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Covid-19 has underlined the need to create sustainable buildings in collaboration with all the stakeholders involved, including the architect, interior designer, civil and structural engineer, product manufacturer, and service provider, who, by pooling in their resources of material, design, planning, technical skills, products, and by sharing their respective areas of expertise, can effectively design and build spaces that are socially engaging and interactive, while adhering to the norms of social distancing and hygiene. In this article, Architects, Designers, Builders, and Product Manufacturers, who are also society’s influencers, decision makers, and environmentally responsible citizens, give their perspective on a changing scenario where conserving and fostering the natural environment takes precedence over unsustainable practices through conscious planning and design; they also share ideas, solutions, and products to make living easier and healthier in the years to come.
Real Estate: Transitioning Towards Smart & Self Sustaining Buildings

This year, the theme of the World Environment Day was ‘Celebrate Biodiversity’ which is a call to action for individuals and government bodies around the world to undertake actions that can save and protect our environment from its rapid degradation. This global epidemic has once again reminded us of the need to push a reverse button, re-plan our development path, restructure our cities and reconfigure our ways of living.

Unsustainable practices such as rapid urbanisation, rising levels of consumption, and the degradation of lands, have led to a rampant increase in environmental problems like soil erosion, ozone layer depletion, and rise in levels of air pollution. Recent instances of forest fires in Australia and California have showed how our illicit practices are causing harm to millions of habitats around the world and are restricting our green cover. It is the result of these practices that a series of zoonotic diseases like SARS, MERS, Ebola, bird flu or Covid-19 have now been unleashed into our eco-system.

As we start thinking of living in the post-COVID world, there are now diverse perspectives on how our cities can respond better to current and future crises. Once the current pandemic is over, life in cities as we know it will change and the changes that will come around will be long-term. A majority of the decision making in the construction of new cities will now depend on many factors, including how governments and societies respond to the coronavirus aftermath. Therefore, building a course towards more sustainable lifestyles has now become imperative for us. It is the impact of the ongoing pandemic which has made it certain that we change our approach to work and lifestyle, wherein we undertake long term initiatives for environment conservation and focus towards creating communities that are better, stronger and provide eco-friendlier solutions for the future.

The vision for the future of development and environmental conservation will require a radical transformation of our current infrastructure systems. Conservation of energy and water, proper waste management and sanitation should now be the basis of future growth patterns.

In the recent past, planned design and development of our urban landscapes have presented a solution to address the current need gap for the adoption of sustainable living and has showcased its ability to foresee and accommodate the future requirements of cities and their urban dwellers. Investments in planned urbanization have been found to not only improve the quality of life of the citizens but can also be a huge contributor to the environment.
It is important now to customize relevant technologies in homes that would incorporate modern habitat design with traditional practices. While we have always put hygiene practices at the forefront, we believe that this time of introspection will give us the fuel and motivation to show the next generation what more is possible.

Lindsay Bernard Rodrigues, Co-Owner & Director, Bennet & Bernard Group

Today, leading Indian realtors have transitioned towards building smart and self-sustaining projects which comprise a wish list of infrastructure and services which cater to the aspirations and needs of today’s customer. These rise in sustainable projects have ensured that developers make structural modifications in their new builds such as re-distribution of airflow and oxygen supply and implanting elements for quick absorption of carbon dioxide in their properties, which will not only enhance hygiene and health of the customers, but will also reduce the overall carbon footprint of the property.

Moving beyond the traditional practices of environment conservation like solar power for lighting up of common areas, rainwater harvesting, recycling and reusing water for flushing or landscapes, wet and dry waste segregation, are measures that will ensure that traditional practices co-exist with modern technologies.

With the inclusion of the eco-village practices such as provision of energy-positive homes, doorstep high-yield organic food production, use of mixed renewable energy and storage, waste recycling and making use of advanced agricultural technologies that require less land, like aquaponics, hydroponics and vertical farms, these infrastructures are now making sure that a balanced community is the central theme of all the realty projects. Such projects have the capability to not only enable people to live, work, and enjoy a vibrant community life, but can also promote a feeling of self-reliance among its residents in an ecologically aware and sensitive way. Even though the development of self-sustaining communities is still a very niche concept in India, however, the industry is expected to attract interest from both the investors and the buyers. India currently ranks second, just after the United States, in terms of the number of green technology projects and built-up areas. Post the Covid-19 crisis, this holistic construction approach is here to stay as a sector that promises incredible growth for many years to come since it encourages interdependence and shared responsibility among stakeholders in building the value chain. However, what is certain is that we will witness changes that will be for the long term, and, hopefully, use lessons from this crisis to rebuild and create communities that are better, stronger and provide eco-friendlier solutions for the future.

At Bennet & Bernard, we have been following sustainable practices for over a decade, and are now further enhancing our design initiatives, considering lifestyle changes in consumer behavioural patterns. We are incorporating changes in the layout and design and making structural modifications like re-distribution of airflow and oxygen supply, as well as implanting elements for quick absorption of carbon dioxide to enhance hygiene and health. The design flow includes selection of light, placement and paint schemes to add to the existing eco-friendly technology approach at our properties. It is now critical to think out-of-the-box.

Our enhanced designs will also incorporate aspects like versatile workspaces, community vegetation, contactless delivery, and self-
sustenance. Other traditional healthy practices like keeping footwear outside, sanitizing hands and feet before entering homes will co-exist with these initiatives. We are also ensuring that working from home is ergonomically most efficient. We will be creating an exclusive space which will impart an office-like feel. The designs are being executed to help maintain privacy and offer a noise-free ambience in certain sections of the homes to ensure minimal distractions. Usage of copper will be a regular feature and the company is working in multiple ways to enhance the wellness of our clientele.

Being able to build sustainable homes is a responsibility that respects the environment around us. We are introducing hydroponic farms in all our new projects. Sustainable farming and the desire to eat fresh, organic, zero-carbon food is the best way to provide healthy and nutrient-rich food. Hydroponics and other soil-less farming techniques can also help us take our agriculture and farming industry to the next level as climate change poses a major challenge to food production. In fact, Hydroponic gardening is fast becoming a popular choice for many growers around the world due to its more sustainable approach to resource usage.

Elevators: Handrail Sanitization a Must

Transmission of causative viruses to humans can be through hand contact on the handrails of escalators and moving walks, posing a potential health hazard. Therefore, ensuring clean handrails in the most efficient way has become a matter of great urgency.

Schindler Handrail Sanitization Solutions brings advanced hygiene by providing continuous and automatic disinfection of the surface from bacteria, parasites, and viruses. Schindler’s handrail ultra UV device uses germicidal UVC light to irradiate the handrails at a short distance. This directly damages DNA and RNA, which are the genetic materials of microbes and viruses. Additionally, with the LED lighting technology, handrails are disinfected in an efficient and environmentally friendly way.

Developing handrail sanitization solutions is part of our endeavour to provide user-friendly solutions to our customers while keeping their health and safety as the highest priority.

Ashok Ramachandran, President, Schindler India & South Asia

The device is installed inside the escalator or moving walk to ensure passenger safety. The design makes it easy to install, which makes the Schindler handrail Ultra UV device a practical solution to fight any type of virus. The solution is more advantageous than mercury or halogen lamps since installation inside the unit provides invisible protection for passengers; physical disinfection with no chemical or heavy metal residue; besides which, it is green and energy efficient.
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Elevators: Health & Well-Being Solutions

To say that the pandemic has thrown life out of gear for all of us would be an understatement. Indeed, Covid-19 has forced us to rethink the way we should live. Public spaces are stressful in a coronavirus-stricken environment, and the way people interact with everyday surroundings is set to change. It becomes imperative that buildings and cities are made safer and healthier places to live, work and commute.

As a pioneer in people flow, and with a holistic approach to health, well-being and safety, KONE has introduced a range of Health and Well-being Solutions that will help recreate safer user journeys and healthy spaces in buildings. The solutions are built on KONE’s deep expertise and knowledge of people flow, which is vital when addressing the challenges of adapting to a new way of life in the face of the current pandemic.

Our Elevator Remote Call feature that uses WhatsApp reduces the need to touch surfaces. As people started returning to work, another real concern related to shared spaces became extremely clear: people are unwilling to touch common surfaces like buttons or handrails in Elevators and Escalators. Elevator Remote Call Feature using WhatsApp is a response to this. It allows users to summon an elevator using social messaging channels like WhatsApp, removing the need to touch possibly contaminated buttons or displays.

KONE is using physical distancing elevator floor stickers and elevator full load limit adjustment to ensure less crowding, thereby contributing to a healthier environment.

To further reduce concerns over elevator use, KONE is introducing, to selected markets, the new KONE Elevator Air Purifier. It uses technology – including an advanced photocatalytic oxidation (PCO) process developed by NASA for air control on spaceships - to improve air quality in the elevator car by destroying most of the potential pollutants like bacteria, viruses, dust and odour.

KONE Handrail Sanitizer is an escalator handrail cleaning solution that uses a type of ultraviolet light (UV-C) to continuously clean the handrail when the escalator is in use. The solution is installed inside the escalator, so users are not exposed to it. The handrail emerges much cleaner and ready to support passengers when they hold the escalator handrail.

In these unprecedented times when hygiene and physical distancing are vitally important, KONE’s health and well-being solutions will help regain our confidence in everyday environments, in cities, and with the buildings we move through.

Amit Gossain, MD, KONE Elevator India

As we all learn to live by the new norms of our cities, neighborhoods and buildings, it’s likely that we will continue to insist on smooth people flow once we do get going again. The transparency and preventive maintenance offered by the cloud based KONE 24/7 Connected Services can help here and keep equipment running and safe.
Hospitality Industry: Next Level of Transformed Spaces

We as designers are keenly waiting for new design guidelines in order to incorporate them in hotel designs ensuring their rapid reopening which is a challenge in the current scenario. Also, assimilating the new alters intelligently in the existing design of all the typology of hotels, including guest houses, budget hotels and luxury hotels without jeopardizing the aesthetics, is again crucial and of utmost importance. We, as designers, expect the authorities to introduce a universal touchstone where properties can be categorized into Covid-19 compliant for the comfort, safety and satisfaction of the guests.

The design fraternity should come together and find solutions to the anticipated problems which may occur for built environments post lockdown in order to curb this global menace

Khozema Chitalwala, Principal Architect & Designer, Designers Group

The hospitality industry, which is customarily considered to be pretty decent in terms of hygiene will now be required to practice clinical hygiene and the same will be true for other public buildings. In fact, even with no regulation in the norms by the government yet, numerous brands have already taken the aspect into account and have incorporated certain SOPs, maintaining considerable amounts of hygiene levels and social distancing. These SOPs and evident transformations concerning health and hygiene will also cause amendments in design. The alternation will be manifested from habitual changes where sterilization may be subsumed as a part of the design itself and we may need to introduce pre-sanitization areas in hotels. Also, the current air conditioning systems, return air quality, indoor air quality and other technical aspects would need major attention ensuring that apt standards are maintained.

Social distancing has become an exigency today. The need of the hour for the designers is to look at interior spaces with accommodational functionality or limited areas, where practising social distancing can be problematic. These spaces may include banquets, F&B outlets, meeting rooms, diners where buffets are served, bar areas and even the public areas. Avoiding human interaction/intervention in the hospitality sector is near impossible as the experience of a hotel without hosts can never be the same. Although, we can confer technology like e-menus, virtual voice assistance etc. to some extent, they might come at a huge cost. Also, India, while acquiring great scientific knowledge of planetary composition and being a birthplace of Ayurveda and Yoga, can become a wellness retreat for the world. We can incorporate wellness and recreational centres in our hotels to market a vertical revenue.

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Building with Smart Steel Structures

Tata BlueScope Steel is ramping up the health infrastructure to combat the coronavirus pandemic with Smart Steel Structures that are easy to install, modular life-care structures to combat Covid-19. Supplied under EZYBUILD® smart steel solutions, these hygienic Isolation Units and contactless Testing & Sample collection kiosks are designed as per medical guidelines on social distancing.

The EZYBUILD® customized life-care solutions in the form of Isolation and Quarantine units, Testing & Sample collection booths and Doctor’s Cabins are specially designed and developed for anyone seeking to install such facilities in their premises or locality - be it state governments, municipal corporations, hospitals, corporates, institutions, or large housing societies.

With necessary amenities as per medical guidance, these smart steel structures in the form of Quarantine Wards and Testing Kiosks are available in kit-like solutions, wherein the wall, roof panels and internal partitions are assembled onsite.

Optimizing healthcare facilities is the need of the hour - the only way is to develop alternatives that are secure and quick to erect. To address the ever-increasing demand for high quality, ready-to-install infrastructure, Tata BlueScope Steel is developing innovative infrastructure solutions for improving lives with easy to build and maintain structures that are designed keeping in mind the healthcare worker’s security and comfort.

Riten Choudhury, MD
Tata BlueScope Steel

They can be easily dismantled, packed and shifted to other sites once the containment zone is free from the pandemic’s threat. These structures are easy to sanitize, are weather-proof, thermally efficient, and can be offered with or without the base platform. Made from lightweight, high strength Colorbond and Zincalume steel, these structures offer great corrosion resistance to any chemical-based discharge or sprays. In fact, these light gauge framing structures are the best option for a speedy turnaround time, especially in times of crisis. All Ezybuild Solutions are ready to install, quick, customisable alternatives to conventional construction techniques, and are available pan India.
India has 45 million SMEs, which employ approximately 11% of the working population of the country. This workforce works from different commercial spaces (offices, retail stores, healthcare and education institutions, hospitality outfits) spread across the country. Smaller outbreaks of the Coronavirus are expected to keep happening for a longer time; the smallest of such instances can bring businesses to a screeching halt. Hence, business owners will place hygiene at the very top of their priority list, ensuring a safe and productive work environment for their employees and clients. In this changing business environment, a special focus needs to be put on Home Office options for certain sections of the workforce which can work remotely without loss of productivity. This will help reduce operational and real estate costs for brands, and also provide greater safety and time and cost-saving for team members.
Commercial spaces cater to culture, community, and connection for the working professionals; however, the fundamental tenets of work and workspace design will change, so will the products that go into a workspace.

Vikash Anand, Director - Sales and Marketing, Partner, Flipspaces

Flipspaces has leveraged its domain knowledge in workplace strategy with global experience in designing and building for Fortune 500 companies, start-ups, and co-working spaces to put together resources required to adapt to a changed world of commercial interiors. As a tech-enabled venture in interior design, products and projects for commercial spaces, we follow a differentiated approach through a tech-suite which creates efficiency and enhances the customer experience in every step of their interior design and build journey. Our Home Office Solutions address the need for working professionals to have a seamless and distraction-free remote working experience.

Our REBOOTSPACES line of products and services focuses on creating next-generation commercial spaces that are intuitive, empathetic, and safe, with ergonomic workspaces to facilitate a seamless home office experience. We offer brands smart products that promote social distancing, hygiene, sanitization, and Touchless Automation, which can be mapped specifically to their requirements.

Our cutting-edge product line is designed to help brands restart their operations while providing a secure and hygienic work environment for their teams. Our outreach activities include installation of Automated Sanitization Booths in police stations across Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore. These automated sanitization booths are effective in disinfecting visitors in high footfall areas owing to a no-touch process.
Rethinking Home Design as More Flexible

It's times like these we reset the clock. The Coronavirus pandemic has forced us to take stock; to determine what's important and what's disposable in our lives. Despite our rapidly changing world, what is evident and consistent is people's desire to feel connected to a larger network. Not just our family networks, but our work and sport environments; our local neighbourhoods too. Just as the pandemic magnified our need for social interaction, it also highlighted the need to rethink the way we design our homes. In the future, we can expect to see home design that is flexible and considerate, that is focused on community, Nature and well-being. We can expect to reshape the way we design our homes to focus on the following elements:

Connection: Making allowances for different social interactions will be critically important in future home designs; such as a place to greet guests and entertain, whether it's for big celebrations or intimate dinner parties.

Work/life balance: Design needs to facilitate connection with our community through spaces and scales. To provide inviting spaces that engage all the senses; these spaces can be private or public. Acoustics, light and space all play their role in the quality of the engagement.

Flexibility in design: Future home design should allow the flexibility and the understanding that you need a balance of open plan living for connectivity and compartmentalisation for concentration and contemplation. Clever use of space, storage and IT that allows us to be adaptable and the ability to put our things away at the end of the day will be important. The home office may return as people have found huge advantages from working from home, but there will always be a need to connect with the workplace so this space should be usable but flexible in its approach.

Landscape: Mental and physical health is directly linked with our ability to connect to Nature, so as we move forward, we can expect to see the integration of landscape in both the public and private realm, such as edible gardens, urban orchards and a general intertwining of nature and design a real focus for developers and residents.

Health and wellness: Just as we saw a reconnection with nature, the pandemic also created a renewed focus on health. Post-pandemic we can also expect to see home design shift to ensure appropriate spaces for wellness and exercise.

As we now look to life beyond lockdown, the changing values of consumers will impact the way we design homes for the future, and I, for one, believe it's a change for the better.

Residential Portfolio Leader
Tim Boekhoorn, Hames Sharley

Essence Apartments in Perth, WA.
Photos by Douglas Mark Black
De-urbanisation & De-centralisation of Cities to Define Development

The ‘new normal’ - irrespective of being short- or long-term will have its influences on design. We have already seen exciting responses in the field of product design, in making new masks, handles for sanitizers, multiple-use key chains, virtual lift buttons and so on. It’s a fact that we have all got used to digital platforms a lot more, and I won’t be surprised if digitisation gets extended to every component of a built environment. Virtual offices have suddenly become more comfortable for both employers and employees, and the trend questions the very need for large office blocks. Home automation will play a larger role and more with voice commands.
It’s the time to pause, reflect and retrospect. We, as architects, have a larger role towards society and the eco system than just designing beautiful buildings - we need to design lifestyles, such that people can live life in the true sense.

Ar. Vivek PP, Founder Partner, De Earth

And I think that we should start questioning the whole premise of the built environment. Why do we need to build? How can we build with minimum impact on Nature and the neighbourhood? How do we create positive social and public places, where people can breathe clean, healthy air? We may have to go back to such primary questions and start a search for more sensitive responses to each one of them. Humanity first, will be a good slogan, even for designers with respect to the built environment. When we get sensitised about our larger role as a human being and a responsible citizen, and then as a design professional, we may be better ready to co-live with the elements of Nature by creating spaces that evoke a civic sense and responsibility towards the environment.

We need to take a re-look at our cities and the planning policies and re-define ‘development in order to bring ‘adaptability’ at the centre of focus. We need to design our public spaces and buildings, and our neighbourhoods with green and buffer spaces around them for positive compartmentalisation. We have seen haphazard and rapid urbanisation in the last few decades, but it’s time now for some planned de-urbanisation, and de-centralisation of our cities, it’s administrative structure, health and education facilities, and fundamental supply chains for effective and welfare-oriented governance. Let social organisations evolve from the village level to drive this change and percolate it to all layers of society. We, as designers and architects, can play a pivotal role in this renaissance.
Waterproofing the Dr. Fixit Way

As the lockdown enforced to combat the COVID-19 pandemic eases, monsoon is set to enter the country. While it will bring general relief, the ensuing rains could well worsen the leakage issues faced by consumers in their houses and cause damage to structures. This will impact the large numbers of people living in buildings and homes that need serious preventive waterproofing before the rains arrive. It is expected that 6-8% of buildings and structures may need critical pre-monsoon repairs. The waterproofing contractors play a crucial role in ensuring the structural integrity of buildings and depend upon the pre-monsoon work for a big part of their earnings. However, consumers have heightened health and safety concerns this year and may be wary of workers entering their homes. It is necessary to address these concerns as it may lead to reduced repair and waterproofing work and impacting incomes of the waterproofing community.

Keeping this in mind, we have rolled out multiple initiatives which will safeguard the livelihood of thousands of waterproofing contractors and benefit consumers who urgently need waterproofing of their homes. The program has been rolled out across 10 cities - Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Indore, Ahmedabad, Surat, Kolkata and Nagpur, and addresses two objectives.

The first is to train and certify contractors on all safety aspects that they and their workers need to adopt while conducting site operations. Our full-fledged program imparts training and information about all precautions as per the guidelines of MHA and WHO. At the end of the course, participants take a detailed exam, with successful participants being duly certified. The training, conducted over video conferencing, has been helping contractors allay the fears of potential customers and enhance their prospects of finding fresh work. Moreover, Dr Fixit has complemented the training program with an audio visual that guides users on how to handle site work during the pandemic.

The second objective is to provide technical training to contractors/users on advanced waterproofing techniques so that they can be equipped to complete all jobs faster, with fewer workers, and as per stringent quality standards.

Waterproofing contractors are an extremely important spoke in our ecosystem as they help protect the integrity of buildings and homes. This initiative will equip them to assure customers of complete safety and to do their critical waterproofing jobs efficiently without losing out on the key business period.

Nilesh Mazumdar, CEO, Construction Chemicals (Retail), Pidilite Industries

To this end, the Dr Fixit teams have been providing technical training on advanced waterproofing techniques, including the use of mechanized tools and devices that would help them speedily complete and deliver their jobs to the best quality. Dr Fixit has partnered with multiple companies that manufactures these mechanization equipments and has been training its users on these machines.

For the mental peace of their hardworking and safety-trained contractors and their teams, Dr Fixit has stepped up to also provide them with free COVID insurance cover.
Corporate Office Design

Post-Covid social distancing will considerably change the landscape of commercial office and residential spaces. Unlike homes which have turned out to be safe spaces, commercial offices will face many design challenges with regard to hygiene, sanitization, densification and safety. Besides the look and feel, health and hygiene will be at the core of design philosophy. Architects and Interior Designers share their views.

By Vinod Behl, Editor, PropTOQ
Courtesy: IID webinars on Corporate Office Design

The office space design norms will have to take into account densification in common/collaborative areas, washrooms, conference rooms, cafeteria, etc. Safe distancing of workstations and employees and reducing touch points will be the other new design norms. Despite the increasing trend of "Work From Home" (WFH), Sonali Bhagwati of Design Plus firmly believes that offices are not likely to lose their significance as all office functions are not possible to be performed from home. Even in design firms, 40% of site work and manufacturing have to happen outdoors. With WFH being the new norm, she forecasts the design trend catering to offices like homes, which means that the home design will account for a dedicated space conducive for office work. She also envisages a new trend of plain vanilla workspaces coming up in neighbourhood markets to cater to the needs of people working from home.

The corporate office interior will undergo a major change, according to Vistasp Bhagwagar of Vistasp and Associates. The design will have to take care of physicality of space and circulation of people to ensure proper distancing. More operations will be designed as voice-controlled and there will be hands-free, foot pedal adjusted workstations. Designers will use anti-microbial laminates for bacteria-free surfaces.

Co-working spaces, according to Nilanjan Bhowal of Design Consortium, will see new design metrics, focusing more on health and hygiene, than on look and feel of the place. Common areas like washrooms, corridors, pantry, etc, will be redesigned in accordance with the new density norms. The design will ensure capping of number of persons in meeting/conference rooms, lifts and in the cafeteria. He also foresees push to suburbs and tier 2-3 cities in view of the need for de-densification. Large urban public spaces may become the new norm. The future city designs will focus on sustainable seamless developments. We may have to go for smaller sub cities, separated by green buffer zones - independent yet working as one unit. According to him, even construction methods will have to undergo a change due to shortage of skilled labour and social distancing. There will be more focus on mechanization- and greater use of pre-fabrication and pre-cast technology.

Deben Moza of Knight Frank India is of the opinion that offices will be designed like hospitals, and due to extra care for hygiene and sanitation, material selection will be key. There will be greater demand for office buildings with sustainability and wellness.

Says Sanjay Kataria, "The future designs for home and office will focus on wellness. These designs will take care of moisture management, water contamination, temperature comfort, acoustical privacy etc. And with that the trend of wellness-certified buildings will emerge. Our company is already designing India’s first wellness-certified, 7 lakh sqft building, for which we have got a pre-certification. One can even go for a wellness certification for existing buildings with the help of retrofitting.”

Going beyond LEED certification, wellness-certified offices will be the new norm, agrees Sonali Bhagwati. “Since this will have financial implications for both developers and occupiers, initially, the concept may take off on a small level, but will pick up over a period of time,” she says.

Sanjay Wadhwa, MD, SWBI, believes that tech push will get bigger with greater use of tools like IoT, Alexa, Tracking Technology, and technology related to workspaces such as voice activation for elevators, sensors, smart window shades, and microbial coatings will be in use. “Going forward, design processes need to be more structured,” he says.

The future of architecture has to be organic, driven by technology - contextual and relevant,” affirms Nilanjan Bhowal.
Reflections & Transparency

Exploring the balance between solid and void, opaque and transparent, interior and exterior, the design of Opus is by Ar. Zaha Hadid in which she created both its architecture and interiors.

Home to the new ME Dubai hotel, the Opus is located in the Burj Khalifa district of Dubai. Spanning 907,400 sqft, the Opus is designed as two separate towers that coalesce into a singular whole—taking the form of a cube. The cube has been ‘eroded’ in its centre, creating a free-form void that is an important volume of the design. The two halves of the building on either side of the void are linked by a four-storey atrium at ground level and also connected by an asymmetric 38-metre-wide, three-storey bridge 71 metres above the ground. "The precise orthogonal geometries of the Opus’ elemental glass cube contrast dramatically with the fluidity of the eight-storey void at its centre," explained Christos Passas, project director at Zaha Hadid Architects. The cube’s double-glazed insulating façades incorporate a UV coating and a mirrored frit pattern to reduce solar gain. Applied around the entire building, this dotted frit patterning emphasizes the clarity of the building’s orthogonal form, while at the same time, dissolving its volume through the continuous play of light varying between ever-changing reflections and transparency.
The void’s 6,000 sqm façade is created from 4,300 individual units of flat, single-curved or double-curved glass. The high-efficiency glazing units are comprised of 8mm Low-E glass (coated on the inside), a 16mm cavity between the panes and 2 layers of 6mm clear glass with a 1.52mm PVB resin laminate. This curved façade was designed using digital 3D modelling that also identified specific zones which required tempered glass.

During the day, the cube’s façade reflects the sky, the sun and the surrounding city; whilst at night, the void is illuminated by a dynamic light installation of individually controllable LEDs within each glass panel.

The ME Dubai hotel incorporates 74 rooms and 19 suites, while the Opus building also houses offices floors, serviced residences and restaurants, cafes and bars. Furniture by Zaha Hadid Design is installed throughout the hotel and fabricated from materials ensuring a long lifecycle and its components can be recycled. Sensors throughout the Opus automatically adjust the ventilation and lighting according to occupancy to conserve energy. Hotel guests receive stainless-steel water bottles to use during their stay with drinking water dispensers are installed throughout the hotel. With no plastic bottles in guest rooms and a program to become entirely plastic free in all areas, the hotel is also reducing food waste by not serving buffets and has composters to recycle discarded organics.

Fact File
Architect: Zaha Hadid Architects
Design: Zaha Hadid, Patrik Schumacher, Christos Passas
ZHA Design Director: Christos Passas
Photography: Laurian Ghinitoiu
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Experiential Shopping

Drishti Architects & Interior Designers create 9th Avenue Gallery - a magnificent center for retail for natural stone company CMC, where customers can view the vast variety of products and visualize their infinite design possibilities to create unique interiors and exteriors.

Classic Marble Company (CMC) is one of the largest manufacturers and suppliers of imported natural marble, exotic stones, granites, engineered marble, quartz and porcelain slabs. The brief was to design a signature showroom cum production unit in the company’s massive 26.5-acre area at Silvassa. The client wanted us to create a wonder world of retail that eased the process of selection with spaces that showcased the company’s products with their endless design possibilities for creating grandiose spaces, stylish interiors, and imposing facades.

Our greatest challenge was to deal with the duality of the set-up, which is both a manufacturing and a production unit, and must now be designed to double up as a large-scale retail outlet. The greatest advantage was the expansive grounds and the liberty we had to segregate zones, create landscapes in the foregrounds, and long alleyways for transiting from one division to another. While we have tried to maintain subtlety in design, maximization of the products has been our priority.
The design and layout conceived by Drishti Architects of our 9th Avenue gallery at our plant in Silvassa speaks for itself. We wanted the architecture to reflect CMC’s legacy of premium quality natural stones and showcase our wide variety of products. We undertake innovations, technological advancements, and, most importantly, present a life-size showcase of CMC’s product offerings. The idea was to create a confluence of all these aspects for the benefit of our customers. When customers land on the rotunda, they get a bird’s eye view of the entire premises, followed by a ground tour on golf carts during which they can perceive the magnitude of our production center and our gallery of products. The golf cart takes them through alleys where they experience at leisure the various sections of products and their usage. The impact is that of sheer opulence and a variety that overwhelms.

Amit Shah, Managing Director, Classic Marble Company

Our concept for the 9th Avenue gallery of CMC was to create an array of stimulating compositions that inspired architects and interior designers to think beyond the typical layouts, and where they could present clients an effective palette that lured them to explore a myriad design options. Our design purpose was simple: the facility is industrial, and we wanted to cater to it as a hospitality cum shopping ground for customers.

Sunil Gambani, Principal Architect, Drishti Architects & Interior Designers

CMC’s 9th Avenue stockyard
A project of such a huge scale had to be segmented; and to create an early impact we began with what was existing. The initial process started with remodeling of the existing corrugated sheet facade. Materials from the company’s yard were used to clad the exteriors. The bulbous black mass of factory shed is treated as a backdrop to the rhythmic wave of KalingaStone Marble jaali intermixed with vertical greens. The C-shaped factory yard gave us the opportunity for inserting massive gardens that formed an extensive foreground to the marble façade. The façade design not only marks an identity, but with its elements of modernism, innovativeness and durability, it can be seen as a trendsetter in the corporate, commercial and luxury sectors. Materials used are Alyssa KalingaStone marble and Volcanic Ash Techlam.

The interiors of the 13000 sqm of stockyard have been conceptualized as a modern-day museum. In fact, the ‘9th Avenue’ gallery is an understated black cover that displays huge slabs of marble like paintings in a museum or art gallery. The circulation is planned to create dark alleys with bright streaks of floor markings and adjustable art lighting that highlights only the marble slabs on both sides. The design aims to meet the demands of the company’s affluent clients such that they can move around with ease and at leisure. Materials used include Volcanic Ash Techlam and Dark Steel Techlam.
Fact File
Project Name: 9th Avenue Gallery
Project Location: Silvassa
Client: Classic Marble Company
Typology: Retail gallery of natural stone
Area: 26.5 acre
Architect Firm: Drishti Architects & Interior Designers
Landscaping: Kunal Maniar & Associates

An exquisite showroom displays samples of over 550 stone slabs along with showcasing their vast usage and design potential. Grey Armani floors, Marble tabletops, counters, wall highlights etc are made using CMC’s in-house material. The sculptural columns in marble at the entrance and a single slab quartz conference tabletop are two majestic pieces that stand in the lobby. Materials used here include Repen KalingaStone Marble, Ush KalingaStone Quartz, Italian Marble, Volcanic Ash Techlam and Dark Steel Techlam.

The Executive Dining room is a personalized space for afternoon lunches and discussions. It is set amidst a Zen garden where a beautifully composed marble mural, a glass table with a one-piece sculpted base, single tone marble floor, and views of the lovely garden create a space for appreciating natural stone’s inherent beauty and ability to create wonderful interiors and exteriors. Materials used are Steel Dark Laminate, cladding in Raffel KalingaStone Marble, flooring in Grigio Armani Marble and Spiderment exotic marble, and the mural in Raffel KalingaStone Marble.

The end result is a wonderland of marble with segregated and self-sufficient divisions, surrounded by lush landscapes, grand entrances, huge doorways, high volumes, a hospitality lounge that also acts as a localized showroom, while the stockyards are designed as a bulbous volume of neutral greys to allow the material to do the talking.
We welcome you to visit our model plant at Bawal, right outside New Delhi. A short tour around the plant can acquaint you with our range of latest roof and wall profiles, PEB System, Deck Floors, Sandwich Panels and other important components. This makes decision making so much easier and faster for you to choose from what suits your requirement and budget. We are confident that you will find all the right solutions for a building that works for you. 😊

Next-Generation Metal Buildings
Land of Well Being

According to LWK + PARTNERS, landscape design can be better integrated with the overall environment alongside technology, heritage and ecology, to boost people’s wellbeing.

Landscape design was once unfairly seen as interchangeable with the decoration of ‘green spaces’. As society evolves, modern landscape design has taken on a different role in urban development, shifting from its traditional role to one that instils positive values to society through multiple dimensions. With ‘wellbeing’ fast becoming a buzzword amid the epidemic, the industry has seen much discussion on how to improve ventilation, anti-bacterial equipment, and the likes.

Wellbeing is two-fold – both physical and mental health - and must be addressed. They can be holistically incorporated in a given space if well-curated landscape elements in a project and its overall design objectives are in place. A humanised experience and values of liveability are at the centre of these design initiatives to create healthy and happy communities.

From Environment To Behaviour – Physical Wellbeing

Behavioural changes can be induced through environmental design, calling for healthy habits that elevate the quality of life. We evaluate site features to match residential projects, commercial spaces or recreational facilities with the most fitting landscape elements including running tracks, outdoor sports venues, indoor or outdoor swimming pools, children’s playgrounds and elderly fitness facilities. We challenge the boundaries between indoor and outdoor spaces and bring in natural scenery to indoor areas, encouraging people to move daily activities and their social life under the sun for a healthier lifestyle.

At The Pavilia Bay in Hong Kong, for example, LWK + PARTNERS took full advantage of the development’s seafront location to set its clubhouse facilities in open or semi-open areas. Complemented by well-ordered greenery, these facilities allow residents to extend their ‘comfort zone’ to public spaces outside their homes and spur a sense of belonging. It also provides the opportunity to spend more time walking or doing physical activities.

Interacting with others and a sense of community are essential for a healthy mind. While trees have always been popular social spaces, people are likely to spend longer periods of time together where benches and pavilions are thoughtfully designed – drawing attention to their arrangements, numbers, facing angles, materials and levels of privacy. Public space design is also important in that they are key for engaging seniors to exercise outdoors, slowing down the speed of ageing and bringing them in touch with other people of the
community. This helps maintain a cheerful mood and is part of active ageing. Move this to an urban planning scale – bike trails and walkable communities can well become healthy landmarks that integrate regular exercise in daily life and nurture new kinds of place-specific lifestyles.

Kai Tak Promenade, Hong Kong, China

Elevating Lifestyle Through Multisensory Experience – Mental Wellbeing

The notion of healthy communities has gained traction among landscape designers. The trend is to adopt a multisensory approach to make best use of nature's offerings to address specific project needs and the local culture.

Bayview Garden, Zhuhai, China

Different plant species don’t only confer a space with visual properties like colours and forms, but are also responsible for its soundscape. In residential spaces, for example, different types of trees can do more than providing shades and light configuration, acting also as 'noise-cancelling' devices that block out the unwanted hubbub from the city to create a peaceful living environment for residents and visitors. Along similar lines, having a diversity of vegetation attracts different birds, while waterscapes of various sizes and features provide habitats for different fish, algae and aquatic organisms. Aroma can be specially curated for large developments through tea gardens, Chinese herbal gardens and the likes. These rich systems of visuals, sounds and aroma offer great ways for building an immersive environment of nature, which helps people relieve pressures from urban life while inspiring creativity, all conducive ingredients for a healthy mind.

Bayview Garden, Zhuhai, China

Smooth spatial transitions are also a plus for the mind. With underground carparks becoming a main point of access for residential spaces, LWK + PARTNERS has been working to introduce overground land features to underground spaces and integrating the two in more effective ways. Taking Zhuhai’s Bayview Garden in China as an example, we’ve widened the light wells and optimised ventilation for underground spaces to create environmental conditions that promote the physical and mental wellbeing of residents.

Bayview Garden, Zhuhai, China

Healthy Spaces, Healthy Cities

Health empowers happiness. Weaving our built and natural environments together through innovative landscape designs would bring people closer to nature and give urban spaces a refreshing dose of energy. We employ a rich palette of architectural and landscape design elements to activate multisensory stimulants, and in doing so improve everyday experiences as well as inspire more liveable cities. By laying down the suitable environmental conditions, our landscape design programs facilitate healthier lifestyles and push forward a series of changes in people’s behaviour towards better physical and mental wellbeing.

Hebei Grand Hotel, Anyue, Shijiazhuang, China
The Workspace: A New Paradigm of Industrial Design

Spread across a sprawling 33-acre campus in a small town outside Guwahati in Assam at the foothills of the Himalayas, the Emami campus is a world-class manufacturing facility and one of the finest examples of this new Workspace. The campus houses the complete range of Emami’s FMCG Manufacturing Facility, an independent Administrative facility, a Welfare facility for the workers and even a traditional temple.

The Manufacturing Facility

‘This is a world class, GMP compliant, zero discharge facility which features large span multistoried metal structures with insulated building envelopes for energy saving and reduced heat gain. Large perimeter glazing brings in ample natural light to the shop floor.

The main production facilities are aligned along a strong north-south axis with ancillary facilities dotting the intersecting nodes. Site planning is focused on clear segregation of the vehicular movement and the worker’s movement through and efficient circulation. The entire campus is friendly for the differently-abled with easy access for wheelchairs and wide elevators in every building. Vast swathes of lush green lawns surround the buildings with designated footpaths for workers’ safety.
Wide swaths of lush green lawn and large insulated glass at working level allow natural light and views of the greenery, minimizing visual fatigue and increasing workers’ efficiency.

Seamless Polyurethane flooring, pre-painted sandwich partitions and stainless steel ceiling panels provide a clean, sanitized and easy to scrub environment – critical for the manufacturing process as well as for the workers health.
The Administrative Facility
The administrative building is located at the entrance of this campus. The building faces the intricate magenta coloured façade of the manufacturing building on the front while having a view of green hills on the rear.

The building accommodates a large reception area, state-of-the-art conference facilities, an office for 60 people, and a modern gallery exhibiting the company’s history.

Concept and rationale
SSA came up with a unique idea of two rectangular blocks juxtaposed at 90 degrees to each other.

The projection of the upper floor gave a covered porch to the lower floor and the projection of the ground floor generated two open terraces on the first floor.

The projecting upper floor protects the wide glass expanse of the entrance lobby from heavy rains during monsoons.

The driveway gradually slopes up to the plinth level of the ground floor giving a seamless feel to the entrance lobby and lounge, and extending beyond its boundaries into the covered porch.
**Interior layout and design**

The entrance lobby is flanked on one side by a state of the art 40 seater conference room and the Emami exhibition gallery on the other. An open well staircase leads to the first floor, which is the administration hub with a large open plan office with 42 workstations. The bright pin boards on the white furniture complement the bright façade of the facing building seen through the long sweeping window. Peripheral glass cabins lend a feeling of equanimity amongst the admin team. The open terrace on either side gives the much needed breakout space to the staff during leisure time.

**The Welfare Center**

A welcome gesture by the company and a key feature of the campus is the workers’ welfare center. The building is centrally located and houses two large dining halls with a capacity to seat 250 workers, a fully equipped kitchen to serve hot meals for three shifts round the clock. Also located in the center is a well-appointed medical room, a creche, a seminar room, and TV/Yoga lounge.

**The Temple**

The temple design is based on the traditional Hindu Temple design principles and philosophy. The four corners of the temple are aligned with the four ‘Vastu Kones’. A traditional Pradakshina Path encircles the entire temple. The octagonal dome with intricate stone corbelling draws its inspiration from the ‘Holy Kamakhya Temple’ of Guwahati.

"Designing the Emami manufacturing facility was like designing a whole new town! Contrary to popular belief, modernistic factories of the future are not going to depend solely on robots, rather, they will be a fine balance of machines and human intelligence. A hygienic, safe working environment with plenty of natural day light, clean, fresh air, and lush green surroundings, will co-exist with high yield machines and give a new shape and feel to the workspaces."

**Ar. Sabyasachi Sen**

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**Fact File**

| Name of project: | Emami Campus, Pucharia, Assam |
| Built up area: | 50,000 sqm (fifty thousand sq.mtr) |
| Architect firm: | Sabyasachi Sen & Associates |
| Client: | Emami Ltd |
| Design team: | Pallavi Sen, Arunashish Mazumdar |
| Structural design: | Arvind Gupta Consultants |
| MEP Design: | Krim Engineering & S N Consultants |
| Cost of project: | ₹150 crores approx. |
| Year of completion: | 2019 |
Aesthetics of Timber Cladding

Architect firm Auhaus creates a stunning family home in an unusually shaped block in Brighton with inventive use of thermally-modified American tulipwood

The 500 sqm corner plot in this affluent coastal suburb can only be described as an ‘odd shape’ and the challenge set by the owner / developer was to create a private space. When they first embarked on their Brighton House project, Ben Stibbard and Kate Fitzpatrick, Principals of Melbourne-based Auhaus, say they became “Preoccupied with creating a house that felt open on a constrained pocket site. We wanted to create a sense of entry and keep the light in the site but also didn’t want a fishbowl, the sense of privacy was also important. We came up with a concept which enabled the structure to hug the boundary but feel surrounded by green and have some protected spaces.”

The solution allows views from the front to the back of the house creating a generous feel and flow that gives the illusion of a far bigger space. The widened entry creates an impact that is enhanced by the unique exterior finish. The owner requested a strong façade to the house and Auhaus was keen to avoid the ‘typical Brighton House’ of neutral render and glass.
We considered how to draw attention to the form of the building and ensure it presented strongly from the street to further enhance the entry experience. We have used black exterior finishes in projects before and knew that it would provide impact and reduce the structure to a single form.

Kate Fitzpatrick & Ben Stibbard, Principal Architects, Auhaus Architecture.

The aesthetic of a stained timber exterior contrasts with, and highlights the planned verdant green landscaping. Timber cladding can be challenging to maintain, not least in Australian coastal environments such as this. Thermally treated timbers were considered given their resistance to the elements and minimal maintenance requirements.

Auhaus used thermally-modified American tulipwood. Not only was this an option that was cost-effective, it was also lightweight, which made it ideal for the expanse of cladding required. “We did plenty of testing to get the richness of color. We used Quantum Aqua Stain which is an oil-based stain. I’ve used this in black before so had confidence that it would work,” Stibbard says of the finish.
Fact File

Typology: Residence  
Location: Melbourne, Australia  
Architecture: Auhaus Architecture  
Engineering: RI Brown  
Landscape design: TNLA Landscape Architects  
External cladding: Thermally-modified tulipwood with black oil stain finish  
Windows: Double glazed with black stained timber frames  
Internal floors: Polished concrete  
Helical stair: Steel construction with timber treads  
Joinery: 2PAC cabinetry with marble benchtops

Commenting on the increased recognition and popularity of American tulipwood in Australia, Roderick Wiles, AHEC Regional Director, said: “Until now, we have only seen one other instance of it being used externally in Australia and that was thermally-modified, but with a natural finish. What Auhaus has achieved here is truly impressive, both in terms of creative use of a readily available timber but more importantly in realizing such a stunning design. We’re very excited to see how the timber has performed over time in the Australian climate, but recent images suggest that it is maintaining its appearance well.”

Thermal modification of some select U.S. hardwood species allows for interior furniture, flooring and joinery hardwoods to be used in exterior applications, where durability and dimensional stability is paramount. This can offer a viable sustainable option for a range of uses, hitherto inaccessible to temperate American hardwoods. While only fairly recently available, they are now being recognized for their aesthetics and performance and are being specified worldwide in outdoor furniture, decking and cladding.

American tulipwood is one of the most prolific hardwood species from the U.S. hardwood forests and is unique to North America. The trees are huge and identified by their tulip-like flowers giving rise to the name. Thermally-modified tulipwood has been subjected to high temperatures in a controlled environment, resulting in permanent alteration of the wood’s chemical and physical properties. It does not absorb moisture and is dimensionally very stable. It is less prone to warping and twisting with changes in humidity, making it perfect for outdoor use.

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) runs a worldwide programme to promote American hardwoods in over 50 export markets, concentrating on providing architects, specifiers, designers and end-users with technical information on the range of species, products and sources of supply.
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Reinventing a Brand

United Coffee House Rewind, a chic offshoot of the legendary 75-year-old United Coffee House is a thrilling design venture by Chromed Design Studio, wherein the Old-World charm of the brand is retained while transforming its spirit into a contemporary setting.

Located in Chandigarh, this restro-bar amplifies the regal charm and characteristics of the city and gives it a much-needed breakthrough from the cliché café culture. The design scheme sought to reinvent the venerable brand with a unique mix of classical style infused with a contemporary burst of colour. The façade is contrived with glass cladding and brass lattice embodying arches.

A giant door subsumed in an expansive arch welcomes guests inside. Inordinately patterned seating, boho-chic lighting, patterned floor tiles, solid colour with hints of blue, Sabyasachi designed wallpaper and other unique design elements create an avant-garde setting. The design language of the space is tied together using arches of various scales and sizes throughout the different zones of the restaurant. The brass lattice in compliance with the theme is stimulated by arches and runs across the space.

In the main dining area, the Baroque print in the vaulted ceiling oozes opulence and grandeur. This dramatic print is reminiscent of Gothic stained-glass windows. A chandelier dangles from the dome ceiling lends a timeless appeal. Booths flanked by heavy curtains through orange arches and embellished with ornate white motifs, are segregated by the arch-shaped brass lattice. A giant glass ellipse with a pattern similar to the brass lattice formulated with vinyl stickers, arched mouldings on walls, and a back-lit bar encompassing a waffle slab circumscribed in an arch, are the other showstoppers.
The design of United Coffee House Rewind offers a rich brew of a bygone era of architecture and brings alive the nostalgic past, while exuding modernity with its contemporary feel and flavour.

Ar. Abhigyan Neogi
Fact File
Project name: United Coffee House
Typology: Hospitality
Location: Chandigarh
Gross Built Area: 2750 sq.ft
Completion: December 2019
Design Team: Abhigyan Neogi, Dhruv DV, Dev Gakhar, Amandeep Kaur, Muskan Kapoor
Photography: Dhruv DV
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Contact: Ms. Violet Rodrigues
Tel.: +91 22 6787 9804 | info@bcindia.co.in
www.bcindia.com
The Metallic Look

The most common material options for metal cladding are galvanized steel, aluminium, stainless steel, zinc, copper, titanium, etc., each of which have their own strengths and weaknesses; the choice of material will be influenced by the desired aesthetics, climatic conditions, structural system, nature of adjacent materials, and the construction budget, writes Ar. Sumit Dhawan, Founder & Principal Architect, Cityspace’82 Architects.

Facades determine visual identity and expression of architecture; their design imparts character to the building and is a parameter for building performance. Building facades lie at the convergence of the outward and inward environment - forming an integral part of the building. They are the most difficult to design since the perception of iconic and technologically advanced facades is changing frequently. Besides technology, materials like metal, glass, concrete etc., used for the building skin are an integral yet singular aspect of the façade design.

It’s often seen that whenever an architect is talking about metal in facade, it is always correlated with commercial or institutional architecture. A few examples that come to mind are The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao by Frank O Gehry done in titanium, Riverside Museum by Zaha Hadid, and maybe The Sage Gateshead in UK by Norman Foster. But no residence done in metal will come to our mind, and if proposed by an architect, the clients’ apprehension will be, “I hope it won’t look ‘commercial’.”
Metal facades, combined with the right dose of technology, can uplift the exterior of spaces and multiply their utility
Ar. Sumit Dhawan

The fact is that a metal facade combines attributes of both appearance as well as superior performance unlike any other building system. Use of metal facades in residences is recommended due to the extremely beneficial properties of metal. Aesthetically speaking, metal offers a unique modern rhythmic aesthetic to complement any building. Easily bent and configured to the specific design, it can be used as a lightweight decorative element, or as a structural component in buildings.

Metal roofs and wall panels can be curved to create a unique and dynamic building appearance - amplifying its versatility. Not only can metal withstand harsh weather conditions, it can also address resource depletion due to its recyclability. Being an eco-friendly material, it minimizes energy use, promotes sustainability, and invites innovation and creativity in terms of design. The concept is fast catching up in India, but the changes go beyond skin-deep alterations or a facelift. Apart from aesthetics, a metal façade also offers better functions.

Metal cladding encompasses a plethora of different materials, each with its own unique strengths and weaknesses. The choice of material will be influenced by a number of project-specific factors, including the desired aesthetics, climatic conditions, chosen structural system, the nature of adjacent materials, and the construction budget. The most common material options for metal cladding are galvanized steel, aluminium, stainless steel, zinc, copper, titanium, etc.
Designers are researching and experimenting with new and complex façade and fenestration technologies. Along with the materials that furnish the look and feel of a building, technologies applied to facades are also changing. Investing in technologies like BIM allows designers distil options down to a set of criteria that meet the aesthetic ambitions of the project and its tactical requirements, ensuring that these are met with optimized environmental parameters.

There has been a slow but very perceptible shift from the use of traditional masonry towards the use of compelling automation in façade and fenestration. These include motorized shades, switchable windows that modulate daylight and solar heat transmissions, and predictive controls for optimized performance. End-user comfort, satisfaction, and acceptance of automated façade systems are the various ways automation is incorporated in facades. These tools enable designers to explore the forms, real-time and derive key insights into the thermal, daylight and solar performance informing decisions pertaining to the building orientation, solar shading, glazing etc and also save cost.
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Hardwood flooring dates to the 1600s, when wood began to be used more frequently for flooring, often as unfinished planks supported by wooden joists over dirt or stone. The wood floors that you see today, are diverse in species, patterns, styles and designs, as well as the types of materials used to create the flooring.

Wood has evolved to become more polished and finished and it comes in a variety of species and styles. In India, the trend of laying wooden flooring has become popular in residences, offices and commercial spaces. Concerns regarding maintenance and care of wooden flooring can be overcome with a better understanding of the material and its properties and by using simple techniques.

There are two types of real wood flooring: Solid Wood and Engineered Wood. Solid wood flooring is made from a single piece of timber, usually a hardwood. Engineered wood flooring is an engineered board - quite simply, a timber board that consists of more than one layer.

Beauty & Benefits of Engineered Wood Flooring

Engineered wood flooring is a superb alternative to a solid wood floor. In fact, once laid it looks like solid wood. It also offers exactly the same health benefits, and will last equally well. It offers a number of significant advantages since it is far more stable. This is because wood being hygroscopic, absorbs moisture. So when the surrounding humidity levels change, either due to natural changes in the climate or through the use of artificial aids like heating or air conditioning, it can swell or shrink. This can result in planks cupping or warping, or gaps opening up between them.

The 9mm thick planks in our PurePlank range are a superb example of an excellent veneered product, with an integral cork backing for improved thermal and acoustic insulation and a prime grade timber surface protected by eight layers of UV cured matt lacquer.
Wooden flooring, a supposedly ‘Western’ concept, is fast finding its way into Indian homes. It lends elegance that very few floor options can lay claim to. When touched, wood touches you right back. It attracts your attention, engaging you, grounding you and creating magic. And once you have walked on wood, you will not settle for anything less!

Aashish Poojari

Engineered wood sounds unnatural, but actually, it simply means boards made from multiple layers of timber instead of from a single layer. The top layer, known as the wear layer or lamella, is usually hardwood and, more often than not, oak. The base layers are usually softwood or multi-layered plywood, although occasionally, they may be yet more layers of hardwood. All the layers are bonded together so that the grain of each one runs at right angles to that of the layer on either side, making it virtually impossible for the board to swell or shrink.

Engineered wood flooring looks and feels just like a traditional wooden floor because the top layer is real solid hardwood, and it is perfect for use as paneling or even joinery projects like doors and tabletops as well as for floors. What’s more, it offers all the benefits of a traditional wooden floor, plus a significant number of other benefits all of its own.

Engineered wood flooring is a superb alternative to a solid timber floor, but it’s not necessarily cheaper. In addition to a better long-term fit, exceptional stability in a timber board has a number of advantages. Firstly, it means that much wider planks may be produced: 180mm wide engineered planks are quite standard; 260mm widths are not unusual. Also, it means that most engineered wood boards can be fitted over underfloor heating, unlike the majority of solid wood. Engineered wood boards offer alternative, easier methods of installation. They also make far more efficient use of the slower growing lamella layer timbers like oak and walnut.

The top layer of solid wood on an engineered board may be anything from 2 to 6mm thick. Obviously, the thicker the layer of solid wood the more times it may be sanded and refinished to remove any signs of wear; a 6mm wear layer is similar to the depth above the tongue in a traditional, solid wood tongue and groove plank.

Many wood flooring products, both solid and engineered, are now available pre-finished. This means that many hundreds of different effects can be achieved though techniques like smoking, sawing, brushing and planing, as well as use of stains and oils, and it reduces the need to use exotic, often endangered species to achieve specific effects. Not only does pre-finishing offer far greater aesthetic choice, pre-finished wood is much quicker and easier to install and avoids any ‘surprises’ on site.

If you want the look and feel of real wood in quality flooring, but are on a really tight budget, a veneer could well be the perfect answer. A veneer uses a very thin layer of real wood, usually bonded to a core of some type of composite timber product like fibre board.

“Engineered wood looks and feels just like a traditional wooden floor, but it’s not necessarily cheaper. In addition to a better long-term fit, exceptional stability in a timber board has a number of advantages. Firstly, it means that much wider planks may be produced: 180mm wide engineered planks are quite standard; 260mm widths are not unusual. Also, it means that most engineered wood boards can be fitted over underfloor heating, unlike the majority of solid wood. Engineered wood boards offer alternative, easier methods of installation. They also make far more efficient use of the slower growing lamella layer timbers like oak and walnut.”

Aashish Poojari
APL Apollo Tubes Limited (APL Apollo), a leading structural steel tubes manufacturer, has launched Apollo Fencing Solution, which gives the much-desired safety fencing to any property, besides adding beauty to it. Comprising an array of uniquely designed H-Shaped Fence Post called ‘Apollo Fence’, this low-cost and durable product can be used for perimeter protection for gardens, houses etc and even replace concrete boundary walls. Apollo Fence tubes can also be used to support various types of wire or wire mesh. The product is formed by merging the H-Shaped Apollo Fence tubes on both ends with an Apollo Plank placed between them. Apollo Plank itself being another new age steel product, makes the ‘Apollo Fencing Solution’ an amalgamation of two of the strongest products of APL Apollo. Homeowners and real estate developers looking for superior safety fencing can view our solution as it is a blend of two of our strongest products. The fencing also offers benefits in terms of value for money and lower maintenance costs. What’s more, the fencing is easy to install and is more cost-effective vis a vis precast concrete and brick walls. It is priced at only ₹129/sqft in comparison to a brick wall, which costs ₹191/sqft, or a RCC precast wall which costs ₹178/sqft. It is also fire resistant, termite proof, durable, eco-friendly, recyclable, and reusable. It can be painted, requires zero maintenance, and has a life span of 15-20 years.

Owners of private villas, commercial property owners, and real estate developers looking for superior safety fencing can view our solution as it is a blend of two of our strongest products, plus the fencing adds aesthetic value to the space.

Sanjay Gupta, CMD, APL Apollo

Perimeter Protection

APL’s Fencing Solution designed for gardens, private properties, villas and residences and other buildings, provides protection and safety along with aesthetics, and value for money, says Sanjay Gupta, CMD, APL Apollo

Techinal Details

Apollo Plank size: 150X25 mm Thickness: 1.2 mm
Weight per running meter: 39.56 kg/m; required 12 planks for 1 fencing
Apollo Fence size: 60X80 mm Thickness: 1.2 mm
Weight per running meter: 2.71 kg/m; required 2 Apollo fence for 1 fencing
Height of the wall -> 1.8m
Spacing between 2 Apollo Fence Tubes -> 2.5m
Weather/wind resistance: For an Apollo fencing boundary wall with geometry properties of 360m length, height of 2.5m, and width of 0.025m, and assuming a wind speed of 47 m/s, Apollo Fencing solution has to be designed to withstand a wind pressure of 1.06 kN/m².
**Grundfos SCALA2 enables right water pressure**

In residences and commercial buildings, pressure boosting has become an important element in distributing water, to ensure that a consistent water pressure is maintained. Unmanaged or excessive pressure could waste water while reducing the lifecycle of pipes and other equipment. Often, pressure boosting pumps also consume high levels of energy. SCALA2 is integrated with adaptive pressure boosting. It combines a pump, motor, tank, sensor, drive and non-return value into a singular, compact unit. With its intelligent pump control system, it can adjust inlet pressure from the tank and the outlet pressure at the tap.

Unlike conventional pumps, SCALA2 has an extremely low noise level of 47dB. This is achieved with the help of a permanent magnet motor that reduces noise and a water-cooled operation. A conventional motor compounds the noise through its vibration and wear and tear. Additionally, the pressure boosting system uses a variable frequency drive to save up to 80% energy in comparison to its conventional counterparts and at the same time detects leaks.

The built-in sensor in the pump has the ability to measure discharged pressure. If the current pressure drops below pre-decided parameters, the solution will boost operation to increase overall pressure and mitigate the loss of pressure. On the other hand, if the pressure in the pipelines exceeds the maximum parameter, SCALA2 will be able to manage the pressure and reduce it to standard settings. As an advanced feature, SCALA2 will turn off the booster after 30 minutes of continuous operation suspecting wastage or leakage.

**Features**

- Maintains water pressure with the help of intelligent adaptability
- One of the quietest boosters in its class
- Capable of operating from 1.5 bar to 5.5 bar with a comfortable discharge of 3 m³/hr.
- One variant for all domestic purposes with a compact, ‘plug and pump’ approach
- User-friendly control panel for user
- Reliable operations with dry running protection
- Cycling alarm that detects minor leakages in the system (e.g., if a tap has not been closed)
- Quality tested product with an increased lifecycle and minimal maintenance
- Indoor and outdoor installations are available
- Can boost pressure in residences up to 3 floors with 8 taps
- Can increase pressure of water delivered by local municipality
- Can increase pressure of water collected from roofs, rainwater tanks and wells of 8m depth.
REHAU unveils durable flooring RAUFLOOR Neostein

Stain, scratch, water and termite resistant, RAUFLOOR Neostein is a highly durable solution for residential, light commercial and office application. It is characterised by five special layers: UV layer, wear layer, colour film/printed layer/vinyl top coat, an SPC core and a foam or cork backing layer. The topmost UV layer protects it from stain, water, dirt and chemical contaminants while its wear layer gives it durability, besides stain and dirt pickup resistance which help in easy cleaning and maintenance. The printed decor layer not only protects the flooring colour, but also gives the desired look to the surface. With its rigid core vinyl layer, an eco-friendly waterproof core that is sturdy and stable, yet comfortable under foot, the flooring meets strict chemical emissions limits. Its DIY installation with easy click lock process is supported by the certified ‘valiange’ locking system, and it comes with accessories like Skirting, Flush Stairnose, T-moulding and Reducer. REHAU is offering 20 years warranty for residential uses, 10 years for light, and 5 years for heavy commercial uses.

Voltas AC launches UVC based disinfectant solutions

Voltas Limited, in response to fight the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, has launched a new line of Ultraviolet Light (UVC) based surface disinfectant solutions in addition to the engineered UVC based air and duct disinfectant solutions that the industry leader has been offering to its consumers for the past several years. This is in line with the Tata Group’s commitment towards serving community and making a positive social impact.

“There are growing concerns about using central Air-Conditioning systems in offices and commercial spaces, owing to suspicions that the virus is transmitted through AC vents, said Pradeep Bakshi, Managing Director & CEO, Voltas, “As the Indian economy recovers from the shock of COVID-19 and people resume work in the ‘new normal’, it is essential for organizations to give utmost priority to the health and safety of personnel and their families. Our UV-powered offerings for Duct, Air and Surface disinfectants complement the immediate and long-term need for safety in shared spaces like malls, waiting rooms and offices.”

Voltas has been collaborating with its engineering partners to increase its portfolio of UVC based products to address the survival of the virus on surfaces. The new bouquet of products include: RUKS CoiloTron, that ensures near total elimination of mold, fungi, and microbes on Cooling Coil and Drain Pan; HandHeld - a portable disinfection unit, designed for rapid sanitation of any surface; UV Cart System designed to deliver high germicidal intensity, adequate to sanitize the area and inactivate the micro-organisms in a short time; and RUKS GermiTron Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UCVI) System that can kill 90% of bacteria and virus, per pass. This indoor air quality and bactericidal management system has a scientifically proven design with computerized selection to assure delivery of specified or target kill rate.
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C P Kukreja wins design proposal for State Headquarters of Indian Oil Corporation in Punjab

C P Kukreja Architects, India’s leading multi-disciplinary architectural and engineering firm, is set to design the State Headquarters for Indian Oil Corporation Limited at Mohali, Punjab. The firm has won the project through a National design competition wherein the winning firm was selected based on the architects’ understanding of three factors – corporate governance, climate responsiveness, and introducing workspaces thriving with culture. The 2.2-acre site is strategically located with access to public facilities and transportation. The project encompasses the design of the IOCL Headquarter Building, Senior Management Centre, Transit Camp, and Residences. With a striking façade, the fluidity of oil inspires the viscous curvaceous forms, instilling a sense of curiosity and allowing the edifice to emerge as a beacon of progress for the city.

Technology plays an essential part of design development and has been rigorously accommodated to safeguard the health provisions for the top management staff of IOCL as well as Ministerial and VIP visitors, their security and communication, along with ensuring an unhindered workflow at the office. A confluence of art in architecture, deriving inspiration from the industrial nature of the Corporation, inspires a fusion between high functionality and an aesthetic appeal to the edifice. The proposal also has been appreciated for its resolve to manifest as a net zero energy complex. Through careful implementation of energy, water and electricity conservation strategies, the architects present a visionary module of design which heralds as a smart development.

IIID signs MoU with CREDAI, ISHARE, IGBC, FSAI & IPA on World Environment Day

I nstitute of Indian Interior Designers (IIID) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India (CREDAI), Fire and Safety Association of India (FSAI), The Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), Indian Plumbing Association (IPA), and Indian Society of heating, refrigerating and air conditioning engineers (ISHRAE), to boost sustainable practices for a better tomorrow.

These special communities came together to explore and respond towards a sustainable planet through joint events, discussions, research programs and innovations. The event witnessed renowned speakers like Jabeen L Zacharias, President, IIID, Vasudevan Suresh, National Chairman, IGBC, Suresh Menon, National President, FSAI, Gurmit Singh Arora, National President, IPA, Satish Magar, National President, CREDAI and Richie Mittal, National President, ISHRAE.

The deliberation was focused on enabling Green cities for the environmental movement. Aspects such as water and sanitation, energy efficiency, sustainable design-oriented workshops, research programs were also highlighted during the webinar. Post-COVID 19 hygiene is going to be very important so plumbing is also crucial for clean water and design is an important aspect of it.

Said Satish Magar, National President, CREDAI, “Growth without sustainability will leave our future generations bereft of the fruits of development. With the objective to identify and implement various environment friendly innovations and solutions for scripting a sustainable growth story, CREDAI is at the forefront to transform the real-estate landscape and to create a greener and healthier world. The partnership with IIID reiterates our commitment to a healthy and safe environment. Post lockdown, as we re-start building the nation together, it is imperative for us to commence our operations responsibly.”

“The present situation has compelled us to introspect on the fact that our resources are limited, and therefore pooling and sharing alone will optimise our productivity. In this new paradigm, it is a survival of the quickest to embrace change, and reinvent the new mantra for success,” said Jabeen L Zacharias, President, IIID.

With this MoU almost one lakh members will be reached through all the 5 Associations. The collaboration will result in working towards a shared goal, with a passion to add value to the existing systems and opportunities.
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