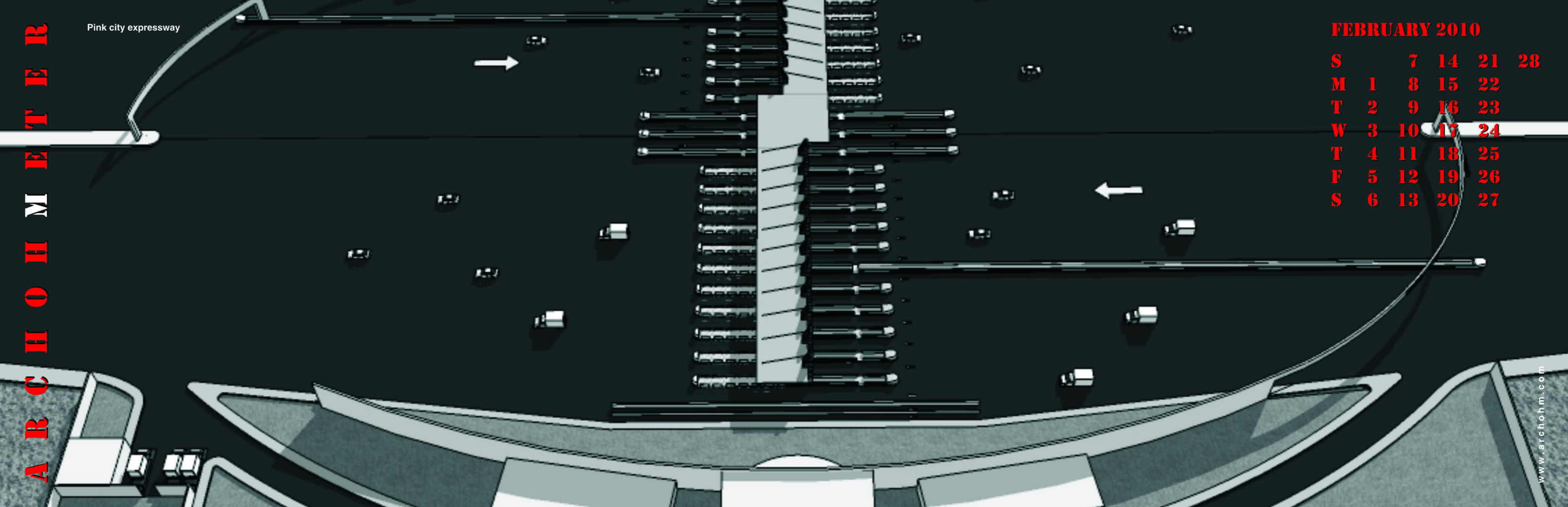


Pink city expressway



FEBRUARY 2010

S		7	14	21	28
M	1	8	15	22	
T	2	9	16	23	
W	3	10	17	24	
T	4	11	18	25	
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Il tempo vola - as the Italians say (or 'Time Flies' for those who prefer English).

I began writing this article whilst on a tree house- not the kinds that you'd associate with either the Phantom or Tarzan, but a true house nonetheless. A modern one, which had air conditioning, a plasma TV, and the works; and located in sylvan surroundings just outside Jaipur. Very organically designed, it seemed like the kind of project that was NOT designed by either an architect or a structural engineer... which raises a pertinent issue that - is the ever increasing legislation on building permissions etc in some way harming pure architecture? Definitely something to ponder upon.

This month I conducted a **heritage walk** for a couple of American architects, that took them from the 11th century to the 21st in a matter of a few hours...through a carefully planned journey all within Delhi!

We began at the crack of dawn at the **Qutub Minar**, which has been an iconic symbol of Delhi for over 800 years now. We then saw the **unfurnished Alai Minar**, begun by the megalomaniac Alauddin Khilji- who saw himself as a latter day Alexander - and the remnants of the **Qutub-ul-Islam mosque**- the earliest mosque in North India.



After admiring the **iron pillar**-which dates back almost 1500 years- and stands free of any rust- as silent testimony to the skill of the metalworkers of the Gupta period; we drove to the **Humayun's Tomb** (a forerunner of the Taj Mahal) with a slight detour to see the **Chor Minar**- a little known monument in Hauz Khas. The heads of executed thieves (chor in Hindi means thief) were displayed in the holes of the tower to act as a deterrent to those considering thieving as a career option!

From the beautifully restored 16th century Humayun's Tomb, we drove up into **Lutyen's Delhi** to study the city building ideals of Lutyens and Baker. Supposed to have been a reminder of British power - after all it was an Empire - no less; today the names have changed, but it is still the seat of power so far as India is concerned.

We rounded up the trip with a walk around the Lodi Institutional Area where we saw Delhi's most recent architectural masterpiece - the **Alliance Francaise de Delhi**. It is of course impossible to do justice to the whole tour here- but those who want more suggestions on what to see in Delhi are free to contact me- I'd be glad to assist.

The project of the month, whose image you see on the other side of this newsletter - is the proposed Shahjahanpur Toll Plaza on the Gurgaon Jaipur Expressway. This month we are also featuring an article by Atsisi - the de facto editor of this newsletter since its inception in July 2008 - on Barcelona's Casa Mila, one more of the wonderful projects that we saw on Archtour 2, another on Archohm itself by an old friend Nishant Pandey, and of course Sourabh's ending piece - which covers the tricky and vexing issue of what constitutes a Design Problem!

- Kunal Savarkar

FEEDBACK: Please address all feedback to Atsisi at archohm@archohm.com

Archohm works

The Pink City Expressway entails the upgradation of NH-8 - one of the most frequented National Highways in India - between Manesar and Jaipur. The project will make **road travel between New Delhi and Jaipur into a breeze** - by allowing users to drive non-stop along a world class 6 lane expressway.

As is typical for a BOT road project, the 228km long project includes 3 toll plazas - at Manoharpur, Daulatpura and Shahjahanpur - which is the principal one, situated almost midway between New Delhi and Jaipur. There are 2 26 lane plazas - Manoharpur and Shahjahanpur, while the Daulatpura plaza caters to a total of 12 lanes.

Archohm's concept for the Shahjahanpur plaza was born at the first Archoforum - a design workshop held at Delhi in August 2008. As I was not a part of Archohm then, I missed being involved in that exercise which included a drive down the existing highway till Neemrana (therefore involving a full 5 course meal there).

Using the Jantar Mantar - mediaeval observatories that survive to this day at both Jaipur as well as Delhi - the plaza is defined by an incomplete elliptical enclosure akin to a defensive wall with signage that runs along the top of the wall.

Not only does this define the plaza area, it also announces its presence to the approaching traffic, and also presents an opportunity to incorporate signage and lighting.

The toll operations building is divided onto 5 blocks, which work independently, but are connected through shaded courtyards, so placed that for each - one of the outer walls follows the elliptical arc. The control block lies in the centre, flanked by the office and toll collector block on the left; and the service and maintenance block on the right.

It is a **fast track project** like all of this genre, and it has given me and the rest of the team at Archohm, great satisfaction in both designing and detailing the project. Very soon, as one speeds along the world class expressway coming up between Delhi and Jaipur, you will get an opportunity to experience this plaza for yourself!



Rachna Mittal. Quiet and dedicated worker - unlike the perception of most architects - Rachna brings a solidness (no pun intended) to whatever she works on - with her ability to design in detail. A Supermom who balances work and a one year old daughter at home!

A decade ago, a dream named Archohm was born with a vision to match its ambition and it started its romance with designs. Since then, with successful completion of small and big projects in India



and abroad, the **romance has bloomed into an ever-lasting marriage of appealing form with desired function**. It has come a long way from being a dream to designing dreams for others.

I have been a witness to the journey of Archohm right from its embryonic stage, and remember the day when Sourabh had shared with me the name, Archohm, he had thought of for this venture. From then to now, in the last decade, India has seen people come up with business plans driven on factors such as the boom stage of the economy, availability of funding, timing the market, access to the right technology etc. But the vision of Archohm was unmindful of such external dependencies and it zeroed-in, laser like, on the passion for creation, travel and people to serve as its fuel for growth. While the location and size of the offices of Archohm, and the people inhabiting those offices, have grown by leaps and bounds, this **fuel has remained sacrosanct, intact, and undiluted** - and that may very well have been the biggest achievement of Archohm.

Archohm should work to break the myth that aesthetically appealing architectural solutions are a monopoly of the affluent. By introducing beautiful yet affordable designs for the common people, Archohm could introduce the beauty of design as a backdrop to their lives and let splendour touch the lives of common people



Nishant Pandey. A sounding board for all thoughts, plans, visions and mistakes. His eventual life synergises with Archohm's intensely active professional journey. A maverick with words, he has been able to articulate Archohm thoughts even better, taking them to the next level with this increased clarity. Nishant stays a neutral well-wisher who opines with a degree of reason and logic.

in focus

Casa Mila, commonly known as La Pedrera (Catalan for 'the Quarry') is the largest civil building designed by Antoni Gaudi. The apartment block was constructed between 1906 and 1910. It was built for the married couple, Rosario Segimon and Pere Mila. This was Gaudi's last work before he devoted himself to the construction of the Sagrada Familia- which incidentally is still a work in progress! The building **encapsulates a paradox of kinds** since it is more or less a summary of all the forms that he has since become famous for.

Casa Mila was practically the last building that we saw in Barcelona on the ten day long Archotour 2 traversing Spain and Portugal; and it was a rather pleasant surprise after all the straight lined, right-angled buildings that we had been seeing before that. The building, to me, emanated an old world charm and represented what seemed almost akin to a 'castle', which I have primarily associated with Spain, ever since I was a kid.

The wavy facade, with its large pores, reminds one also of an undulating beach of fine sand, formed by a receding dune. It breaks with traditional architecture by using **not a single straight line**. The building does not use load-bearing walls, but rests on pillars and arches. Together with the use of steel this allowed the architect to create completely irregular floor plans. Even the height of the pillars and ceilings differ from one to another. In order to allow light in all the rooms, the apartments are arranged around two central courtyards, one circular and the other oval.

Today, the top floor, attic and the roof are the areas which are open to the paying public who queue up for hours to get a glimpse of the wonders that lie within. Just like the outside, the interior has virtually no straight lines. The attractive rooms have a lot of character, with a mixture of expressionist and Nouveau art styles.

There is a permanent exhibit which displays Gaudi's concept, and scale models that explain his perfect understanding of the relationship between pure structure and architecture.

The roof is probably the most extraordinary part of the building. Once you reach there after accessing it through a winding spiral staircase, you stumble upon a quite extraordinary panorama where sculpture, art and architecture all merge into each other! It features a number of surrealistic colourful chimneys; and provides an exhilarating **view of the Example district**.

Walking through those structures and climbing down the stairs of the building transported me into an almost unreal world. The building communicates to you the feel of an era that is gone past, almost propelling you to transcend the boundaries of time and space. Of course the building remains fresh in one's mind since (like all fellow Archohmites on Archotour II) I ended up spending all the carefully saved Euros at this- the last halt as such!

Atsisi Amit - Interior designer, member of Archotour 2, editor of this newsletter- I assume readers address all complaints regarding Archohm to her (and the bouquets to Sourabh and myself). Hard working and talented, but like most in her generation - needs some 'assistance' in getting started off on a task!

NEWS:
3 Idiots-office outing

Surprise! Surprise! The whole bunch of Archohm staffers landed up at PVR Saket - some on site visits, others to meet clients, some on product research expeditions...etc. Then it dawned on one and all that they had been called with a purpose- to see the latest Amir Khan flick '3 Idiots'. 10 minutes into the film, we all thought that Sourabh had written the screenplay- with memorable lines like - "do you ever forget to eat" and so on!

Zoljins

An interior design and furniture store with a difference - Zoljins was inaugurated at an extremely underplayed opening on 1 January 2010 - at C19 Nizamuddin East. A must visit destination for all who appreciate pure European design.

Vihaan's party on Sunday

Another Sunday - and another expedition - this time to Faridabad - to celebrate the arrival of Vihaan Mathur - or the **Jr Mohit Mathur!** We finally met someone who can ruffle the normally cool and calm Mohit! **CTB finally distributed!** After a long gestation period, people have begun receiving the CTB... all comments on the same are welcome - whether by email, snailmail or telephone calls to 98101056xx.

Archohm is providing lunch to its employees

Tired of seeing people disappear for long extended lunch breaks, we have decided to organize a common lunch for all- including any unfortunate visitors and clients who might happen to be there at the time. I say unfortunate because it means we will see far lesser of the awesome tikkas and chhole bhature of Agrawal sweets. :-)

A trip to the Shoolini campus, up in Himachal Pradesh- a trip we would all enjoy in summer! Well our office visit there saw coordination at its best...Nabin, Giridhar and Sanjay Hanat- all travelling in their own manner, all ending up finally at the picturesque site near Solan; where those with beer paunches regretted all those evenings of excesses.

Office meeting

An office meeting on the terrace, where people grudgingly accepted the proposal to have the fourth Saturday off (in addition to second Saturdays which have been a holiday since forever). Grudgingly because they wanted all Saturdays off!!! A certain senior member of the staff had the narrowest of escapes, almost being knocked off the terrace, when he opposed the proposal to have the extra Saturday off!

UPCOMING PROJECTS:

Sirt Mosque: Archohm is designing what promises to be the focal point of Sirt, one of Libya's most picturesque cities. A large mosque that will stand out as a symbol of architectural expertise and construction ability. The aim is to weave in modern methods with traditional elements in seamless fashion!

PMC: Amongst a thousand and one things that Archohm does, it has started Project Management Consultancy for various projects, under which a dedicated team is going to work on managing time, cost and quality of projects.

BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH:

Archana Anand	seventh
Shanvi Bisht	seventh
Sanjay Kumar	tenth
Bhoomika Singhal	eighteenth
Chandra Shekhar	twenty eighth

NEW JOINEES:
Shoubhik Hore Architect
Md. Golam Mosabbir Tawhid Architectural trainee

Sourabh's desk

'is design a barter or a top up?' was my only question in an intense discussion with clients grappling with the decision of continuing with their concept architects 'mrvd' for a solution on their bangalore housing project. **point of discussion was a trade off between aesthetics and numbers.**

design is no luxury, it needs to evolve as a logical result of an issue that needs resolution, design needs to understand all the parameters and constraints and evolve into a solution that best fits the bill and in today's context even time.

problems need solutions also, a solution can only evolve if the problem is identified in the first place, such is the nature of architectural design brief.

one needs to have a brief, an elaborate brief, a program requirement that has an underlayer of thought that is beyond just building a pretty building, this could be a functional requirement, a part of a larger vision, a product of an intense research, these additional agendas to a design project takes the final product to the next level of existence is fundamental to good design.

lim, bangalore

this is the fundamental difference between a las vegas and closer home a gurgaon where buildings spring out as a mere product of a client budget and an architect's fancy, not building really to an agenda beyond achieving the required far(floor area ratio)- a legal building following the bye laws and a pretty picture as a building facade. **beauty is skin deep and eggs, hence the product needs to be much more enriched, a facade is almost a byproduct of great spaces and cannot the end to a building design exercise, architectural design is an answer to questions of concepts and functionality, a response to climate and context and a play of space and light.**

so, in today's times, as i see the 'a lost opportunity' with every new metro station springing up, the designs have come about without addressing the problems, and hence, designs have become the problem.

lim, bangalore

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