it borrows. Landscape architecture today no longer creates new ideas; it simply interprets those of other disciplines in the media of turf and trees, earth and concrete pavers.³

Landscape architecture no longer has connections to power and politics that historically defined its periods of greatest production, innovation, and prestige.

Historically, periods of professional visibility and strength have also been characterized by strong connections to political regimes or to sources of power, money, and influence. Andre Le Notre designed for the powerful, if corrupt, Sun Kings just as Alphand and Haussmann created public open spaces under the dictatorship of Napoleon III. The English Landscape Gardening School and Brown, Repton, Price and Knight were supported by the political power of wealthy landowners; Gilmore Clarke and Horace Albright linked their aspirations to the careers and public poli-

cies of Harold Ickes, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Robert Moses. In contrast, landscape architects today hide from politics and refuse to engage openly in the broader world of public policy.

Nor does the profession register on the radar screens of the powerful. In 1804, Thomas Jefferson, then president of the United States, was well versed in landscape gardening, and clearly, based on his 1782 land survey act, understood the importance of land and landscape on the future development of the United States. In 2004, however, does George Bush know what landscape architecture is and understand its potential value? Or, more to the point, perhaps, does Bill Gates? Who, besides landscape architects, really cares about landscape architecture?

2. The number six is not particularly magical. There are probably more, but we think this is a sufficient number to at least begin with.

3. Landscape architecture's lack of "phantasy" and original lines of development (*Entwicklungslinien*) has been decried by Nicole Uhrig "Landscape en vogue," 8; see also Stefanie Krebs "The Readability of Landscape Architecture" and James Corner "Representation and Landscape," 255.

the fearful field of landscape architecture takes few risks and resists change.

Landscape architecture has not replaced the loss of intellectual roots and political leverage with any new or important context or support.

In particular, landscape architecture is not tied into popular culture—the new religion—in any meaningful way.⁴ Landscape architecture has ignored the power inherent in popular culture and popular ideas.



Although the cultural production of private landscapes—once a mainstay of the profession—is now a democratized, widely popular art, landscape architects have abdicated this responsibility.⁵ Instead of participating in the process and encouraging an appreciation of design on a private scale that might lead to support for design on a public scale, landscape architects

have allowed others—Martha Stewart, cable TV—to promote gardening as a consumer activity. This has led to the proliferation of the common residential landscape vocabulary—Keystone® retaining wall blocks, Interlock® pavers, and Haddonstone® planters—in the public landscape. Such professional lethargy is in marked contrast to Garrett Eckbo and Larry Halprin's use of *Sunset* magazine to popularize their work and then leverage this popularity into more important, more durable, and more visible public work.

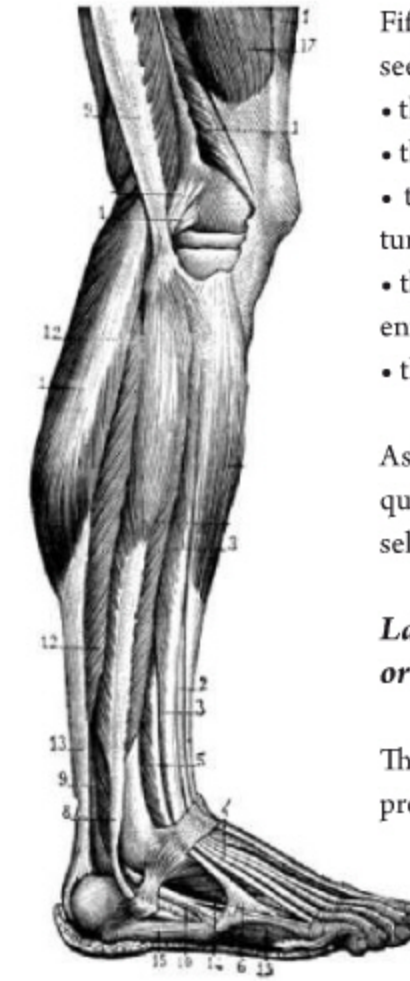
As a result, today “landscape architecture” is both too popular and not popular enough. On the one hand, it is too familiar, too seemingly simple: to build a house is complicated, but everyman can plant a tree and mow a lawn. On the other hand, when complexity is introduced, John Q. Public perceives “landscape architecture” as irrelevant to his everyday concerns (“What does landscape systems theory have to do with my backyard?”).

Landscape architecture, as currently practiced, is a deeply conservative activity.

Landscape architecture today is overly concerned with conservation. By this we do not only mean that it seeks to conserve physical, natural, and cultural resources, but that it also seeks to conserve economic, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual resources. Landscapes today are constructed to preclude consequences: to avoid controversy, to prevent cost overruns, to avert liability. The resulting landscapes of practice are uniform, built to CLARB standards of imagination.

In other words, the fearful field of landscape architecture takes few risks and resists change. But as Dr. Phil says, so long as you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got. In 1954, a different Phil put it another way: he said that designers limit themselves by leaning on standard practices.

the “crutches” of landscape architecture—the crutch of history, of the pretty drawing, of utility/usefulness, of comfort, of cheapness, and of structure...



Fifty years later, these “crutches” (as he called them) still seem relevant to landscape architecture:

- the crutch of history (doing what's been done before);
- the crutch of the pretty drawing (so, today's is digital);
- the crutch of utility/usefulness (landscape architecture is nothing if not a useful profession);
- the crutch of comfort (both the designer's and the client's) the crutch of cheapness (no comment); and
- the crutch of structure (if there's order, it's ok).⁶

As long as the field is supported by these crutches, we question landscape architecture's ability to reinvent itself in the face of social and environmental change.

Landscape architecture today has no central or core defining values.

This lamentable situation is new. Historically, periods of professional dynamism and strength in landscape architecture are correlated with strong social agendas.

In the early 1800s, the profession's gestation period, landscape architecture existed for a particularly compelling reason: the amelioration of social conditions caused by industrialization.⁷

It is no coincidence that landscape architecture gained prominence through the success of the Olmsteds in the late 19th and early 20th century in the United States,

where a democratic political system, combined with a huge influx of immigrants, accelerated social reform in the face of modernization.

Such professional strength, through a connection to social reform, also characterized the 1930s, when landscape architects created new typologies such as parkways and residential subdivisions, while implementing the quasi-socialist vision of the Roosevelt administration. The 1950s and 1960s were another period of professional vigor, fueled by the social ideals of Modern architecture as transformed and translated into landscape by the likes of Garrett Eckbo, James Rose, Hideo Sasaki, M. Paul Friedberg and Larry Halprin.

In contrast, landscape architecture today lacks a compelling and unifying social agenda. Landscape architecture is scattered among ever-increasing and increasingly disparate types of practice, ranging from garden design to GIS applications. But these practice types define activities, and activities do not provide a professional *raison d'être*. As a result, no one, not even landscape architects, knows what landscape architecture really is.⁸

4. As proof, we cite the hilarity induced by imagining landscape architectural connections to Eminem, Britney Spears, Steven King, Steven Spielberg, Julia Roberts, John Williams, or any commonly known or commercial artist in any but our immediately allied fields of art and architecture. Or, imagine any current, well-known landscape architect (Martha Schwartz or Laurie Olin, perhaps?) having the desire, connections, and wherewithal to host a prime-time TV show, as Ian McHarg did in 1969.

5. This is part of a continuing pattern. For example: landscape architects, pioneers of modern parkways in the 1930s, relinquished road design to engineers in the 1950s, relegating themselves to highway planting design. In a similar way, urban planning has largely become the domain of architects, transportation engineers and developers.

6. Philip Johnson, “The Seven Crutches of Modern Architecture,” excerpted in Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf, *Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture*, 208-210. We do find it a little ironic that even our critique of landscape architecture employs an architect's help.

7. See any general landscape history text such as Norman Newton, *Design on the Land*; Philip Preghill and Nancy Volkman, *Landscapes in History*; or George Chadwick, *The Park and the Town*.

8. Sure, landscape architecture is loosely united by some vague environmental concerns. Yet defining such “environmentalism” is difficult, when some landscape architects support traditional real estate development while others promote “sustainable growth.” Ironically, even among the latter, there is little consensus on what sustainability is or means. Of course, such professional single-mindedness is likely irrelevant. Within the past 100 years, landscape architects have seen—and even aided—the rise of other professions more nimble and effective at advancing environmental and social change: Consider the astounding effects environmental advocacy and law has had in protecting the United States' environment—its public lands, its clean air and clean water—since Earth Day. What comparable achievements has landscape architecture produced since then?

anything landscape architecture does—whether it's site engineering, site ecology, environmental art, site design, planting plans, sustainable design, cultural criticism—there is another field that can do it, and do it better.

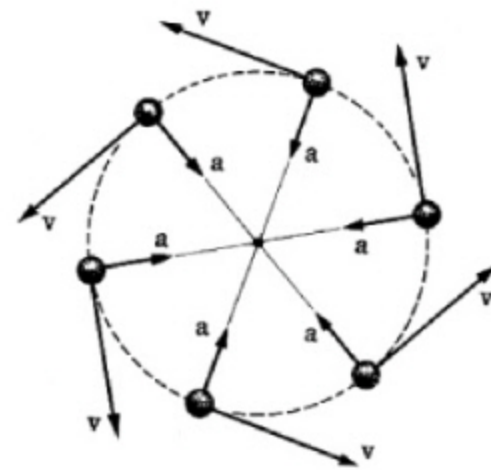
If landscape architecture cannot define a current direction, neither can it cope with its status as an undefined and undefinable profession.

In 1981 Stephen Krog's article "Is it Art?"⁹ unleashed a brief firestorm of vitriolic debate on the nature of landscape architecture. Is landscape architecture art? Is it "not art?" Is it applied art or is it science? Is it art + science? Is it... Well, what exactly IS it? The debate has intermittently continued over the past twenty-odd years, begging the question of whether the profession could actually be all of them simultaneously.

Considering that none of the allied professions of art, architecture, and engineering seem to have such existential angst,¹⁰ the major result of such debate seems to be the revelation that landscape architecture is hamstrung by its own ambiguous nature. Even worse, anything landscape architecture does—whether it's site engineering,

site ecology, environmental art, site design, planting plans, sustainable design, cultural criticism—there is another field that can do it, and do it better.

This conundrum has led to two opposing forces acting on the field: The first is an outward/centrifugal pull, expanding the field to encompass all areas, reducing eliminating and blurring disciplinary boundaries; the second is an inward/centripetal force which seeks to defend these boundaries and hoard a professional monopoly.¹¹ Together, these forces ensure the field's lack of directional momentum.



Doctoring Landscape Architecture: Five Miracle Cures?

If there is consensus that landscape architecture is an ailing profession, then there has also been no shortage of therapies proposed to have magical healing properties. Well-meaning members of the profession regularly propose panaceas for the aforementioned symptoms, in the exciting guise of "redefining the profession." Such cures range from reforming education¹² to "designing with nature" to "expanding the field" to "recovering landscape" to "(de)forming, in(form)ing, and re(forming) landscape."¹³

Yet despite their catchy slogans, these therapies have done little to heal the patient. We wonder, just how effective are these proposed cures for landscape architecture? Are they the professional equivalent of patent medicines or stem cell research?

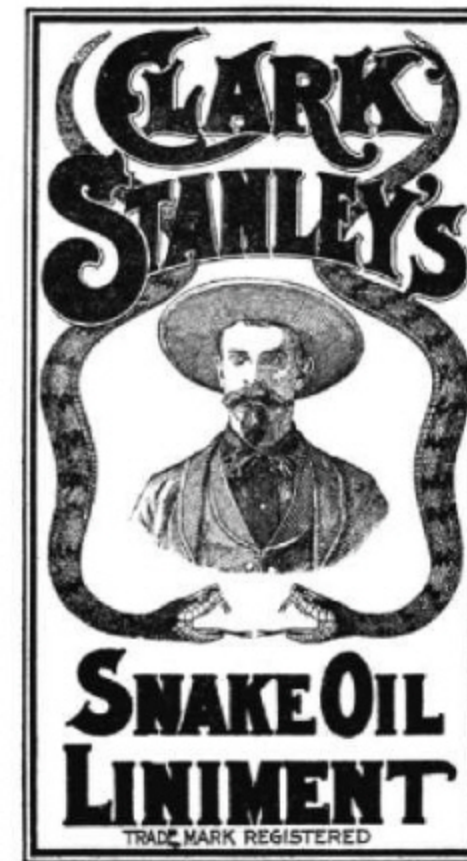
landscape architecture today is distinctly anti-controversy, a sad, if logical, outcome of the field's polite, upperclass, gentlemanly upbringing.

The development of a critical discourse will re-energize landscape architecture's moribund nature.

This remedy is often trotted out and a "new" critical spirit is launched on a depressingly regular schedule.¹⁴ But the resulting provocative articles have a half-life of about one month, or the time it takes for a letter to the editor of *Landscape Architecture* magazine to be processed and forgotten. Critics may be writing, but no one's listening.¹⁵

Critical dialogue isn't a solution to landscape architecture's problems in part because the field has never sustained a critical dialogue. Landscape architecture has never had a major critical voice, preferring commentators or observers like Grady Clay, J.B. Jackson, and John Dixon Hunt over "real" architectural critics like Ada Louise Huxtable, Herbert Muschamp, and Robert Campbell. Landscape architecture today is distinctly anti-controversy, a sad, if logical, outcome of the field's polite, upperclass, gentlemanly upbringing. As a result the field doesn't know how to critically evaluate work, or what to do with criticism when it gets it.

Moreover, for discourse to work, someone has to care and the fact of the matter is, most people don't. Much of the profession is simply not interested in critical discourse and dialogue, preferring instead to go about the daily "business" of landscape architecture. At the same time, critical discourse requires dialogue and dialogue between the field's defining, polarized extremes—architectural theory wannabes versus "landscapers"—is really not possible. An intelligent middle-ground seems unattainable: In the words of William Butler Yeats, "[t]he best lack all convictions, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity."



It seems to us that it's time to more closely examine the many proposals to reinvigorate landscape architecture. In the following section, we dissect five of the most blatantly optimistic and most frequently presented cures, to determine, what, if any, promise they hold for reviving the patient.

9. Steven R. Krog, "Is it Art?," 372-376

10. For example, it's hard to imagine engineers regularly asking themselves, "What IS engineering?"

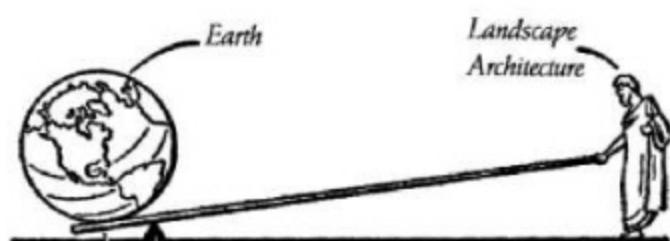
11. This is also related to the associated "Are landscape architects specialists or generalists" debate, another existential crisis well outlined in Patrick Miller, "A Profession in Peril?" This article also discusses the related conflict between practice and the academy.

12. The authors admit their duplicity with this particular panacea, in light of the fact that we participate in the education of hapless youth as cannon fodder for the profession.

13. See Elizabeth Meyer, "The Expanded Field of Landscape Architecture;" James Corner, "Recovering Landscape as a Critical Cultural Practice;" and Peter Jacobs "De In(form)ing Landscape Re." For other profession-reinvigorating proposals, one might also examine the following books: Bernard Lassus, *The Landscape Approach*; Kristina Hill and Bart Johnson, *Ecology and Design: Frameworks for Learning*, or James Corner, *Recovering Landscape*. This list is by no means comprehensive: There are many others.

14. Such criticism "start-ups" include, but are by no means limited to, the aforementioned Stephen Krog article, plus his "Creative Risk Taking;" the series of topical counterpoint "debates" by Roger Wells and Ignacio Bunster-Ossa which appeared in *Landscape Architecture* from June 1997 to December 1998; and the poorly circulated annual *Critiques of Built Work*, published by the Department of Landscape Architecture at Louisiana State University. We assume this manifesto will soon be relegated to this category as well.

15. As illustrated by the premature demise of *Landscape Forum* in 2002 after only 14 issues.



If landscape architecture could learn to present its contributions to human welfare in a more convincing manner, then it would be understood and embraced by all.

This remedy proposes that landscape architecture is merely a misunderstood profession, unknown to the public at large, and that its problems will be solved by better—and more—communication with the public. A corollary to this argument is that the name of the profession should be changed, maybe to “land architect” or “land planner,” because the term “landscape” is too vague, too picturesque, too antique, and too confusing for the public to understand.

However, landscape architecture’s misery is not simply the result of a public relations failure or a “branding” deficiency. The inability of the profession to convey its value to the public is not so much a function of poor communication as it is a result of the profession’s discomfort with its ambiguous nature. Until landscape architecture itself knows what it is, no one else will, either.

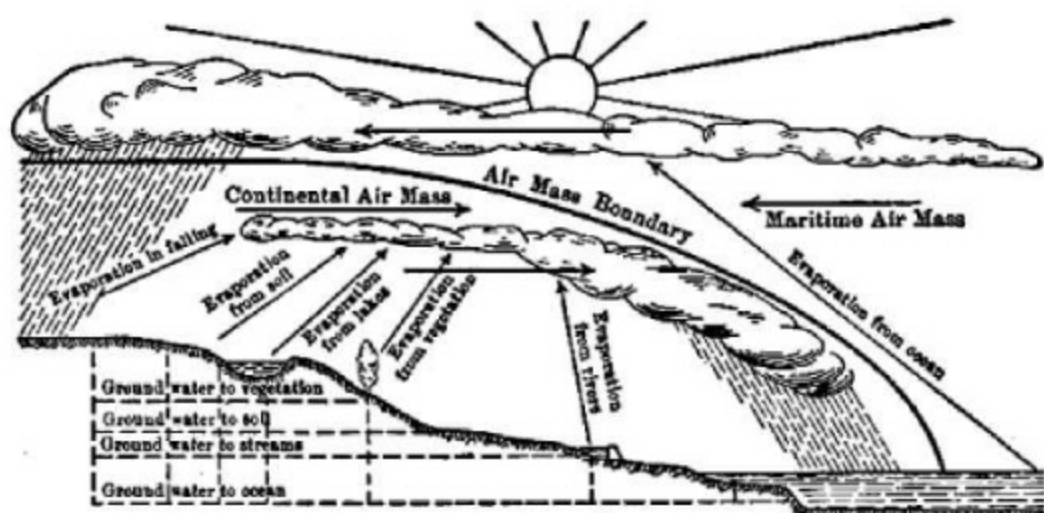
The formulation of a body of theory will unify the disparate activities of landscape architecture and provide a direction for the field.

In light of

literary theory, architectural theory, the theory of relativity, evolutionary theory, small particle theory, chaos theory, modernist, post-modernist and post-structuralist theory, critical theory, Marxist and post-Marxist theory,

the lack of *landscape architectural* theory would appear to be a problem, at least to theoretical thinkers. But is the development of landscape architecture theory a viable solution to the waning nature of the profession?

Theory is an intellectual practice and, as a field emerging from the earth, landscape architecture has always had a distinctly anti-intellectual streak. After all, the key constructs of the field are very simple: Water runs down hill. Plants need light and sun to grow. The angle of repose of dirt is 3:1. Could it be that landscape architectural theory is simply the curtain hiding Dorothy from the Wizard? Theory will please academics, but will do little to bridge the growing gulf between academics and practice, which ultimately surrounds this anti-intellectual aspect of landscape architecture, an aspect which grows stronger as a global market and service economy are brought to bear on the profession.



with nature and ecology as sacrosanct values, landscape architecture also thereby excused itself from a larger political and cultural discourse.

The question thus remains, what is landscape architectural theory? Much of what’s being proposed as theory is appropriated from other fields—probably necessary given that landscape architecture evolved from a diverse set of pre-existing disciplines. As a result, the profession’s multiple areas of activity are now spawning multiple theories, theories the big thinkers of the profession would like to parlay into a unifying theory of design. But is this really possible? Seeing landscape architecture as a unifying discipline, an incarnation of cross-, inter-, and transdisciplinarity, might be heartwarming, but seems a little presumptuous given the profession’s current insularity.

Ecology and sustainable design will breathe new life into landscape architecture, which will then become the bastion of applied ecology and the protector of the earth.

Though often presented as a new and revolutionary concept, ecology was not absent at the roots of the profession, as seen in the work of designers as diverse as Repton, Olmsted, and Jensen. Their picturesque/pastoral landscape

ideal—a highly diverse landscape, a dense mosaic of different habitats, well-connected and rich in ecotones—is the image that underlies, implicitly or explicitly, “ecological” designs to this day.¹⁶

By the mid-20th century, McHarg’s rational and analytical “ecological determinism” was initially used in service of a euphoric Modernist desire to improve the world. But as decision-making moved from expert-driven to discursive, landscape architecture’s 19th century perception (and self-perception) of being based largely on aesthetic concerns (of taste rather than necessity) soon threatened its existence in a value-pluralistic (and occasionally even democratic) discourse. Thus ecology as an undisputable, scientific, and fact-based foundation¹⁷ became the last straw of a field trying to save itself, moving landscape interventions from the disputable to the factual. With nature and ecology as sacrosanct values, landscape architecture also thereby excused itself from a larger political and cultural discourse, a comfortable, if limiting position the profession has embraced for the past 30 years.

Yet somehow, a large part of the profession has missed out on the subtle difference between descriptive science and the normative use of its findings. Island biogeography and population ecology, habitat connectivity, patch dynamics, and more recently the general obsession with “landscape process” are now the pavers of good intention on the road to “better” landscapes. Today, just framing a natural process as part of a design can still excuse landscape architects from making potentially contestable decisions.

The question of whether ecology is just a “green veneer” for the profession or whether landscape architecture becomes “ecological design” is mostly



16. Sadly, this type of landscape was the direct outcome of a particular economic, social, cultural, ecological and physical context and reality. Since no one (or very few) today would like to bear this reality, a re-creation of this landscape ideal seems out of place and out of date. It is symptomatic, that landscape architecture and other disciplines so far have failed to develop landscapes that express a contemporary set of conditions and values.

17. Ecology has had its own struggle to be accepted as a “real science;” see Ludwig Trepl, *Geschichte der Oekologie (History of Ecology)*.

by trying to be both art and science/nature and culture, the profession does a good job at neither.

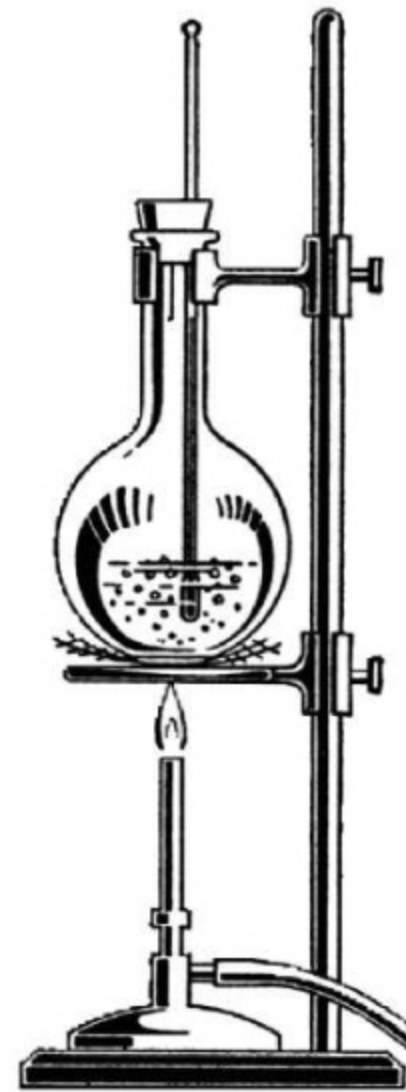
semantics. The larger issue: Landscape architecture is inextricably caught in the nature-culture/art-science dialectic. Although all of the above should obviously be integrated in design, and while the profession argues that it has successfully done so, there is still little evidence, beyond a showcase project or exemplary individual, that this is true. Rather, by trying to be both art and science/nature and culture, the profession does a good job at neither.

Landscape architecture is uniquely situated to be an experimental field less bound by formal and technical constraints, and should be reinvented as such.

This argument, an admittedly more European take on the subject of landscape architecture's problems, states that landscape design could be used as an indicator of current conditions, as well as an experimental stage for dealing with those conditions. In other words, because "landscape" is not just a cultural construct, but also a potential "agent of change," landscape architecture is attributed with the power, or at least the possibility, to design that agency.¹⁸

In the light of landscape architecture's disconnect from concentrations of economic and political power, this would seem a rather grandiloquent statement. Yet despite the field's obvious lack of power and influence to implement its own creations, and despite its infusion with (the *Reader's Digest* version of) systems theory, the hope of a "new" landscape architecture persists, with incrementalism, open-endedness, and experimentation flaunted as the approaches *du jour*.

In fact, landscape architecture *used to be* an experimental field, aligning itself with and participating in the big cultural projects of enlightenment and modernism. Today, however, participation in a culture determined by "multivalent postmodern pluralism" is necessary to be "experimental," and this, unfortunately, does not sit well with landscape architecture's conservative base values, its lack of risk-taking and anti-controversial attitudes. Hence, experimentation cannot occur; the "landscape experiment"¹⁹ is therefore undertaken by other disciplines.²⁰



18. This argument is more fully described in James Corner, "Recovering Landscape as a Critical Cultural Practice;" Thorbjörn Andersson, "Open design fields in contemporary landscape," and in Richard Weller, "Between Hermeneutics and datascape," 11-13.

19. Furthermore, the concept of experiment is not well defined in landscape architecture. It seems quite different from that of other, scientific disciplines, in which a guided inquiry involves operational definitions, testing hypotheses, control groups, and measurable results. This is not just a landscape architectural problem, however, as Thomas Fisher points out in "The Value and Values of Architecture," (33-37) where he describes architecture's inability to quantify, measure and assess values, though he does not express this explicitly as experimentation.

20. See projects by MVRDV, Raoul van Bunschoten and CHORA, and West 8 (okay, so Adriaan Geuze is a landscape architect, but this is a multi-disciplinary firm), UN studio, for work that might be considered "experimental."

landscape architecture is demonstrating an inability to accommodate the basic ideas of postmodernism, especially the dissolution of the nature-culture dichotomy.

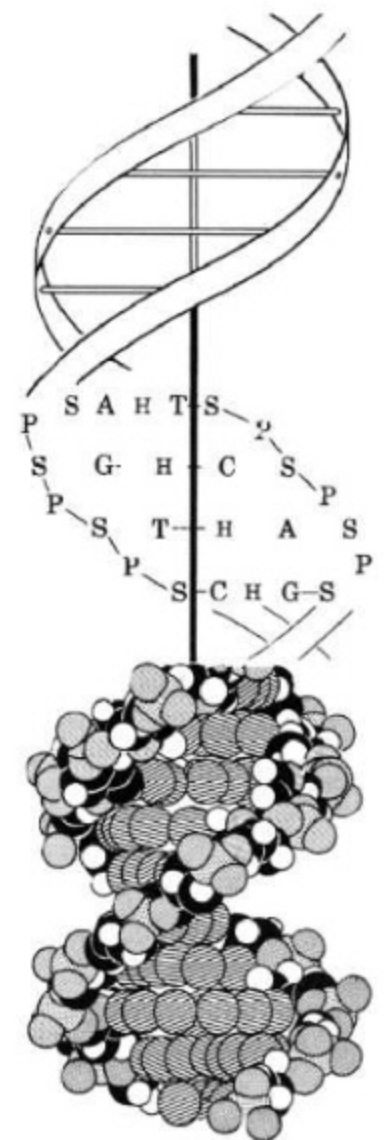
Does the patient have the will to live?

It is also possible that no amount of medical heroics will save the ailing patient. What if, for instance, the failure of landscape architecture is contained in its genetics?

The existence of landscape architecture as a concept, as coined by J.C. Loudon, dates to only 1840, and its use as a professional title to 1862, when Olmsted and Vaux described themselves as landscape architects.²¹ The field coalesced from a diverse set of related pursuits—among them agriculture, building, architecture, gardening, and painting/representation—in response to a particular set of political and cultural conditions, including increasing populations, urban growth, the rise of individualism, and industrialization, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. These conditions are generally known as modernization, and landscape architecture did not, in the form in which it existed in 1850, exist prior to these modern conditions.

However, the forces that held a disparate set of activities together as the discipline of landscape architecture are no longer functioning. Modern conditions have given way to a set of new, post-modern social and political conditions, including multiculturalism and globalization. Unfortunately, landscape architecture is demonstrating an inability to accommodate these basic ideas of post-modernism, especially the dissolution of the nature-culture dichotomy.

The loss of landscape architecture's conditioning forces has set the profession adrift in "the liminal space between signifier and signified, mind and matter, intellect and body."²² If, as Roland Barthes said, the postmodern world can be seen as "a textual field – it writes us, and we write it"²³ that world seems to be largely devoid of landscape architects as either readers or authors.



21. John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, 1, 3.

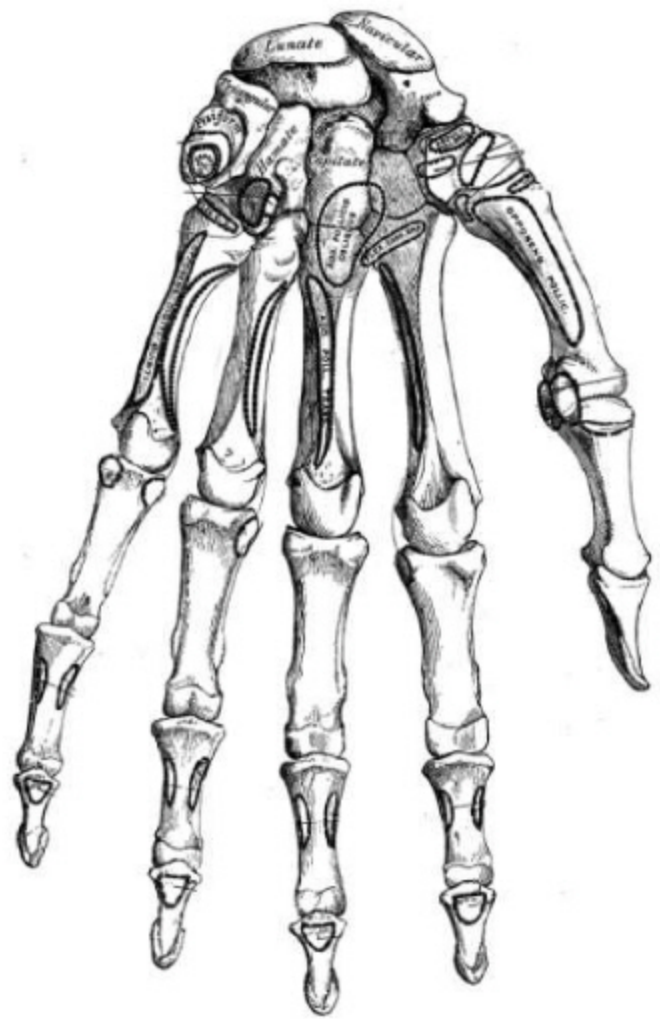
22. James Corner, "Ecology and landscape as agents of creativity," 97. Ok, so we don't know what this really means, either. But it sure sounds impressive, doesn't it?

23. Roland Barthes, as quoted in Richard Weller, "Between Hermeneutics and Datascape," 6.

Is it Dead?

We suspect that landscape architecture's critical condition indicates that the profession is on its deathbed. But should we continue to administer care? Should we really desire to resuscitate the patient? Might landscape architecture not be a field whose time has come and has now passed? Are landscape architects thus like other defunct 19th century professionals such as farriers, wheelwrights, chimney sweeps, bloodletters? Has landscape architecture now become a practice of nostalgia?

What if landscape architecture disintegrated back into a set of related disciplines much as existed prior to its creation? Is it time, we wonder, to just pull the plug and put landscape architecture out of its misery?



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Geeta Wahi Dua

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Describing the difference between an evergreen and deciduous tree referring to the example of a pilkhan (*Ficus infectoria*) tree in the nearby public park to my ten year old daughter, I completely missed the tree's extraordinary ochre shaded silhouette shimmering in the evening sun, pointed out to me by her. It was an amazing play of light, shade and color on the onset of the new season of the year – summer.

As we grow up, with our minds conditioned by education, experience and routine, we sometimes lose the ability to appreciate simple joys of life – a flowering amaltas (*Cassia fistula*) tree along the roadside, the chirping of birds at dawn and dusk, amongst others. As adults and professionals, we over analyze events, places, processes and relationships and arrive at results, decisions, viewpoints and solutions. We tend to be judgmental about situations and personalities. We accept all these changes and incapacities as the traits of a “grown up, educated, intellectual and cultured individual”, who should not think, say and write about “ordinary things.”

Giacomo Leopardi who is considered Italy's greatest modern poet observes that after becoming adults, we acquire

a capacity to analyze but we lose *naïveté* – the capacity to wonder about things.

It may not be wrong to conclude that these ideas of doing away with the “ordinary” and over rationalizing and complicating issues have a role to play in the way we work. The landscape professional, who might design something sensational and quirky, can have his or her landscape end up as a failure, in terms of cultural appropriateness, function, inclusiveness, a sense of reality, maintenance and sustainability.

This aversion to “normality” has found its way into professional discourse as well. We have become more social and verbose. There is an increased urge amongst us to talk, share and convey our thoughts and feelings to others. The values of anonymity are long forgotten. With a desperate need for public acceptance and adulation, many of the lectures and presentations in professionals' forums are “dressed up” to convey simple ideas in abstract and over philosophical ways. At other times, this “imposed intellectualism” is about processes, contexts and projects which are too esoteric. Many of them lack focused and serious experiential component for the listeners to follow and apprehend.

This strategy also works in another way. As human nature, we are always in awe of things that we don't understand. So, young students and professionals with impressionable minds are in awe with the imagery conveyed by such projects. Are these self-promotional exercises disguised as intellectual discussions contributing seriously to the cause of the profession? I have my doubts.

The phenomenon is being practiced in many of the writings in professional journals and academic exercises in design institutes as well. To convey even simple thoughts and ideas, we use a grammar that is intangible, obscure and too theoretical for ones general sensibilities. Moreover, we are over analytical and unnecessarily critical in our observations without understanding the core contexts, in other words, we are good armchair experts.

For me, reviewing a final year thesis project of an architecture student set in a heritage area further underlined the fact that the days of simple ideas appear to be over. The brief given to the student by a senior guide noted that, “you can do anything but ordinary.” On another occasion, the refusal of a senior academic to conceive a design book for higher secondary grade children on

Published in early 40's, Malgudi Days is a collection of short stories by R. K. Narayan. The writings have a strong sense of place and character and gentle beauty. With his characteristic simplicity and unpretentiousness, the writer is able to capture the intricacies of simple daily life of a fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. Illustration by R. K. Laxman
Source: www.its.caltech.edu



the grounds that it will “simplify”—and hence, lower the level of intellectual discourse—was an eye-opening statement to me.

Are “simple” and “ordinary” the new cuss words in the design discourse and practice? Why is “simple” being equated as unintelligent and unimaginative whereas it is the most sustained way of design, timeless, and therefore arguably elevates itself to a much higher plane than complex thought?

As Leonardo Da Vinci declared, “Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication”, the most profound concepts and complex design ideas can be evolved, executed and explained in simple ways and terms.

It is more challenging to develop a simple sustainable approach to a given design brief than a complex trendier one, which runs the real risk of becoming obsolete after a while.

There are examples of many landscape design projects in which in spite of complex ecological layers beneath, the designs have been able to transmit a sense of lightness and simplicity. Many old and modern Far East gardens reflect the same concept of a minimalist ordinary approach that hinges around a few design elements. Closer home there are few good contemporary examples of sophisticated and yet simple landscape design vocabularies.

There is a need to conceive our new landscapes as unpretentious realms that are an authentic and realistic narration of the spaces. They are to be experienced with love and belonging rather than created with a self conscious detached spirit to be viewed with awe and false respect. Shouldn't we follow the same rule for our professional discourse as well?

I feel that the search for a lost innocence and an eye for wonder and thrill in the simple details of our daily lives are the steps towards unravelling those imposed complexities that shackle us. Maybe this will liberate us to think and design simply.

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Samir Mathur

RATING THE RATING SYSTEMS

The genesis and growth of Green Rating systems is important to understanding and critiquing them. They were basically formulated to put a check on uncontrolled use of resources – land and water, all are related to landscape construction. Every truth about green is a matter of interpretation, like any language that you use, be it Hindi, English, or any other. It conveys different meaning in different contexts. It is true that rating systems depend more on the design elements and energy calculations to reach certain figures and numbers rather than actual working of the building. So, for the last few years it has been able to generate its own exclusive and elite “green industry” of green products, specialized glazing, vertical green walls, construction materials etc.

The rating systems with their limited scope should not be regarded something more than just a basic framework for sustainable development, that also which is evolving with each passing day.

The Green Rating movement, and LEED Rating System in particular,

originated from USA. It therefore has a strong American-centric bias and its goes out to solve problem related to resource intensive countries rather than developing countries, and there is a big difference between the two. In the US one can find air conditioned environments even in the economically weaker section housing developments whereas in India there is no such thing. So, to achieve the credit, you first aircondition a space and then remove the conditioning and you get credits. But in case like in India, if there is no air conditioning at all to start with, there is no provision to get credits. There is no base line for such construction. In USA due to the high ceiling heights of 3 metres and above and local climate conditions, the optimum temperature is taken as 24 degree Celsius, whereas here, in India we can manage with low heights of 2.4 2.7 metres and an optimum temperature of 27 degree Celsius.

At the same time the average US building is highly water and energy intensive and has a certain level of basic threshold of construction which is very high, while this is not the case in India. So

one can say that the LEED Rating System is not ideally compatible to rate Green Buildings in India.

The first Indian rating system TERI GRIHA came into being in 2007, and while it was a good move, it needs to evolve further. In many cases, we have the same set of professionals who facilitate projects to get the rating and at the same time assess the building documentation for green credits, leading to a conflict of interest. When LEED AP professionals came in picture, their job was to span the gap between the rating system and the actual construction. However, like environmental consultants, many times these professionals do your documentation work and at the same time are part of the committee which assesses you project for LEED credits, leading to the same conflict of interest. We need to have two separate groups of people to bring credibility to the system. The documentation needs to be checked by some experts of sustainability sitting outside the credit giving agency, and this needs to take place at various levels.

Another important point is that the rating systems are not at all suitable for smaller towns. Many parameters are related directly to municipal bye-laws like set back areas, areas of openings, ventilation, and orientation, floor-area-ratio etc. In absence of evolved building bye laws, these parameters don't work in smaller towns and cities. So you see most of the green rated buildings in metros and big cities.

It is a costly affair to get a building LEED rated. So you see very few government buildings that accomplish this. Moreover, it is very important for the rating systems of India to be region and culture specific keeping in view the geographic and cultural background of such a diverse country. We have same set of guidelines for development for Alibaug which is semi urban as we do for a core urban metropolis like Mumbai. There are no rating systems for large scale developments, for example for housing, commercial areas, and industrial landuses. The existing rating systems only work for individual developments.

We now also have National Building Code Energy Efficiency Guidelines, which will be soon notified. They have a strong Indian context. They will be mandatory to follow during all building construction and so we will have some real sustainable development. Personally, I have great hopes for it. Also, the Comptroller Auditor General is in a process of introducing energy audits for all government buildings which—if notified—will be mandatory. Both these steps will give a boost to the real green movement in the construction industry.

Green Landscape Rating System by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) is more specific to landscape architecture, which is another good move. It has landscape architects on its advisory panel, which should bring more value and credibility to it. It will also need to evolve with time. The design section appears to be quite detailed but the post construction sec-



tion should have more weight. In green projects, standardization in plant palettes is increasingly evident in order to meet various parameters. There is no measure of landscape richness in such ratings. IGBC should associate with the Indian Society of Landscape Architects (ISOLA), Forest Research Institute (FRI), Botanical Survey of India (BSI), as well as local naturalists and ecologists to provide a contextual framework for its rating system.

One can say that all Green Rating systems presently being used in India are still evolving, and it may take another decade or so before they become stable in terms of criteria against which to design a project to.

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Sanjay Prakash, Tanmany Tahaghat and Mohan S. Rao

GREEN ON CREDIT

A NOTE ON THE **IGBC GREEN LANDSCAPE RATING SYSTEM**

The pilot version of the Green Landscape Rating System (LRS) by the Indian Green Building Council has opened an interesting set of discussions. At one end of the spectrum, the necessity of rating systems for the design profession itself is being questioned while at the other end is the critical appraisal of individual criteria. While each of the criteria (or points) can be debated for their scientific rationale and merit, it would be interesting to research the actual impact of ratings as a means for achieving sustainable outcomes – the presumption here being that the actual purpose of such rating systems is to help create a sustainable world. That presupposition itself may need a revision since the only time the LRS uses the term ‘sustainable’ in the entire document is not as a desired outcome but where points are awarded for ‘sustainable landscape maintenance’. While a conscious effort to reduce resource consumption is clearly necessary, whether that is effectively achieved through a globally applicable, or in this case, pan-Indian, points sheet for the design profession remains debatable.

The overarching framework of the LRS is to achieve ‘green’ landscapes, as the title makes it quite clear. There are also clearly stated directives such as conservation of water and biodiversity, prevention of soil erosion, etc., which are no doubt commendable. Since the LRS is prepared by a ‘building’ council, it is quite logical that most points are given to things that are ‘built’, not for leaving natural systems alone. Oftentimes, a responsible landscape professional may feel that the best approach to a healthy site is to do nothing. This may be beneficial for the site’s natural systems, but not for the professional concerned since she or he will neither get points for a ‘green’ design nor will the project qualify for one of the colored medals.

The basic assumption being the profession of landscape architecture is all about designing gardens. Quite possibly so. The much sought after certificate proving one’s green credentials clearly categorizes the entire spectrum of a landscape professional’s engagement in two neat silos – gardens more than 5 acres or gardens less than 5 acres. This should conven-



iently exclude the radicals who want to engage in streetscapes, conserve natural systems and other peripheral activities, while leveling the field for a tidy rating system.

Before one even attempts to get the maximum points, it is important to qualify that the ‘garden designer’ should ensure that projects are located in geographies that meet the exacting standards of the LRS. For example, one should necessarily conserve topsoil to qualify. If the project happens to be in a deltaic plain or a black cotton zone, the fact remains that topsoil conservation is a non-issue. And yet, since this stipulation is mandatory, the project will not qualify to be rated if one does not actively address this aspect.

Assuming one is able to transcend this barrier, the LRS is quite helpful and transparent by instructing the design professional in a step-by-step manner on how to achieve maximum points. There remains the small matter of mutually contradictory directives, which needs the intervention of a skilled ‘green’ consultant to navigate the document. It is highly likely that a professional education in landscape architecture is quite unnecessary to engage with the process – the LRS is practically a dummies guide to designing landscapes! It would also help to have a master’s degree in finance while inferring the LRS. For the first time ever, ‘green’ design has been defined based on the cost of materials that has gone

into the construction. This is clearly a cutting edge science that needs careful understanding.

A careful reading of the LRS does not offer any clue to as to its intended target group. Is it the designer, owner or the manager of the proposed ‘landscaped garden’ who is responsible for rendering the space ‘green’? Specious directives that offer credits for starting shuttle bus services to connect to public transport, enforcing a ‘no-smoking’ policy and such others effectively detract the serious applicability of the LRS. Such frameworks makes one wonder if the LRS’s stated intention is to help create a sustainable environment or is it merely yet another cleverly disguised exercise in obfuscation and green washing?

The LRS document in its attempt to be a guideline booklet but ends up rather as a conservative expediency-based manual, displacing the field of landscape architecture from its fundamentals of geography, climate, culture and context into a purely bureaucratic process. Though the various ‘guidelines’ in the LRS imply certain overarching self-regulating specifics, by reducing the process to exclusively numerical values, it undermines the immense diversity of sites and displays a narrow understanding of the profession that should ideally be a qualitative interpretation of site processes rather than one merely driven by numbers.

nearly every single point can be debated—and effectively trashed. While the document makes all the right noises deemed politically correct in the current climate, it appears to be designed more to protect the insensitive and incompetent designer rather than encourage more sustainable and sensitive interventions.

For illustration, SPM Credit 1 states, 'Minimise disturbances to the site so as to reduce long-term environmental impacts'. Further, it clarifies, 'Avoid disturbance to the site by retaining natural topography for at least 20% of the site area'. Such an ambiguous and largely contradictory regulation implies that on a 100-acre hilly site in the Shiwaliks, for example, a designer can manipulate the numbers game by destroying 80 acres of the topography and retain 20 acres in its original form and still meet the approval of the LRS. Further on, the LRS 'instructs' the right slopes for any site and stipulates that grassed slopes should not exceed 1:4! In a bizarre manner, the LRS retrospectively establishes a convoluted rationale of as to why 80% of the hilly terrain in the Shiwaliks indeed required excessive manipulation.

In another regulation, the SPM Credit 5 states, 'Increase the green cover in landscape, to preserve local biodiversity'. While one can for a moment believe that more green is always better, it gets tricky when the LRS puts a specific number to this game when it further states Ensure at least 70% of

total landscape area has green cover to the ground. Such a loosely positioned credit creates unwarranted homogeneity to landscape across geographies and especially typologies that deal with vast complexes of temples, mosques and palaces, spaces that have been traditionally landscaped based on their cultural and functional paradigm.

Does this mean one starts ripping out the paving in Fatehpur Sikri to render the World Heritage Site more green? Or, more importantly, does the LRS imply that these spaces are not qualified as 'landscape spaces' to begin with? Is then the more acclaimed Kolkata City Centre plazas are to be termed as a 'landscape' space or an 'open' space? Should then the competency of the drafting board be questioned on the preliminary definition of a landscape space?

In a creditable gesture, the LRS awards extra points for providing meditation spaces, clearly in deference to the Indian spiritual ethos, thus providing a strong context and effectively silencing critics who might nitpick that the document is not sufficiently 'Indian'.

If one were to look at strongly themed gardens like Nek Chand's Chandigarh Rock Garden – one could miss the point of it all, and start scoring it on what are non-issues for the ecological story that the park is telling! It was the same with building ratings, which end up de-rating the value of environmental architectural gems like M. K. Gandhi's Wardha Adi Kutir or Laurie Baker's Centre for Development Studies campus at Thiruvananthapuram.

Critically, the LRS reads like a hurriedly compiled document that tries to be the primer for 'green' landscape design while assuming the Indian professional to be of the lowest intelligence and capability. And adding insult to the injury is that for proving oneself otherwise, the professional is rewarded with points. A careful reading of the document makes it apparent that the stated intention and the expected outcome are worlds apart – following the LRS to the letter would result in landscapes that are anything but sustainable. At the same time, the danger from such an approach is very real – of validating a destructive, let alone unaesthetic or inappropriate, approach to design of

open spaces based on a series of fallacious and irrational strictures. This is quite transparent in the tokenism used to stipulate an extremely low threshold specified for supposed green characteristics. Even the numbers seem to be thrown together like an end-of season sale) rather than being rooted in any scientifically proven rational process. For example, (>50% local material gets 1 point, >75% gets 2 points. Most stipulations, including the percentage of recycled material, native vegetation, and storm water run off, are set to laughably low standards, irrefutably weakening any pretence to a 'green' approach. Further, the LRS literally forces increased use of electro-mechanical equipment and industrial products, which is clearly good news to manufacturers, and not users, while not using these is actually penalized.

Given enough time and patience nearly every single point can be debated—and effectively trashed. While the document makes all the right noises deemed politically correct in the current climate, it appears to be designed more to protect the insensitive and incompetent designer rather

than encourage more sustainable and sensitive interventions. One can easily examine a hundred of the best designed spaces in the country—possibly the world—through the lens of the LRS and it is more than likely that ninety-nine of those will fail miserably to meet the irrational benchmarks set under the thin pretence of 'standards and best practices'.

In trying to create 'standards' for landscape or garden design or whatever it purports, the LRS manages to reduce the immense diversity, not to mention complexity, of the Indian sub-continent into a single piece of real estate – possibly imagined as Gurgaon or Hyderabad. Critical aspects of site sensitivity and contextual response are completely abandoned in favour of a clean points sheet cleverly tailored to lazy clerks and accountants, who would then sit in judgment on the strength of a design professional's 'green' acumen. This is the most damaging aspect of the document. Irrespective of the geo-climatic demands of the rich and diverse landscape of India, one is clearly encouraged to have a single, industry-sanctioned

approach to every given site. This will undoubtedly kill the burgeoning professional interest in sustainable environments but more importantly, will surely provide official sanction to the decimation of the environment.

Rating systems end up creating insensitive attitudes and approaches to environmentally appropriate work. This particular draft, it can be argued, will devalue the quality of landscape design in the country while encouraging self-congratulatory ratings to proliferate. Given their real estate industry-driven and self-proclaimed success in the ratings of green buildings it is unlikely that IGBC will listen and withdraw launching this rating or extensively revise it. Therefore, we have to get used to another marketing tool in the hands of promoters of gated communities with platinum rated parks. A parallel process of dialogue on what constitutes good landscape architecture is sorely missing in the Indian marketplace, and publications such as this one, the Journal of Landscape Architecture, need to create that conversation.



most of the existing parks and gardens will not require a specialized consultant, or even a landscape architect, to successfully apply for certification. this democratization of green rating is the right step in making sustainability accessible to everyone. this is true revolution.

Despite these deficiencies, there is a lot to be said in defence of the intent of the IGBC Green Landscape Rating System. Sustainability had hitherto been the privilege of select buildings, with vast areas of open spaces, parks, and gardens not even getting a chance to be recognized as “Green” unless a new green building was built on it. The LRS has made the green lifestyle even more accessible to everyone. India has the potential to have billions of square feet of certified green parks and landscapes. If the IGBC building rating systems have achieved the target of one square foot of green building, the LRS should target at least ten square feet of certified green landscape, for every Indian.

There are thousands of private as well as municipal parks in the country that can potentially transform into idyllic, accessible, clean, green, non-night-sky-polluting, energy efficient, and mosquito-free meditation spaces. If you drive in, adequate parking, downward facing solar-lamps, public facilities, and access ramps will make the experience all the more pleasurable. The focus of the rating system on the selection of native,

drought tolerant, habitat attracting, and mosquito repelling plant species in all climates and settings will create a consumer demand for such plants even amongst the non-green markets.

Responding to the demand for certification of both new and existing landscapes around buildings and campuses, the LRS is designed for ease of documentation and compliance. The excessive cost of green consultants and the arduous documentation process has been a bane of many a green projects in the country. The LRS has tried to overcome this barrier by putting the specifications in layman and non-technical terms as far as possible, and leaving

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many areas open for interpretation and subjective adjustments. In fact, most of the existing parks and gardens will not require a specialized consultant, or even a landscape architect, to successfully apply for certification. This democratization of green rating is the right step in making sustainability accessible to everyone. This is true revolution.

SEEING THE UNSEEN

The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.

—Aristotle

Designing the landscape is, amongst other things, about creating outdoor imageries that evoke different kinds of experiences. The philosophical essence of the discipline places it very close to the fields of literature, visual arts and music. In literature, the writer or poet uses words to creating imageries by coining a metaphor, importing a memory, imparting a meaning and marking symbolism; in the visual arts he uses forms and colors to achieve the same. In music, he creates an experience with different types of melodic scales, chords, and notes. All these creations communicate an emotional and important experience imaginatively and creatively, deepening our knowledge of the senses more poignantly. The absence of a physicality of objects and materials to generate experiences make a literary, artistic and musical composition occupy a specific place in the mental landscape of the reader, observer or listener, taking it to a sublime level where it lingers for a much longer time. The meaning of the creation is far richer than the plot.

Works of art and literature are often the sources of inspiration that help spatial designers create and convey meanings using implicit ideas rather than relying only on explicit physical structures and settings. The true meaning of a design involves the observer's senses, intelligence, emotions and imagination.

With these ideas in mind, we are introducing a new section from this issue— **Seeing the Unseen**. Readers are invited to write about their favorite pieces of literary and visual art for this section which have inspired them in their thinking about and designing of landscapes.



Poem by Geeta Wahidua
English translation by Manjusha Ukidve

A set of questions that a landscape architect puts across to a poet to guide him to make his landscapes more emotive and timeless...

Can the poet provide the clues?



मन की राह

मन की राह किधर से गुजरे,
प्रिय कविराज बताओ ।

नव उपवन निर्माण में, सब गुर कौशल लग गये,
माटी की वो सौंधी महक, तुम कहाँ से लाते ?
प्रिय कविराज बताओ ।

फल फूल हैं, फव्वारा भी, हाट को जाता रस्ता भी,
भाव-विभोर सी पर वो यादें, तुम कैसे जगाते ?
प्रिय कविराज बताओ ।

नूतन छव, नयी दिशाएँ, वृक्ष भी हैं कई नये,
चित्त हर ले जो छवि सुखद, तुम कैसे बनाते ?
प्रिय कविराज बताओ ।

नये बाग में सब जन आये, आई न वन की बया,
नभचर के स्वछंद कलरव को, तुम कैसे बुलाते ?
प्रिय कविराज बताओ ।

जो देखा है सो नश्वर, जो अनदेखा वही स्थाई,
युगों युगों से यही गान, यह धरती करती आई ।
पावन अदृश्य उस दुनिया की, तुमने क्या तस्वीर बनाई !
अजर अमर कैसे बने रचना, मुझको भी सिखलाओ ।

मन की राह किधर से गुजरे,
प्रिय कविराज बताओ ।

Way to the heart

Lead my mind along thy way,
Dear Poet!

I create new gardens of delight,
Crafted with my skills, talent and insight,
But dear poet, understand my plight
And guide me so that I might
Imbue them with the delicate fragrance of the Earth.

Fruit laden branches, with the winds sway
And flowers bloom along the pathway,
Sparkling fountains play night and day,
But pray, tell me oh Poet, how I may
Evoke in them memories laden with sentiments?

New images I make,
New directions I take,
And exotic trees I plant,
For novelty's sake.
But oh dear Poet,
Do help me make
An image that takes the breath away.

People visit time and again
But all my efforts are in vain.
If the bayaa of the woods does refrain
From making the garden her domain,
Teach me dear Poet, teach me again
To beckon the sky bird and her unrestrained song.

What meets the eye is mortal
And immortal, the unseen,
Timeless and ageless, this is what
The song of the earth has been.

How do you capture this song, oh poet,
And portray intangible worlds?
How do you write unseen emotions
With timeless, yet tangible words?

How do you create the ethereal
Universe that can't be seen,
Something surreal, and yet so real
Something that has always been?

Lead my mind along thy way,
Dear Poet!

POETIC MUSINGS

TALKING TO **ASHOK VAJPEYI**



Photo source: www.the-south-asian.com

Noted Hindi poet, essayist, literary-cultural critic, thinker and a cultural and arts administrator, the ever-smiling **Ashok Vajpeyi** discusses poetry, art, culture and the idea of 'Indianness'.

Can you discuss poetry in India in terms of its reach and relevance – in Hindi, English, and regional languages?

Poetry in India is a varied scene. What is obtained in one language may not necessarily be obtained in another. We have large audience of poetry in Bengali, Malayalam, Urdu and perhaps Punjabi. The difference between significant poetry and popular poetry is not so vast in these languages as in Hindi. In Hindi, popular poets are those who don't matter in literature and important poets are those who usually are not popular at all. This divorce is peculiar to Hindi which is not that apparent in other languages.

English poetry is a niche kind of poetry. It has a small audience. English appears to be a popular and dominant language while we sit in Delhi or any other metropolitan city. But when one goes to places like Allahabad, Jaipur, Guwahati, Lucknow, or Patna one realizes that it is not true at all. We have produced good fiction writers

and novelists in English literature such as Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth and Arundhati Roy. They can possibly be called major writers but we haven't been able to produce good poetry in English. None of the Indian poets writing in English can be called a 'major' poet.

You have translated many literary works. Do you think a translated work can capture the spirit and flavour of the original work?

I am the shameless partisan of poetry, knowing fully well that it is a marginalized art. I have translated four major Polish poets, two of them being Nobel laureates. I translated them out of my sheer love of poetry and the passion that their works should become available in my mother tongue. Poetry is deeply embedded in structures of utterance, structures of articulation and to transport them into another language is always difficult. There are two viewpoints. One, that poetry is what is lost in translation. Other, that it survives the translation. Everything in poetry cannot be translated. For instance, Czeslaw Milos, who

was a great Polish poet, used a very Christian church imagery in his poetry which is difficult to translate in Hindi.

We invited Tomos Transtomer, a great Swedish poet to The World Poetry Festival at Bharat Bhawan in 1989. In one of his lectures, he said, "The difficulty in the translation is not that you can't find word for word but many of the poetry reside in silences between words. These silences cannot be translated or located at the same place."

But in spite of all these difficulties and inadequacies, I still feel that translation is the third life of any literary work. One is its own life given by the creator, and the second being the life given by the readers. It is not frozen on the page; it becomes live in the minds and hearts of the audience. My own poetry has been translated in French and Polish. I have heard those translations with great sense of wonder.

Art has no absolute truth. The full truth of any form of art, even architecture, emerges when the observer adds his own sense of truth and meaning to it. Does it mean that all art forms are inclusive, and therefore you don't need a trained mind to appreciate art and poetry?

the first life of any literary work is given by the creator, the second is given by the readers; translation is its third life.

Not only art but no other discipline or body of knowledge has absolute truth. There is no absolute truth. It is a myth. There are pluralities of truths. Many of the truths are jointly discovered, by the writers, by the artists, partly, and it is made into some kind of whole when you add your bit. It is a shared truth. Everybody co-shares the truth. There are passionately animated moments of response. You partly start creating it.

A trained mind doesn't mean that it has some academic training or has attended some program or class. If you expose yourself to lot of poetry or any other art form, you will start responding and get trained. But it is always good to know some basic facts, read books and have a keen sense. Direct sensuous encounter is important. That is an important step in direction of training. In our tradition, Bharat *muni* has described 36 qualities to be a kin hearted person before he is admitted to the company of artists. One ought to have these qualities. Most of us gain these qualities by our family, school, education system and of course personal initiatives and efforts.

All art forms show you the "way to the heart". Generally, they are highly evocative; they make you see the in-

visible. Why are we as spatial design professionals, rarely able to touch this aspect in our works?

It is good to have a heart but important to have a mind. It is good to have feelings but important to have intelligence. I think the dichotomy is false. Intelligence comes through what is known as heart and as well as mind. The over dependence on either of them is dangerous. In a way it can tilt the balance and hence lack true beauty and truth. It would be one sided. No art form, either visual arts or performing art can be entirely in the realm of either heart or mind. There has to be combination. I don't think when architects build anything they always build by mind. Any piece of architecture is meant for others to be used. Most architects build for others who are to use it, live into it and all. In the process they try to be others. You start feeling that you are the other. It makes a huge difference. Hence you achieve a kind of poetic moment in your endeavour. You have released yourselves, liberated yourselves from the prison of self for something that is entirely different. It can be magical if handled properly and disastrous otherwise.

over dependence on either heart or mind is dangerous. in a way it can tilt the balance and hence lack true beauty and truth.

In present times, there is a growing insensitivity amongst all of us, professionals and non-professionals. We all have become self-centered and self promoters. Architects are in a big unholy company in that sense. There is a less degree of connection to the otherness of the world. You can't go in a unidirectional way. Professionals should heed this and should be aware of this. There is a strong need to internalize an element of "others" and bring it in play within our works.

How does one explain the term "Indian" in such a culturally diverse nation?

What is truly Indian is a difficult question to answer. Oscar Wilde said that artistic truth is one whose contradiction is also true. One can also say that Indian truth is one. Its contradiction is also true. We have a mind boggling plurality of everything – geographies, climates, religions, languages, beliefs, philosophies, cuisine and so on. If Ajanta is Indian so is the Taj Mahal. Temples of Khajuraho are as Indian as Harmandir Sahib. It is very difficult to define India in a singular identifying term.

Contemporary writer & critic in the Kannada language and my friend U. R. Ananthamurthy said that if you start pitching for diversity in India, you will land up with unity, and if you emphasize its unity, then you end up defining its plurality. It has to be defined not in terms of singularity but in terms of plurality. India is much more than the idea of India

of RSS or Darul Islam which is rather narrow, parochial, and fascist. There are many contenders for Indian-ness, most of these contenders fall short of real pluralism of India.

How different is the challenge of bringing memories in design of a new place with no history as compared to a place with a historic past where you have clear stories of references?

Memory, in a sense, cannot be created. It can only be recalled, articulated and expressed. It cannot be manufactured. If there is a historic past to the site or region, then you can only resonate or import memory. Erecting statues doesn't bring about memory. It is the easiest and the most banal way of memorializing. Devi Prasad Rai Chowdhury's *Gyarah Murti* on Sardar Patel Marg in New Delhi is an excellent example of commemorating a historic event where a mural depicts a historic movement in which people belonging to all genders and age groups participated. So memory need not be confined to structures. Memory should resonate in non-physical ways, of course by physical means. Over a period of time, the place will have its own memory.

I was invited to suggest ideas to create a sense of place by a real estate group based in Bombay which is developing a large township in the region. Bombay has great tradition of nurturing Hindustani Classical music. It has been a foreground of the *avant garde* progressive movement of In-

dian Art. The region has a credible tradition of Marathi theatre. I suggested that one may create an archive of Hindustani music which people can come and listen to or a museum of Modern Art.

In present times, all forms of art, painting, photography, sculpture have adopted different commercial ways of reaching the common man through art galleries, sponsored shows, exhibitions, festivals, auction houses, literature festivals and all. How do you see this trend?

It is good to have them. They do create support systems, both in terms of economics and response. If there are no art galleries then where do people will see these objects? Institutional infrastructure is necessary but not enough. The interest has to be initiated at the level of schools and colleges. SPIC-MACAY is an excellent example. It took music, dance to many schools and universities all over the country. So, young people need to be enthused to engage with art. Jaipur Literature Festival has completed six years. Although mainly in English, it receives on an average, around three lakh footfalls in three days. We need many such events, more inclusive, for dance, theatre, visual arts, poetry and other art forms. These events cannot be State initiatives. They should be social initiatives and private endeavours. Non-Government Organizations can play a crucial role in this area.

all landscapes ultimately are "inscapes". landscape architects should look at them as geography of the soul rather than as physical entities. imagine more intelligently, more poetically.



↑ Charles Correa explored the idea of a "non-building" as a building in Bharat Bhawan, Bhopal. Photo source: www.1.bpblogspot.com

↗ Devi Prasad Rai Chowdhury's Gyarah Murti in New Delhi is an excellent example of commemorating a historic event where a mural depicts a historic movement in which people belonging to all genders and age groups participated. Photo source: www.panoramia.com

What message would you like to give to the landscape designers working in present times?

All landscapes ultimately are 'inscapes'. Landscape architects should look at them as geography of the soul rather than as physical entities. Imagine more intelligently, more poetically. Create or enhance the rhythms which are inherent in any land even in the most arid one which has its austere and severe kind of a rhythm. Enhance and supplement these rhythms. Visualize and design in a way so that they become obvious and start making themselves felt. Charles Correa explored the idea of a "non-building" as a building in Bharat Bhawan in Bhopal. It creates its own strong idea of "sense of place" with built form merging with landscape.

Nature has the two distinctive aspects- it is prolific and has a certain self control. Any creation has to have a delicate balance of both. Where ever prolific is necessary, like in groves of trees, fields, do it but with a sense of control. It can run amok. Good design should a combination of both. There is a given poetic of a space and there is a poetic of what is created. The two should match. One should not intrude in another.

The design should be such that the user makes an effort and feel encouraged to look for the whole. These kinds of notions must percolate. In design like otherwise, saying is good, saying too much is confusing, saying very little may not succeed, so say intelligently imaginatively and sensitively, not too much and not too little. Find a way but it is better to ebb on the side of austerity than to ebb on the side of opulence.

Ashok Vajpeyi can be reached at ashok_vajpeyi@yahoo.com.

अशोक वाजपेयी

Poems by Ashok Vajpeyi
English translation by Basant Rungta

उम्मीद का दूसरा नाम

रचना

कुछ प्रेम
कुछ प्रतीक्षा
कुछ कामना से
रची गयी है वह,
- हाडमांस से तो
बनी थी बहुत पहले ।

The other name of expectation

A composition

*From out of a little love
some awaiting
some wanting
she has that been composed,
-out of flesh and bones,
'twas made
a long while ago.*

और अब शुरू

और अब शुरू होता है
अनुपस्थिति का दुख ।

कामना की राह
अँधेरी और लम्बी है ।

आकाश नीला और निर्दय
निहारता है बिना मदद किये ।

सितारे भटकते हैं
कामना की आकाशगंगाओं में
खोये हुए ।

धरती चुपचाप विलाप करती है ।

And now begins

*The pain of an absence
now begins.*

*The road to desires,
Dark and long.*

*The sky, azure and cruel,
Helps not, stares on.*

*The stars wander,
go astray
Lost in desires,
their milky way.*

*And silently,
laments the earth and wails...*

वे

वे हो सकती थीं
सुख की जड़ें,
वे महज
दुख की शिराएँ हैं ।

They

*Roots of happiness
They could well have been,
Just arteries of sorrow
Is what they are
Instead.*

पचास कविताएँ

उम्मीद चुनती है 'शायद'

उम्मीद चुनती है अपने लिए एक छोटा-सा शब्द
शायद ...

जब लगता है कि आधी रात को
दरवाजे पर दस्तक देगा वर्दीधारी
किसी न किये गये जुर्म के लिए लेने तलाशी
तब अँधेरे में पालतू बिल्ली की तरह
कोने में दुबकी रहती है उम्मीद
यह सोचते हुए कि बाहर सिर्फ हवा हो
शायद ...

उपरोक्त मुख्य कविता का एक अंश है ।

Fifty Poems

Expectation selects 'maybe'

*Expectation selects for itself
A small little word, 'maybe'—*

*When at midnight, you get to know
That, for a crime not committed,
The uniformed police
would rattle your doors
and search and frisk,
then, like a pet cat in that dark,
cowers in a corner and cringes the hope
that outside what lurks
is just a gust,
maybe...*

The above is an excerpt from the full poem.

Rahul Gupta

en route

WOVE organized a travelling workshop & travel camp on the route that took the participants through to Sambhar Salt Lake and to the historical city of Kuchaman, Rajasthan. The idea was to provide a contextual learning through independent reference points to create a visual narration. How the eye saw things from a different perspective using imagination as a tool was the main objective.

The project brief was to COMPLETE the travel experience through a visual narration. The story was to be told in eight frames depicting the following expressions/ words:

—Conversation—Observation—Moments—Perspective—Learning—Eye—Thoughts—Experience.

As a traveller, I have existed, at times with many questions that I find need to be explored. Trying to catch some unanswered aspects of my subjects, I hold my ear to the tracks and listen to stories of the fellow travellers. Opening the door in my thoughts, I walk in to be a part of the silent dreams that lie curled up in the corners. In the huddled shadows of desires, I feel the stories of dried marigold flowers.

Can I unlock one part of the circumstance, can I find the lost voice, belong to the details or loose myself to the larger picture?

En Route I try and find myself in between nowhere place – abandoned by all. I sit to write a dialogue of the conflict and the romance of a young nomadic traveller who dreams of going to a place he has never been before.

His *Thoughts* make me believe that there is a traveller within all of us. In his *Observations*, I find new and silent meanings. Tracing his steps, I pause where the *Conversations* took place and where he found his *Moments*. What did his *Eye* see and what he felt, I shall never truly know. My frames carve his perspectives and through his *Experience*; I *Learn* that the journey is incomplete.

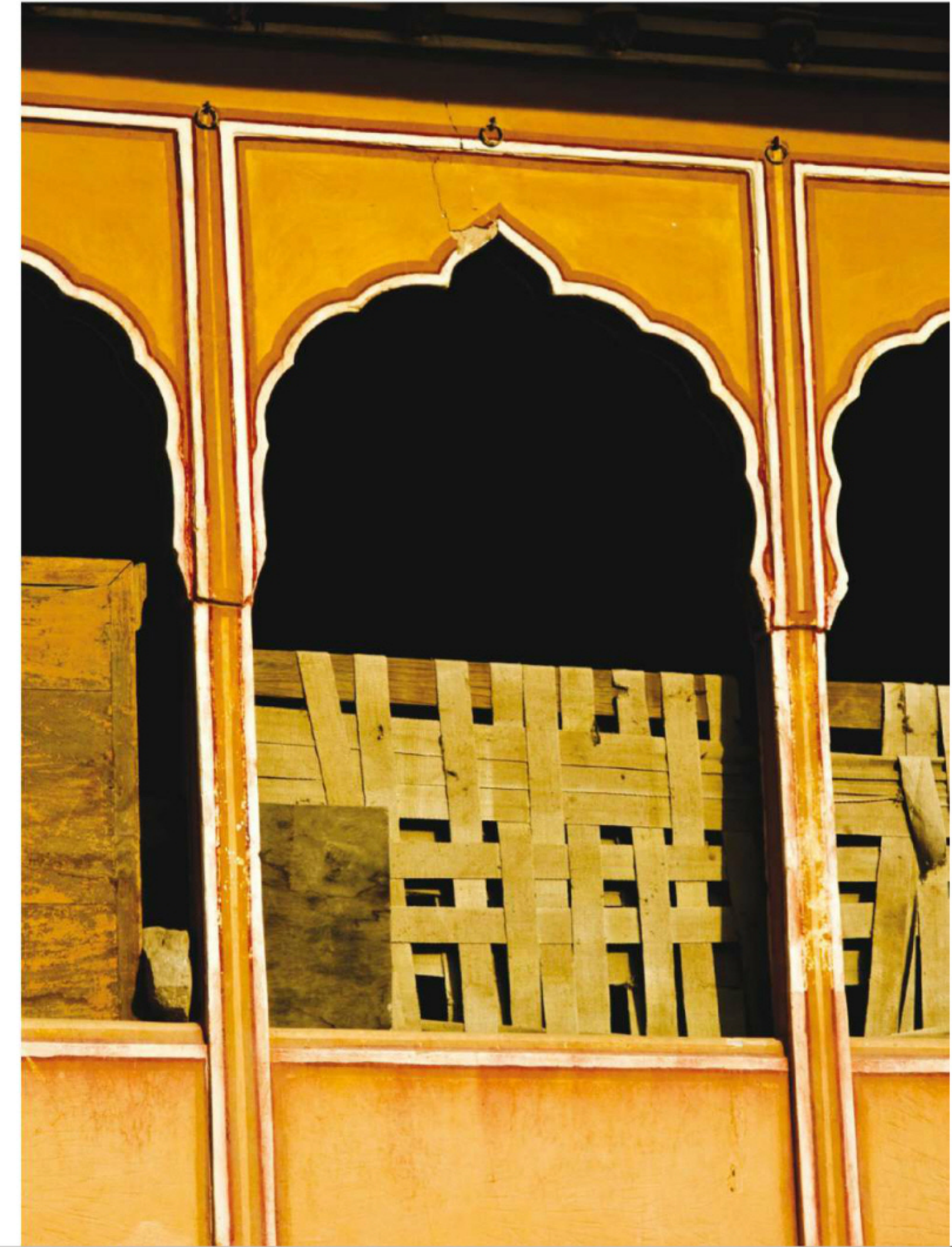


↳ Conversation

Come close and hear in my silence how I have stitched my wounds, with the tip of my tongue's

↓ Observation

Carrying the nights with me, I live in the company of new stars



↓ **Moments**

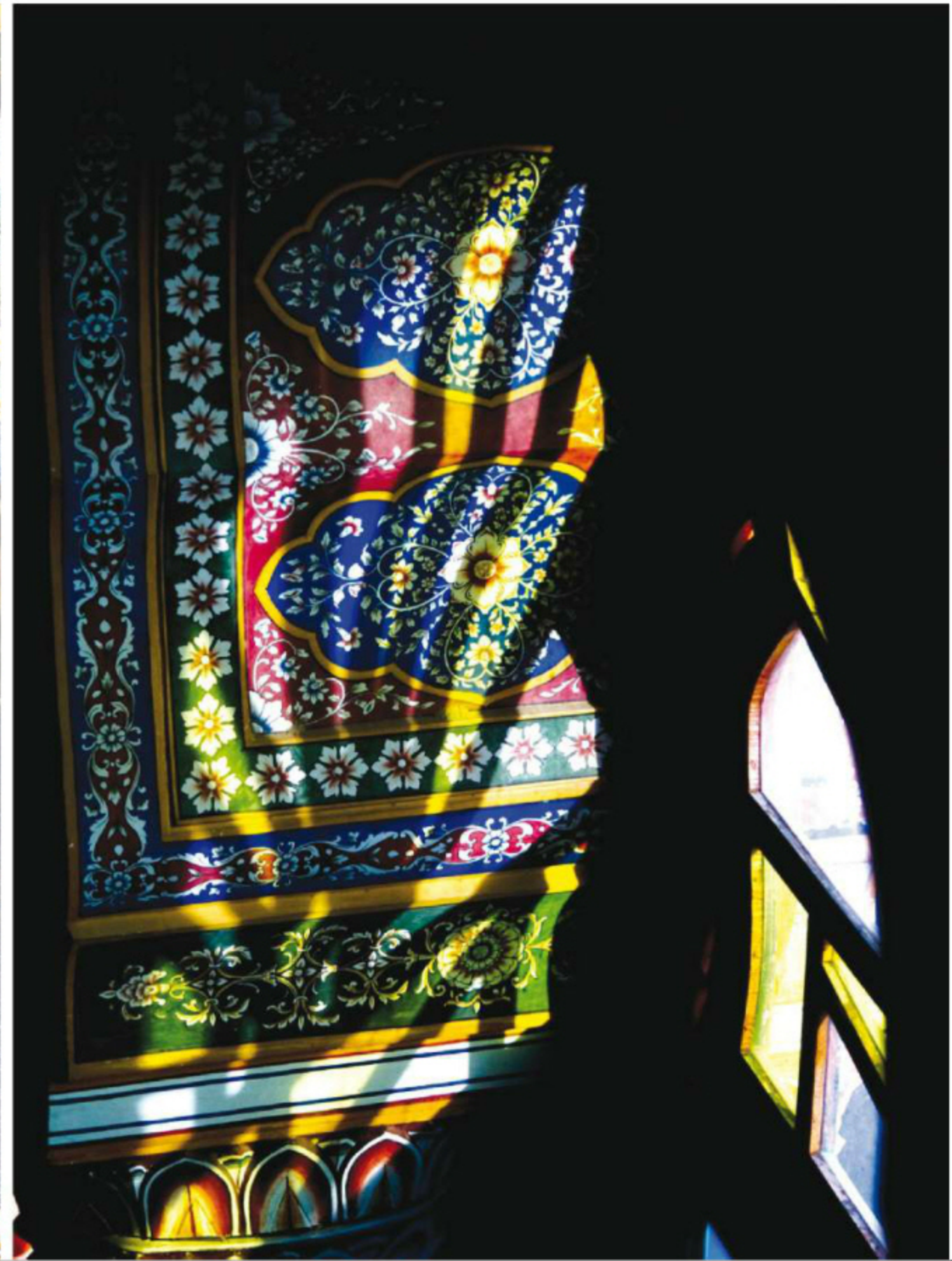
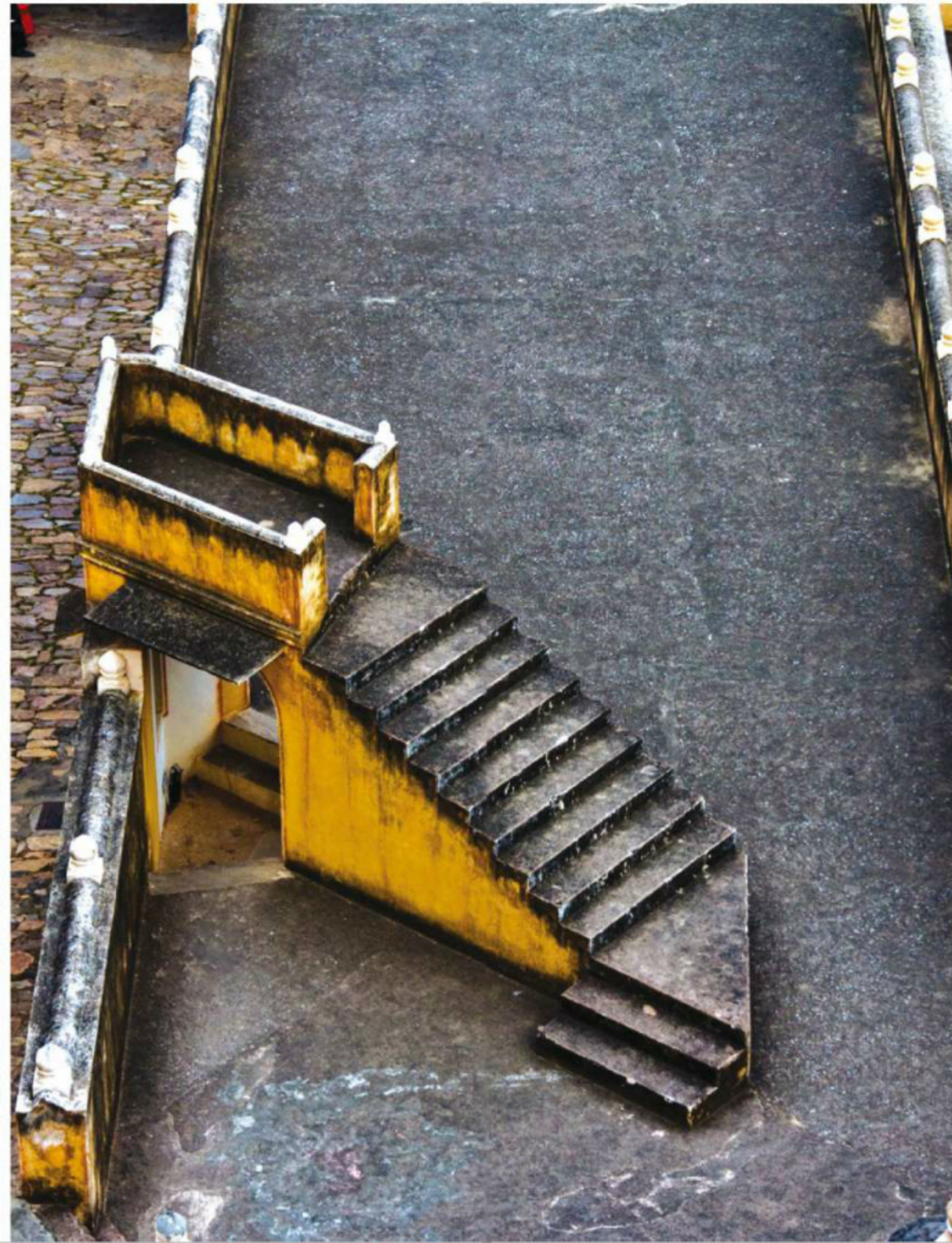
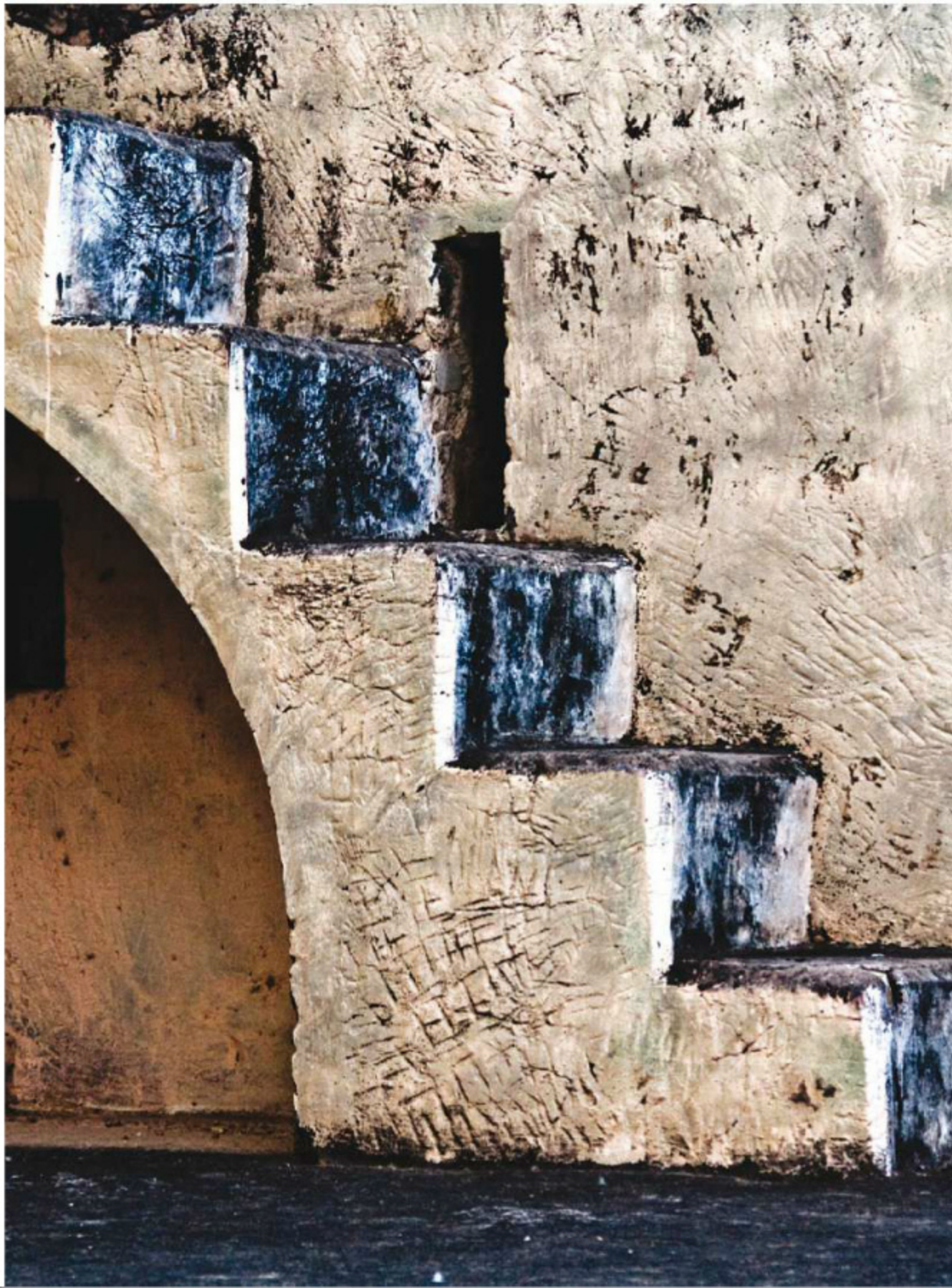
She stood on the steps, holding each one in an eternity as I watch the sun slip through her bangles

↘ **Perspectives**

Songs pervaded the silence, waves after waves as the beautiful form turned into circles, squares and triangles

↘↘ **Learning**

I preserve the broken mirrors for in them lie my dreams. Putting out the lamps of memory, deep shadows peep through unknown layers – have you seen her?



↓ **Eye**

My breath followed my eye, through the painted space, in the ochre splash, the birds have come and I must too leave

↘ **Thoughts**

Leaving my dreams at home, I walk in the shadow of my shadow, bringing my eyes close to the heart

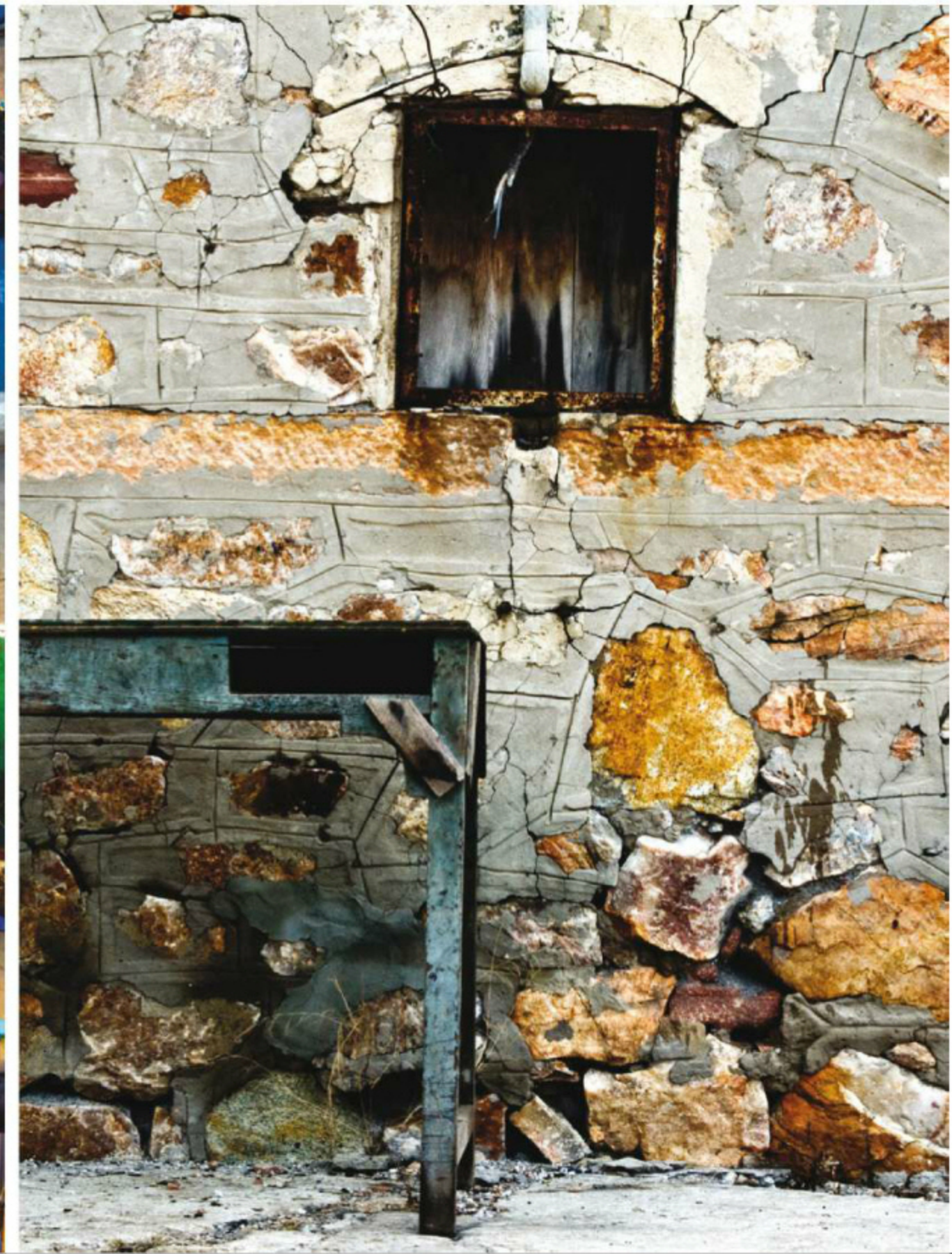
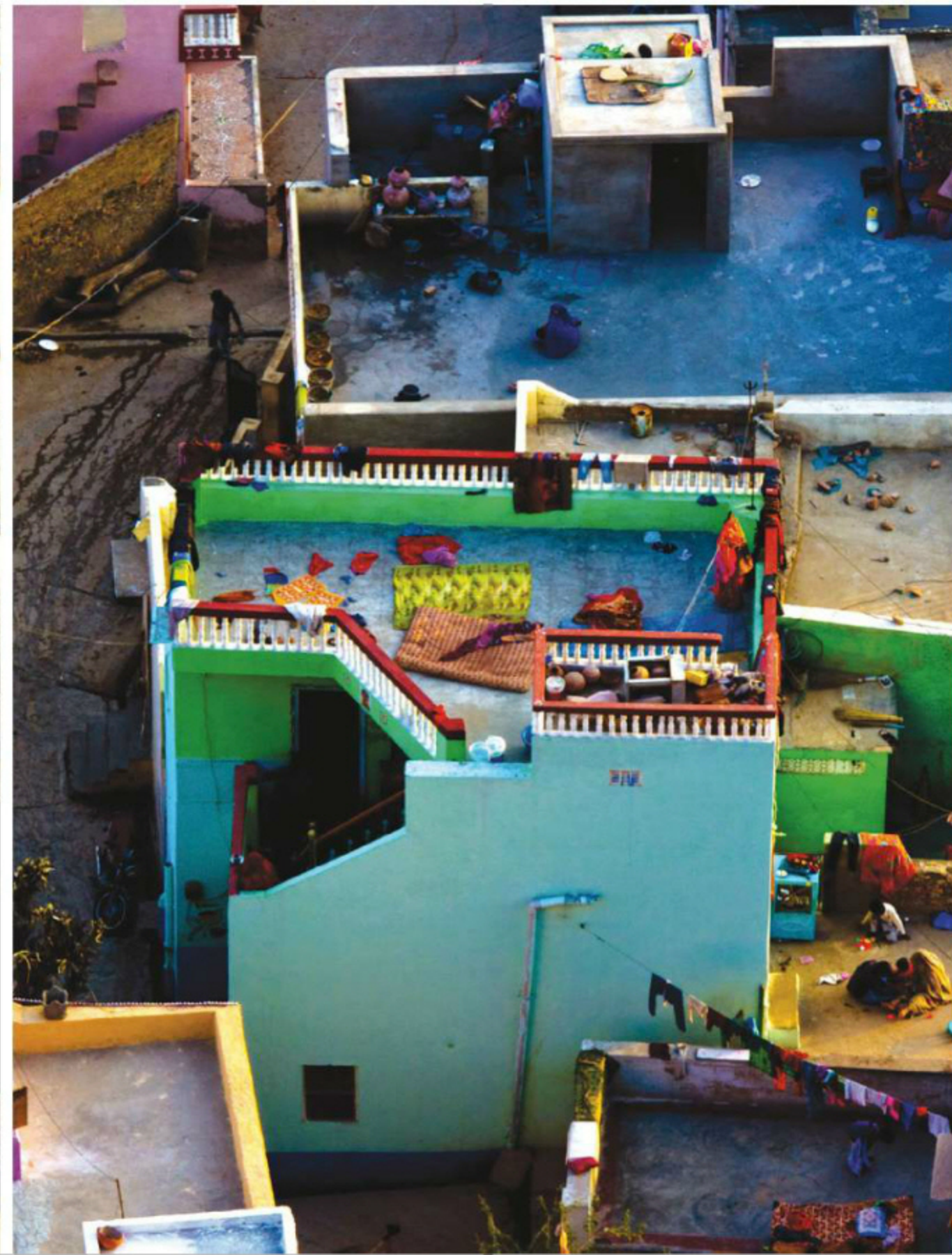
↙ **Experience**

Unwashed images, unbathed experiences, at last a quiet corner, I search for lost sky

All photographs courtesy the Author.

WOVE Workshops aim at bridging the gap between thoughts and action using creative interventions to generate ideas and stimulate imagination, while offering space for collaborative learning through creative thinking process.

A farmer by instinct, photographer by choice and a teacher through learning, **Rahul Gupta** makes young minds explore and discover through his creative workshops. He can be reached at rg@rahulgupta.net.



Ritu Sharma and Prachi Wakaley

UNDER GROUND

IN CONVERSATION WITH **JEROEN VAN WESTEN**

Jeroen van Westen's preoccupation with the water as an element has been expressed through varied mediums be it sketches, his writings, aided by photo collages, audios, videos, and prints, & even Landscape installations. At the source of his work lies the premise that landscape is legible: that a landscape reveals how culture and nature define each other, and by that how culture can reflect on itself. His lengthy and repeated sojourns in a landscape lead to an analysis, which in turn results in his eloquent work of art. Over the last twenty years his work developed from installations in museums and galleries, which represented landscapes, into actual co-designing large scale transformations of landscapes. Most of these land-art oriented works are highly functional, such as a 12 acre retention basin for water, a 20 kilometer long new river, both in The Netherlands. Over the past six years he has embarked on a long research into Stepwells of Gujarat.

An exhibition at India House Art Gallery, Pune mainly focused on Jeroen's visit to India – a personal journey that reflects upon his engagement with water. Jeroen's photographic endeavours try to capture and put forth what the human senses and mind experiences in a space as enigmatic as a stepwell. The extremely laborious task of documentation has been very sensitively handled and compiled by Jeroen in collaboration with co-writer **Michael Pestel** and graphic designer **Eloi Koster**. It is published in the form of two books, a travelogue, an illustrated text book and 'Inverse', a photograph based book. The exhibits of his photographic expressions printed to human height were a delight to gaze at.

What inspired you to be an artist? Would you please elaborate about your inspiration for the works that respond to the social concern, the environmental concern, that is much more than just an art piece?

I was raised in a family where art was important; from very early on I visited museums and galleries. When I was around 15, we visited the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam where I got to see some works by Richard Long, a famous English land-art artist. That was so inspiring and so beautiful, I am still a fan! I thought, if that work is art too, then I want to be an artist. Secondly, we lived on the outskirts of a tiny town and I really loved to roam in the fields and orchards, our Dutch version of nature. At the same sensitive age of around fifteen, a highway was constructed nearby and I was upset. That road changed everything, and not all for the better. Highways connect over long distances but are true scars in landscapes. They cut off existing local infrastructure; they divide the habi-

tats, hamper social networks since it can take long detours to cross the highway. Fighting developments like a highway sets you apart from main stream society. I decided to go to art school, took up landscape as my subject with a desire to investigate the complex relationship of nature and culture. My early work was rather straight forward activism – revolting against major cultural developments like highways, urban sprawl, etc. After around 4-5 years I decided to try to become a positive force in the process. Art is culture and if culture needs to change, the arts should take up their responsibility and participate! Art can be a reflective power in the process of changes and transformations to landscapes. Art can contribute to beautify designs, but to me it is more important that art can address fundamental issues beyond the functional and the economical. Slowly over the years I succeeded to be invited to participate in the discussions on the plans rather than fighting against those decisions when they are already made.

art is culture and if culture needs to change, the arts should take up their responsibility and participate... art can be a reflective power in the process of changes and transformations to landscapes.

Artist Jeroen van Westen for the exhibition "What if ..." (2011) — A plea for a sensory approach to urban development. Photo source: <http://www.eloikoster.nl/blog?start=20>



all cultures are defined by the way they use water... i am enthralled by the manner in which water has been not just respected but celebrated in india.

Why stepwells?

Water is something to be handled seriously and urgently. Most people live within 100 kilometers from accessible water. We cannot live without fresh water, we need water for transport – no water no culture! All cultures are defined by the way they use water. Some cultures are in constant need for water, others need to protect themselves against flooding. Water is not a commodity that can be taken for granted and lived within a leisurely way. The Netherlands is a delta of three major rivers. We have too much water, in a way we are continuously at war with water, culturally speaking, but, we need to change our attitude due to global warming and over stepping our limitations in technology as well as economically. The way we used to live is simply impossible to keep up, we need to change. That is the major transformation I am often involved in The Netherlands. To be able to come up with fundamental questions and possible new answers, I work for eleven months in a year on my commissions and travel for a month in search of countries where people are

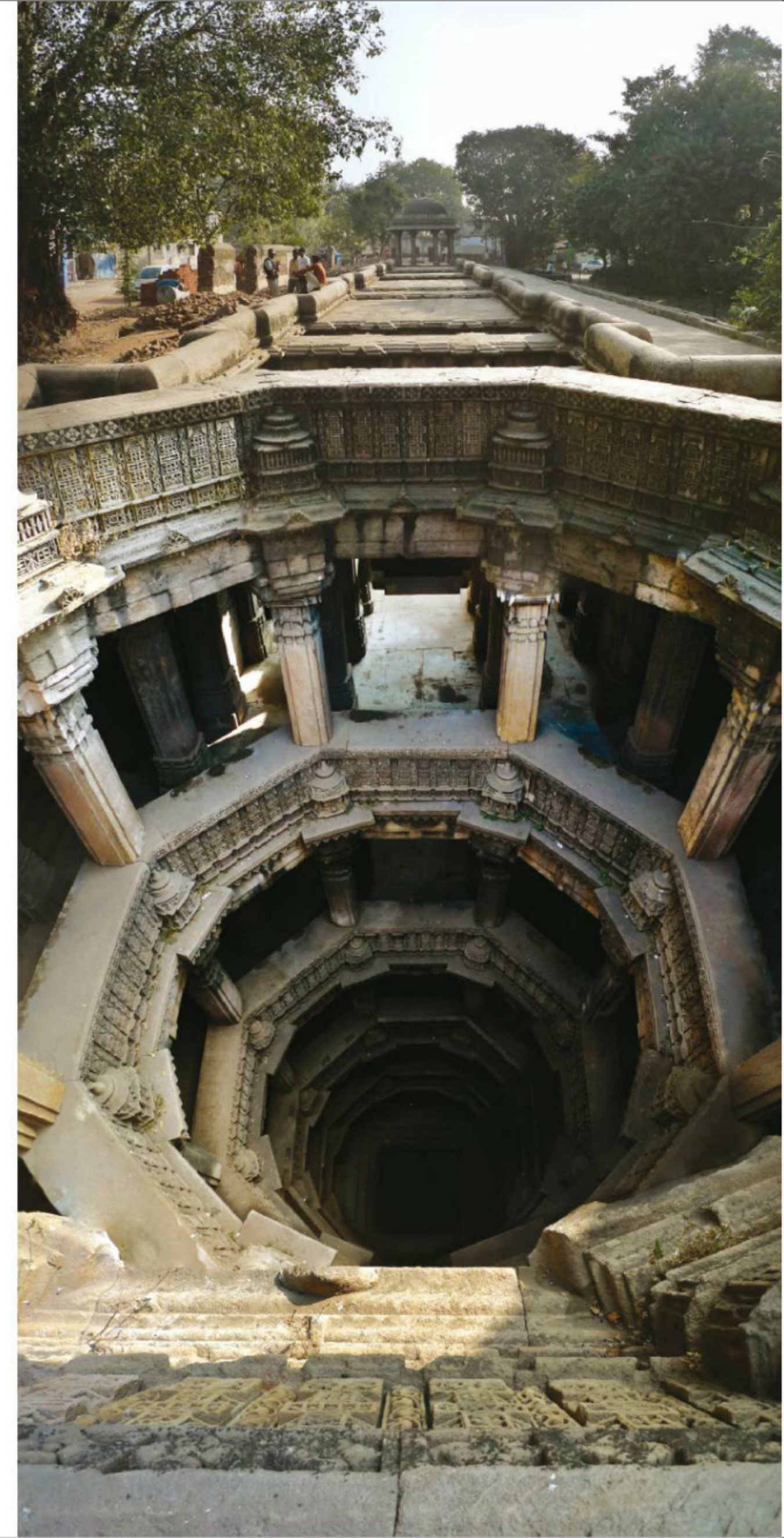
friends with water. Those travels have taken me to Southern Africa, New Mexico, and now India.

I have discovered enormous coherence of community participation with regards to traditional water management systems. Be it the acequia communities of New Mexico or the polders in my home country Netherlands or the stepwell communities of Gujarat. In Northern Gujarat, being a semi-arid country, water is an important source of life and as such still revered through these stepwells, with their altars being used for rituals. I am enthralled by the manner in which water has been not just respected but celebrated in India. Here, in Gujarat, water is sacred.

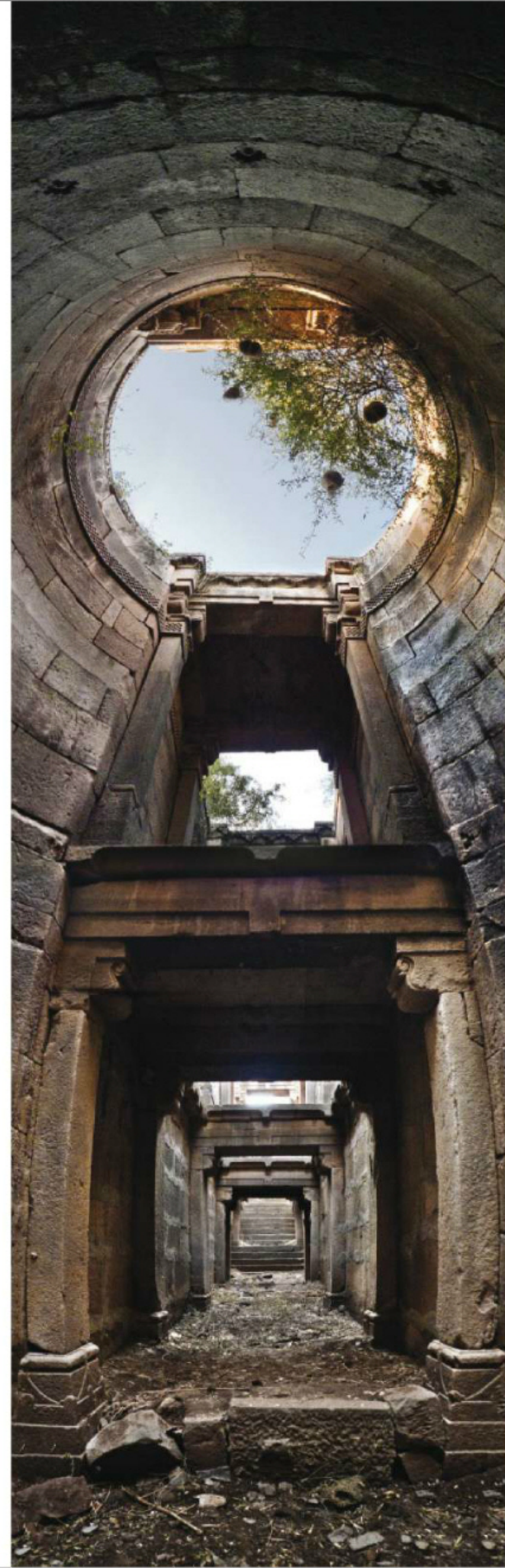
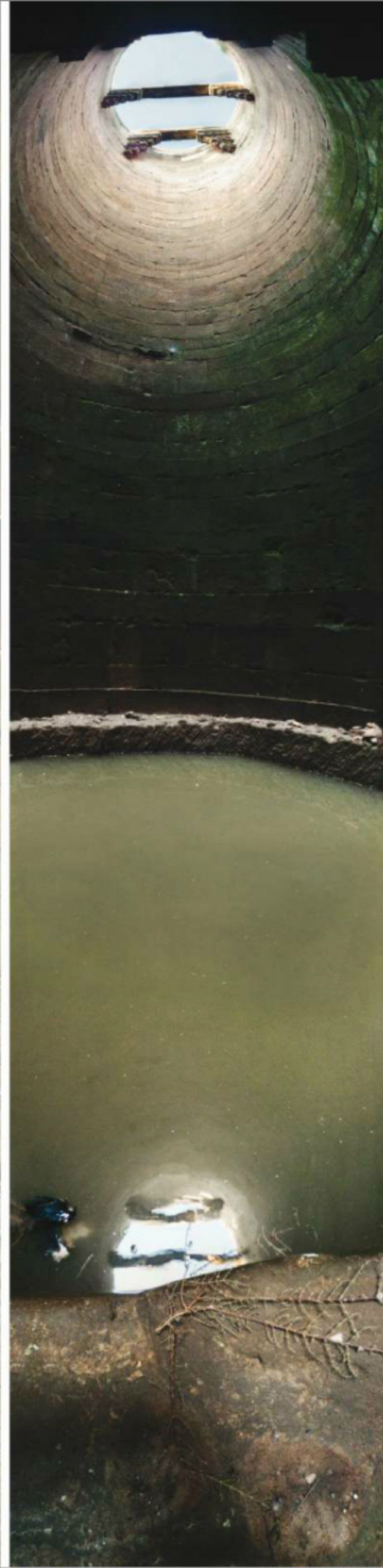
Presently most of the fresh water is monsoon water harvested by the government behind dams, and deep ground water pumped up from aquifers. Both approaches are not without issues, environmentally and politically. Environmentally the use of aquifers is a one

way street; we use more than is replenished naturally. Politically the control of fresh water changes our perception for the value of water, water is reduced to how much you can afford financially. Stepwells are losing their meaning, in the big cities for sure, and with that we might lose a beautiful unifying structure, physical (the architecture) as well as mental (sense of community).

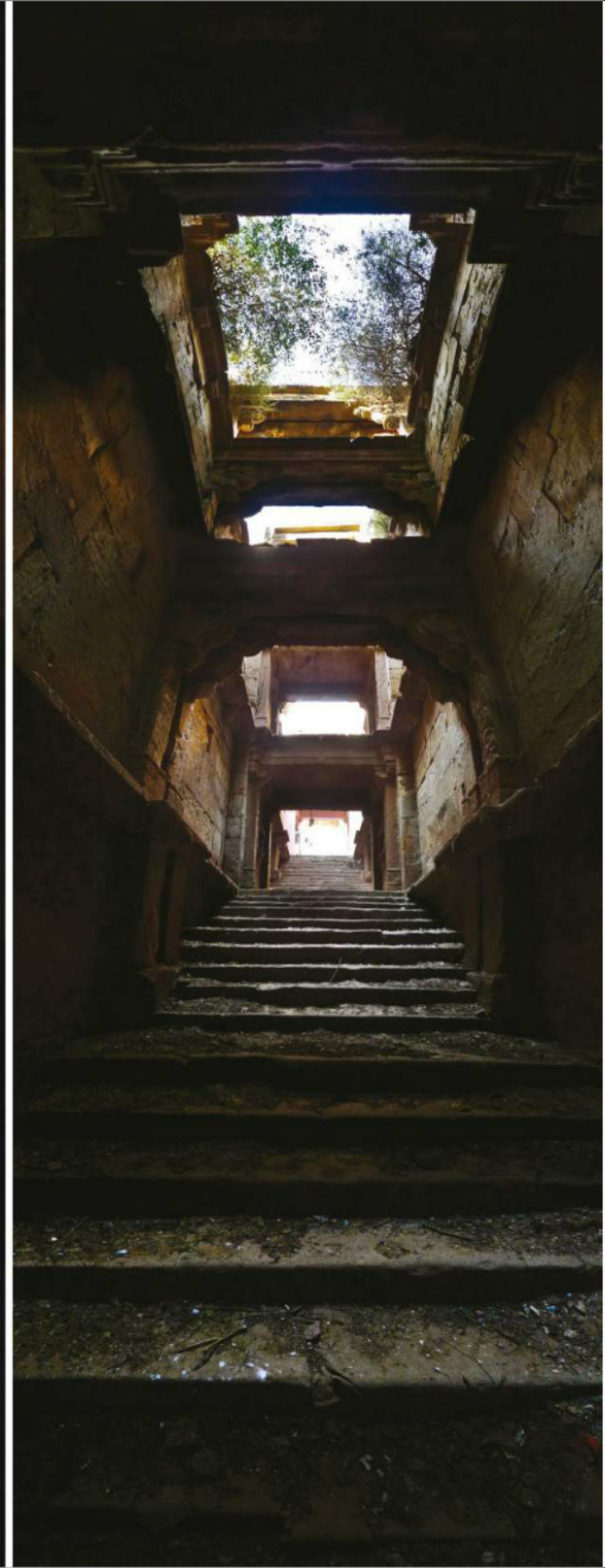
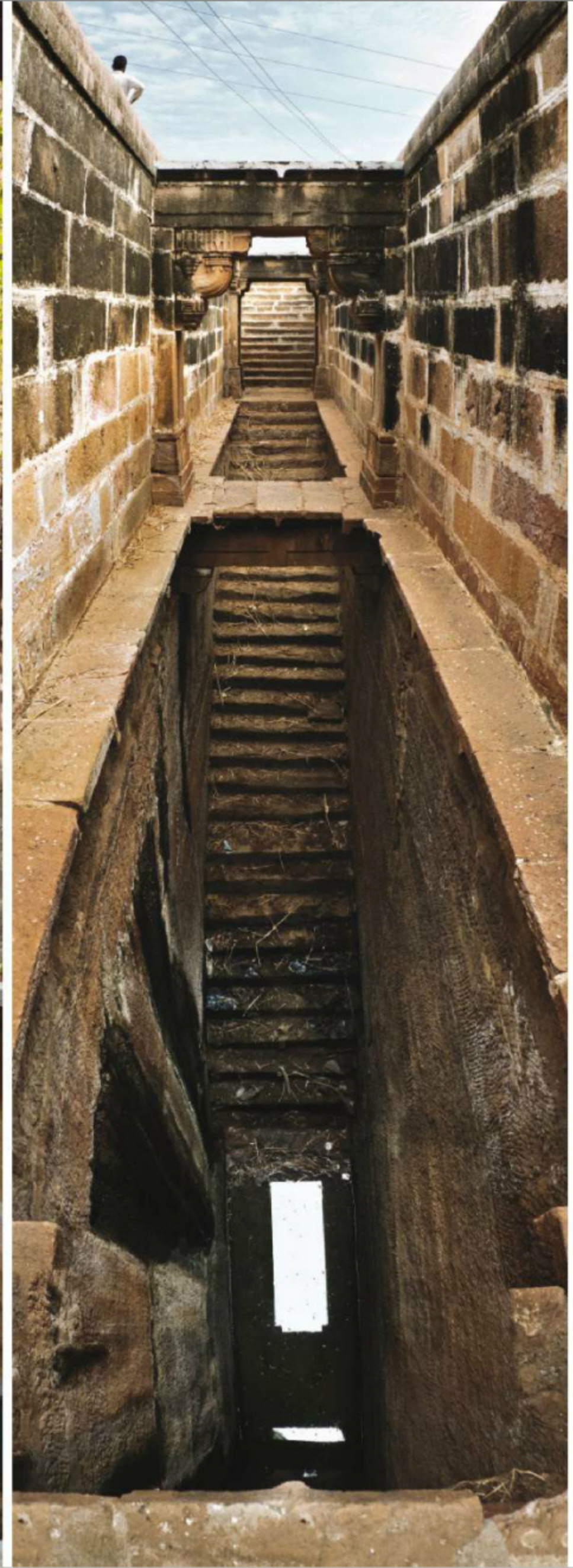
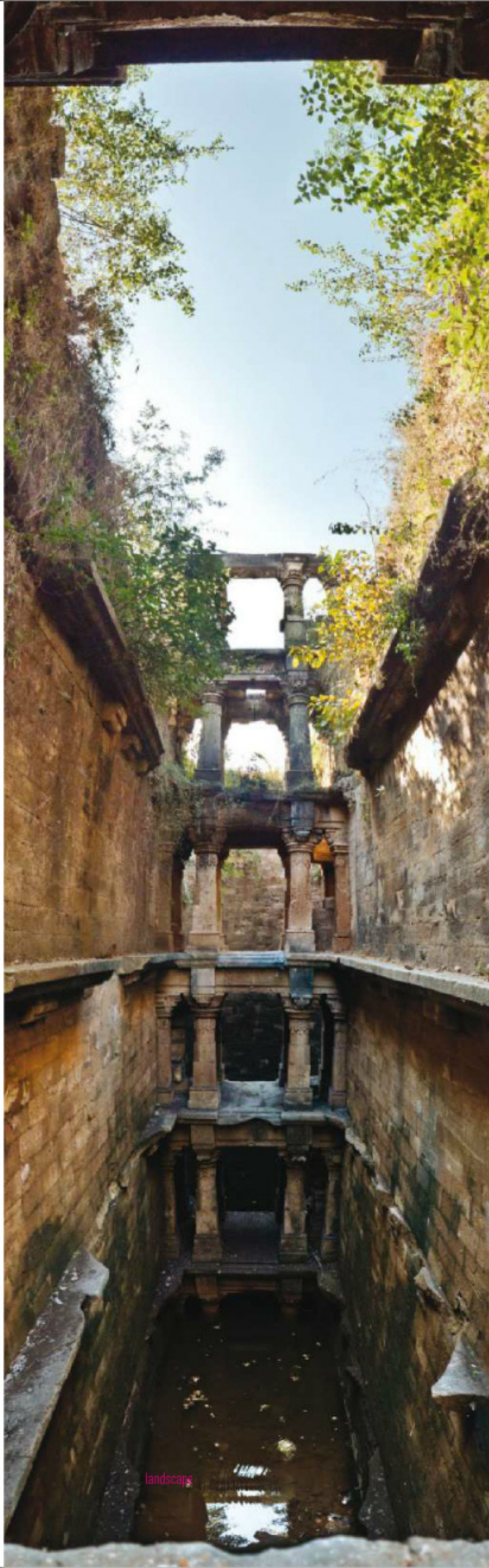
Till now, we have discovered some 300 odd wells, big and small, some spectacular, some not maintained and few even disappeared, some of which are still in active use, the oldest close to 2000 years old. As an architect, to create space, normally one would gather material, and build on top of the earth. Unlike in a stepwell where you take out earth and sculpt a space in the earth. This is what I call *'Inverse Architecture'*. The result is a space in which a totally different rhythm of light and dark, humidity, temperature and sound can be experienced.



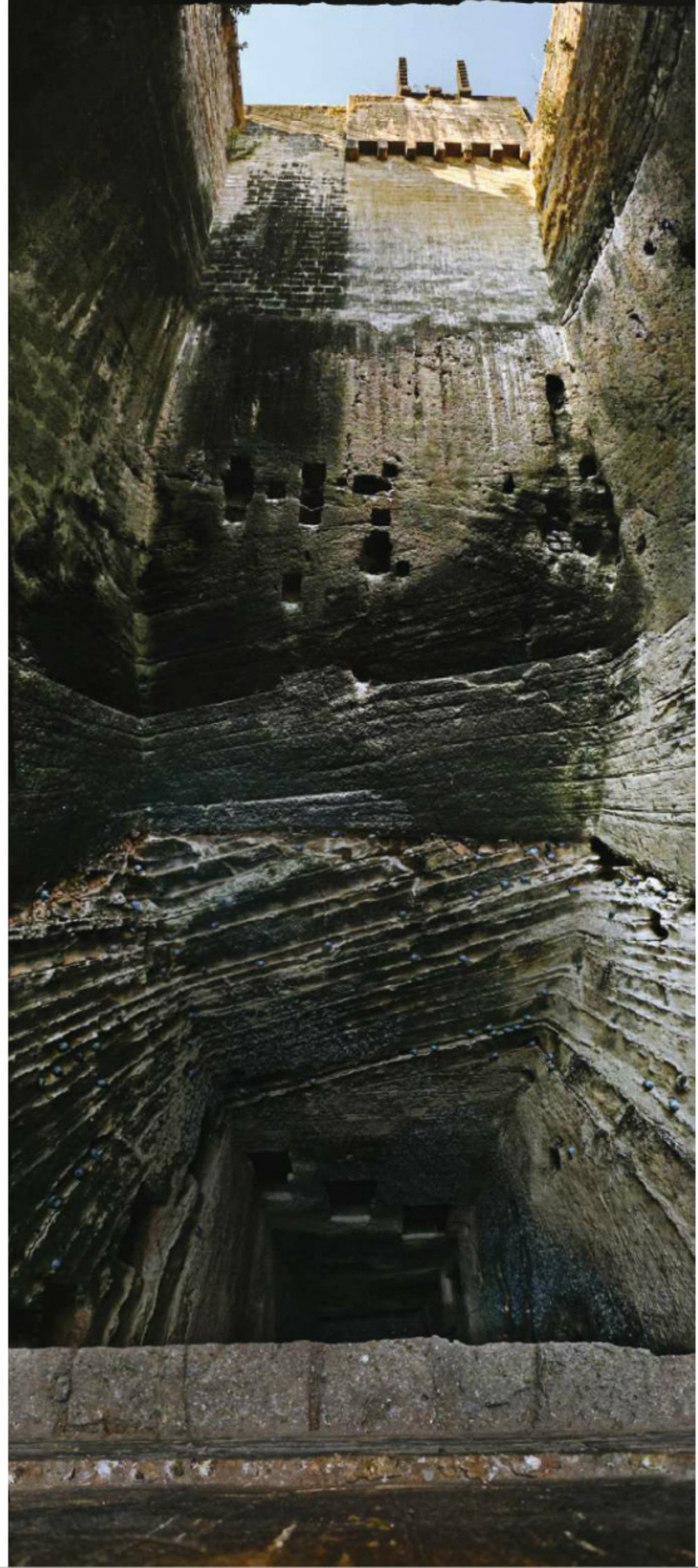
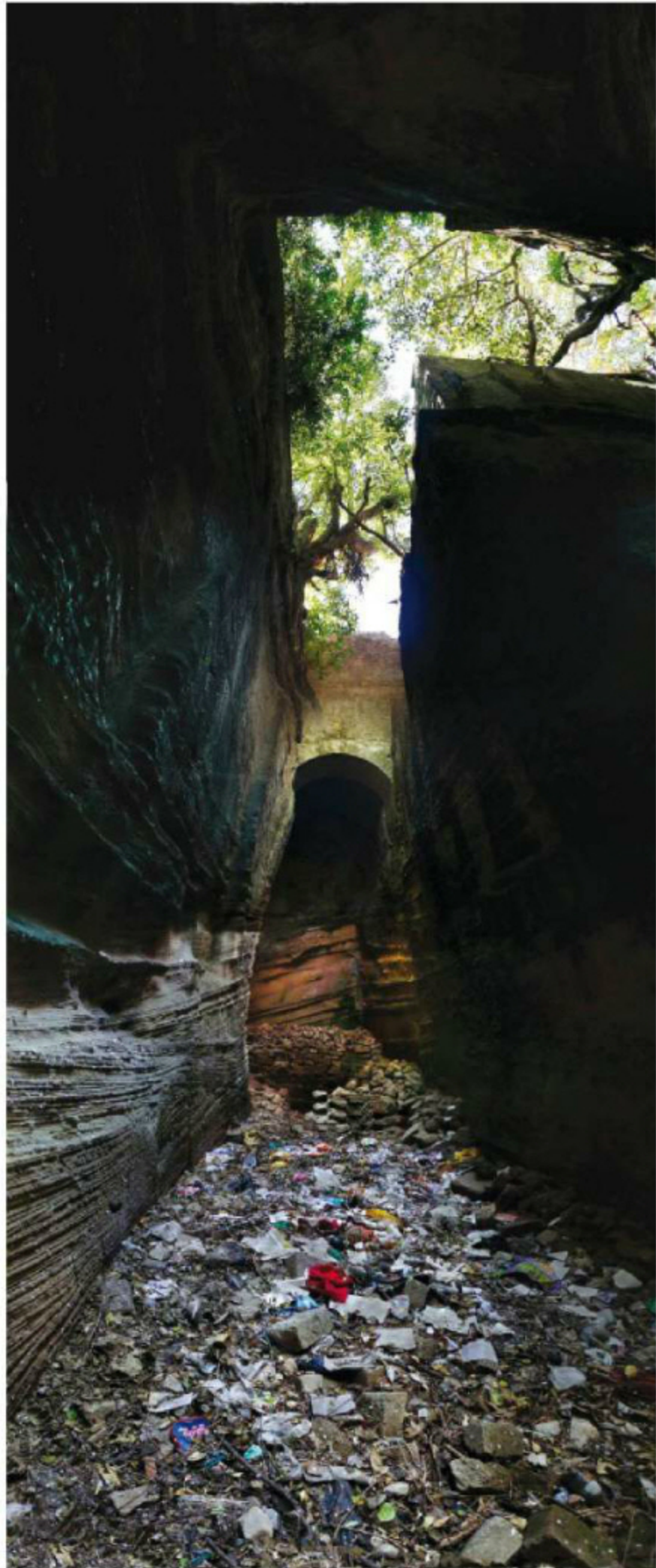
Stepwells (vav) of Gujarat...
Dada Harir Vav ↗



←←
Isanpur Well
←
Kankavati Well
→
Kankavati Structure
→→
Rampura roadside well



←←
Vekia Vav
←
Khata Vav
→
Dada Harir Vav
→→
Jegadva Vav



←←
Laskhar
←
Adi Chadi Well
→
Navgahn Kund



Can an artist change people's view on a landscape or can you contribute in a landscape?

The history of Western art is quite clear in that aspect. Yes, art has changed the perception of our surroundings. Until the first painting was made of scenery, there was no landscape. It is the frame that defines a landscape. It is the way the artist paints the landscape that people start to recognize their own position in space. In the second half of last century artists broke out of the frame, out of the museum and started to work with the landscape: landscape as material and that is called land-art. There are big land-art earth works in the western world, and luckily quite a few in The Netherlands.

Personally my early work was artist books about the nature-culture relationships in a landscape. In a way my works guided people to understand a landscape in a different way just like the early painters. At the same time I was inspired by land-art artists like Richard Long Michael Heizer and Marinus Boezem because their works draw people out of their chairs into the actual landscape. Over the years, making my artist books I realized that the landscape itself can be seen as a work of art, not signed by a single unique artist, but by a culture or by successive cultures. Whereas before

I studied a landscape and went back into my studio to make a book and present my ideas to the world in galleries and museums, I now go around the places and work with people and once you are part of them, I can be hopeful to change something. This personal drastic transformation to socially responsive art in the landscape took place around 20 years ago. What stayed is my theme, the complex relationship between nature and culture. I think culture is a word that emerges out of our actions, our beliefs, what we built, how we behave.

✎ **ORIENTARIUM NIEUW HOORNWIJK, RIJSWIJK NL, FOR NFI**
NFI, Not just water, in his project for the The Dutch Forensic Institute, Van Westen handles the grounds in an equally sensitive manner. Being a research and investigation centre that does its work necessarily rather secretive, the fingerprint is a almost too obvious icon. But this fingerprint is often hardly visible; one needs to pay attention to discover the fingerprint. It is created by removing 20 cm of clay and alternately filled with sand. Broadcasting a mix of native seeds, different varieties are favoured by the different soil conditions, and the pattern is visible by different shades of green and colours of the flowers. The finger print is sometimes subtle, sometimes highly visible aptly responding to the understated criminal investigation activity. Though a highly manicured landscape, the project is alive, seeking nature as a partner in the arts.

↑ **WATER LEAF, WIERDEN NL, FOR WATERMANAGEMENT BOARD VECHTSTROMEN**
Jeroen introduces interesting graphical installation, a response to the polders of Netherlands, where water is in excess. The installation is a composition of spheres of different sizes. To keep the shapes of the spheres and bowls crisp and clean the area is grazed by sheep twice a year; not wanting to use machines, 250 sheep are put in for a fortnight. The Land-art installation in fact a water retention area. If it starts to rain, the river starts to flood. Unlike conventionally, where after heavy rains pumps start immediately to pump water out, here water is first of all pumped up into the bowls that are higher up, then the space between the spheres fills up. After the rains the water is released by gravity only. The whole process slows down the flow of water to the lower parts of The Netherlands. This way it is easier for the lower parts to keep cities and fields dry. The bowls are filled a couple of times a year, and it is still magic to people driving by, they don't understand how this is possible. Only once every couple of years the whole area is filled with water.

as we change our culture we generally also change our environment and affect nature probably in that process, and a landscape is the book that records these changes; it is up to us learn to read this book – the landscape.

Evolutionary people had to live accruing to the natural conditions. Locally cultures developed that were completely adapted to that region. So, essentially culture is defined by nature! But, as nature is not an entity that can define or express itself in cultural terms, nature is a cultural concept. If you follow me in this, you'll conclude with me that nature and culture articulate each other just like day and night, if one changes, the other changes too.

As we change our culture we generally also change our environment and affect nature probably in that process, and a landscape is the book that records these changes; it is up to us to learn to read this book – the landscape. Only then we can ask ourselves a fundamental question, the biggest one may be being what is the nature of our culture? Others are: How do we respond to the success of our culture? Endless growth is not possible, what do we lose when we gain? I am of the opinion that our landscape is

an external memory, it depicts how we are going away from nature, going away from our intrinsic needs. So, today if a transformation is to take place in landscape, we need to go to the past to search for what we have lost. Understanding the history of our landscape equals understanding the history of our culture and can probably serve as energy to solve the problems of building the future. So, that's the big line in my work.

How do you look at the journey ahead?

I guess it needs a well integrated approach where engineers can take care of infrastructure and construction, whereas landscape architects can take care of spatial development and deal with the functional concerns. Even the artists need to come out of their zones / studios and do the ground work and participate, instead of merely commenting. All of us should open up to each other and start to collaborate. The most important

aspect is to include those people from the community. Though they have to live with a transformation, but they are often neglected. So, start interacting, involve these people and educate them on the issues that need to be resolved in their area, and check their perception of the need as assumed by the commissioner of the transformation. Take them on excursions to similar areas, and take them out of their comfort zone, discuss art and landscape in more philosophical terms. It will slow down the process initially but they will surely appreciate your true involvement and speak of their viewpoints. That's where the process will speed up as they know local solutions from the past. With this on the platter you may now be introducing new ideas and you will get a boost. You need not always have to study literature or go places, searching for the library records; you may tend to miss the knowledge base that is never officially documented. It's all in the culture, it's in peoples head, and you have to tap that source.

culture is a social design in continuous transformation. art should be part of it, and the landscape is our book to read.

proposed to create a new river, with that special water, and thus to create a new green line in the barren land. They were willing to bring in property, money, support and energy for the purpose. Culture invited nature to create new conditions for a living culture in the future!

Your work definitely goes beyond the tag of 'art' but how or in what terms does it differ from the scope of a landscape architect?

I think the difference is the attitude. Landscape architects are trained to work on the problem as defined by the commissioner. Whereas, I always question the problem as defined by the commissioner, for cultural arguments. To put in simpler way, I am about meaning and not about spatiality and functionality. As an artist sitting with a team of specialists and hopefully inhabitants, future users, etc, I don't mind asking any question which others may have never asked and

these may trigger a new outlook towards the whole issue. The idea is to highlight the point of thinking outside the framed mindset. In the end we need the specialists to design the solution we agree on, but this may be a solution to a re-framed question, and so a completely different one as it would have been when only specialists had dealt with the commission. This collaborative process may not happen every time but I think it should happen this way. In Netherlands, there are around ten artists who work in a similar field. Even if we have a hundred more to work like this, there could still be more required. Culture is a social design in continuous transformation. Art should be part of it, and the landscape is our book to read.

All photographs courtesy Jeroen van Westen.

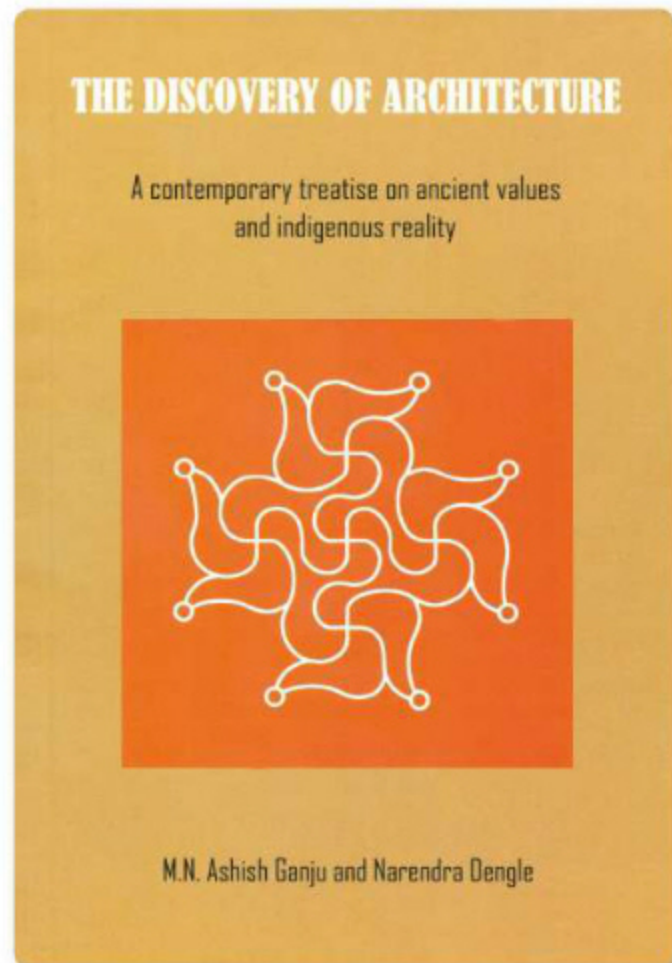
Jeroen van Westen can be contacted on jeroen@jeroenvanwesten.nl

India House Art Gallery, Pune is dedicated to exhibiting master artists' works and exceptional artists, exploring timeless energy with fresh commitment.

Pune based landscape architects Ritu Sharma and Prachi Wakaley can be contacted at ritu274@gmail.com rootsdesigns@gmail.com

Book Review by Madhu Pandit

THE DISCOVERY OF ARCHITECTURE



The Discovery of Architecture
 A contemporary treatise on ancient values and indigenous reality
 Authors: M.N. Ashish Ganju and Narendra Dengle
 Publisher: Greha Publications, New Delhi (2013)
 Size: 140 x 205 mm
 Softcover, 66 pages

The book is a reflective journal which seeks an integration of contemporary building methods with the wisdom of the traditional practices in India, the latter having produced centuries of most magical architecture, with its site specific languages and cultural referencing. Its subtitle *A contemporary treatise on ancient values and indigenous reality* might sound as big as the book is small. Based on a research initiated between two architects M.N. Ashish Ganju and Narendra Dengle for over a period of twelve months, this enormous little book explores the ancient values within the building traditions in our country, where sadly, there is very little schol-

For many of us, architects especially, who have been in the middle of the vortex of galloping changes in the building industry towards the end of last century, and more so during turn of the present one, *Discovery of Architecture* is a book which reaffirms our faith in perusal of relevant architecture and appropriate methods. I remember this used to be a major preoccupation amongst designers when we were students in the eighties. Ecologically sensitive approach did not have so much to do with the climate change pathologies, as with our genetic memory of reuse and of an inherent abhorrence to mindless appropriation of our natural resources.

arly evidence of any of its theoretical perspective.

It is relevant, particularly now, when architectural profession and the building industry has been in conflicting dialogue for more than half a century in post independent India. As the primary internal imperatives of the industry remain economic in the money driven and global economy, the Indian market continues to see products and processes imported from elsewhere. *Discovery of Architecture* not only questions this but also attempts to show us the 'way'.

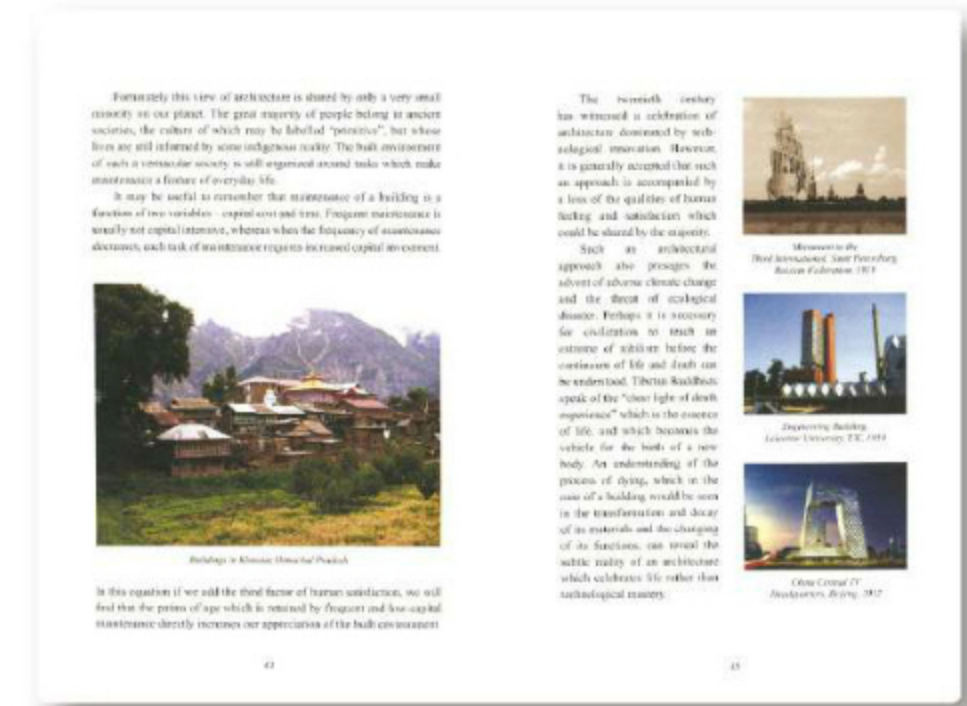
Setting this task in a four part analytical matrix, where leading words like 'self', 'awareness', 'renewal' and 'regeneration' form the basis of this enquiry, and any resemblance to ancient Hindu/Buddhist philosophy is definitely intentional.

It begins by quoting from Christopher Alexander's *The Nature of Order – An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe*, "that all space and matter, organic or inorganic, has some degree of life in it, and that matter/space is more or less alive according to its structure and arrangement" and "that all matter/space has some degree of 'self' in it, and that this self, or anyway some aspect of the personal, is something which infuses all matter/space, and everything we know as matter but now think to be mechanical". Closer home it draws parallels be-

tween these fundamental ideas/concepts and the classical Indian philosophical landscape prevalent centuries ago. This brings to mind of the reader the elusive, yet clear, teachings of Advaitya, the non-duality between the true Self, Atman and the highest Reality Brahman, which have been the basis for, not only many schools of eastern theosophy but, more recently, of several western scientific theories (often much criticised) like the Gaia hypothesis, or the mysticist interpretations of quantum physics in *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, or the 'colliding particles' as the dance of Shiva in *The Tao of Physics*. This establishes the interdependent nature of self and community.

The second part is about the 'act of building with the awareness of the evolving universe', that it is a process guided by method, and that it cannot take place in a philosophical vacuum. It quotes from S.K.Bhatt's *Applied Philosophy, Value Theory and Business Ethic*, "Philosophy, as a foundation for all knowledge, is essentially practice-oriented. It is both view of reality and a way of life. It is not just a love of wisdom as the etymology of this word suggests, but it is also shaping of life in accordance with the acquired wisdom. It is of course a theoretical enterprise but it is not speculative if it is worthwhile. It has practical applications, as theory without practice is lame and futile, and conversely, practice without theoretical foundation is blind and at random".

In the third section on maintenance as renewal, the book discusses symbolic understanding of life processes, like the Buddhist image of the wheel of life symbolising the unending process of birth, death and rebirth. References to Patrick Geddes work which stresses on the importance of diagnosis in design of the built environment and its renewal, urges the reader to question the frame-



work within which the architectural profession has had to proceed in post independent India. Defined by codes that did not have an Indian essence, the more appropriate and natural morphology of our built environment was driven out taking with it a part of our diverse lifestyle, forcing us to morph into one that has evenly spread itself across the subcontinent.

It has a writing style that, in most parts is simple with clear titles for its sections, despite the vignettes from the Vedas and other texts which feature frequently, sometimes breaking the flow of thought. It is open ended, inconclusive and redefines a 'treatise' by defying the stereotypical summation of principles and conclusions. As an illustration of 'regeneration with learning' the authors have proposed to test the framework, which will emerge out of their enquiry, by conducting a series

of workshops* where students, teachers and professionals will be invited to participate. It says in the end "there are a number of assumptions and propositions in the text, and these need to be debated by a dedicated group of teachers and practitioners who can validate or extend the enquiry".

Discovery of Architecture does not seek a model for the future from the traditions of spiritual monism taught by the scriptures, or even a rediscovery of these spiritual roots to help India 'keep up with the times'. It very specifically talks about continuity through regeneration with learning, and that the spirit of each act of building is the spirit of continuity. It is a reminder to all that we have a responsibility of looking towards a new way of interpreting the ancient values and discovering an expression and form, which re-validates our roots while placing us in the present.

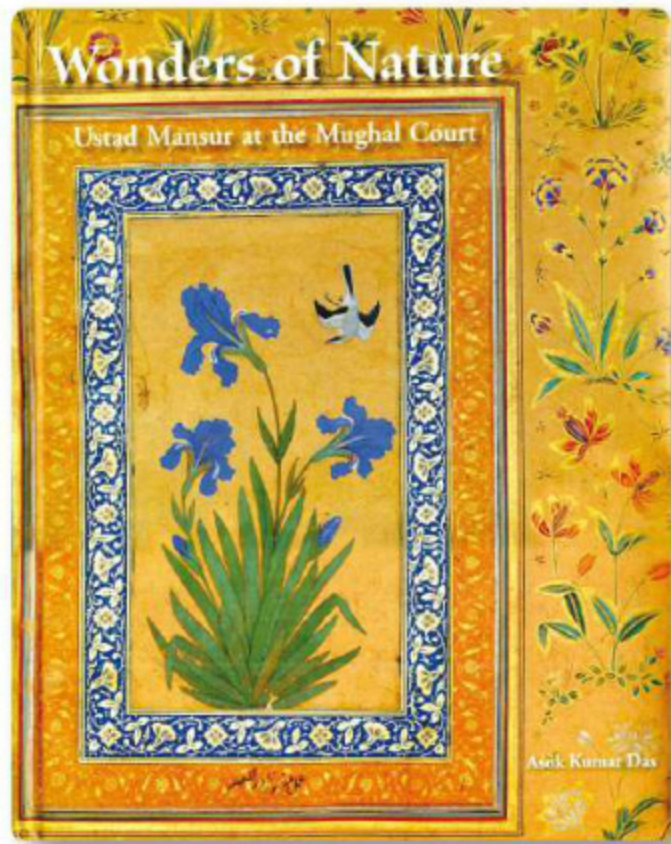
* Based on the treatise, various workshops are being organized by the authors in architectural institutions across the country with an attempt to engage with teachers of architecture to begin a process of enquiry leading towards the configuration of a new pedagogy with architects's own voice.

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Book Review by Priyaleen Singh

WONDERS OF NATURE

USTAD MANSUR AT THE MUGHAL COURT



Wonders of Nature:
Ustad Mansur at the Mughal Court
 Author: Asok Kumar Das
 Publisher: Marg Publications, Mumbai (2012)
 Size: 310 x 249 mm
 Hardcover: 176 pages

art of recording nature. This publication, aptly titled *Wonders of Nature*, is the first of its kind devoted exclusively to the artist Mansur, and captures his engagement with the natural world through his paintings.

Spread over seven chapters, the book spans the entire range of Mansur's work to include his early phase as assistant to some of the leading masters in the painting ateliers in the court of Akbar and the later phase in the court of Jehangir where he graduated from his early rank of designer or *naqqash*, as an illuminator, to earn fame as a specialist in natural history subjects.

The Mughals as great lovers of nature is a fact well chronicled in history. That this resulted in the great tradition of *char bagh* garden design from the sixteenth century onwards has also been written about and researched extensively. The Mughals were great patrons of art and this love of nature was reflected in the painting traditions of the period too. The fascination for native and exotic flora and fauna resulted in several albums and folios being commissioned by the imperial court. And amongst the many artists patronized by the Mughal court, the name of Ustad Mansur stands out as one of the most prolific and proficient in the

The first chapter is more in the form of an introduction to the Mughal emperors, their fascination for new discoveries of flora and fauna, and the desire to capture the rarities of nature observed in their travels and hunting expeditions. It also introduces us to the personality of Emperor Jehangir in particular, who in "combining the eye of a naturalist with that of a scientist and an art connoisseur" was largely responsible in fostering the talent of Mansur. The great popularity enjoyed by the Baburnama at Akbar's court gave Mansur the first opportunity to display his prowess at illustrating manuscripts. His folios in the various copies of the Baburnama and Akbarnama also demonstrate his handling of human subjects with remarkable maturity. Chapters two and three of the book dwell on the Early Natural History paintings and portraits drawn by Mansur. The eye for capturing the intricacies of foliage is apparent in this phase of Mansur's career as well, as evidenced in the sensitive portrayal of the *vina* player in a garden landscape setting, a painting now in the British museum collection.

The next chapter describes the illumination work by Mansur *naqqash*. The folios attributed to Mansur dazzle the eye with the intricate decorations of the text panels and the delicate rendering in the borders and margins of



the books in the Mughal *kitabkhana*. Chapters five and six—comprising the largest section of the book—dwell on the studies of animals, birds and flowers, in which Mansur excelled. The realism and scientific enquiry is visible in all the works of Mansur and can truly be appreciated in the portrayal of the zebra and the common turkey, the subject of folios now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The illustrations clearly display that the imagery of nature was not imitated from existing illustrations but was drawn from closely observing the subjects. But the finest and best known natural history painting executed by Mansur in Jehangir's *taswirkhana* is the 'Squirrels in a Chinar tree' now in the British Library, where the treatment, textures and colours of the tree are mesmerizing.

The book also puts together some of the finest flower paintings drawn by Mansur which include the Red tulip, Iris plant and the Narcissus, all of which reveal the impact of European illustrations of herbal folios on his work. The last chapter is a brief essay on the legacy of Mansur displayed in the continuing interest shown by artists in drawing nature subjects right up to the early nineteenth century.

The format of the book makes for extremely interesting reading because while the main narrative is woven around the more famous and selective works of Mansur, it is interspersed with details pertaining to the specific subject in the painting frame and related infor-

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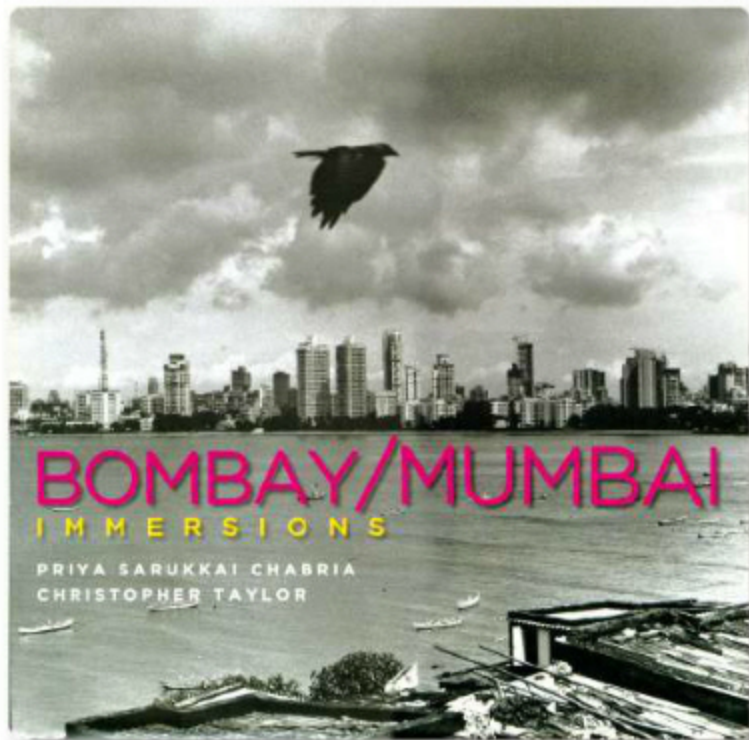


mation outside of the frame. The author links the paintings with contemporaneous events through anecdotes and other descriptions, offering insights into life in the Mughal court, travels of the Mughal emperors, work in the painting ateliers and natural history.

With little known about the personal life of Mansur, it is for the reader to speculate on his personality through the sensitivity with which he managed to capture the essence and beauty of nature and the sheer aesthetic delight he provided through the magic of his brush. The book is truly a feast for the eyes and worth having in ones library to simply appreciate the joy of nature and bring a certain warmth and beauty in our lives. Browsing through the book will perhaps help arouse an aesthete and a connection with nature, helping some of us to become better designers in a world alienated from the beauties of nature and fast imbibing the crass culture of commercial enterprise and mass production of design. The book also brings to the fore that the craft of the human hand can never be matched by the acquired skill on the computer machine.

Book Review by Shilpa Ranade

BOMBAY/MUMBAI IMMERSIONS



Bombay/Mumbai Immersions
 Authors: Priya Sarukkai Chabria and
 Christopher Taylor
 Publisher: Niyogi Books, New Delhi (2014)
 Size: 229 x 229 mm
 Hardcover, 278 pages

Bombay/Mumbai is an intense city: dense, vibrant, ruthless, friendly. It is a city of extraordinary struggles and unprecedented triumphs, captured and mythified through the written word and moving image. As a *maximum* city where everything is taken to the extremes and human life is experienced through the sheer magnitude of contrasts, it is rich in metaphors and offers endless fodder for inspiration and interpretation. And like any great city, it is multivalent: there are as many Mumbais as there are *Mumbaikars*.

It is not surprising then that the city has been the subject of countless books: historic documentation, fictional landscapes, studies in economy, social structure, architecture and urbanity amongst others. So yet another book on the city might seem one too many. But Priya Sarukkai Chabria and Christopher Taylor offer a very different take on the city from any other one has read. Chabria is a writer who has worked across genres; Taylor is a photographer

with a long experience working in old cities. As against the Mumbai we have met before in books, often seen from a bird's eye view or discovered in the musty records of the archives, their Mumbai is discovered on foot over unhurried walks through its lanes and by-lanes.

For all appearances, Mumbai is a hyper-energetic city, short on time and stretched for space. Ever changing, with a gritty in-your-face pragmatism (as evidenced by the Bollywood agent in the fourth section) it has little use for nostalgia. Its stories are often stories of longing and loneliness in the midst of a relentless crowd. But it is also a city more than any other that can make a new visitor feel at home with a startling speed and intensity. Despite its population and scale, it is a city where people and places seem rooted, where every little street corner seems to have found a home – rarely floating in an abyss of dislocation. Setting out to “find the unknown or discover the known afresh”, it is this city of intimate, restful belonging that Chabria and Taylor capture in the book. The sub-title *Immersion*s is suggestive of the ritual immersing of Ganesh idols into the sea at the end



of the impressive annual festival of Ganesh Chaturthi – taken to its spectacular limits in Mumbai. But it also suggests a personal, deeply absorbing, introspective engagement with the city, or many cities that inhabit here.

The first section ‘*Concrete to Basalt*’ traces the history of the city in reverse from contemporary times – ‘a city that supports 17,000 persons per acre’ – all the way to its pre-historic origins ‘in a blaze of a volcanic fire’. The second section ‘*Mosaics of Movement*’ dwells on the essential movements that determine the beat of the city and keep it alive: the tides of the Arabian Sea, the local trains which are its lifelines, the flow of migrants and the buzz of the monetary transactions that fuel its growth. While the narrative threads identified here are insightful and promising, the writing and photographs tend towards the generic and fail to capture the essential spirit that makes these events specific to Mumbai. The third section ‘*South to North*’ is a collection of vignettes of different places and people in the city.

It is the fourth section ‘*Immersion*s’ is the heart of the book and makes it stand out amongst others on the city.

Chabria paints intimate portraits of its places and people that foreground the poignancy of their lives and being. In particular, the chapter on Bollywood brilliantly describes a world that is even less known than the behind-the-scenes life of the world's largest film industry. The final chapter of the section on the Borivali National Park is also surreally evocative and draws one into the mysterious atmosphere of this wilderness so close yet so far removed from the concrete jungle it is located in.

The photographs unfortunately appear under-exposed and without a powerful content or composition. They work in sections that are perhaps Taylor's strengths – the interior shots of empty spaces are evocative and communicate an atmosphere pregnant with imagined histories. The exterior shots of buildings and landscapes as well as the portraits unfortunately do not have the same effect, failing to either tell a personal story or nudge an insight beyond documentary record. In that sense the photography fails to become a strong

duet voice and complement the poignancy of the text.

The initial chapters tend to be general overviews but coming to more definite moments the book turns inwards to reveal an insightful core – a sense of essential timelessness that permeates the present moment. Chabria's writing brings a meditative feel to the narrative that successfully captures what the authors set out to do; “to seek the semipiternal amidst the ephemeral” in this ever-changing city. In effect the pace of the narrative forces one to slow down as it lingers on the little shrines and the shady lanes – the small things that make for this great city. For this is where the greatness of Mumbai lies – in the way its denizens claim it for themselves, imbibing every anonymous street corner with memories and associations. In a city that is defined by its compressed time-space, Chabria and Taylor successfully seek out the underlying note of stillness that is otherwise lost to the consciousness in the mad rush of life in the city.

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books



LANDSCAPE DESIGN & PLANNING, BIODIVERSITY, ECOLOGY

Buddhist Gardens in India, China, Japan and SE Asia (Buddhism and Gardens) [Kindle Edition]

Tom Turner
Gardenvisit.com, 2013

Churning the Earth: The Making of Global India

Aseem Shrivastava & Ashish Kothari
Penguin India, 2013

Isabelle Around The World – Temples and Landscape Around Bundi, India

Isabelle Guyot
LDN House, 2013

The Art of India: Images of Nature

Judith Magee
The Natural History Museum, 2013

Talking Environment: Vandana Shiva in conversation with Ramin Jahanbegloo

Oxford University Press, 2012

A Forest History of India

Richard P Tucker
Sage Publication Pvt. Ltd., 2011

Environmental and Natural Resource Management 2011

H Mishra
Forward Books, 2011

Flora's Empire: British Gardens in India (Penn Studies in Landscape Architecture)

Eugenia W. Herbert
University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011

Garden and Landscape Practices in Pre-colonial India: Histories from the Deccan (Visual and Media Histories)

Daud Ali & Emma J. Flatt
Routledge India

ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

Himalayan Cities: Settlement Patterns, Public Places and Architecture

Pratyush Shankar
Niyogi Publishers, 2014

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Shashikant Nishant Sharma
SureShotPOST Online Publishing, 2012

HISTORY AND CULTURE

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Agnieszka Kuczkiewicz-Fras
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Jim Masselos & Narayani Gupta
Penguin India, 2011

Chikrassi

Chukrasia tabularis

Chukrasia is the generic name while *tabularis* is a Latin word which means flat top, because of the tree's timber being used for making boards and furniture.

FAMILY

Meliaceae

COMMON NAME

Chikrassi

DISTRIBUTION

Native to Western Peninsula, *Chikrassi* is generally found in the moist tropical forests and valleys. It is indigenous in the peninsular India from hills in Deccan, Konkan to Travencore and Ceylon, East Pakistan, Sikkim, Assam, Orissa and the Andamans.

DESCRIPTION

A medium to large-sized tree with conical to rounded crown, the tree has a cylindrical and erect trunk. Its bark is rough dark brown and longitudinally fissured with short and horizontal cracks. The lower branches are generally horizontal and the upper ones are vertical. These remain undivided for some length and near the end divide into numerous branchlets giving it a rounded to conical crown. The leaves grow as a pair of oblong leaflets with pointed tips.

Trees are typically deciduous. In the cooler and drier parts of the range they are usually leafless during the winter. They fall in December–January and new leaves appear in March–April, which are bronze in colour but later turn to dark green. The flowers, yellowish-greenish in color, are fragrant. They are not very prominent. In Northern Plains, the tree flowers in the last week of April whereas in Southern Peninsula, the flowering season is May–June. The tree grows to a height of 12–20 meters with a spread of 9–15 meters. The life of the tree is around 80–100 years.

CLIMATE

It can be grown in a wide range of climatic conditions but prefers tropical and subtropical climate of the hills and the valleys. It grows well up to an elevation of 900 meters above the sea level. *Chikrassi* is a pioneer

species capable of colonising bare land. It is light demanding. However, young seedlings in natural regeneration may tolerate some degree of shading. It is a dominant tree occurring mostly in the top canopy in natural forest.

SOIL

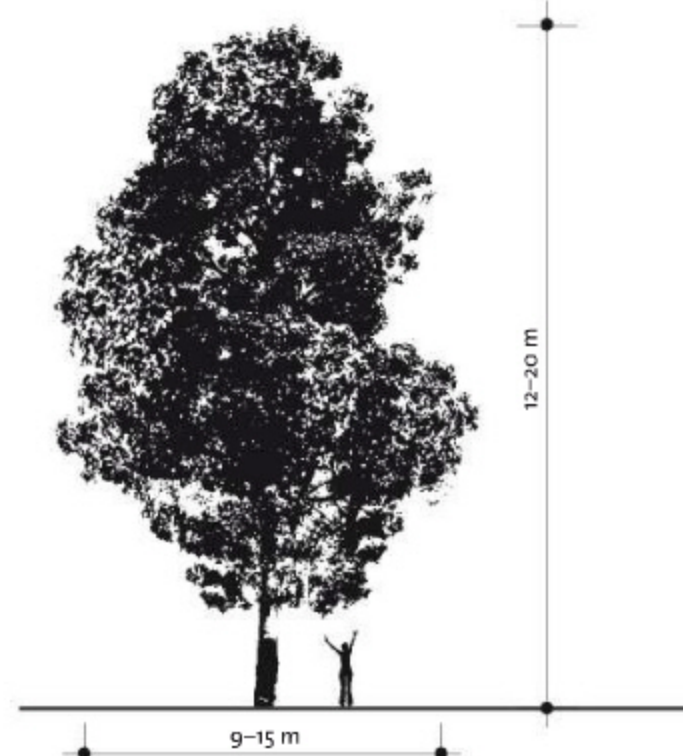
It can be grown in any type of deep and well drained soil which has an ability to retain moisture. Clayey and sandy soils are not suited for its healthy growth. It does not grow well where hard pans underlay lateritic soils or on barren hills. It is also usually absent in heavy-textured and waterlogged soils.

PROPOGATION

It is relatively fast growing and easily propagated by seeds. Young saplings tend to develop a small and sparse crown. As the tree grows the crown becomes deeper and denser but still maintains a good length of branchless bole. Healthy potted seedlings attain a stem height of 30 cms, suitable for transplanting into the field, within 4–6 months. It is susceptible to attack by pests, impact of which can be very severe. In its early growth, pests and diseases can be responsible for loss of plant if left unchecked.

USES

The wood of *Chikrassi* is of considerable economic importance. The timber is used for cabinet work, panelling, furniture, doors and windows and light flooring. It is also used for railway sleepers, ship and boat building, packing boxes and general light construction. Flowers contain a red and yellow dye, bark and leaves have medicinal uses. The stringy bark has medicinal uses. It is planted as a shade tree for coffee plantations in Eastern region. Self-pruning ability with a straight form makes it a suitable tree for growing in combination with crops, such as banana, *Citrus spp.* and guava. It is an ornamental tree planted in avenues and gardens.



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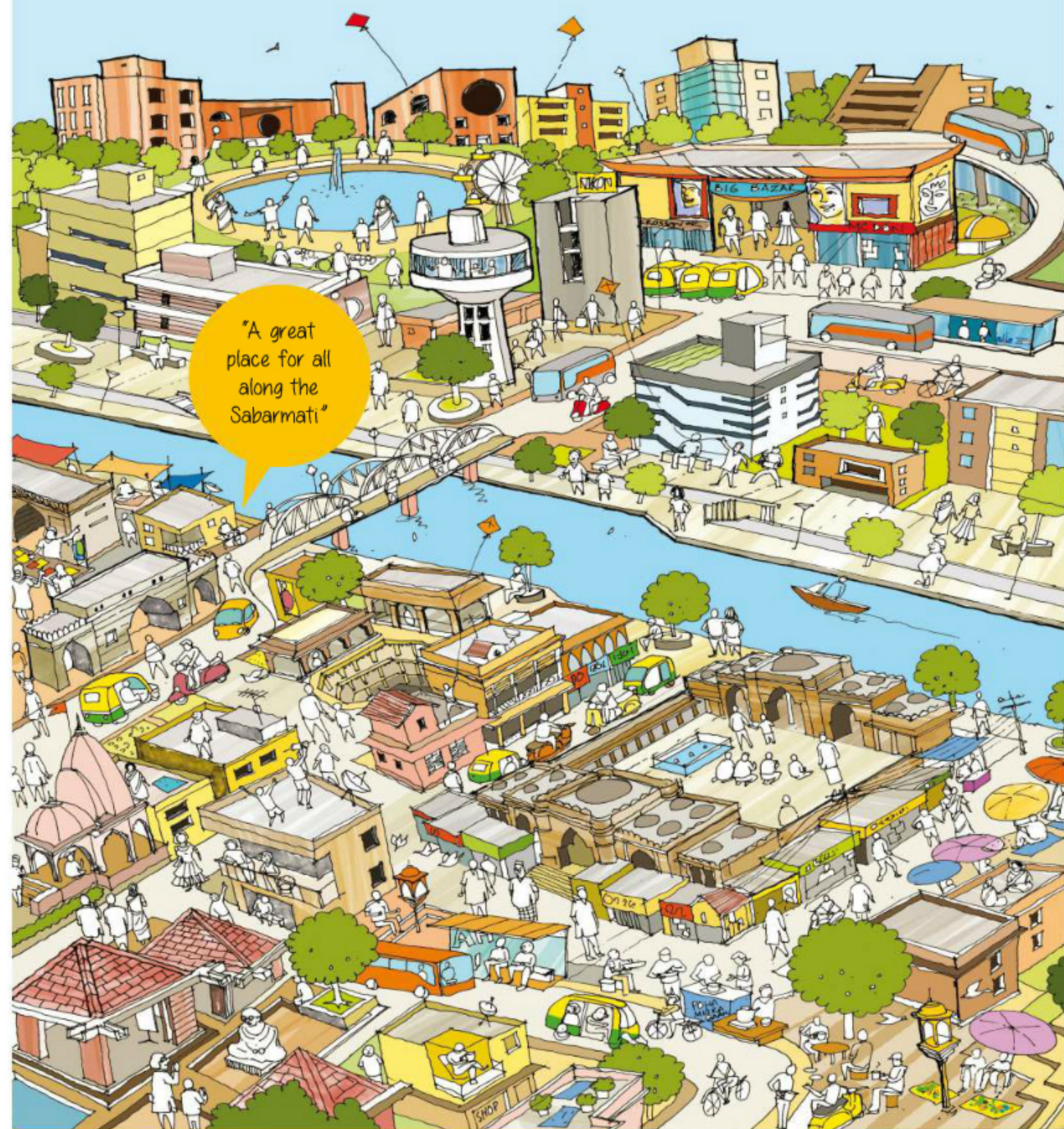
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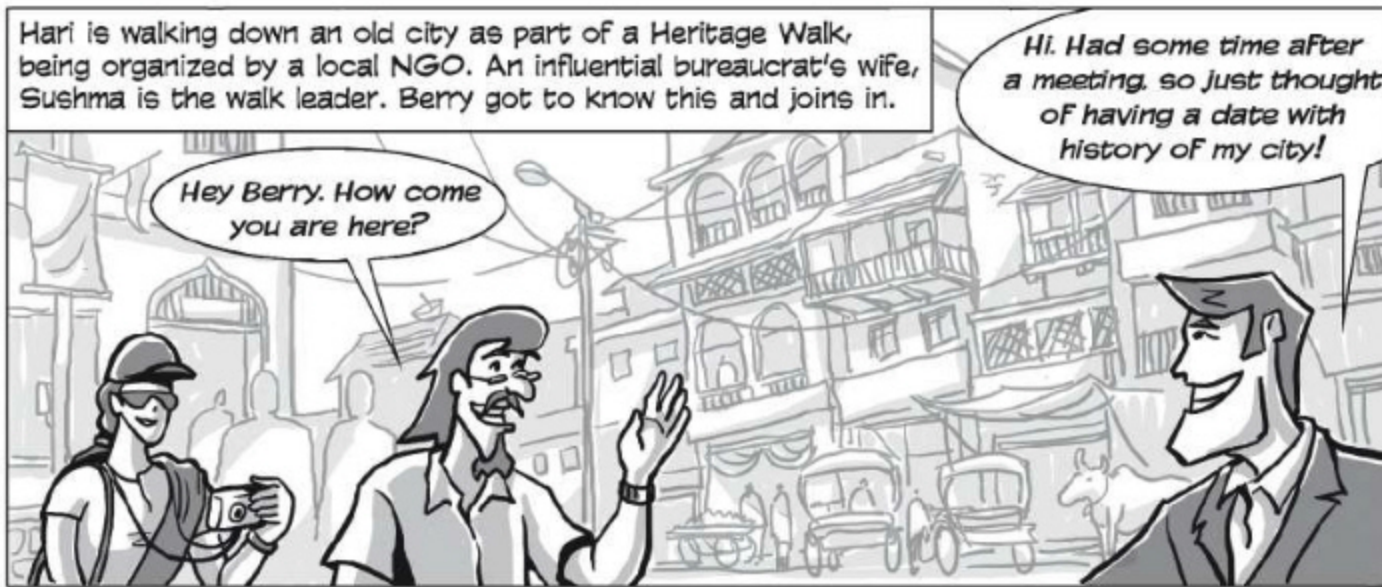
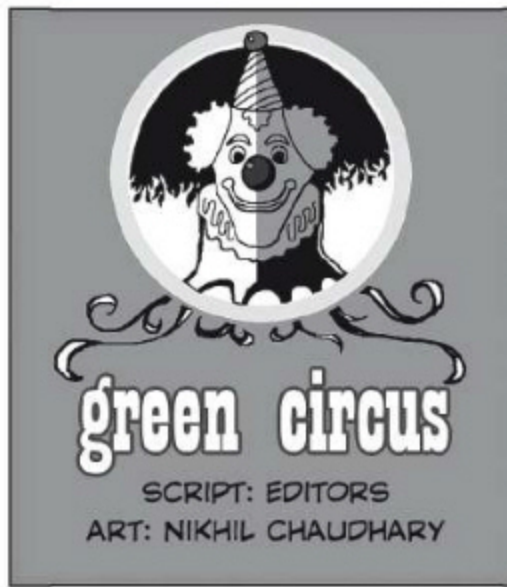
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