

antarya

AN IIID BANGALORE REGIONAL CHAPTER PUBLICATION

When Fan met Chandelier



IIID BANGALORE REGIONAL CHAPTER

FEATURING

Studio Lotus | Benny Kuriakose
Bidriware | Untitled Design Consultants



BANGALORE REGIONAL CHAPTER



◆ COVER STORY

When fan met chandelier

BY NANDHINI SUNDAR

08



◆ INDUSTRY FEATURE

14

Fan the chandelier with Fanzart



✦ YOUNG MASTERS

22

Rooting into the context

FEATURING STUDIO LOTUS



✦ ARTYFACTS

36

Crafting the perishing Bidriware

FEATURING BIDRIWARE



✦ RESTORATION

60

A second lease of life

FEATURING BENNY KURIAKOSE



☐ RETAIL VIEW

44

Basking in nature

OUTDOOR CONNECTIONS



✦ GREEN SENSE

50

Reviving through crafty infusion

FEATURING UNTITLED DESIGN CONSULTANTS

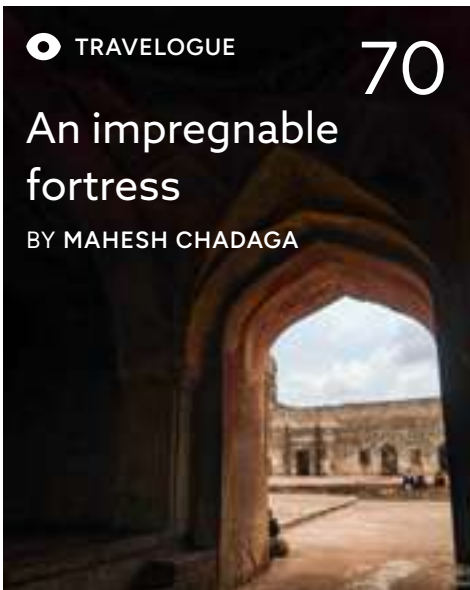


🕒 TRAVELOGUE

70

An impregnable fortress

BY MAHESH CHADAGA



DESIGN IDEOLOGY

The language of architecture in design

PROF. JAISIM KRISHNA RAO

48

ACADEMIA COLUMN

The State of Indian Architecture Education

DR JAFFER AA KHAN

49

Happenings in BRC

APR TO JUN 2024

78





Reviving through crafty infusion

BY NANDHINI SUNDAR

FEATURING UNTITLED DESIGN CONSULTANTS



It is an open secret that these precious arts and crafts which the erstwhile kingdoms helped to preserve are now in danger of extinction, thanks to the apathy of the market that is unable to discern the intricacies and exotica of each of these skills passed down generations.





AMRITA GUHA



JOYA NANDURDIKAR

When the duo forged ahead to start their design Practice, the journey was not easy, especially given their strong convictions of needing to work with traditional artforms and interpret them to successfully incorporate into contemporary spaces.

It is no secret that the country abounds in arts and crafts that date back centuries, passed down traditionally through the generations, each skill being taught, trained in from a very young age or tutored over extended periods that many times span over a decade. It is also an open secret that these precious arts and crafts which the erstwhile kingdoms helped to preserve are now in danger of extinction, thanks to the apathy of the market that is unable to discern the intricacies and exotica of each of these skills passed down generations. While awareness is slowly seeping in prompting the designer fraternity to work at ground level with the craftsman to revive, preserve these fast perishing skills, the quantum of such intervention is unfortunately far and few to make a significant impact at ground level. It is thus not surprising that many of the skills and artforms are already on the verge of slipping into the record books.

Sensitive to this disturbing state of our traditional artforms and the fast disappearing traditional craftsmen across the country, **Interior Designers Amrita Guha and Joya Nandurdikar of Untitled Design Consultants** chose to convert their interior design projects into fertile grounds for revival of a range of these traditional arts and crafts in tune with the relevant local context. What then ensued is a profusion of designs incorporating a range of exotic traditional arts and crafts, some of which were in the danger of imminent extinction.

The rich cultural beginnings

The active engagement with traditional artforms and craftsmen and the passion for the same, for both Joya and Amrita, dates back much before their tryst with interior design as a field of study. Born and raised in the culturally rich city of Kolkata, Amrita had exposure to art from childhood, given that her mother was an accomplished artist who used multiple mediums to give expression to her forms. The exposure did not stop with art, as Amrita is also an accomplished Kathak dancer, the influences of these strongly evident in her designs upon her taking up interior design as a profession.

The growing up years for Joya is not much different, though residing in Delhi, spending most of her childhood vacations in the countryside of West Bengal. The rich cultural background she was raised in, the natural environs of the 'uncorrupted fields, the village tanks and fishing trips', the Kumhaar Pada (potter's village), not to mention the annual Durga Puja festivities where 'we would team up and paint the dolls for display', together left an indelible mark, only to manifest as a rich feast of designs once she took up the mantle of Interior Designer.

Interestingly, both completed their diploma in interior design in Delhi, Amrita graduating from Vaastu Kala Academy and Joya graduating from Meera Bai Institute. While Amrita initially worked with Product Designer Davis Alex 'who was a strong influence', the duo met when both were working for Interior Designer Jyoti Punj who became their strong mentor, 'and has had a major impact on our approach, style and design inclinations.' "The unique projects we worked on during our tenure with her along with the freedom given to be creative proved to be an immense learning experience, laying the foundation for our future Practice", says Amrita.

Initiating the Untitled

When the duo forged ahead to start their design Practice, the journey was not easy, especially given their strong convictions of needing to work with traditional artforms and interpret them to successfully incorporate into contemporary spaces. "The computer and our car were our office those initial days", smiles Amrita. "It was a year and half later that we took up a room in the staff quarters of a residence and forged ahead from there. And there has been no looking back since." Their first tryst with a strong presence of crafts in the projects had come about when working on the Somany Residence during their tenure with Jyoti Punj. "The array of arts and crafts that we came across and brought into the spaces was something that we had not encountered before. This further cemented our convictions and gave also the direction to move forward when we later started our own Practice", states Amrita.



Shola craft used on the table top

Countering the challenges

While the conviction to infuse artforms into the spaces in whatever form or manner possible was all pervading, the ground level challenges to execute proved to be multiple, "starting from convincing the client to connecting with the craftsmen as the contact list is non-existent or negligible, even with the Crafts Council." This was also the period when awareness about reviving the traditional artforms and crafts was not high, prompting insipid response from the public when it came to incorporating Indian arts and crafts into the interiors, points Amrita. The duo decided to work their way around these challenges by simply going ahead and creating art and craft pieces by working with the local traditional craftsmen, "whether the pieces are approved or not for incorporation into the project". The intent was to make a beginning and take it thence from there, says Joya. "To facilitate working closely with the artisans, we accommodated their stay in our workshop where, based on their knowledge and skills, together the art pieces were designed and developed to fit into contemporary spaces."

To appeal to a larger palette, the duo decided to come up with totems which was a commissioned assignment for the Serendipity Art Festival, where the traditional artforms used as frescos such as Kerala mural art, Shekhawati, were interpreted and incorporated. This ranged from replicating on the totems the traditional surface treatments done on walls, using the traditional fresco arts in a contemporary way on a totem, to amalgamating the different architectural interventions in the form of varied traditional columns and featuring the same in a contemporary style. "Any craft form can be interpreted and used here and these have global appeal, prompting the market to demand these pieces", Joya elaborates.

With market recognising and demanding, Joya and Amrita soon started hosting workshops for artisans from across the country. "What the craftsmen need is the concept of what is required and they come up with small samples which are then improvised. It is essentially a collaborative effort where the knowledge and skills of the artisans



Pattachitra painting on the wall of the lobby

Each space comes with its own unique characteristics, language, functional needs, not to mention the locational sensitivities.

are understood, respected and aided in reinterpreting it to fit into contemporary spaces”, says Amrita. “For instance, the traditional Shola crafts can be interpreted to feature as a table top or a mural to fit into a contemporary space.” The interpretation and designing involves lengthy and in-depth study of the crafts in each region before connecting with the traditional artisans to create the product, she adds. “This calls for a lot of research and ground level work in terms of physically visiting these regions and tracking to identify and connect with the craftsmen.”

Thus, when the duo decided to work with Pattachitra artists and use the same in their projects, they had to spend copious amounts of time visiting the villages abounding in this craft, meeting the craftsmen, giving them the preliminary designs to understand the possibilities of interpreting them to suit contemporary leanings. “These come with other challenges too in terms of time factor as the artisans are not used to stiff schedules but work at their own pace. The final execution calls for not only passion but also immense patience and commitment”, smiles Joya.

Finding the right fit

Each space comes with its own unique characteristics, language, functional needs, not to mention the locational sensitivities. While each region abounds in traditional crafts, finding the most appropriate craft intervention into the spaces can be a challenge, aver Amrita and Joya. “The art or craft form will need to do justice to the space and the mode of infusion needs to meet functionality as well as suit the contemporary settings”, explains Amrita. “The craft forms can be fused into every section of the space of a project, but which craft, in what form it is to be introduced requires deliberation as well as appropriate interpretation and usage by the concerned craftsmen”, adds Joya. Likewise, each space can also incorporate multiple crafts, yet the right detailing and product conceptualisation in terms of such a combined usage needs much exploration, she points.

While the detailing needs to be intricately worked on to create the highlight, be it a single element or a series of multiple elements involving a range of arts and crafts, it is important to bring in a touch of glamour into the fusion, “as this captures the market and lays the ground for further adoption in other spaces. Essentially it is about how it is composed to stand out in the context and contrast the surroundings”, the duo contends. “The usage in most cases serves as a unique interior solution, such as using the exquisite Bidri or Koftgari metal craft on the coffee tables which is totally variant from the traditional format in which the artforms exist.”

The painted narratives

Over the last two decades of their Practice, Amrita and Joya have worked with an expansive range of traditional artforms and crafts spread across the entire length and breadth of the country, conscious to identify especially the most endangered of these traditional crafts, giving them a new lease of life through their vivid detailing and differential interpretations to suit contemporary spaces and lifestyles. Some of the notable traditional paintings and artforms addressed include Gond art, Pattachitra, Madhubani paintings, Thangka art, Phad art, Mata Ni Pachhedi, Kalighat paintings, Pichwai paintings, Kalamkari works, Shola, Kerala mural art amongst others.

Splashing the walls with Madhubani

The rich Madhubani art, traditionally created by the women of Mithila district in Bihar, features as a splash of colours and strokes, transforming the spaces with its vibrant detailing. Traditionally these paintings featured on the mud walls, which were decorated using organic colours. The earthy stories that the paintings depicted were based on mythologies, folklore, legends pertaining to nature, with many also featuring as artworks on panels. Joya and Amrita adopted the traditional artform to create wall installations, as headboards.

In one of their projects, a headboard going up 18 feet hosts a Madhubani painting done by a national award winning artist where the artwork features as concentric circles of dense marine life. In yet another project which was ripe with concrete and terrazzo flooring, a Madhubani painting featuring a cluster of bees as the motif, was captured on canvas to serve as the highlight feature on the wall. Similar artistic interventions were brought on to the wardrobe shutters. “These traditional artforms also serve as rich connect with the past culture and lifestyles, communicating the folklore to the current generation and help in the cultural revival in each region”, adds Amrita.

The rich Persian influence

The Kani-Kalamdani, a colourful papier-mache craft that abounds in Kashmir, is the result of the strong Persian influence that the region witnessed. The artform, used in a range of utilitarian objects, has mostly nature as its motifs, bringing in a freshness to the space with its presence. Amrita and Joya incorporated this artform into the contemporary context, fusing them into the spaces as panelling, in furniture, the artform used more as geometric patterns to feature as an arresting highlight.



Pattachitra by National awardee Neel Madhav Sahu depicting 'Kandhara Godha'



Pahari miniature painting decorates the wall of the puja room

The earthy stories that the paintings depicted were based on mythologies, folklore, legends pertaining to nature, with many also featuring as artworks on panels.

Madhubani painting depicting Matsya Avatar of Lord Vishnu





Kalighat paintings depicted on the headboard



Headboard panel incorporating Gond art



Tree of Life represented through Gond art

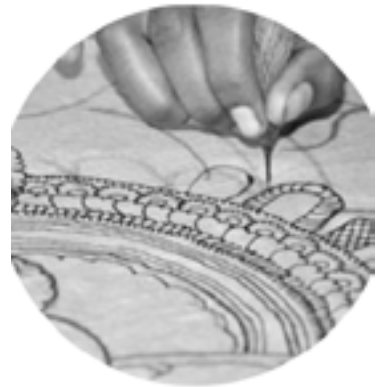


Thangka art on a life size sculpture of tiger

The Gond art originating from Madhya Pradesh was given a contemporary twist where the vibrant tribal art was featured as a mask sculpture depicting mother and child in harmony with nature.



Phad painting of Rajasthan decorates the wall



Tales on canvas

Most of the traditional paintings were done on fabric or canvas, the colours being natural, sourced from vegetable dyes, charcoal, mud. For instance, the captivating Pattachitra originating from Orrisa was traditionally done on fabric or canvas where the first coat was tamarind paste to protect the canvas. The artwork was then done as finely detailed black ink drawings to depict folk tales, mythologies.

Amrita and Joya used this traditional painting on lacquered glass to decorate the prayer room in one of their projects where “the individual pieces were sewn together to form a collage.” Likewise, the Gond art originating from Madhya Pradesh was given a contemporary twist where the vibrant tribal art was featured as a mask sculpture depicting mother and child in harmony with nature. The Gond art was also used as a wall feature as well as a demarcating screen in canvas in the entertainment zone where the folklore intertwined with nature was depicted to send a strong message on environment in urban spaces.

Kalighat, which are paintings done with natural colours on paper, originating from West Bengal, depict mythological stories, Hindu deities as well as scenes from everyday life. The duo incorporated this exquisite traditional artform into the wooden frames of headboards, the display wall in the living area where the wood cladding with the paintings was composed to tell an interesting story of women setting about to finish their daily chores.

The Phad, a traditional artform from Rajasthan is renowned for its vivid hues, detailing and cultural narration. The artform traditionally appearing as scroll paintings where the story of the king is related, serves as the backdrop for the cultural festival hosted in the region.

Joya took a leaf out of this cultural reach and incorporated the Phad paintings into their project in the form of panels along with basalt stone at the entrance foyer where the fusion of the paintings, their traditional stories and the basalt stone combine to make a contemporary statement.

Similar contemporary infusion was done with Mata Ni Pachhedi, a traditional artform originating from Gujarat, featuring on cloth where only natural dyes are used. Given that the motifs and stories narrated in the paintings centre around mythologies, Joya fused the artform into the door enclosing the puja area. “The Mata Ni Pachhedi painting on fabric was sandwiched between the glass of the brass framed door to infuse a rich traditional artform into the contemporary setting”, says Joya.

When the duo had to do the interiors of a residence that came with simple lines, concrete finishes and white floors, their immediate response to the space was to infuse a rich flavour of traditional artforms and crafts. The choice was then the colourful Kalamkari work originating from Andhra Pradesh, where it is done traditionally on cotton or silk textiles by hand painting or dyeing the natural colours on to the fabric. The artform was fused into the interiors in the form of fabric stretched across the ceiling where the exotic art totally transforms the language of the contemporary space.

Dipping into the Northeast

The northeast comes with its own unique flavours in artforms and the Thangka paintings are a signature feature of the states located in the foothills of the Himalayas. Being an exotic set of traditional paintings, the Thangka owes its origins to Nepal. Traditionally done on fabric,



Sanjhi art incorporated on to the main door

the colourful artform comes with strong spiritual depictions. The duo decided to incorporate this art on to a papier mache sculpture where the vibrant colours and intricate detailing serves as a captivating highlight in the foyer of the contemporary space.

Speaking with wood

Intricate carvings and inlays in wood are an integral part of the exotic traditional wood crafts prevalent in the country, with each region offering its own unique technique and craftsmanship in wood. On tracing the range of wood crafts from across the country, Joya and Amrita incorporated them into their projects by reinterpreting their form and use to meet contemporary needs. The Pinjrakari woodwork originating from Kashmir, which is exquisite lattice work in wood, was reinterpreted to feature as panelling in the dining area as well as on the ceiling of the living room. The Pinjrakari work was also incorporated as a highlight feature on a 16 feet high pivot door where the motifs adopted varied from the traditional. "The objective was to infuse a contemporary approach to a very traditional artform and fit the same into the contemporary context", explains Joya.

Similar incorporation was done with the exotic Khatamband woodcraft from Kashmir which involves fitting small pieces of wood together in geometrical patterns to craft an elaborate decorative ceiling. The arresting traditional woodcraft was used in one of their Spa projects where the "splash of woodcraft contrasts stunningly against the natural stone floors, creating a dramatic feature."

Tarkashi art from Rajasthan and Marquetry originating from Mysore, both of which deal with inlays in wood, require strong skills to execute. Marquetry was combined with stone panelling to create an art

wall that extended 45 feet. The crafts were also incorporated into doors to feature as a highlight in the contemporary space. Tarkashi and Marquetry were further interpreted in the motifs of Kantha, an ancient embroidery originating from West Bengal, in the works commissioned for the Serendipity Art Festival. Further fusions in wood and metal are witnessed with the famous Thathera metal craft, which owes its rich legacy to Punjab, incorporated into the doors and wooden walls where the artistic brass sheets are embedded into the wood.

Extending to paper art

The artforms and crafts chosen by Amrita and Joya do not confine to only paintings, wood and metal crafts but extend to traditional crafts executed on paper too. The famous Sanjhi art done on paper, where intricate designs are cut into paper, was incorporated in a few projects by Amrita, sandwiching the exquisite paper art into the entrance door where "it is composed along with a copper panel and log of wood to create a story in the lobby". Incidentally, the artist who executed this work received a national award for the art piece.

"By working with a range of traditional artforms and crafts from across the country, some of which are nearing the state of extinction for want of a sustained market, it became clear that, to sustain these crafts, it is required to reinterpret them to fit into contemporary spaces. This needs commitment as well as awareness to take it forward on a larger scale. But the final fruits of the efforts are very rewarding as the outcome is a very rich, vibrant interior where the craftsmanship comes with its unmatched skills and exquisite features", sums up Joya.



Wood Marquetry decorates the living area



Exquisite Pinjarkari art features as the demarcating screen



Thathera serves as a shining art feature on the wall



Khatambandh decorates the ceiling of a Spa