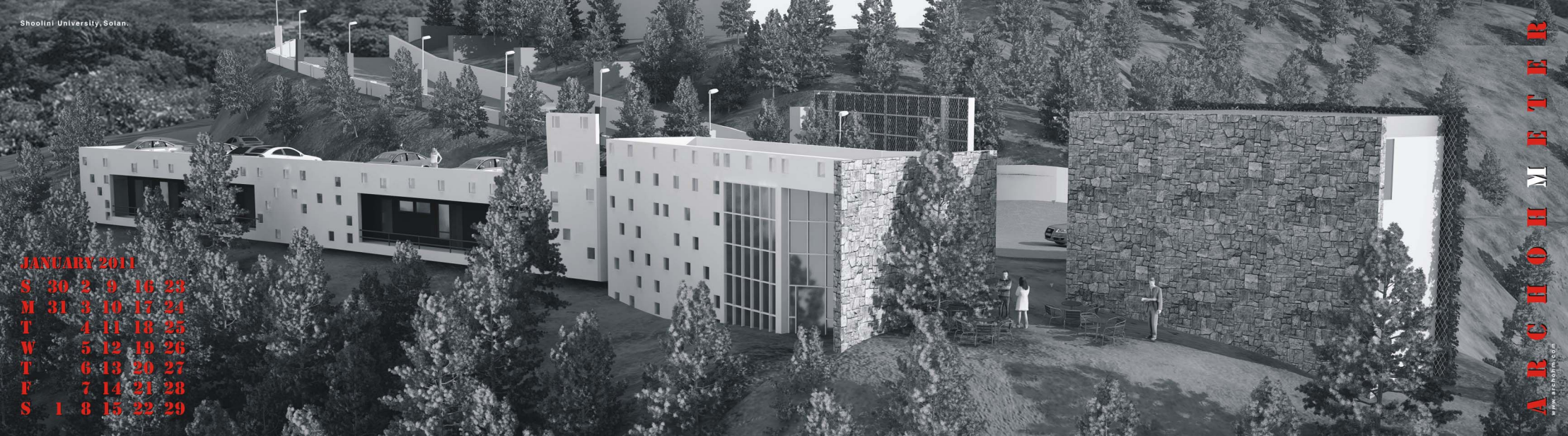


JANUARY 2011

S	30	2	9	16	23
M	31	3	10	17	24
T		4	11	18	25
W		5	12	19	26
T		6	13	20	27
F		7	14	21	28
S	1	8	15	22	29



in focus



Located in Solan district, the **Shoolini University** lies at the foothills of the Himalayas and is built on a site measuring about **12 acres**. Archohm was mandated to design the residential, academic and other ancillary blocks of this university. This was a challenging assignment due to various factors – the **hilly terrain**, the bifurcation of the site by the highway, the existing academic blocks and above all – to build an educational institution which lives up to the **reputation of the school** run by Phunsukh Wangdu (Aamir Khan) in the cult film **3 Idiots**!

The Archohm team started with task of designing the entry block, which also included the cafeteria and parking facilities. This block is designed to provide an **encompassing view of the valley** from the cafeteria and the staff quarters below the parking space, which is 'concealed' impeccably. The view from here is so breathtaking that the client is thinking of converting the staff quarters into faculty residences!

Apart from the essential knowledge centre and mess blocks, Archohm also designed the residential units for students as well as faculty members. The girls' hostel blocks are 'hinged' to each other on the site to form a continuous long strip, to ensure minimum cutting and filling of earth and deforestation. These blocks also have common spill out areas at different levels that act as spaces for interaction. On the contrary, the faculty residences have complete privacy and their sleek proportion magnifies the view of the green valley. The mess block, which serves as a communal space is kept completely separate from the hostel blocks. The terrace of this block can also be used as a sports/ recreational area.

Last but not the least, the core academic blocks which have been designed for phased construction, are connected to each other at different levels to give a feeling of a continuous learning experience. These blocks have a common base which has exhibition areas and three lecture theatres that can also serve as auditoriums.

These blocks are punctured by visual and experiential spaces on the ground level, which collect on a large landscaped plaza for students to interact and create a congenial environment for learning.

Being one of the earliest projects of my professional career, it certainly was an ideal project to work on as it involved the challenge of designing a building in a **highly contoured area**.

Richa Shah - College Topper (so she claims!), quiet achiever and dedicated worker (as I know from my brief interaction with her); her article on Shoolini University is one of the best ever written for this journal in the last 3 years. Here's an architect to watch out for!

Shoolini University has been developed to serve the need for combining science and management into a productive whole. Dr. PK Khosla, a former vice chancellor, dreamt of creating a university that focused on this upcoming stream of education. He got together with some like-minded persons and developed Shoolini University to offer higher degrees in science and management at reasonable costs to students of Himachal Pradesh and neighboring states. This year, the university ranked 6th in an all-India ranking of biotechnology institutions in India.

As the first Biotechnology University of India, Shoolini University is based in the Shimla Hills. This makes the architecture of the campus tricky. At Shoolini University, our dream is to build a fully residential campus, almost like a 24x7 educational resort with major focus on research.

It is always a pleasure to work with a company that is as creative and dedicated as Archohm. Sourabh is always just a phone call away and willing to answer our queries and doubts. His team for the project, led by Jyotsna and supported by Sanjay, Richa and Sadhvi at Archohm is also a bunch of proactive professionals who understand the client's brief well before they come up with a draft.

The way the team has conceived this project is in line with the image Shoolini University wants to portray. Sourabh always says that we are an easy client because we always agree on the first thing that they send us. There are two reasons for the same—one, that he is really good, the other is that we are almost always really short on time!

So it's always a win-win situation with Archohm. Shoolini University looks great and functions well because of the effort by the entire team of clients, designers and the contractors.

The design is conceived around the existing blocks to mark a clear entry and a route towards the new extensions all across the site so as to tie the project together as a unified whole while projecting a strong image.

We look forward to our relationship with Archohm in building a landmark institution in hilly architecture and campus design.



Vishal Anand - Not as liberal with his budgets as his words of praise for Archohm, one needs to keep a clear control of delivery and balance the functionality and economy in institutional projects, and Vishal has mastered this. Definitely a doer who believes in delivery, and with his hands-on attitude and unwavering energy, keeps his team up and about.

design news

Reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary. Who says **electricity towers** are still considered to be the boring essentials of the modern world? The Icelandic Design Competition has redefined the conventional electricity transmission towers-it now proposes **enormous human shape sculptures** holding up cables with both arms.

A thoughtful strategy to rejuvenate the design of **mundane structures** by turning them into landmarks of wonder.



The new look for electricity towers given by the Icelandic Design Competition.

Performance in Product Design



The Flow series of oil and vinegar dipping plates.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art hosts a student design competition each year, where a distinguished designer is celebrated and the students have to design as per the spirit of that designer. This year, (kitchen) product designer, **Alberto Alessi** was chosen. The winning entry was that of James Hughes for his 'Flow Series'. He designed porcelain dipping plates for oil and vinegar. At the bottom of each plate, there is a form of a relief, which uses the natural properties of each liquid to create a pattern that reveals itself during use. In addition to this they also feature a lip for pouring and draining excess liquid. An apt example of **value addition to a functional product** as the usage now becomes a narrative performance of sorts during the dining experience.

Creative @ school. Spanish architect **Alejandro Munoz Miranda's** kindergarten in Granada is designed for children up to three years old.

The interesting feature of this building is that the communal and **dynamics spaces** such as corridors and covered playgrounds are scattered with **multicolored windows** which are intelligently made, merging the wall and the ceiling in places in accordance with the movement of the sun, which give a surge of playful light as one enters them. In contrast to this, the windows in **classrooms** are completely **colourless** to avoid distraction.

So much so for creativity, it's going to be a task keeping the kids in classes!



Alejandro Munoz Miranda's kindergarten in Granada. The playful corridors. Colourless classrooms.

NASA design competition: Archohm has launched its first design competition – 'creative design architecture' under the industrial design category of UTOPIA 2011, the annual convention of the National Association of Students of Architecture (NASA). The winner will be announced in January at Hubli, which will be attended by 4000 students of architecture along with 1000 faculty members and architects.



Upcoming Projects:

Taurian guest house: A fun challenge on design, rather **timely design**. Archohm puts its skill sets together in creating an inside out (read interior and landscape intensive) design project as a corporate **boutique guest house**. The 'Taurian House' is in sync with the series that began with the 'Missu House' and the 'Sumitomo House', both at Delhi.

Revit in office: Our recent experience with American design offices clearly indicated the shift of software and technology from 2d to 3d drafting. Revit works at Archohm for some reputed American firms is a step towards enhancing our learning curve in the industry.

Denso factory: Takenaka, one of the leading global construction companies has set up shop in India. Archohm is honoured to be associated with Takenaka on design and detailed engineering on all these other projects.

Archohm Trivia:

Did you know that if **Arpita Paul** wouldn't be an architect, she would enroll in the defense services? And if you thought that wasn't intriguing enough, **Rachna Mittal** would have become a **mathematician** if she didn't study architecture. Talk about **stereotypical gender roles!** Archohm women have the attitude and the aptitude to get it all. Way to go ladies!

NEW JOINEES:
Mr. Sreechar - Sector Project Manager; Mr. Sonveer - Site Engineer

BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH:
Md. Haider Ali - First, Falzan Khan - Third, Mridu Sahai - Ninth, Deendayal - Twelfth, Kunal Savarkar - Twenty Sixth

sourabh's desk

I write this while flying on 'work' to Goa, a take on fabric. This is a relevant topic for two reasons, one I have mandeep from the famed 'shades of india' sitting next to me giving me 'gyan' on the processes of silk making, cotton, linen and jute; and two because we have the enthusiastic mridu sahai joining our archohm team who happens to be a fashion and accessory designer.

we at archohm have been playing and toying with fabric for a while, as a tool to **enhance architectural or interior spaces**.

from membrane structures in our toll canopies to designing fabric with corporate identity, the opportunity is immense.

personally, this adds another material in our palette to bring in a **play of colour, light, view and texture**, they are not only the finishing touches to the space but also the most obvious and the first things a user perceives and touches, they **punctuate the space enhancing its character**.

the scope in india is exponential, as we have a mad database of traditional products and techniques, the intention is to transform these into an extension of one's own concepts on design and apply them to an entire space or a building which creates a dialogue on materials at every level.

hybridism with fabrics, i.e. to combine fabric with other materials, i.e. to combine fabric with other materials, is a very powerful tool to define the 'look and feel' of an entity, this phrase apply epitomizes the status of fabric in the designing of spaces. It is the 'look', which defines the color by rendering its volume from a distance, on closer interaction; the texture almost literally marks the feel of the same space.

the **color quotient in a space is often carried by fabrics** - for instance - in the corporate environment blinds, bulletin boards and seating fabrics play a major role and in the hospitality milieu - wall panels, lights, curtains are the essentials, thereby making a fairly neutral space well supplemented and celebrated.

talking of vibrancy of colors and textures, it was a great experience hunting for the basic natural jute texture and colored fabric for our new studio upholstery, in the depths of govind puri's busiest local shops.



ds construction corporate office - vip waiting room.

Is simplicity overrated? or Is Less More?



In the process of making a design simple, do we deprive users of 'choices'?

"There should be a balance." You can't over-simplify things and reduce them down to nothing. But at the same time, too much of information, instructions, multiple combinations, permutations are confusing and unnecessary. The key here is to achieve the right level of simplicity. Not too stark that it is poor, and not too brimming with things that is confusing and repelling. The tag line is - 'less is more' and not - 'less is enough'.

my take on less is more, specially in relevance to the context image is 'less' i.e. 'less is more simple' which also hints at the user being stupid at one level but makes the point that usually, too many choices only make things complicated in life and not functionally effective. In most cases these redundant infants should be removed by design-so as to avoid getting irritated at every Starbucks order of coffee or enabling movable beds in a 10th by 10th bedroom. It is almost like saying, 'lets have little inconvenience for some rather than ample of it for many', and the minimalist design benefit is a top up!

simplicity may deprive users of choices but the 'less is more' theorem doesn't. In the above mentioned context, the second image of the mixer looks simple no doubt, but it doesn't reflect the concept of 'less is more'. As used by 'van der rohe', this concept is an aesthetic tool which arranges the essential components of a building by giving an impression of extreme simplicity without depriving the users of choices. He achieved this by making things multi-functional (like designing a floor that could serve as a radiator). Therefore unlike the above picture of the mixer, less is more where it appears to be less but offers much more than what can be seen. This reminds me of how a two-hour presentation is easier to deliver than a five-minute speech, the latter though has a shorter duration, requires more conceptual thought much in the same manner when we apply the design concept of - Less is More.

the color quotient in a space is often carried by fabrics - for instance - in the corporate environment blinds, bulletin boards and seating fabrics play a major role and in the hospitality milieu - wall panels, lights, curtains are the essentials, thereby making a fairly neutral space well supplemented and celebrated.

talking of vibrancy of colors and textures, it was a great experience hunting for the basic natural jute texture and colored fabric for our new studio upholstery, in the depths of govind puri's busiest local shops.



ds construction corporate office - vip waiting room.

By the time you read this edition of the Archohmter, we will have crossed over from 2010 into 2011, thus marking the end of one of the most tumultuous decades in world history.

For Archohm too, it has been an eventful journey - while we are a fledgling practice in 2000, we are now a 100 strong organization with multiple clients and projects - both in India and abroad, of varying scale, use and typology. We are now in the process of settling into our newest office - at NOIDA- glimpses of which you have no doubt seen in the previous editions of the newsletter.

2011 promises to have lots of treats in store. As a cricket fan - the foremost wish is that we have a great World Cup. Whether India wins or not is secondary - but lets have good competitive cricket; not like the last one where a strange format (and Bangladesh) conspired to knock out India after a mere 3 matches! Will we see such a photograph again? Inshallah.



Kapil Dev, hero with the Proteas cup 1983.

For us 2011 is going to be a year of consolidation; a time in which we build upon the huge ramping up in scale that we have undertaken in the shift from our last office to this one. It is going to be a time of forging new relationships, whilst strengthening older ones which have endured now over a decade.

The discerning amongst you must have noticed that this issue of the Archohmter has an extra 'page' - it's a new feature that we have conceived. 'The wall' is a forum of sorts, where design related issues are discussed; it is a medium for voicing of ideas, to get varied opinions on the one chosen 'issue'. Do let us know your thoughts on this!



The Tata Nano.

Last month I spent some time visiting Tata Motors plants at Pune, Sanand (where the nano is produced), Lucknow, and Pantnagar, before ending up at Bombay House (where most Tata Companies have their registered office). I am not going to tell you why I was there - watch the future editions of this newsletter for that!

An interesting thing I learned - a certain gold medal winning engineer, **Sudha Murthy**, was the first woman employee of Tata Motors (then known as TELCO), when she heard that it was an all men organization, she wrote to JRD Tata himself - who asked her to come down for an interview. Incidentally it was her savings that financed her husband and his 6 colleagues when they started Infosys! No prizes for guessing who her husband is.

With that I leave you to peruse this journal, and like always send us your thoughts, reactions, views, comments - of course to the efficient and hardworking Mridu Sahai.

- Kunal Savarkar

FEEDBACK: please write in to Mridu Sahai at archohmter@archohm.com and feel free to point out all typos, factual errors and the like!

editorial

guest thoughts

homepage

thewall