

MY SPACE : GAURAV ROY CHOUDHURY ART FORM : HIROTOSHI ITOH DESIGN DESTINATION : GÖTTENBURG

HOME REVIEW

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FEBRUARY



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The Measure of Intelligence is the Ability to 'Do Next'

GRCA, a Bengaluru-based architecture firm, was introduced when 'what architecture really should be', started dictating architect Gaurav Roy Choudhury's thoughts. After working for 4 years with a reputed architectural firm in Bengaluru, Gaurav decided to set-out on his own, with the 'hopes of redefining honest architecture through a process of re-invention and storytelling.'

His work embraces the old-school principle – space is key, and not the skin – and yet keeps the design relevantly contemporary. Their portfolio reflects their worship for a space and its user, and breathes life in the design through a subtle composition of light, space and materials.

The firm, which was established in 2007, has ever since worked on several disciplines across design – ranging from architecture, interior design, graphic design and urban design. However, the firm doesn't believe in having too much on the plate, and prefers doing justice to a limited number of projects.

GRCA has mastered in articulating a certain restraint in their work, which shuns the blind idolisation of the skeleton of a structure, and instead focuses on bringing complexity and coherence within the space.

This approach, which proposes an alternative to the existing display of visual extravagance, resonates with the thoughts of legendary architect, Louis Kahn, who had once said, 'A great building must begin with the unmeasurable, must go through measurable means when it is being designed and in the end must be unmeasurable.'



GAURAV ROY CHOUDHURY

Interview by Shweta Salvi

Was there a defining phase in your career which formed the core of your design sensibilities?

I think, when you start on your own, the first three or four years define you. Also, in my case, it was a really tough period overlapped with this intense questioning of 'what kind of work I wanted to do?'

That period initiated a deep introspective process, which I still practise today. It also made me connect with myself to an extent where I could not fool myself anymore, or for that matter, draw a single line without believing in it.



Your firm caters to multiple disciplines; is there a design constant you maintain across disciplines?

We do not have any constants whatsoever; in fact, I despise having limitations at the start of design. Yes, at every independent design level, there are eventual constants or ideas which hail sway in design but nothing at the start.

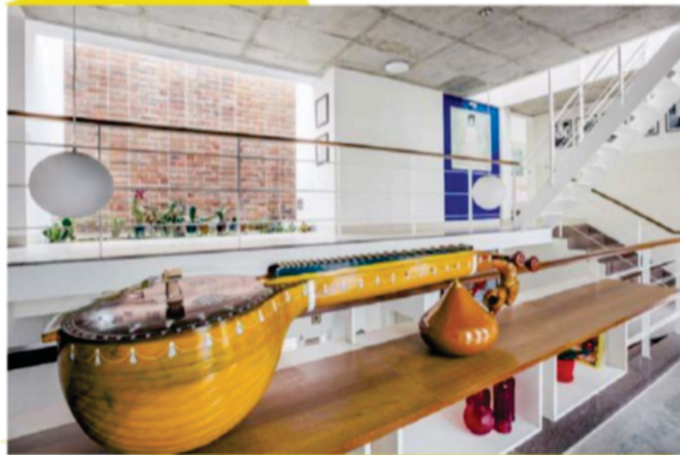


Architecture for me is shelter, privacy, space, emotion and poetry.

Architecture is perceived differently by each architect, for some it is about function, for some it is all about visual experience. In today's context, it could also be about modern materials and technology. What is 'architecture' to you?

Architecture for me is shelter, privacy, space, emotion and poetry. I think all good architecture needs to celebrate all of these factors. I think it is mediocrity that hides behind functionality, or visual aesthetics.

I will always prefer a building which is done well and recognises 100 things as its core brief, than one done spectacularly and recognises only 10.



We see the use of wide-ranging materials in your work that add texture and colour to the space. Is there any building material that fascinates you and one that you would like to explore?

For me materials are important, but they come in a little later down the line in the design process. It is something like casting actors for a film, after the script and story is ready. Of course, they have a very important role, but their character and selection come from the script/ vision of the project.

I would love to work with garbage, plastics, and things we throw away. I really believe that society should reflect and introspect a lot more and in every way possible. What better way to do that, than a building made from what we are desperately trying to get rid-of? To give meaning back to things that we have used and ripped away all meaning from.

The constantly evolving innovations in the field of design and tools like parametric design, allow the architects to imagine beyond the obvious and that too with uncontest accuracy. What are your views on the growing digitisation of the field?

Look, I am not a big fan of parametric building design. I feel they simplify building processes. I will always prefer a building which is done well and recognises 100 things as its core brief, than one done spectacularly and recognises only 10.

Complexity is there everywhere. You just have to look and you'll find it – in the site, in the power structures, in the weather, in the impact. So again, between a complex design and a complex looking design, I would choose the former.

Could you name one building which will always be a landmark structure in architecture for you?

I like the Pompidou Center by Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, mainly because it is probably still one of those buildings, which is incredibly relevant today. It denounced aesthetics to some extent, and is a 'skeleton of functionality'. It shed the skin off architecture, which I believe is the way to the future.

Any current international architectural practice that inspires you... and why?

I am a big fan of a lot of the current Japanese firms constructing these small, beautiful and spatially primal houses there. I like their de-constructive processes addressing lifestyle, economy, family, which makes them do so much in very little space, and with very little fuss.



An Indian monument you would love to give a facelift to?

I am not big on face lifts. I love the honesty of decay, neglect and irrelevance.

What is the firm currently working on?

We are working mostly on residences currently. But all of them are exciting designs that are looking to push to the maximum at their individual levels.

What do you prefer to do in your spare time? Any interests?

I love watching movies and listening to music. I also love to travel, sketch, delve in sculpture and do a little writing. The last year has been a little less productive, but I am hoping 2016 will be different.

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