

MARCH 2010

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LEGEND

- 1 MAIN ENTRY
- 2 COLONNADE
- 3 ADMIN BLOCK
- 4 MBA BLOCK
- 5 LIBRARY
- 6 ENGINEERING BLOCK
- 7 SPORTS ACADEMY
- 8 CANTEEN
- 9 DESIGN SCHOOL
- 10 POLYTECHNIC
- 11 LANDSCAPED COURT
- 12 O.A.T.
- 13 CAMP OFFICE

A measure of the pace at which we work and live is the fact that it always seems like I am writing my opening piece for Archohmeter at a gap of about ten days- when in reality- given the fact that this is a monthly journal- it is more like a month or so!

After getting a few positive mails on my last month's ramblings about Delhi, I decided that it was time to share my knowledge about another city - which I love and hate at the same time- Bombay (or Mumbai as some people INSIST).

If we leave aside folklore, archeological remains suggest that this region has been inhabited since the Stone Age, while history tells us that the Greeks knew this as *Heptanesia* ("seven islands"). Mauryan remains have been found at Karheri, ruled later by the Muslim Sultans of Gujarat- who are said to have given the city the shrine of Haji Ali. Passing into Portuguese control in 1534, the seven islands were part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza, when she married King Charles II of England in 1661.

It was the British who connected the 7 islands of Bombay, Parel, Mazgaon, Mahim, Colaba, Worli and Old Woman's Island. Although never the capital of India, it has always been the financial powerhouse; where the Bombay Stock Exchange (Asia's first) opened in 1875. [India's first train started from here for Thane in 1853.](#)

A city of this size and varied history has much to offer for architects, but if you ask me it is the Art Deco buildings of Bombay that are worth a 'dekho' - just walk around the Fort precinct and you will see several of them, some of which are beautifully restored.

If we flash forward to today, a symbol of the city's financial clout is the under-construction 'Antilia', home of industrialist Mukesh Ambani, a rendering of which is reproduced here.

Elsewhere in this month's newsletter you will find two articles on the Cerita University near Chandigarh, one by Milind Patel, Ahmedabad based landscape architect; and the other by Sanjay Rawat, Archohm architect. It's my turn to double my literary output- I've done so by writing about two of Siza's early masterpieces situated along Portugal's Atlantic coast. Add Sourabh talking about 'lighting the bulb'; and that's about it for March 2010!

Our sincere apologies for the grammatical errors in the last Archohmeter. As always keep your comments going to Atsai@archohmeter@archohm.com.

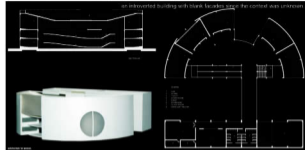
- Kunal Savarkar

FEEDBACK: Please address all feedback to Atsai@archohmeter@archohm.com

editorial

archohm works

One of the most challenging projects for Archohm, this large campus just outside Chandigarh had the benefit of a strong promoter vision. The brief was a fairly brief, a world class education facility with a direct interaction between theory and practice, a design village that facilitates industry interface.

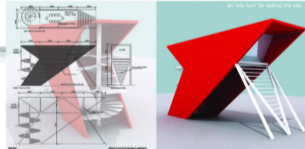


The site was situated on the highway, but extended to almost a kilometre away; highly irregular in shape it also sloped away from the road. Future expansion would be towards the rear, so the master plan reflected this possibility.

- The masterplan tried to translate this vision with a scale and sensitivity that would inspire:
1. a large entrance square with an intimidating administration block and auditorium.
 2. an extensive central library
 3. an impressive school of management with state of the art facilities that encourage networking.
 4. a massive engineering facility with large workshops amidst green spaces.
 5. a women's polytechnic
 6. a sports centre with international sporting facilities.
 7. an independent design and architecture village introducing vocational courses.

Image, costs, buildability and a light constructional schedule brought intense design energy into the process that developed conceptual forms and detailed vocabulary to give a central character to the project.

Owing to the sometimes contentious fragmented land holdings surrounding the campus site, the women's polytechnic was designed to be shifted conceptually from any part of the site to another.



The design itself - both the master plan - as well as the individual buildings were conceived in Archohm workshops in The Netherlands, India and Greece - truly an international solution that involved architects from the United Kingdom, Greece, The Netherlands and of course India.

design is not seen as complete but is seen as a generator for future growth!



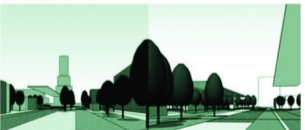
Sanjay Rawat - Able and an efficient architect, Sanjay Rawat is one of the earliest members of Archohm. Very, very good at producing sets of coordinated drawings; Cool and unflappable, Sanjay is now working on the Shoolini University, after the Cerita experience.



As a landscape architect on the project, conceiving Cerita campus was an interesting process. Cerita is constructing a vision slowly, rather than a complete idea and control of the assumed vision from the very beginning- the guiding factor to start the process was not to generalise the specificity of things for the sake of evident uniformity- having disparate faculties involved in the making of this institute. Each and every faculty is addressed through their specific needs and catering to the nature of that particular field. This eventually reflects in the making of the proposed built environment including generation of design.

One is also forced to look into the temporality of the building and its architecture against the making of the institution which we always believe would last much longer. The creation thus initiates from this very point where the design is not seen as complete but is seen as a generator for future growth.

Looking at Archohm's progress I believe that it will definitely be possible to shape Archohm such that important projects within the country come your way rather than being awarded to foreign design firms. (This may be due to client's postcolonial mentality). I really believe that indigenous firms can really interpret the context with much deeper understanding and are now fully capable of handling such scale and complexity of projects. This is from my own experience since I have worked in London for 3 years and have been designing for projects in Dubai and South-East Asian countries without paying much attention to their regional qualities.



Milind Patel - a friend from college days to a colleague in professional life, Iora, headed by Miki, read Milind Patel, has been enjoyable. After innumerable test runs and projects, Archohm has found a partner that shares the energy and enthusiasm on design filling the landscape seat of expertise.

guest thoughts

in focus

Two of the most interesting projects we saw on Archotour 2, were situated minutes away from each other, along the Atlantic coast, in between Lisbon and Porto. The similarities don't end there - what with both being designed by **Alvaro Siza** - easily the most well known of Portuguese architects!



It is easy to miss the Leca swimming pools - situated as they are below eye level - absolutely next to the ocean, lying as it did in front of us, stretching almost into the sea.

Working on a shoestring budget, and the absence of a site survey, Siza spent weeks at the site figuring out the exact levels to ensure the minimal blasting of rock! That he succeeded is evident from the finished product- where a swimmer feels he is in the ocean- indeed being separated by it only by the slimmest of concrete embankments!

The materials used are **concrete**, which resembles the surrounding rock in many ways - and shares their durability; **copper roofs** which from a distance look similar to the pools themselves and **seasoned wood**.



A few minutes further up the coast and we came to the Boa Nova Tea House; this is one of Siza's earliest iconic projects. In 1956 **Fernando Tavora** won the competition for this project, but then handed it over to his young associate, Siza.

Designed to be an eatery that merges into the sea, the main dining hall faces west, and is separated from the Atlantic by a set of windows that disappear into the floor, thus creating a seamless space between the tea room and the sea.

Like the swimming pools, the project is a marvelous response to the topography, being sited squarely amidst the boulders, accessed by steps from the road. The materials used here are again exposed concrete and lots of African wood.

We had carefully worked out what we would imble- travelling as we were on a frugal budget - once again however fate forced the old dictum right - that **'Man proposes, but God disposes'**!

I say that because for some unfathomable reason the Tea House was shut that day! Adios!



Kunal Savarkar - Kunal's blurred description of the two Siza projects is an interesting insight into his alert sensibilities and peripheral architectural awareness as he was often in the company of 'ceveza' (Spanish for a product manufactured by Kingfisher etc) whilst on Archotour Two. A complete entertainer and a great co-traveller shares yet another script on architecture.

designs

Cologne fair: If a product satisfies the Germans, its quality and durability is certified. The techno engineered German standards drive the annual Cologne furniture fair to a different level altogether.



Maison & object: World's most renowned fair for accessories boasts of an incredible collection of products on display. Highlight was to find a potential partner to associate for carpets who come from nowhere else but 'Mseruf'. It was easy to freeze design thoughts as temperatures in the entire trip could not climb upto zero degrees!

TIS-AO DSC KMP Workshop: Another intense design session on toiling with Archohm and TIS teaming to meet stringent client schedules and requirements.

The tour day started with breakfast meetings and then went onto a detailed site visit through every possible terrain to end with a grand dinner amongst all toiling experts of the country at Anand Lok around a bonfire and of course beers.



Renowned **Swiss Architect Mario Botta**, self confessed admirer of the Swiss-French architectural master, Le Corbusier, was in New Delhi, where he gave a presentation on his works which include two in India. In the timeless surroundings of the Swiss Embassy, among those spotted there were Mr. Jose Kurien, Mr Ashok Tandon and Mr Man Singh Rana (who of course has actually worked with Frank Lloyd Wright in the 1940s at Taliesin).

Archohm staffers are weighing in- better than ever before. This is testimony to the success of the 'midday meal' programme launched at the beginning of February. One gets a vague feeling that soon some of us will be hoping that the Gym re-appears!

Upcoming projects: **Taj Khazana Stores**, Archohm and Shades of India went on a combined excursion to unravel treasures at the Taj Khazana stores of Goa. Idea is to bring in a paradigm shift on the look and feel of the stores all across with a local flavour within an underlying continuity of theme.

Of course the trip started with a beach party as Archohm's only contribution to the lighting festival in Goa.

Mangal Puri Multilevel Parking project is yet another step towards covering all typologies of infrastructure projects by Archohm.

BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH: Surprisingly, there are no March births in Archohm!

NEW JOINEES: Saumya Aggrawal - Assistant Interior Designer
Rahat Arora - Executive assistant

at archohm in the next ten years, with our skill sets and exposure, we wish to make ourselves a more socially responsible organization.

designs

sourabh's desk

'mohan, go and light your bulb' was a defining moment in the all time good, well meaning and well made movies: swades.



It took us back by a few years on our visit to 'banglola', a village in the depths of Jharkhand, a state which separated from Bihar in the hopes of improving with its own identity but far from any improved governance yet, the capital, ranchi, has an affluent rich society courtesy of the mineral rich lands. Jamshedpur, the tata town, bokaro and roukela, the big steel plants where industrialization was an early phenomena and an 'engineered' society was an obvious by product, a fair mix of money and meat (cerebral quantification).

two digit kilometres and a couple of hours away, exist villages with no services, from roads to records, from power to sanitation, urban india has had no impact on this 'remote' rurality.



obviously there was no hope for power as there were no cables and conduits. water was an almost dried well away and sanitation was not even a concept. village men were hardly to be seen, after the age of ten and before the age of 50, they were taken by the naxalites as an almost accepted factual reality.

unprepared as we were, we gathered our resources and put together our contribution to this village which had abundance of sun and lack of amenities. we managed to get some solar powered units that could support a bulb for every household. we lit our share of bulbs and returned to our human settlements. as they say, seeing is believing, it took us by storm as we came back into our protected and comfortable domains.

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