

OCTOBER 2011

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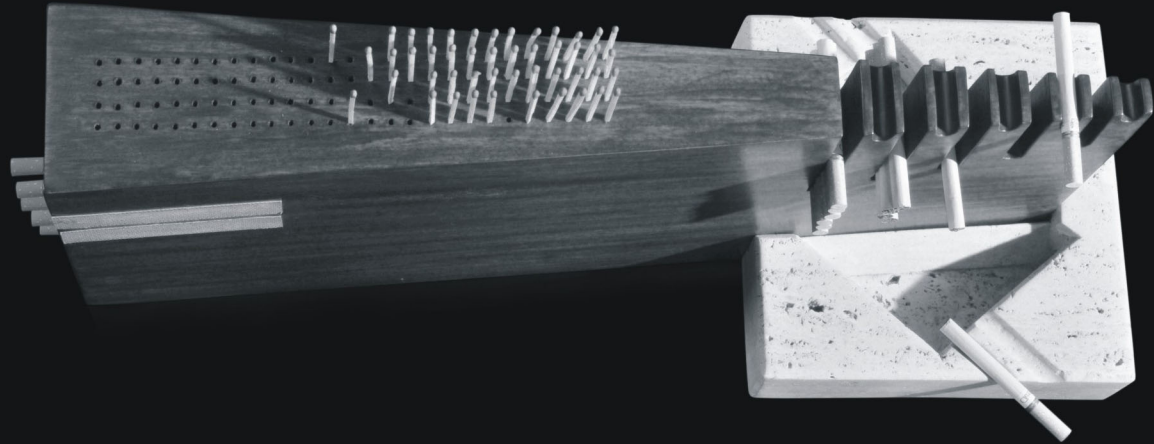
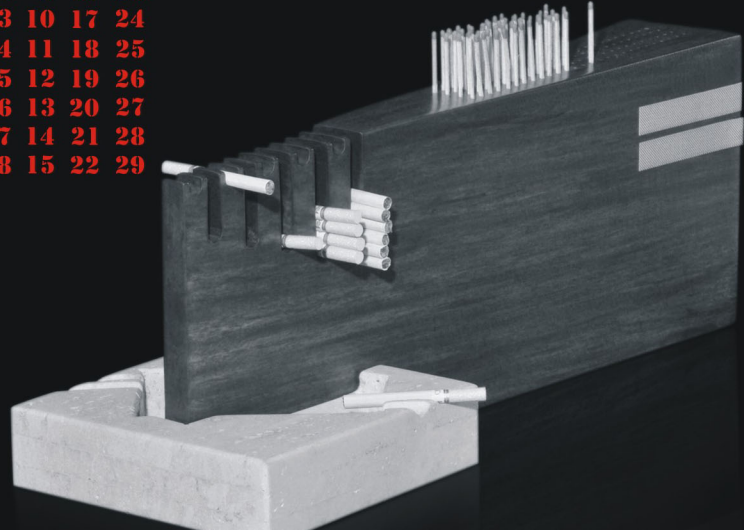
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Heading into the festive season, which means a lot of work and a lot of play-which makes for 48 hour workdays...and more realistically days that merge into one another...and nights that seem end in a jiffy!

Considering how easily the terms Architect and Engineer are interchanged in popular use, I thought it apt to write about arguably the greatest engineer who has ever lived - Isambard Kingdom Brunel. This remarkable man not only designed the largest ocean liner ever made (ill then), he also devised a technology to tunnel underneath the Thames and built portable hospitals for use in the Crimean War.

As Chief Engineer for the Great Western Railway - he took on the onus of design - which to him meant personally surveying the route for the tracks, and then - designing not just the routing, but also the Locomotives and all the bridges and stations; obviously including all the tunnels. Not content with that he also helped create its ticketing mechanism! A true engineer - one who could create anything and solve all problems once he applied his mind to it.

Brunel would have been deeply interested in the Falkirk Wheel - an amazing piece of engineering- which is presented here in this newsletter by our star young architect Krunal Patel. Elsewhere in this issue of the Archohometer you will read Deepshikha's article on 'Products', Ekta's on her association with Archohom and what it means to her, we also feature Ajit Kumar (another of our stalwarts) and yet another discourse, interestingly titled 'the beneficent error!' This is guaranteed to start arguments at the lunch table which indeed is the purpose of such debates!

Of course Sourabh has the last word on China, which is immensely readable- and worth its weight in gold!

We have observed a sudden drought in feedback from our readers - I can only attribute it to the severely intimidating image of our young Editor - Mridu Sahal! You can write to her about your thoughts on anything to do with this newsletter, design at large, Archohom - anything - at archohometer@archohom.com

Happy Diwali then, and greetings for a prosperous New Year!

- Kunal Savarkar



I. K. Brunel

in focus

C - 28c Noida, it's a dark monsoon morning, my eyes refuse to look away from the rain and sitting on my seat a sudden feeling of shelter and distance seeps in. Apart from the sky and rain outside, everything around me seems touched by mankind. The garden outside, the computer in front of me, the books behind me, the light above me and even the chair I'm sitting on - all seem 'made!' In fact, most urban sensual experiences are either consciously or unconsciously designed.

Such is the importance of design in our daily lives. It is times like this that being an architect specializing in product design feels good. There's so much potential! If only there were enough sponsors too!...smiling...I take out my note book and begin to write down my 'To-do' list for the day.

The list includes attending vendor presentations, sending competition entries, coming up with new bathroom panel concepts, re-analyzing our existing designs and finally reviewing the pile of brochures we designed yesterday.

If variety brings spice then being a product designer at Archohm is an extremely hot affair! In a nutshell - mad, random, fun and user centric design is what defines my working experience here.

It's been 6 months since I first entered this design fort and the journey since then has been full of new experiences. Everyday, there is a new challenge, but challenges are not new to Archohm and its 'every problem has a solution' and 'beg, borrow, steal...get the work done' approach says a lot about its design philosophy, for example, orb - the revolving sink door. A concept was dreamt, a design was developed but there was a problem in the detailing. However, true to archo-spirit a solution was found and the product was made!

With such live examples, young designers like me can only get inspired to do more!

Deepshikha Dash - Deepshikha was given the hard task of stealing time to interact with Sourabh and taking product design at Archohm to the next level...and the easier task of designing. She is living up to it!



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The Revolving Sink Door

I have never heard anyone talk so passionately about his or her workplace as my friend Mridu. Regardless of meeting at a party or just crashing into each other's place, she'd usually tell us about Archohm - the work, the office.

I first visited the office about four months back when it was open for all to come and see. To be honest my first reaction was - what crap! It's just another design studio! The invite however changed my perception. I did eventually land up visiting the office that evening and for obvious reason I kept quite thinking to myself-does India really have architectural talent?

Being a student of history and journalism, I usually get to read and travel a lot. As a matter of fact architecture especially Mughal architecture captures my interest. Also since both my parents are interior designers and work with architects all the time I have grown up seeing sketches, plumbers, laminates, electrical fittings and all the raw material. It is rightly said that a person's workplace shoes what kind of work he/she does and so is the case with Archohm. From the gigantic entrance door (which looks like it will lead you to a fort), the artistically designed open hand junk sculpture to the pole, which one can use to slide down on a couch! Without exaggerating I felt like Alice in Wonderland.

I am an expert in design or a critique of the kind of work this company does but I am a journalist with an opinion and can surely say Archohm is one crazy piece of land which will turn any piece of junk into a work of art. I was acquainted to some of the company's products (like converse - the ashtray - an interesting piece to place in our bar!) and the history behind them when I recently revisited the office to cover it for India Today magazine.



One informal conversation with Mr. Gupta makes you sense how passionate he is about his work. His vision is very evident and probably that is why it is a brand in itself today! I wish you guys the best for your all your endeavors and hope to see you all create something interesting for me when I plan on getting my house done!

Ekta Marwaha - representing the intelligent young brigade of the country, Ekta has been a student activist, but now does lifestyle journalism for the India Today magazine.



designews

An engineering marvel - the Falkirk wheel is a boatlift designed to help the boats transit between two canals, separated by a height of more than 20meters.

We had seen the pictures and read briefly about the Falkirk wheel before we visited it, but nothing could prepare us for the magnanimity of the structure, as we witnessed it first hand.

The two large axels, in their fluid curved shape and the central tube had a sculptural quality to them, such that they appeared in motion even when they were stationary, so much so that we could not move our eyes off it, expecting it to start moving any minute.

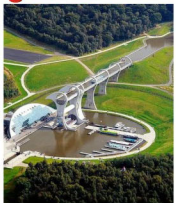
Finally, the maintenance engineer did put the wheel on motion - all of us stood gaping, as the giant turbine moved fluidly without friction, slowly hauling the central concrete vessel (which would contain the boat) upwards. At the same time, the other axel of the wheel, slowly brought down the upper concrete vessel.

It was a feat to watch, as one axel moved up - leaving behind, a dry concrete bed where the vessel fits in, without as much as a splatter of water. At the same time, the other axel inched downwards, in sync. Finally the joining parts of the axel and the structure vacuum fused with each other, and the gates of the vessel dropped down to let in the water of the lower canal flow into this vessel.

All of us burst into applause as this cycle completed and the wheel became stationary again. Hats off to the vision, courage and the engineering expertise of the builders of the Falkirk Wheel.



Krunal Patel - an Archohmite from trainee days, krunal has lived upto every task entrusted. From concepts to details of Archohm projects, meetings and presentations with clients to navigating and driving on Archotours.



News:



Fosters visit - Archohm had an interesting visit from fosters+partners, based in London. Mr. Ricardo Mateo reciprocated the visit of the archohmites on the archotour. His compliments to the office and its environment brought in fresh energy and reassurance.



China - Visit to Chinese factories early this month brought in a fresh perspective on quality. China with its investment in design is also trying to position itself as a fast learner. The main highlight of the trip was that of the Finnish company that produces only in China, products of European quality at their price points.



Malaysia - Archohm's first corporate office furniture designs are being manufactured in Malaysia. The customized solutions with their typical touch of play of materials bring together a new line of work and design.

KYOORIUS DESIGNYATRA 2011 GOA, INDIA

Design Yatra at Goa - Archohm gets into education. A part of its intense research and analysis was a visit to the recent Goa conclave on design education was an obvious destination. Next time, we hope our workaholics at least get to 'see the sea'.

Spotlight
AJIT KUMAR



"For Last Seven years I have been a part of the Archohm family. I have learned many things during my service tenure here. I have almost touched every department of the office. This is the first and last office, which I will ever work in, in my life. The 2004 office trip to Awar was a great experience for me. Currently I am working as an IT assistant in our new Noida office, which is an awesome place to work in."

- Ajit Kumar

"Ajit is one of the most sincere employees of our Company. We have all witnessed his loyalty to our organization for a long time. His no-excuse and ready-to-learn attitude is why he is an asset to the company. Ajit is a jack of all trades. He has grown a lot in all these years and will continue to do so in many more years to come. Our best wishes are with him for his bright future. Best of luck!"

- Sharuli Bisht

BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH:

- Ajit Kumar - Second
- Sanjay Rawat - Second
- Mohit Mathur - Seventeenth
- Richa - Twenty Fourth

NEW JOINEES:

The HR department had a bit easy this month with no new joinees.

sourabh's desk

china has arrived. any notion that india has an edge at some level or the other was wiped off my mind on my recent short trip to shanghai.

the obvious superior infrastructure of airports and roads have brought commercial success to the nation. It was also interesting to see that every international brand, from fashion to food, had a massive presence in the chinese metropolitan. I have not seen such large luxury stores in europe, and shanghai had two massive ones. the largest learning was the youth, the educated young chinese generation has arrived - english speaking and follows hollywood, uses apple applications, goes to night clubs to match vegas, they had left no stone unturned. They come across as vibrant, intelligent and aggressive citizens who the world need to watch out for.

sourabh's desk has to focus on design, so a chinese design tour it is. it was fascinating to see the red town of shanghai. this was an old industrial set up that centered its rehabilitation around design. an area with design centric cafes and shops, bookstores and exhibition spaces. international design offices and beautifully landscaped parks that enthuse a spirit of creativity, a must-see for every evolving society that wants to go beyond the brand band wagon.

there were the best german manufacturers selling office furniture, there were finnish design companies with products that had a design history, all these made 'business sense' in china.

thus, the - made in china - needs a clear positive rethinking and relook.



The beneficent error

In our daily lives, sometimes mistakes and errors give interesting results and get institutionalized in our designs. These errors can more often than not become the main focal point of the concepts in our buildings. They can be intentional like in the case of the RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT MUSEUM, which has a unique CRACKED EXTERIOR that REPRESENTS the effect of a MAJOR EARTHQUAKE, making it one of the most photographed buildings in the world.

Similarly, unintentional mistakes can also lead to intriguing designs. Take the example of the Leaning tower of Pisa. It is disbalanced by nature and is tilted about 3.99 degrees. And this very quality of the tower, gives it its name and fame.

-Kuldeep Singh, BETNITM, Lucknow



I came across this concept in a book called, 'all messed up' by Anna Gerber and it gave me instances of how a mistake could lead to a good design. Contrary to popular belief, mistakes and errors can be used to take a work forward. It might be surprising but the tea bag, the Velcro, the Post-it-Note, the X ray and even the discovery of penicillin was all prompted by a mistake.

In visual language too, imperfections are used as strong aesthetic elements to subvert and excite.

When we make a mistake, the output is beyond our control. this idea is exemplified in the case of the picture below, which is from the 'de' foundation by the Droog design community. This illustration is called 'Do break', it's a collection of products that allow the consumer to interact with the work to ensure that the end product is beyond the control of the designer. The whole process of arriving at a chair from a cube, by intentionally hammering it, is a novel way of arriving at a seating solution but it costs \$6000 a "chair" that either starts as a steel cube which you sledgehammer yourself, or for an extra \$800, someone will pre-hammer it for you. Blowing seven grand for the novelty of experiencing a brief moment of hard labor...hurts a bit too much doesn't it?!

- Mridu Sahal

* THE WALL is a platform where a design issue is raised and people give their opinions on it. If you wish to be a part of future discussions please contact mridu@archohm.com