

BetterLife

August - November 2019

The experimental designs of Patricia Urquiola



Amin Jaffer
“Collecting is a long
journey...”

Rahul Akerkar
Starting over

Saint Amand
A concierge like
none other

Sanjiv Mehta
The house of
memories



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Publisher's Note



Dear Reader,
Welcome to the first issue of *BetterLife*, a lifestyle magazine brought to you by the Lodha Group.

BetterLife is the perfect embodiment of Lodha's philosophy of 'building a better life'.

As we celebrate life in all its glory, with each day lived to the best, this magazine becomes a valuable communication vehicle to share, enlighten and update our readers on the different facets of living — with insights and perspectives on the latest global trends, and the changes we experience in an ever-evolving urban landscape.

For us, the relationship with our customers doesn't end when we hand over the keys of the apartment. Rather, it is the beginning of a continued and cherished relationship with them.

Buying a Lodha property is not just a transactional business for us, but the start of a life-long relationship. This magazine will be a significant platform to strengthen and carry forward this relationship.

Our approach is not just about selling real estate, but about creating vibrant environments that provide a richer and more fulfilling experience — beyond anything seen before, and at par with the global best.

Compiled by the country's finest writers, designers, photographers and illustrators, *BetterLife* will both entertain and captivate you with its evocative writing and visual imagery.

As Lodha transforms the way we live and work, its transformative approach can be seen in the many habitats it creates for its users. In this issue, you will find the story of how the Spanish city of Barcelona transformed itself over two decades into a much-admired, most desirable smart city. This is a significantly important piece considering that smart cities

are expected to be a lived reality in India in the years to come.

Another piece I wish to bring to your attention is the story *How To Train Like A Star* where celebrity trainer Yasmin Karachiwala talks about what it takes to achieve the best Pilates-toned body. At Lodha, the focus has always been on providing a better quality of life to its residents, and hence the emphasis on creating much-needed community spaces such as parks, walking tracks, gyms, and more. The idea is to offer residents a balanced and healthy lifestyle, with all the comforts of urban living.

Similarly, in the edition you are holding in your hand, we dwell on the importance of a better life at your workplace. The article titled *The Changing Workplace* illustrates how modern office spaces around the world, and particularly in India, are being re-envisioned from the perspective of the comfort and well-being of its employees — transforming them into vibrant, convivial spaces where creativity flourishes and productivity improves.

Further, you'll find articles ranging from services provided by hospitality experts St. Amand, to tips on how to start an art collection and buying the best watches this season. Everything to ensure that you live each day to the fullest.

BetterLife is an important part of our continuous endeavour to transform the lives of our customers.

We'd love to know what you think of this edition. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we did putting it together.

— Blandine de Navacelle



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Contents

The house of memories	14
Making the right investment	20
How to train like a star	22
Smart City Barcelona	46
The evolution of Grosvenor Square	72
The changing workplace	90
A concierge like none other	100
The best of 2019	106
The world of Lodha	110
The Icon - Farnsworth House	114

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36



Creator of Meta Luxury Experiences

Sonu Shivdasani, the founder of renowned hospitality brands such as Six Senses and Soneva, believes that the travel of the future will be defined by intelligent luxury which combines environmentalism and sustainability.



30

Craft cocktail haven

Charcoal and truffle oil in your cocktails, custom-made barware and Indian lilac infusions — *Town Hall Mumbai* at The World Towers by Lodha embraces the experimental cocktail culture that has changed the way people drink, globally.



56

Starting over

Rahul Akerkar's personal journey reads like a modern history of the city's independent restaurant businesses. His new restaurant *Qualia* is a culmination of his many culinary experiences.

78



The experimental designs of Patricia Urquiola

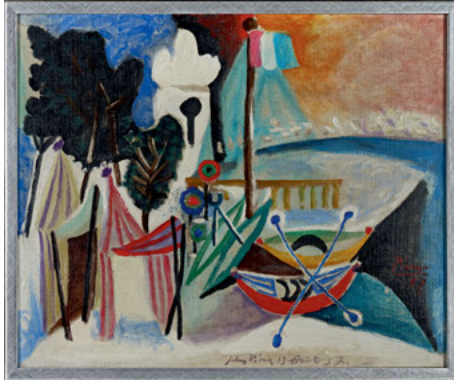
In little over 17 years, *Patricia Urquiola*, the Milan-based virtuoso, has transformed herself into one of the most celebrated women in the male-dominated world of global design.

The multifaceted Amin Jaffer on why art collectors need to be passionate about their collection

By Suman Tarafdar

“Collecting is a
Long Journey...”





FOR THOSE FOLLOWING the Indian art world, Amin Jaffer has been a fixture for the better part of the last decade and a half. In his myriad roles – as an art historian, curator, auctioneer, writer, traveller – he is an aesthete, and yet steeped in the business and administration of the arts. Ethnically Indian, his experiences make him a global connoisseur, equally at home in different aspects of the arts, ancient or modern, oriental or from the occident, classic paintings by the greatest of Renaissance masters or contemporary installations.

Two years ago, after a long stint as the International Director of Asian Art at Christie's, and before that as a Senior Curator at London's V&A Museum, he became the Chief Curator of The Al-Thani Collection. The art repository of the ruling family of Qatar, with more than 6000 pieces

of art spanning the ancient to the modern, is amongst the largest privately owned art collections in the world. It is estimated that the Al-Thani family has spent more than \$1 billion on their modern art collection alone over the last two decades, and the annual budget of the Qatar Museum Authority is said to be in the region of \$250 million. Recently, when Christie's in New York auctioned over 400 pieces from The Al Thani Collection of Indian jewels, ranging from Mughal emeralds to Golconda diamonds, it was hailed as the jewellery sale of the century and fetched a record \$109 million.

Jaffer's prominence in this exalted and charming world of art has been a lifelong journey. His mother had taken him to the Louvre when he was just six, and by the age 10, he had seen most of the major museums of Europe.

Born into an Indian-origin business family in Kigali, Rwanda, he studied ceramics at the University in Toronto before moving to London where he undertook a Master's, and then a PhD at the Royal College of Art, following which he spent more than a decade each in top-level positions at the Victoria & Albert Museum and Christie's.

Two years ago, on the request of the Lodha family, Jaffer was instrumental in acquiring the Picasso that proudly hangs in the lobby of one of Mumbai's most exclusive apartment addresses, Lodha Altamount on the fashionable Altamount Road. It is probably the only instance in the world of a globally renowned artist's work exhibited in the public area of a residential building! The joyful looking painting called *La Plage, Juan-les-Pins* (the beach at Juan-les-Pins) depicts



Picasso's *La Plage, Juan-les-Pins*, which Jaffer helped acquire, finds a pride of place at Lodha Altamount, Mumbai.

“Picasso was a versatile and innovative artist, capable of capturing the mood and sentiment in just a few strokes,” Dr Jaffer says.

Dr Jaffer is a Senior Curator at The Al Thani Collection; some pieces of art, antiques and jewellery from the extensive collection.



the beach in the town of Antibes, on the Côte d'Azur coast along the Mediterranean in southeastern France, where the great artist spent a considerable amount of time during World War II. The work is an important part of Picasso's oeuvre because it was painted in 1937, the same year as his masterpiece *Guernica*. The grimness and horror of the work, which was painted in the dark environ of German-occupied Paris, provide high contrast to the colourful optimism of *La Plage, Juan-les-Pins*, which was painted in sunny beachfront town. "Picasso was a versatile and innovative artist, capable of capturing the mood and sentiment in just a few strokes," Jaffer says. "The range of his practice, from large

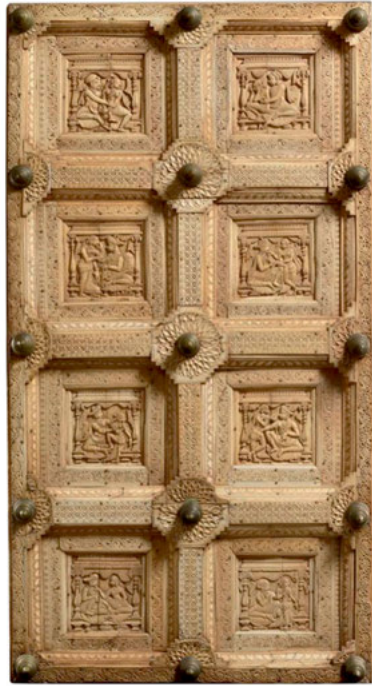
canvases to doodles on notepaper and ceramics, makes it possible to appreciate his distinctive vision in many ways."

Like in the case of Lodha, Jaffer is an art advisor to several prominent collectors of art – from individuals to families – across the world. He was part of the team that launched the first Christie's auction in India, and his dapper, understated presence was often taken to be a reassuring one, as quite a few potential buyers and art collectors have mentioned over time.

What has enhanced Jaffer's reputation as a curator and art advisor have been his many scholarly books on art and antiques of the Indian subcontinent. Among those include *Furniture from British India and Ceylon*

(V&A, 2001), *Luxury Goods from India* (V&A, 2002) and *Made for Maharajas: A Design Diary of Princely India* (2006), the books that accompanied the famous exhibitions that he co-curated including *Encounters: The Meeting of Asia and Europe, 1500-1800* (2004) and *Maharaja: the Splendour of India's Royal Courts* (2009-10). His latest work is *Mughals to the Maharajas: Treasures from the Al-Thani Collection*, based on yet another exhibition that he curated, at the Grand Palais Paris, two years ago. These works, which are a perfect amalgamation of academic rigour and readability, has found Jaffer admirers around the world.

Jaffer's advice to art collectors: buy art that appeals to your senses and aesthetics and visit museums, art



galleries and art biennales, read up on art and keep yourself informed. “With the internet, there is a huge amount of information available today to anyone thinking of collecting. If you visit art galleries, auction houses or museums, don’t be afraid to ask questions. Those who are passionate about their subject will always enjoy sharing information and insights,” he says. A firm believer that collecting is a very personal endeavour driven by individual taste and passion, he adds, “If you are not sure about an acquisition, but you’re drawn towards it, trust your eye, not just your head. In many ways, the worst purchases are the ones you wish you made but did not. In this respect, I would say that collecting should be a source of

pleasure, both the process and the joy of owning something that you love.”

For those with an eye on the value of their artwork, Jaffer says great works of art will tend to hold their value in the long-term, “and can often increase in value. But above all, you should acquire works of art which appeal to you and which bring you pleasure”. He believes that while people can make money from art, “personally, I believe that the main motivation for collecting should be the satisfaction of owning works that you enjoy”. Historically, the collections which have made the greatest returns have actually been those that have been collected with the heart, rather than with an eye on a financial return. “Collecting is a long journey; have an

open mind, and never be afraid to ask,” he stresses. “Collecting art requires connoisseurship, which develops with experience and with study. Visit as many museums and exhibitions as possible: the more you see, the more you will understand.”

“If you are not sure about an acquisition, but you’re drawn towards it, trust your eye, not just your head.”



Amin Jaffer with a guest at a Christie's event in Delhi.

His advice is often sought on that increasingly rare category – Modern Indian Masters. His suggestion for collecting these pieces – “If you know which particular artist you like, there are many websites which can help you find works of art for sale. You can also sign up through auction houses and online sites to be informed if works by specific artists are coming up for auction. If you find galleries which sell similar works, they will usually be happy to keep you posted if anything comes in that they think might appeal to you.”

As for which contemporary artists he would recommend, he says it is difficult to make a general recommendation – it depends on the taste of an individual collector. “It is often helpful to go to an art fair, where you can see a diverse range of contemporary work being shown

by numerous galleries, all of which are ready and willing to help and discuss their artists. Personally, I have been following the work of a group of artists including Imran Qureshi, Hasnat Mehmood, Rana Begum, Ali Kazim, Rashid Rana, Manish Nai, Seher Shah, Ayesha Sultana, Prabhavathi Meppayil, Anita Dube, Waqas Khan, Wardha Shabir and Dilip Chobisa.”

Despite the fall in the market value of Indian art compared to pre-2008 levels, Jaffer is confident about its future. As he points out, there is a long-established market for Indian art but the last decade has seen much more significant international recognition of the best artists, as well as a considerable increase in demand from the domestic market. “There has been an explosion in activity in terms of the number of art galleries, art fairs and collectors,

and this is a trend which looks set to continue. It is also encouraging to see greater international recognition for Indian artists. This was evident most recently at the Indian Pavilion of the Venice Biennale, where an installation by Jitish Kallat won international acclaim.”

For Jaffer, who is 50, it has been a life well spent in the world of arts. “I have been incredibly fortunate to work in many areas of the art world, and with a wide range of artworks; from ancient Egyptian art to contemporary Indian paintings,” he says, “I continue to learn something new every day.”



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The House

By
Deepali Nandwani

Photographs by
Bajirao Pawar

of Memories

Sanjiv Mehta, Chairman and MD, Hindustan Unilever Ltd.
and President, Unilever, South Asia, on what makes life special on
the 57th floor of The World Towers by Lodha.



“What we like about The World Towers are the amenities – the spa, the sports facilities, the sky lounge, the restaurants, as well as the unbeatable views.”

FROM THE 57TH floor of The World Towers by Lodha, the views are a microcosm of Mumbai. They skim over the old mills of Lower Parel, some of which still stand though shut for years, right up to where the two railway lines, the lifeline of Mumbai city – the Central and the Western – intersect before moving in different directions. Beyond that is the gritty Eastern Seaboard, right now overcast with monsoon-laden clouds. From another part of the house, the view skims over the greens of the Mahalaxmi Race Course.

It is these sweeping, picturesque views that frame Mumbai at its best – not just the chic and sophisticated South Mumbai, but even the old-world appeal of Central Mumbai, which made Sanjiv Mehta, Chairman and Managing Director, Hindustan Unilever India (HUL) and President, Unilever, South Asia, opt for shifting homes from “somewhere between Pedder Road and Altamount Road”, to The World Towers in Worli. “We are

succors for good views. From the 57th floor, we get at least a 200-degree view of the city – from east to west.”

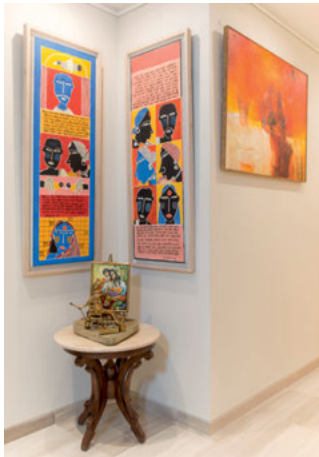
That, and the amenities, he says. “We got a glimpse of The World Towers’ lifestyle potential when the team introduced the project to some of us living in Dubai, at Burj Khalifa, a few years ago. What had appealed to us as family were the world-class amenities – the spa, the sports facilities, the sky lounge and the restaurants in the neighbourhood.”

The Mehta family – Sanjiv, his wife Mona, and their daughters Naina and Roshni have lived across the world. They also own what Mehta calls a ‘classic beach home’ at Palm Jumeirah. While Naina works in Dubai in the field of digital transformation, Roshni, his younger daughter, studies in Boston; both visit when time permits. “We were looking for a home that, in terms of ambience and amenities, would match the best in the world. We love the sports complex at The World Towers – the squash and tennis courts,

the walking tracks and the gym. We also enjoy the spa on the 6th level.”

It has just been two months since Mehta shifted in. “We first bought one apartment, but felt that was too small for the family needs, so we bought another one and made it into a *jodi* apartment,” he says. His sprawling home is a tribute to the countries he has lived and worked in, and the continents he has traversed. It has a vast repertoire of art, classic furniture and antiques that his wife and he bought during their several journeys and stays in different countries.

The Mehta couple is not minimalist at heart: their home reflects their passion for interesting furniture, art and design. “We own paintings and furniture from different parts of the world – from Spain to Syria, Morocco to the Philippines. There is character and history in every corner of the home.” The dining table, for instance, is crafted out of Narra wood, a species native to several Southeast Asian countries. The red-



The walls of the verandah of his expansive home are a canvas for his art. (Right) The sofa set, with mother-of-pearl inlay, is from Syria.



Every part of Mehta's house is a visual interplay of art and furniture.



“If you look at the furniture and art from Morocco, you see a fascinating blend of Arabic and French influences.”

coloured wood is heavier and hardier than teak, and as expensive. And it is banned in the Philippines. “The table was made using the beams of some old houses,” he says. A few other pieces of furniture are from Syria. “I used to head North Africa and Middle East, and I often travelled in the region – from Beirut to Syria, through the Damascus mountains. Syrians make beautiful furniture with mother-of-pearl inlay. We have a stunning sofa set.” The Mehta family also owns a few exotic camel skin tables from Morocco. “The entire belt of Syria, Tunisia and Morocco is rich in culture and culinary traditions.”

The Mehtas are passionate collectors of art and their repertoire is extensive. “We collect what appeals to our senses and what we would like to see adorning our walls,” Mehta insists. Amongst his collection is a painting by Bangladeshi artist Kanak Champa, who works with acrylic and depicts the life of ethnic migrants in her country. “We were among the

first few to put up one of her works at our house in Dhaka. Now, she is an international sensation.” Among other works he mentions is a painting of his wife and two daughters by a father-son artist duo from the Philippines. “Our collection includes artists from Saudi Arabia, Morocco and from eastern India. Recently, I bought a beautiful painting of Nandi from an Indian artist.”

A painting he bought in Marrakech is a few decades old and depicts traditional houses built on rocks. One of his prized possessions is an almost 100-year-old Tanjore painting from a palace near Coonoor. He bought it from an antique dealer recommended by his predecessor at HUL.

While every part of his house is a visual interplay of art and furniture, Mehta’s favourite corner is his study. “It has my favourite felt leather chair and tonnes of books, since my entire family reads a lot. In the morning, I make my tea. I drink a Lipton Yellow Label blend from tea that comes from

Kenya and Sri Lanka. Mona and I start the day by reading the important newspapers, Indian and foreign. I read a lot, from regular magazines to MIT Sloan Management Review, *Harvard Business Review* and books.”

Despite his current interest in digital transformation, particularly as HUL’s chairman and MD, Mehta eschews technology when it comes to his reading habits. “There is nothing to replace how a book feels in your hand,” he says.

The conversation again veers from art and books to the stupendous views. “We drink our early morning tea to the view of the sun coming up in the east. The sundowner is at the western side of the house, watching the sun go down.” For Mehta, monsoons are even more magical a season from this height. “When we were staying on Pedder Road, we could see clouds envelop the top few storeys of The World Towers in monsoons. Now, our house comes under this cloud cover,” he smiles. ☺

Making the right investment

By Suman Tarafdar



The right address is a very vital factor while investing in luxury real estate. The Trump Tower at Lodha Park.

THE NUMBER OF millionaires is growing by leaps and bounds every year. Depending on the source, Indian billionaires number somewhere between 100 and 150 – *Forbes* has them at 109 for 2019, with a net worth of \$405.3 billion. Meanwhile, a Credit Suisse report revealed that the number of dollar millionaires in India was at 3,43,000 in 2018, up from 39,000 in the year 2000.

For this fast-growing segment, growing wealth via investments is almost a lifestyle, an asset manager a must-have accessory. A favourite investment, of course, has been real estate, buying which was already an aspiration hardwired into any Indian's DNA. A rapid rise in the number of high net-worth individuals (HNIs) in conjunction with transforming lifestyles have contributed to the growth of 'statement houses'.

Beyond a hazy understanding, however, is it possible to define what constitutes luxury real estate? "Luxury real estate is more a function of location, specifications, project finishes, amenities and services which cater to a specific lifestyle wealth category," says Rohan Sharma, Research Head, Cushman & Wakefield India. Typically, anything that is priced ₹5 crore and upwards will constitute true luxury. Mumbai, India's most expensive market has

Location, amenities and services should be your reason to invest in real estate, which still provides some of the best returns.

apartments north of ₹10 crore price tag. According to Knight Frank's *Wealth Report 2019*, the ultra-wealthy population (individuals worth over \$30 million) has risen by four per cent between 2017 and 2018 in Asia. Over the next five years, a strong growth of 39 per cent in the ultra-wealthy population is projected for India.

Indian scenario

"With property investment activity having slowed down, luxury real estate was the most impacted," says Sharma. "People are now buying strategically to take advantage of the sales slowdown and the resultant price decline in the luxury segment." Over the past year or so, strategic project launches in core luxury markets with developers reworking the product around the ticket size, have seen some momentum in buying/investment activity. "Key players, who are identified with development in the luxury space have ventured into the market again and have seen moderate momentum," he adds.

So, how do you choose what makes for a good real estate investment?

Location, location, location

For luxury home buyers, the pin code matters the most. "Developers are marketing their projects by highlighting the location along with

luxurious amenities," says Sharma.

Branded homes, often co-branded with international luxury players or lifestyle brands, offer a unique lifestyle of global standards with hospitality services from the finest brands. Themed villas – usually with a touch of the exotic, are another emerging trend. Well-heeled buyers often opt for smart homes – ones that create an 'experience', which are laden with technology-enabled systems, aimed as much at comfort and entertainment (if moving drapes by remote qualifies), as they are with waste management, energy saving and security facilities.

What should one look for while investing

According to Sharma, no one factor can work by itself. Cities which are economic engines of growth offer a mix of returns, transparency and options by large players. "The areas within the city which are witnessing the growth and have the potential for sustaining it and upcoming corridors become investment magnets. Selection of the development partner and project is critical to ensure money is invested in the right asset."


Sharma adds that in a market which is not witnessing high levels of price growth, one could look at renting out the apartment if one is not planning to stay in it. "An apartment

with services can yield better returns if managed by a professional serviced firm, which also ensures a mix of short and long-term stays by professionals."

As for the top five things to look for while investing in an apartment or any luxury property, Sharma suggests looking out for regulatory approvals, location, developer, amenities and services, and price points.

Good time to invest?

Sharma also points out that the volatility is now largely gone from the real estate market, "though some pain points remain, largely centred around unsold inventory and stuck projects with a slowly improving buyer sentiment".

Sure, there seems to be a bit of a glut in the supply of luxury homes in comparison to the demand. Surely that's the time to grab a great deal? Sharma, however, cautions that before investing, it is crucial to ensure that the investor chooses the right mix of the development partner, quality and location to make the most of the luxury real estate investment. "It is critical that the purpose is well-understood and market dynamics have been studied before venturing into investing, and that one is buying into a superior living experience." Indeed. 



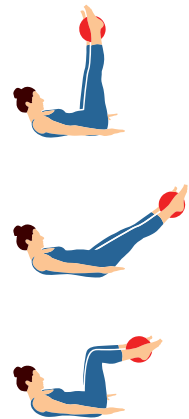
Yasmin Karachiwala has helped some of India's biggest celebrities stay fit and fabulous. Here, she tells us what it takes to achieve the best Pilates-toned body.

How to
train like

By Aparna Gupta

a star

There are many changes you'll see,
but more importantly, feel.
Your shape will change for the better.
You'll look taller and be taller.
You'll feel lighter, stronger,
more energetic and happier.



IT IS A SULTRY EVENING and the Grand Sports Arena at The World Towers by Lodha is dotted with colourful yoga mats. Spread across two acres, the arena includes an athletic track, multiple squash courts and a football turf, with expansive views of the city skyline. It's green and airy, bang in the centre of the maximum city. The view is of the city sprawling westwards, the sea and the greens of the Mahalaxmi Race Course.

If this is not an incentive enough for anyone to come out and stretch their limbs, there is more. It's the opportunity of being exclusively guided by India's leading celebrity trainer in an engaging format – a Sundowner Pilates Camp by Mumbai-based fitness expert Yasmin Karachiwala. She holds the distinction of having trained celebrities such as Katrina Kaif, Alia Bhatt, Deepika Padukone and Kareena Kapoor Khan.

Leading by example, she sports a beautifully toned body and believes that fitness should be anything but

boring in times when sitting on a chair and hunching over the keyboard has become a part of everyday life. Her book *Sculpt and Shape: The Pilates Way* and her easy-to-follow Instagram videos are some of her other efforts to make this form of fitness accessible to all in India.

Her Pilates fitness studio chain, Yasmin's Body Image, known for its celebrity clientele, innovative fitness techniques, body sculpting and transmutation, has been the harbinger of Pilates in the mainstream fitness segment in India. She takes us through her fitness journey and reveals what it takes to stay on top of the game.

Tryst with fitness

Looking at her svelte body and high levels of fitness, it's hard for me to even imagine that this economics graduate from the prestigious St Xavier's College, Mumbai was 'lazy' as a child. "The maximum sport I would take up was the shot-put and javelin throws during Sports Day

because it didn't require me to move," laughs Karachiwala. "I was asked to join the athletic team in school a couple of times but it never interested me because I didn't like moving. I would be the head of march past and I enjoyed doing that because that was just walking." Fitness did not happen organically. A friend wanted to join a gym and asked her to be her gym partner. "Actually she didn't ask me, she forced me to join the aerobics class, and I did everything wrong. This embarrassed me and I took it up as a challenge. In the process, I enjoyed what I was doing and that was my first tryst with fitness." After college, she went to the US for a certification as a group fitness instructor.

What does it mean to have a healthy body?

Just because you engage in fitness doesn't mean you are healthy, she says. While fitness is a broad term that means different things to different people, it also refers to your own



Karachiwala, a BASI-certified Pilates instructor, has introduced India to several 'train-the-trainer' programmes.

optimal health and overall well-being. "Being fit not just means physical health, but emotional and mental health, too. Smart eating and active living are fundamental to fitness." She contends that over the last two decades perceptions about fitness have changed. "Fitness is not about being skinny but leading a healthy life. Working out and eating right make you look and feel good."

Decoding Pilates

Things in the fitness industry are constantly evolving. "I believe a workout is good only if it offers long-term results. There is a new workout called Barre method. It has a bar with which you can do different exercises. I find it very interesting. Then there is CrossFit, which is a short but intense workout. It is very beneficial for those who don't have enough time to work out. Another workout that I can't skip mentioning is Motor. It is a form of equipment that you can travel with. It looks like a foam roller with

resistance," states Karachiwala. While, like most things 'lifestyle', new trends will keep the interest in fitness alive, she plumps for Pilates.

Karachiwala is a BASI-certified (a US-based teacher training programme) Pilates instructor in India and she introduced the country to several 'train-the-trainer' programmes. Passionate about Pilates as a fitness form, she reasons, "Pilates concentrates on strengthening the body with an emphasis on core strength. This helps to improve general fitness and overall well-being. Pilates also focuses on the mind-body connection. While doing the exercises, your mind needs to be constantly aware of your breathing and the way your body moves. In Pilates, the chance of injury is much lower than with other more strenuous forms of exercise."

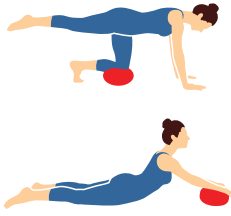
Similar to yoga, Pilates concentrates on posture, balance and flexibility. One of the main differences, she cites, between yoga and Pilates is

that yoga can be used for improving the flexibility of the body and it will also gradually increase the flexibility of your joints. Whereas Pilates focuses on trying to relax muscles which are tense and provides strength to the numerous muscles in the body.

To get the most out of Pilates you need to understand what it is you're actually doing and why, says Karachiwala. "There are many changes you'll see, but more importantly feel. Your shape will change for the better. You'll look taller and be taller. You'll feel lighter, stronger, more energetic and happier. You'll also improve your quality of sleep; and your mind will be more focused. If you have commitment to your daily routine and discipline in your movement, your whole body will develop uniformly, giving you the quality of life you deserve."

The benefits of Pilates

Good posture: The exercises require that your body is always in



The right training

If you want a body like a star, then train like a star! “Scoring a great body is impossible without consistency. It makes all the difference when you are looking at a transformation,” says Yasmin Karachiwala. Patience and discipline are the virtues that help the B-town stars get by.

“Their tight work schedules make it difficult for them to make time for exercise. Sometimes they work 12 to 14 hours a day – and at others, they are just travelling for a stretch. But to achieve a certain look for a film, they ensure that they exercise at some time of the day,” shares the star trainer. She offers some tips to get started.

Know your body type: Before you plan your routine, find out your body composition as this will help you set your goals.

Warm-up: A good warm-up helps avoid any of the pulls or pains that hinder your fitness plans. Pick right shoes, keep yourself hydrated and make sure you cool down post a workout to stretch the muscles.

Pilates push: Improve your posture by including Pilates in your workout routine. It works on lengthening and strengthening your spine.

alignment. This is especially beneficial if you suffer from lower back pain.

Muscle tone: It involves the use of muscles that you may not use on a daily basis. After the initial soreness, you’ll find that your muscles are much more toned.

Flat abdominal muscles: Because Pilates focuses on strengthening your core, regular practice will result in a flat stomach.

Flexibility: Pilates restores flexibility that one loses with age. This comes in handy for avoiding injuries from falls.

Improves your balance: Through the mind-body connection which is taught in Pilates, you become much more aware of how your body moves and performs.

So, who needs Pilates?

With our growing sedentary lifestyle and incorrect posture, shoulder pain and stiffness has become commonplace. A lot of people only take up Pilates when they feel they need rehab, or they have an ailment of some kind due to postural issues and their working environment. However, Karachiwala recommends it as a preventative form of exercise, “Whether you are a mature person with a sedentary lifestyle, an active athlete, or a young teen, Pilates is for you. With multiple modifications, this workout can be applied to every individual, irrespective of their age or activity level.”

Pilates, then, is a form of exercise that is versatile and suitable for both beginners and people who already exercise regularly.

Making it a fun exercise

Karachiwala’s sessions are fun and

not monotonous. Consistency in fitness regime and the right lifestyle is the key to achieve the best benefits. “Challenges are good as it keeps you and your client motivated. I try to learn as many styles in Pilates that I can and try to make my own style using all of them without losing the core principle. In our country, people get so involved in making exercise interesting that they do not stick to the rules of the exercises.”

Keep fitness simple

Her over 25 years of experience has taught Karachiwala that there is no magic formula to be fit, except exercising and eating right. “There are lots of home exercises you can do like squats and lunges. Challenge yourself and avoid boredom. Find an exercise partner. Schedule your workouts. Use a journal to track your progress and jot down any breakthroughs you may have – push-ups, triceps dips, jumping jacks, *Suryanamaskars*, chest lifts and sit-ups. You can buy a TheraBand and do lots of free-hand exercises.” If you are trying to lose weight, for it to show results, you must enjoy your workout sessions. Pay attention to what you put in your body. You can exercise for one or maximum two hours a day out of the 24 hours. What you eat or drink for the remaining 22 hours matters as much if not more.

“Don’t get obsessed with your workout,” she warns. “While it is important to be fit, I don’t get down to extreme measures such as fat burners. Never compromise on health in the name of fitness. Do it in moderation and do it right.” 📧

Pilates, much like yoga, concentrates on posture and flexibility. While yoga improves flexibility, Pilates relaxes tensed muscles.





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Craft Cocktail Haven





Charcoal and truffle oil in your cocktail, custom-made barware and Indian lilac infusions — Town Hall, Mumbai, at The World Towers by Lodha, embraces the experimental cocktail culture that has changed the way people drink, globally.

By Bisham
Mansukhani

Photographs by
Bajirao Pawar

THERE'S LITTLE ABOUT this bar and world cuisine restaurant that's commonplace. In fact, there is plenty that represents everything that is tantalizing about the trending global cocktail culture.

Town Hall is an unusual name for a cocktail bar-cum-restaurant. In Britain, town halls are places where the elite and political leaders once congregated to make significant policy decisions.

The name is an unmistakable invitation to congregate and the clutch of signature cocktails is the answer to the reason why. Town Hall is one of Mumbai's latest restaurant-cum-bars to enter the generously populated Lower Parel food and beverage realm but with some shining distinction. Already well established in Delhi, Town Hall's Mumbai outpost at the

swish new address, The World Towers by Lodha, serves world cuisine, chief among them sushi and grills, Southeast Asian comfort food and South American fare. Notably, it also serves a number of in-house crafted cocktails. With so many restaurant options alongside one long asphalt stretch, Town Hall, its owner Randeep Bajaj says, had to do something compellingly unique.

Hence, a menu comprised entirely of signature cocktails and stripped of the classics (though they are available on demand) is Town Hall's hedonistic attribute. "Cocktails are more in vogue now than ever. Town Hall has been active since this trend was nascent. We've put our backs into creating a space to experience eclectic original cocktails. We don't worry about the

liquor and ingredient cost as much as crafting a great cocktail, in spite of all the challenges," Bajaj asserts.

The space itself betrays a certain originality of scale — the tall ceiling offers a sense of volume and the bar stretches its shelves almost all the way to the top. There certainly is a lot of spirits to look up to.

Cocktails & how

Signature cocktails are now a pervasive claim to fame for most high-end bars. For Town Hall, these aren't just an attractive gimmick but serious business. Town Hall's signature cocktail menu, remarkably, brings home plenty of international trends as well as domestic ones. Bajaj believes that many of the prevailing international and domestic trends are



Hitesh Kumar, Town Hall, Mumbai's beverage director, with owner Randeep Bajaj.

embedded in the menu itself. “Indians have moved beyond the classics and prefer signature concoctions and that is confirmed by the fact that our best-selling cocktails are all house originals. Our focus is on contemporary cocktails,” he infers.

Then there’s gin — this aromatic white spirit has pervaded international mixology for the past two years and in India, the charge is two-pronged, both with cocktails and a larger selection of international and even domestic gins. Town Hall has gone a step further, serving up home-made gin and tonic literally, all four variants of them. This they’ve done by using siphon machines to redistill gin and produce home-made infused tonics — Indian lilac and smoked pineapple are some notable ingredients.

Which neatly pivots the conversation to another buzzing fad — infusions. Town Hall beverage director, Hitesh Kumar, who worked the Delhi craft cocktail bar scene for several years, pitches in. He reveals a key bar USP, saying that while most bars infuse spirits back of the house in mason jars, Town Hall uses its siphon machines to create the infusions on demand. One of the rewards is a signature called Heritage which contains coconut-washed bourbon. Washing is a technique that requires infusion. “Town Hall has the gear that gets it done in minutes using siphon machines as opposed to conventional infusion that might take two days. So, we’re doing infusions on demand,” Kumar declares.

Golden Saint is one of the bar’s

most popular cocktails in which this technology is best on show, requiring rapidly infused turmeric gin.

In-house craft

Bitters are another fruitful obsession for the Town Hall bar. Bitters, Bajaj says, are a vital ingredient that lends balance and complexity to cocktails. He notes that many of the bitters were all initially imported from Europe and while that supply line is still active, Town Hall’s handymen are constantly making their own. The mixology workspace abounds with tiny bottles of grapefruit, rhubarb and tonic bitters. Toxin Protocol uses grapefruit bitters while orange bitters liven up the tequila-based concoction, Rutaceae. Kumar claims that



Golden Saint has Rapid Infusion Turmeric gin, lime juice, simple syrup, egg white, and is garnished with bitter art.



Stalker, made using Del Maguey Mezcal, Martini Bianco, Angostura bitter and apricot syrup, is topped with ginger ale.

eucalyptus tincture which goes into the signature aperitif, Botanic Touch, is almost impossible to find behind any Indian bar. Its Asian influences are betrayed by an arsenal of spice bitters, namely Thai chilli and bell pepper. Walnut, chocolate and cinnamon bitters are in the works as are recipes to deploy them in.

With regard to another critical ingredient, syrups, trend or not, Bajaj says Town Hall doesn't do artificial. "We want to banish artificial flavours from this space so home-made syrups are a strict norm. We use a lot of fresh fruit here — strawberries, for instance, are crushed, pureed and frozen. Even our sugar syrup is made from sugarcane," he stresses.

Back to spirits. Gin isn't the only one monopolizing the domestic buzz.



A menu comprised entirely of signature cocktails and stripped of the classics (though they are available on demand) is Town Hall's hedonistic attribute.



Burnt orange, in-house syrups and fresh ingredients are some of the hallmarks of Town Hall's cocktails.



Toxin Protocol, made with gin, two dashes of grapefruit bitter, some thyme, a dash of lime juice and honey, and garnished with thyme and grapefruit slice is served in a stemless glass.

There's been latent Latin traction with both Mezcal (Mexico) and Pisco (Peru and Chile) gaining favour. So, there's a signature, Stalker (sole Mezcal cocktail for which dry vermouth and apricot are used) and while the bar presently serves up the Pisco classic – Pisco Sour, in-house recipes are in the works.

Caribbean and South American rums also feature among Town Hall's cocktails. Sake Council features as an unmistakable tip of the hat to Town Hall's dedicated sushi bar – sake with galangal, lemongrass and citrus, served in the very Oriental soup bowl.

There's an interesting ingredient, Kumar points out, which global mixologists are taking to and so is Town Hall. Charcoal features in two of its signatures – Char-goma and Toxic Protocol. The latter features an

activated (heated) charcoal flavoured ice sphere so the cocktail starts off looking creamy, gradually getting darker as the sphere erodes. Some other trendy asides include the use of healthy ingredients such as aloe vera, turmeric, chia seeds and Sriracha.

Kumar brings to attention the shooters section; shooters, he says, aren't just for kicks but also some serious flavour experiments. For proof, there's High Octane which contains truffle oil and butterwash gin and tastes nearly like petrol. Two oak barrels sitting quietly behind the bar, ageing two classics, are a nice touch and might soon be nursing signatures.

The overall cocktail presentation, Bajaj emphasizes, is also taken seriously. "We focus consciously on the aesthetics – garnishing, ice and most

significantly, glassware. Most of our glassware is custom-made. Custom glassware is a growing international trend in an age when most cocktails land up on Instagram before being sipped," he points out. To that end, Town Hall's menu contains another distinction – a cocktail tree which includes six cocktails – a community cocktail concept.

Redoubtably, Town Hall is a reliable mirror to, and a sounding board for global cocktail trends. But it isn't the one to rest on its achievements, with seasonal menu changes due and hibiscus-flavoured ice and sous vide machines ready to make in-house liqueurs. The crafting here is unlikely to ever cease. Town Hall, Mumbai certainly isn't the common cocktail haven. 🍷



Town Hall uses no artificial syrups. It also uses a lot of fresh fruits.



Sake Council is a blend of sake and vodka, served with a dash of lime and honey, topped by galangal and lemongrass and garnished with plum and apple slice.

Creator of

By
Neeti Mehra

Meta-Luxury

Experiences



Sonu Shivdasani, the founder of renowned hospitality brands such as Six Senses and Soneva, believes that the travel of the future will be defined by intelligent luxury which combines environmentalism and sustainability.

CURIOSLY, A SALAD starring the humble *Eruca Sativa*, a fresh, tart, peppery leafy plant, better known as the rocket leaf, is the signature dish at the hip ultra-luxury castaway-style Soneva resorts in the Maldives and Thailand. Located on patches of paradise in inspired natural locations, Soneva combines luxury with a fierce commitment to the environment, winning legions of loyal celebrity patrons such as Gwyneth Paltrow and Tilda Swinton.

Sonu Shivdasani, Soneva's CEO and Joint Creative Director, along with his wife, Eva Malmström Shivdasani, its creative director and 'conscience', pioneered the unique philosophy of intelligent luxury – a simple sophistication at the doorstep of nature. The hotels he set up are holistic getaways that are disconnected from urban chaos.

Coming back to the salad, then. Shivdasani argues that this chemical-free and sustainably sourced salad (it is grown by their gardeners) is an embodiment of true luxury for the urban elite. The experience of eating greens, freshly dug out that very morning from the garden, is a

cherished moment that overshadows a masterfully plated smattering of caviar, served with a steak of Wagyu beef that has been flown over air miles, in a starred restaurant. This thinking has been distilled into Shades of Green, the latest dining addition to the flagship Soneva Fushi, where guests embark on a sensorial guided tour of the garden, foraging herbs, fruits and vegetables. Choosing among seasonal, six-course menus: cleansing, crispy, raw, grain, fire and sweet, diners nibble into a future that values simplicity and discovery.

Shivdasani has often termed himself an accidental hotelier. A descendant of Indian parents, Laxmi and Indoo Shivdasani, he was born and educated largely in England and spent some of his growing years in Nigeria and Switzerland. His father, an Indian merchant and banker, made his fortune while trading in Nigeria. An alumnus of Eton College, Shivdasani graduated from Oxford University with an MA in English Literature. He met his future wife, Eva, a Swedish fashion model and entrepreneur on a fortuitous trip to Monaco for the Grand Prix.

For their honeymoon, they embarked on a whirlwind trip across the globe, savouring the world's most exclusive getaways. Both passionate environmentalists, they fell in love with the untamed beauty of the Maldives. Back then, the tiny island nation was a magnet for budget travellers, flush with tacky hotels, with disposable plastic chairs, shiny neon lights and tinned food. They wanted to build a dream destination for luxury travellers, and in 1995 they opened Soneva Fushi (Soneva is a combination of their names Sonu and Eva), on the deserted island of Kunfunadhoo, introducing the world to barefoot luxury. It was their first success story, one which has replicated itself innumerable times in the past three decades. A working partnership is a tricky road to navigate, but they have clearly defined boundaries. They complement each other's skills, with good communication as the glue binding them together. While Shivdasani conceptualises the architecture and design of the buildings, Eva focuses on interior design. "If one of us objects to the other's thinking, we will both scream



Soneva resorts work with the local community to curate exceptional experiences of the destinations they are in.



Left: Soneva Fushi in the Maldives.



Top: Sonu Shivdasani and his wife, Eva, the creative director and 'conscience' of the brand, have created simple sophistication at the doorstep of nature.
Below: The Shivdasanis pioneered the concept of using sustainable food sources in the hospitality industry.



Soneva Kiri in Thailand is a lush island escape. (Right) Out of the Blue is a shared dining space for a number of kitchens at the Soneva Fushi resort, in the Maldives.

and kick a bit. Once we see the other's perspective, we generally find a solution," he says.

Soon after the success of Soneva Fushi, they were inundated with requests to manage hotels and resorts. Shivdasani launched Evason Group of Hotels and Six Senses Resorts and Spas across incredible locations in Southeast Asia and Europe. Six Senses set the gold standard in wellness at a time when the term was just an abstract concept. "Our focus was always to combine the best of Western science-based wellness with the ancient traditions of Asia. Whether it is traditional Chinese and Tibetan medicines or Indian Ayurveda," Shivdasani says, explaining their philosophy of "balancing the senses", while creating equilibrium between the east and the west, the Yin and Yang.

This multi-dimensional approach to wellness pushed beyond traditional boundaries. Over the decades, the brand continues to introduce ideas that bring together cutting-edge neuroscience and human biology, a high-tech and high-touch approach. By 2011, Six Senses had grown to an international luxury spa and resort

chain, with 26 resorts and 41 spas across the globe. The newest Six Senses opened at the uber-exclusive The World Towers by the Lodha Group in Mumbai and caters to the residents of the upscale residential property.

Despite the success of Six Senses, Shivdasani took a hard decision. He sold both the companies in 2012, to focus on owned resorts with private residences under Soneva, as part of the 'One Owner, One Operator, One Philosophy, One Brand' strategy. Soneva, a sustainable luxury resort operator, owns and manages Soneva Fushi and Soneva Jani in the Maldives and Soneva Kiri in Thailand, as well as Soneva in Aqua, an ultra-luxurious yacht also tethered in the Maldives. *Forbes* reported last year that the privately held company takes in about \$70 million in revenue, with a healthy \$24 million in profit.

Shivdasani laments that luxury, in general, has become institutionalised. A walk down London's Bond Street, ironically the refuge of the elite, reveals a laundry list of brands built with the sweat and toil of a few passionate individuals, now owned by a handful of conglomerates peddling

a similar vision of refinement. This consolidation has segued into the hotel industry too, where hospitality monoliths are swallowing up independent operators and chain hotels creating homogeneity. "Destinations true to their offering will continue to thrive and those that lose that individuality will suffer. Most luxury brands' latest offerings are no different from their last or that of a competitor's brand. The only difference between one and the other is the name on the door," he says, with a belief that hotels are dynamic entities which must continuously evolve and change, adding new dimensions frequently.

The Soneva experience of barefoot luxury is disconnected from the white noise of the world. Shattering outdated notions of luxury is what Shivdasani intends to do. "Expense, we would argue, is not indicative of luxury. Rarity, however, is. Our core purpose is to create imaginative and engaging SLOW LIFE (Sustainable Local Organic Wellness Learning Inspiring Fun Experiences). It is our guiding principle and our moral and operating compass."





Building a foundation

The Shivdasanis established the Soneva Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation, to reinforce their core ideology of slow life. Shivdasani believes that companies need to be a part of the solution. “The hotel industry benefits the richest 20-30 per cent of the planet, because of our resource-hungry ways,” he reflects.

Shivdasani tweaked the business incrementally, ensuring that Soneva’s profitability remained intact and the guest experience didn’t suffer, yet the business made an impact on the sustainability front. He banned branded water and sourced purified and bottled water on site. Soneva also introduced a mandatory two per cent carbon levy on customers, to set-off their carbon travel emission, raising nearly \$5 million.

Claire Wrathall in *The Telegraph* writes about how Shivdasani has set an example for the plutocrats who have the power to make a difference. “Take waste. ‘We regard rubbish as an asset,’” he says, explaining his waste-to-wealth scheme. “It can generate income. Food and cardboard are composted; fallen branches

turned into charcoal; polystyrene made into pellets for beanbags...” Soneva Fushi has its state-of-the-art glass factory, which recycles its waste as well as that of neighbouring resorts in the Baa Atoll, turning much of the waste into tableware.

The Soneva Foundation has funded a reforestation programme in northern Thailand; a windmill in southern India, and has provided 1,50,000 heavily subsidised cooking stoves in Myanmar and Darfur. “Our earth’s resources are finite and we all need to be better guardians to protect the world,” he comments. Being sustainable doesn’t always require a substantial outlay. Some of the effective measures have included producing cold-pressed coconut oil and recycling glass bottles into objects of beauty.

He is also looking to develop a natural skincare range using traditional remedies and biodynamic ingredients and eco-friendly boats.

Soneva Resorts create meta-luxury experiences for their guests, with a focus on depth, discovery and understanding of the community and the destination.




Freelance journalist Claire Wrathall, writing about the sort of barefoot luxury propagated by Soneva, in *The Telegraph* describes it as the only place she has stayed in “where you are offered a drawstring bag on arrival and encouraged to give up your footwear for the duration of your holiday. Thankfully, for those with imperfect feet, it’s not a rule they enforce. Neither is there an actual blackout on media. There are televisions, though they are concealed in artfully arranged vintage trunks at the foot of each bed. And there is WiFi in each villa, though it can be switched off. Resigned to the reality that the high-rollers who can afford to holiday here are probably wedded to their phones, there are little pockets sewn into the mosquito nets so that you can reach for your handset with ease during the night.”

The experiences at the resorts are positively enchanting. At Soneva Fushi you can watch a film under the star-spangled sky in the open-air Cinema Paradiso. Or count Saturn’s rings in the high-tech Observatory, the largest one built in the Indian Ocean! Eat fair-trade dark chocolate in the Chocolate Room or uncork biodynamic wines

from the five hundred wines to choose at any of the nine restaurants. Children can play in the \$1 million dens, a technology-free environment. And you can shower in the 100 square-metre bathroom among waterfalls, tropical plants while gazing at the full moon. Enjoy your meal while your toes sink into the silken sand. Soneva is where you forget the concrete jungle as you know it. But ultimately, the experience comes together depending on the quality of service. “Magical service is not taught, it is instilled in people.”

The past few decades have seen a rise in the new urban wealthy, in sharp contrast to the landed gentry of yore, when the old rules of luxury were established. The internet revolution and the emergence of the BRICS heralded the birth of the affluent entrepreneur. “Cities are becoming larger, more polluted and more stressful to live in. This city dweller, whether he is from London, Paris, New York or Tokyo lives in a variety of boxes: an apartment box, a car box, an office box, and so on. He walks on metal, plastic and concrete with leather-bound feet,” says Shivdasani,

whose intention is to help them indulge in an otherworldly lifestyle far removed from the shackles and formality of urban living.

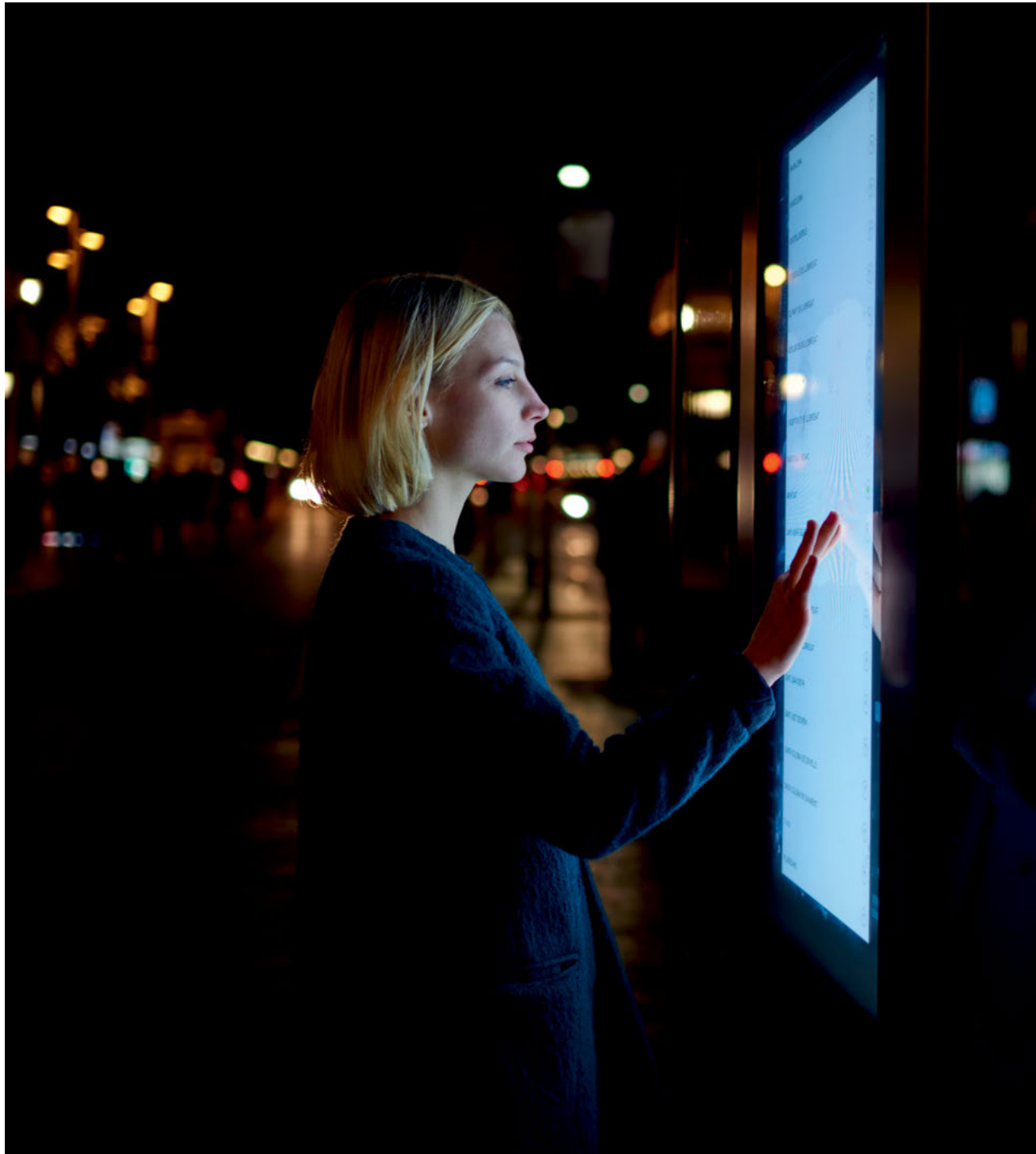
“The new travellers’ needs have evolved from luxury to meta luxury. Luxury today is no longer about owning items indicative of status,” he says. Meta luxury, a buzzword coined by global consultancy Interbrand’s directors, Manfredi Ricca and Rebecca Robins, represents the human quest for unique achievements that can stand the test of time, enduring and evolving from one generation to the next, while fostering a culture of excellence, a philosophy that Shivdasani has built for Soneva. “Meta luxury is about authentic conviction, experience, focus and depth, discovery and understanding. The new elite seeks meaning, authenticity and connection,” he succinctly sums it up. The world is striving for real experiences, seeking to live in the moment. “We want them to escape, to dream, to feel. When you create an experience that is both unique and admired, you earn a very strong level of loyalty from the guest,” Shivdasani says. 

Smart city Barcelona

By
Savaram Ravindra

and
Deepali Nandwani

**How the Spanish city reinvented
itself through an impeccably
orchestrated regeneration plan.**





Superblocks, an urban mobility programme, has helped decrease the number of cars in city centres.



SOMETIMES, THE GREATEST of sporting events leave equally great impact on the cities they are staged in. Particularly when the event is as global and prestigious as the Olympics. Beijing built humungous stadiums, which are considered architectural icons. Cities such as Vancouver and London constructed considerable urban infrastructure to meet the demands of sporting events. The once contaminated industrial fields of East London, where the Olympics was hosted, have been converted into a 250-hectare Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Modern apartments have sprung up where once stood the athlete's village.

But it was Barcelona, more than any other city, which used Olympics as a pole vault to leap into the future, launching a regeneration project so humungous that it changed the face of the urban landscape and earned it the tag of a smart city. So rewarding was the regeneration that in 1999, the Royal Institute of British Architects took the unprecedented step of awarding its Royal Gold Medal for Architecture not to an individual architect, as in years past, but to Barcelona for its “ambitious yet pragmatic urban strategy”, which has “transformed the city’s public realm, immensely expanded its amenities and regenerated its economy, providing pride to its inhabitants and delight to its visitors”.

If you walk along any of the beaches and promenades of Barcelona today, it is hard to imagine that the city once had virtually no coastline,

that it was cut off from the beautiful Mediterranean by a 10-lane highway and railway tracks, and that it dumped all its untreated sewage water straight into the ocean. Joan Busquets, a city planner and architect who helmed the city planning authority ahead of the 1992 Olympics, said in an interview to *The New York Times*, “Barcelona had all the stigmas of the negative place you could think of.”

Barcelona, which sits on the northeastern corner of the Iberian peninsula, in the Spanish Levante, is bounded by the Mediterranean Sea to the east, the Collserola mountains to the west, the Besòs River to the north, and the Llobregat River to the southwest. Today, this Spanish city may be famous as “the land of sun, sand and sangria”, but before the Games in 1992, it was considered an industrial backwater. Why it went to seed before being put through a major regeneration programme can be traced back to its history.

The city traces its origins back to the Romans, who settled here in 15 BC and in the 1st century BC, built the medieval city of Barcino. From Barcino to modern-day Barcelona has been a long journey, but its growth has been hampered by the fact that it is a “bounded and compressed city”, according to Busquets. While all through history, almost every part of the city was carefully planned, increasing population and a thrust towards industrialisation ensured that, over time, Barcelona got severely congested. In the 1930s, a group of architects called GCATSPAC (Catalan

Group of Technical Architects for the Solution of Problems of Contemporary Architecture), headed by Josep Luis Sert, a follower and colleague of the famous French rationalist architect Le Corbusier, came up with an urban development plan to deal with the chaos. Le Corbusier helped GCATSPAC develop the Maci Plan, which reconceived Barcelona along grand modernist lines, as a political and cultural capital.



Getty Images

Barcelona's City Council augmented the road network, creating new bicycle lanes.



Artists' collectives that took over Poblenu's abandoned warehouses, painted the neighbourhood walls with colourful graffiti.



The Maci Plan was never implemented. Instead, a civil war in 1939 led to the ascension of Gen. Francisco Franco, a fascist dictator under whom Barcelona suffered huge neglect. The period was characterized by unregulated construction using cheap materials, often at the periphery of the city, to accommodate workers moving from other parts of Spain. After his death, Spanish governments over time made small cosmetic changes. But not until the 1992 Olympics was a major regeneration project launched.

Regenerating the city

The local government launched a major restructuring project, which is today considered the gold standard. A report on the economic impact of the Olympics by Ferran Brunet of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, revealed the extent of the investment in infrastructure and how humongous the project was. The regeneration project cost Spain \$11.4 billion way back in 2009. “New roads were laid out and the road network went up by 15 per cent; the sewage system was augmented by almost 17 per cent; and the green areas increased by 78 per cent.” Before the regeneration project, Barcelona did not have any beaches or beachfronts. Under the project, the city created two miles of beachfront and a modern marina by demolishing industrial buildings on the waterfront. The city also built a network of sporting infrastructure.

Unlike Beijing, Barcelona did not focus on large sporting venues,

considered white whales that gathered dust after the event. Instead, it focussed on funding major infrastructure upgrades across the entire swathe of this sea-fronted city. Rundown industrial facilities were demolished and where the Poblenou district met the water, the planners put in an Olympic village, with new residences that became prime housing afterwards. The beach at the seaside neighbourhood of La Barceloneta was extended two miles north, opening a huge stretch of renewed waterfront to city dwellers and tourists. A new port called the Olympic Port was built to accommodate increased tourism. Ring roads (*rondas*) were constructed around the city to enable smooth transportation between venues and reduce congestion.

Poblenou’s transformation also had a lot to do with the artists’ collectives that took over the abandoned factories around the same time, to set up studios. Early adopters included Antoni Miralda and Mariscal, creators of the famous Palo Alto design studio. Although they retain the grittiness of their former industrial avatar, the warehouses now host open-plan homes, co-working studios, and architects and artists’ homes.

Phase II: Meeting the modern-day challenges

The regeneration project was spread over several years, of which the first phase was all about urban infrastructure. In the second phase, city planners came up with solutions

on how to grapple with a growing, and ageing population, a challenge most urban cities face today.

In the second phase of Barcelona’s regeneration, which began in 2012, the emphasis was on smart technology, on ways to harness information and communication technology, the internet of things (IoT), and gain insights into data to actually develop smart applications that make day-to-day living comfortable for the residents. Sensors were installed to monitor a variety of services including parking and transportation, air quality tracking and trash collection, which enabled big data analytics to provide optimum solutions.



Barcelona’s City Council has implemented an Electric Vehicle Master Plan to minimise the environmental impact by public transport.

The then mayor Xavier Trias built a team for structuring all the smart city projects into one co-ordinated system, named as 'Smart City Barcelona'. It aimed at connecting people and infrastructure using new technologies for offering citizens a better quality of life. The focus remained on good governance, accountable administration, innovative and competitive commerce and a sustainable city. It also aimed at enhancing cooperation between businesses, people and the government for the creation of a knowledge society.

One of the major drivers of this model was the need to make the city more competitive by creating new communication channels, improving the efficiency of public services, facilitating access to information and promoting innovation. A Smart City PMO (Personal Management Office) was created to co-ordinate all the projects in the city. Some of the key features of Barcelona Smart City Transformation include:

Poblenou

The artists and architects' hub is at the centre of Barcelona's smart city transformation. A few years ago, 200 hectares of industrial sites were hewed out into a technology and innovation hub and rebuilt under 22@Barcelona. The Smart City campus is located in the heart of Poblenou. Many notable start-ups and co-working spaces operate out of the neighbourhood. The residents of Poblenou will be the early adopters

of 5G technology; it will enable businesses working out of this area to communicate with zero latency. Enhanced connection means enhanced M2M (machine to machine) interaction. The customers who are looking to make use of services such as Glovo (a courier service based out of Barcelona), can configure their devices for paying automatically and tracking deliveries with zero time lag.

TMB smart app

The TMB App is designed to place all the transport (Barcelona metro and bus) information that citizens require at their fingertips, irrespective of the area they are in. They have access to alerts, maps, operating hours, bus due times, nearest public transport and navigation. Using the widgets available on their mobile screen, they are able to look up routes, save their favourite routes and means of transport to speed up their searches. There is a provision to choose the alerts they want to receive for staying informed about disruptions to metro and bus services, exclusive special offers for cultural and leisure activities, and new developments in public transport in the city.

Smart transportation system

Barcelona is showing tremendous commitment towards becoming a frontrunner in the use of renewable energy for transportation. The city has introduced electric vehicles (which produce less pollution and have more energy efficiency) for minimising the environmental impact of public

transportation and enhancing the quality of life of its citizens by providing high quality and clean water, air, and light. It has built free electric charge points in municipal car parks that are located across the city for supporting its citizens who use electric vehicles.

Smart traffic light system

Designed to help visually impaired citizens use pedestrian crossings, it consists of a remote control device which activates the audio mode that emits a sound when the traffic light turns to green. The smart street lights also allow the emergency vehicles to pass through traffic without disrupting its smooth flow, and manage the traffic light route to an accident or fire. This system turns the traffic lights into green colour along the route to the destination, until the emergency vehicles pass through and then returns them to their standard setting, leaving the route clear of traffic.

Bicing and interactive bus stops

The city bike system of Barcelona supports the economical mode of transportation. Citizens can rent a bicycle from Bicing to go across the city; there are no prohibited zones. Many citizens choose to buy a membership card, which has to be activated at the Bicing stations. Interactive bus stops are another outstanding infrastructure introduced as part of the city's smart transportation system. This



Under the Barcelona regeneration project, the city created two miles of beachfront and a modern marina by demolishing industrial buildings.

Barcelona is showing tremendous commitment towards becoming a frontrunner in the usage of renewable energy for transportation. Free electric charge points in municipal car parks are located across the city for supporting its citizens who use electric vehicles.



sustainable bus stop, designed using a host of smart technologies, offers facilities such as USB ports, a WiFi connection, and an interactive touchscreen device powered by a solar panel that offers information about bus schedules and other additional information about the city.

Barcelona is now already on its third phase of regeneration — this time with the Climate Plan 2018-2030, which aims to limit the average temperature rise to no greater than 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the 21st century.

Smart waste management system

Barcelona has implemented a pneumatic waste management system. The compact drop-off containers suck the trash below the ground with the help of a subterranean vacuum network, via the pipes. This system alleviates the noise pollution made by trucks carrying trash and keeps public spaces clear of any trash. The pneumatic collection is made available at a number of waste bins that are all linked to a central suction point via a network of pipes. The bins are located on landings of buildings, common areas, or on streets. The system allows to deliver the waste at any point of time during the day.

Dealing with noise pollution

Placa del Sol, a beautiful square in the heart of Barcelona, is a perfect hangout zone for locals and tourists with its gaggle of shops that remain open late nights. But the noise level was getting to be a nuisance for the residents in the area. As part of the smart city programme, the authorities devised low-cost, easy-to-use sensors that can detect air pollution, noise levels, and other factors such as humidity and temperature. The people living in nearby apartments placed these sensors in their balconies only to realise that the noise levels are far higher than those recommended by the World Health Organization. The matter was escalated to the City Council, which laid down rules that ensure the revellers, and those not living in the area, clear the square by 11 every night.

Urban mobility plan

Barcelona, like most world cities, is swamped with cars that cause the levels of noise pollution, air pollution and greenhouse gases to rise. In a bid to provide space to cyclists and pedestrians, the city planners came up with an urban mobility plan called Superblocks that helped decrease the number of cars in city centres on any given day, and increase mobility by foot, bike and public transport. In short, the City Council plans to block traffic from entering nine square blocks in Barcelona. So, cars and trucks wanting to enter the streets through those roads have no other option but to drive around the

perimeter of the superblock. The speed limit inside the superblock is restricted to 10kmph and all the parking is underground. This allows more space for outdoor games, markets and other events. Poblenou was the first such superblock in Barcelona and the city is aiming to build many more in the years to come.

The future of development

Barcelona's success is the result of co-operation between the academic, private and government institutions, and other relevant stakeholders. Also, the city government's political commitment to lay out all the best practices for a smart city is a major contributor to its success. Josep-Ramon Ferrer, the former director of Barcelona Smart City and IT Program and Deputy CIO at the Barcelona City Council, has said in the aforementioned interview to *The New York Times*, "We had to anticipate the 21st century's main challenge: fast-growing urbanization while constantly innovating. By 2050, 70 per cent of the global population will live in cities. This growing urban population will put more pressure on cities, inducing more energy consumption (cities consume around 70 per cent of global energy today), more resources to be allocated, etc. Cities will also face a growing concentration of economic activities. Currently, large cities alone account for 55 per cent of economic output. In this new context, smart city management means ensuring citizens' quality of life, with new and more complex needs, and allocating



The city biking system, Bicing, offers citizens smart cards that they can use to rent bicycles; (Below) The sustainable public transit model is reshaping the way people commute.



resources efficiently.”

Barcelona is now already on its third phase of regeneration – this time to combat climate change. The Climate Plan 2018-2030, launched last year, aims to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent in the bid to contain the average temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the 21st century. The plan identifies a number of climate risks that Barcelona faces – drought, floods, saline intrusion, forest fires and sea storms – and then proceeds to devise ways of combating these from an adaptation perspective. In the process, it promotes a transition towards decentralized energy generation, encourages self-reliance and advances the use of renewable energy.

With so many plans underway, it is no wonder that last year Barcelona was ranked as the eighth most liveable city in the world, ahead of even technologically advanced and a much smaller San Francisco. The global consulting firm Resonance, which does the ranking, called the “defiant Catalan capital, an eclectic mix of beach, architecture and boho vibes”, and “an almost ideal European city”. Barcelona is an excellent example of how an old city, through innovative thinking and use of modern technology, can transform itself into one of the greatest global metropolises. An example for the rest of the world to follow. 🌐

Savaram Ravindra is Content Lead at Mindmajix.com where he writes on emerging software technologies and digital marketing, among others.

Mumbai's most famous chef-restaurateur Rahul Akerkar's personal journey reads like a lush, modern history of the city's independent restaurant businesses, and his new restaurant Qualia, a culmination of his many culinary experiences.

Starting over

By Bisham Mansukhani
Photographs by Keegan Crasto





THERE'S PLENTY TO BE GAUGED by simply watching a figure in chef whites walking to the site of a photo shoot, even as he assesses the lights and table alignments in his restaurant – here's a man of detail, who constantly emphasises raising the bar. That's Rahul Akerkar, at home on a Saturday in his personally crafted restaurant Qualia at The World Towers in Mumbai's Lower Parel. Dinner is still three business hours away. After the shoot, Akerkar settles at the corner table he anoints as the office for the course of this interview.

The city's culinary community has waited long enough for him to return to his element of creating stellar, edible fare and he has done so with Qualia. The swanky restaurant and bar, which opened two months ago, is the expression of the chef-restaurateur's return not just to the scene but the good ol' wholesome cooking approach. Qualia is distinguished in both the culinary and the interior design.

Before delving into his latest project, tracing his decades-long

journey might itself reveal so much about his evolution into one of India's best-known independent chef-restaurateurs. Reminiscing about his past, right back to the early '80s in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, he talks about how he hustled his first gig as a dishwasher-cum-salad maker at Jetro's. His affable candidness sets the tone at the outset as he remarks, "I asked them for a job because I was broke. It's that simple really. I did the dishes and appetisers." Noted French chef Paul Aso trained him in Provencal-style southern French cuisine and also got Jetro's to hire him as a chef.

And so began a slew of jobs at assorted New York restaurants. By day, he'd juggle several pursuits, but nights were constantly spent in restaurant kitchens, cooking, learning, imbibing. Akerkar did pursue a PhD alongside but didn't complete it.

Returning home was about potentially opening a restaurant but without any hope or clue. He, however, quickly found himself working as a private chef for South

Mumbai residents. "That really took off and I got busy. I was making pasta at home and set up a clothesline in the hall upon which the 'edible laundry' would slowly set," he recalled.

His parents, though, were stoked by his work as were the city's gourmands and a restaurant opening was inevitable, punctuated however by a brief stint with a certain AD Singh. "My association with Just Desserts was temporary because my focus was always on opening the restaurant, Under The Over. The cuisine was wide-ranging, from Italian to Japanese and Creole even." This is where it was all supposed to come together. And it did for quite a while. Akerkar amusingly recalls the unofficial tussle with Shamiana restaurant at the Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai; the restaurant ended up constantly copying his menu. It was all going swimmingly well before the landlord got greedy and made the project unviable.

For a while, the Akerkars – Rahul, his wife Malini and their two daughters – shifted to the fringes of



Long braided metallic chains break Qualia into discreet areas and lend a sense of translucency.



Akerkar brings his exacting standards towards the food he serves, to the design of the restaurant.



Charred Pumpkin



Red Smoke



Qualia is peppered with several discreet and private spaces.



Grilled Octopus



A contemporary feature of the restaurant is its almost entirely live kitchen, a first for Akerkar.



(Top) Akerkar serves Yellowfin Tuna Loin with Kerala-inspired curry leaf and sesame rub, a creamy avocado pachadi and tangy pickled beets.



(Right) Squid Ink Gemelli is Akerkar's take on the popular dish that is known for its salty, ocean-y flavours.

Bengaluru, and lived on a farm. But once the initial allure faded, the chef was gearing to open his next venture. Akerkar clearly saw his ambition for opening a restaurant perfect for a more urban area and when he ruled out Bengaluru, Mumbai was the default city of choice. But none of the locations they scouted for really worked for what he had in mind, so the Akerkars set a deadline to find a desirable one. He went back to working at New York restaurants, running down the clock until one day, his wife Malini sealed the lease for Mandalik House in South Mumbai – the spot where, debatably, India’s first casual chic stand-alone restaurant came to be.

Breaking new grounds

Akerkar admits he didn't know then that he was at the cusp of not just opening a restaurant, but creating a brand. “Indigo broke a lot of rules and a lot of records. Near five months of reservations sold out, hotel staffers dining at the restaurant to ‘survey’ the menu, the staff treated like they would be out West and even better. Something spectacular had happened. I was taking it all in, while relentlessly serving wholesome European cuisine, though Indigo for all purposes was ‘cuisine agnostic’.”

He declares that Indigo was probably the first Indian restaurant to serve duck. Three years in, he opened Indigo Deli, citing the need for furthering the envelope on casual dining and making it price accessible, adding retail of cold cuts and cheese, which oddly didn't exist in this modern island city way back in 2003. Akerkar remembers Camellia Panjabi, who was then head of F&B at The Taj

Group, asking after the soft opening: “Rahul, gutsy move. But will it work?” It couldn't have been easy for Akerkar and his wife Malini to hear that. But in a few weeks, even industry peers stopped by the restaurant to understand why Indigo clicked brilliantly. “It just came together. We did everything right. Attention to food, service and detail just worked,” says Akerkar.

He knew he was doing things right when Indigo had a three-month long waitlist. But the moment success really hit home was when Shah Rukh Khan and Naseeruddin Shah ambled in, asking for a table. Unfortunately, short of asking guests at another table to leave, he couldn't help the situation. That day was when “I felt like I had arrived”, Akerkar admitted in another interview.

Food writer Antoine Lewis, who has observed Akerkar's culinary journey for over two decades, says, “With Indigo, Rahul managed to change the industry altogether. This was the first fine dine stand-alone restaurant led by a chef doing high-calibre fine dine cuisine, served in a great ambience. It didn't just survive but thrived and paved the way for other restaurateurs to have the courage to take the plunge. He changed the way people ate – course-wise wine menus and *al dente* pasta. Rahul didn't adapt his cooking style to prevailing preferences. He got a generation of diners to, in fact, appreciate authentic, wholesome cooking. I've seen Indigo evolve right from its inception. He broke more ground with Indigo Deli where people could enjoy comfort food in shorts and loafers.”

Akerkar conceptualized and

launched another major restaurant, Tote On the Turf and took on a partnership in the massively popular Blue Frog, spreading himself a bit thin and yet being able to invest in each of these projects. Chef Irfan Pabaney of The Sassy Spoon fame, who worked

Akerkar is considered a game-changer and he has influenced innumerable chefs and by extension, many of the menus in restaurants today.

with Akerkar for over eight years on two different stints, at Under The Over and then Indigo, considers him a mentor. “I was fortunate that my first job out of catering school involved working with Rahul at Under The Over. Learning from him, and understanding his approach and temperament was an experience that became part of my own foundation. He set a fine example of how to be a good chef-restaurateur. He was serious about the food – the standards were very high, the working atmosphere was intense but also fun. There was healthy respect. I believe he revolutionized the restaurant business as we knew it with regards to the kind of food served, the service standards and the overall business.” The chef-restaurateur behind that other big successful indie stand-alone restaurant brand, Indian Accent, believes that Akerkar raised the bar as far as chef-restaurateur's go. “He has always been very focused; the emphasis is on the best ingredients and the best food he can serve, rather than gimmicks.

Before Indigo, the fine dine restaurants people spoke about were all located within five-star hotels. With Indigo, he changed the trend. Fine dine could be independent, stand-alone and offer the best dining experiences in the best ambience.”

In 2016, Akerkar exited the Blue Frog partnership; a potential new funding being discussed for Indigo’s expansion turned out to be from a sham source, and the perfect storm of a financial crisis led him to enter a partnership of necessity, which worked only for a short while. Reconciling financial rationale with the culinary quality turned out to be a fair bit of compromise. He sold his stake in the company to begin whittling down his non-compete clause. “You have to work with partners who share your vision not just those who have the funds. There’s sensory and emotional management and expectations management,” he muses. He lowers his gaze as he reflects on “the bitterness within me towards my partners and the sense of betrayal I felt. Losing control of something I had created was painful. I felt I had to purge this bitterness. I did just that by leaving”.

Akerkar is still considered a game-changer and he has influenced innumerable chefs and by extension, many of the menus in restaurants today. Pabaney believes that he could rise from the ashes and start another restaurant thanks to his indomitable spirit. “After having built Indigo into the institution that he did, having to let go of the restaurant and to then come back with something as distinct as Qualia — where innovation coupled with pickling has created an exciting menu — is a tribute to his ability and appetite to positively disrupt the

market. He never lets up!”

Akerkar’s tone instantly picks up as he details the high points of his hiatus. It was a great decision in so many respects, he believes. “To begin with, life’s simpler joys of just waking up to my kids and spending time with them, taking my dog for a walk. There was a lot of travelling with the family, too. And I generously indulged my lifetime passion for deep-sea diving.” Even while he was travelling on a vacation, Akerkar began feeding his curiosity about different cuisines and the way people ate and approached food across Europe, the US and Southeast Asia. Part of the hiatus was also spent dining locally. Here, though, he felt unpleasantly surprised. “I dined out a lot in Mumbai, but I was freaked out by the market. I saw restaurants encouraging mediocrity, literally serving the same dishes – truffle fries, edamame dumplings and tuna carpaccio, to name a few. So I turned myself inwards and shut out what was going on around me.”

The germ of an idea of a small, intimate restaurant with his trademark cuisine had already begun to form towards the end of the break and location scouting soon began. This mission mercifully wasn’t as arduous as the one for Indigo’s venue. “When I visited The World Towers site, I first saw the space where Town Hall is now but it didn’t quite click for me. As I walked away, I saw this spot which had been earmarked for high-end retail and within a few moments of taking it in, I said this is where I want to make my restaurant. Where else could I find a 100-foot glass frontage facing a park and 20 feet high ceilings? This was it. This choice meant a change in scale – not intimate, but grand.

While he took time out to reboot, he thought about what he wanted to do next. The generation he would be dealing with, would be decidedly younger and better travelled than the earlier one. In an interview to *Mid-Day*, he had said a while ago, “The need was to do something fresh; you need to think out of the box and think younger. If I look today at the business plan I wrote for Indigo, I’d bin it. My older daughter is working with me and I value her inputs (he considers his daughters his biggest critics). I have an idea about what I want, but at times, I question whether people have outgrown that. A majority of people eating out these days are younger. Are the things that I hold sacred relevant to them at all?”

Ultimately, Akerkar envisioned Qualia as a restaurant serving food big on technique and innovation but buttoned down as far as the dining experience goes. Parallel gourmet experiments continued on at home, with former Indigo chef de cuisine also coming on board. Chief among these experiments was pickling. “I wanted to explore pickling that adds richness and complexity to ingredients,” he says.

This approach is visibly hard to miss at Qualia where more than 400 jars sit on the shelves, filled with edible, evolving ingredients. “Many of the ingredients have been pickling for more than a year. As we turn over the stock, we replenish it with what’s best in season and revisit it in another six months,” he reveals.

Lewis, who was particularly curious about what he was going to do with his second coming since the market is now crowded out by many chefs who’ve been influenced by him,



Heirloom Beets

says he is doing interesting things at Qualia. “I believe he’s gone in a different direction to where the market presently is. There’s a masterful technique to the cooking and plating and it is incredible how he’s managed to integrate a pickled element into almost every dish! But for me, it’s comfort food. Let’s see how it plays out.”

The far end of Qualia is partly walled in by a wine rack – a testament to one of Akerkar’s underrated achievements, having won the Wine Spectator award for the best Indian wine menu for 10 years straight.

Qualia is where Akerkar believes his culinary style has converged with his experience to yield the menu he most connects with. “Western cuisine has always been my strength, but Maharashtrian and other local influences gradually seeped into my overall approach to cooking over the years,” he says. One dish at Qualia that perfectly exemplifies this is Tuna Loin rubbed with Kerala-style dried curry leaf and sesame.

Similar examples melding global and local influences abound on the menu but Akerkar paints it with a broad-brush stroke of “cuisine agnostic with a sweet-sour profile and the rich acidic dimension of pickling”.

One conspicuously contemporary feature of Qualia is its almost entirely live kitchen, not a rarity in the general sense but a first for Akerkar. “Live


kitchens have become the norm and why not – that one degree of separation is gone; there’s transparency and guests can literally interact with the chefs and watch their food being cooked. It is almost like being at home. There’s an overall subtle theme of an orchestra pit with most tables facing the live kitchen.” The far end of the restaurant is partly walled in by a wine rack – a testament to one of Akerkar’s underrated achievements, having won the *Wine Spectator* award for best Indian wine menu for 10 years straight. “I took the wine menu seriously because I just love wine, old world or new. For me, it’s an inseparable accompaniment to food.” In its heyday, Indigo boasted a wine list of nearly 400 wines, though with Qualia he has pared it down to 130, some of which he says are exclusive only to the restaurant.

Design is another element he has keenly looked into. Long braided metallic chains abound, which, he feels, break the space into discreet areas. Yet, they lend a sense of translucency, or rather, create an opaque division between spaces. He laughs when asked if he’d ever imagined his kitchen populated by a posse of cooks sporting hipster beards and bandanas. He’s proud, though, of a significant number of women on his team.

That apart, his standards remain exacting – while he’s delegated the cooking almost entirely to his young team, he has put some of them through the proverbial wringer and confidently remarks that “they could pack up and go work anywhere in the world tomorrow”. Akerkar is in the kitchen most evenings, keenly overseeing operations and plating dishes, taking to cooking occasionally.

As the owner, he’s literally got a lot more on his plate than just the kitchen. Which neatly links back to his very first venture when significantly, he began his journey as a chef-restaurateur, the likes of which Mumbai had never seen.

Akerkar says the role was a massive challenge then and continues to remain so even as some prominent names are in that club. “I regard myself a jack of all trades – as a chef and restaurateur.” He recalls a conversation with his mentor, Michael Romano, the former culinary director of Union Square group in the US, with whom he shared his internal conflict of choosing between being a chef and a restaurateur; he felt equally drawn to both sides of the business. Romano suggested that, perhaps, Akerkar may be more of a ‘good generalist’ instead of a ‘specialist’; perhaps he views the restaurant business holistically, rather than through a particular prism.

It wouldn’t be wildly indulgent to acknowledge this culinary genius as both a successful chef and a restaurateur. 



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As the sun sets, the various moods of the **Sea Lounge** emerge. The eclectic continental spread has been carefully designed for a tantalizing culinary journey. Sway to the rich harmony and soulful rhythms played by our crooner, who will serenade you with her tunes.



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Rahul Akerkar's Quick Meals

*Three easy-to-make recipes
that will make you feel like a master chef.*



A quick breakfast



SERVES 2
MINUTES 10

Sweet potato, black bean & avocado, breakfast burritos

(INGREDIENTS)

Makes 4 burritos

4 (8-inch) whole-wheat tortillas

3 medium sweet potatoes

1 can black beans, rinsed
and drained

¼ tsp cumin

¼ tsp chilli powder

A few dashes of red
pepper flakes

3 pieces ripe avocado, diced

2 cups Monterrey Jack cheese

3 cups chopped parsley

1 cup chopped coriander

2 cups sour cream

(METHOD)

Cook the sweet potatoes: Roast the sweet potatoes in the oven at 180°C for 45 minutes. Once the sweet potatoes are cooked, remove the skin and place the potatoes in a medium bowl. Mash with a fork and set aside. Season with salt, pepper, olive oil and chopped parsley.

In a separate large bowl, add black beans, cumin, chilli powder and red pepper flakes. Stir to combine and season with salt, pepper, olive oil and chopped parsley, then set aside.

Prepare the avocados: Dice the ripe avocados. Slightly mash them with a fork. Season them with lemon juice, chopped coriander, chopped green chillies, cumin powder, salt and pepper.

Assemble the burritos: Make sure you have warm tortillas. It makes it easier to roll. You can warm them up for 10-20 seconds in the microwave before assembling. Lay out warm tortillas and spread the sour cream. Now evenly distribute and spread mashed sweet potato on each. Evenly distribute diced avocado, black beans and shredded cheese on each tortilla. Season with salt and pepper, if desired. Tuck ends in, and then roll up the burritos.

To warm up: Place on a baking sheet in an oven at 150°C for 5-10 minutes or simply microwave them for a minute or two. Serve with sour cream, yoghurt, salsa, or hot sauce.

A quick lunch on the go



SERVES 2

MINUTES 10

Greek quinoa salad

(INGREDIENTS)

Makes 4 portions

1 cup quinoa

Salad dressing -
3 tbsp freshly squeezed
lemon juice

1 tbsp red wine vinegar

¼ tsp dried oregano
1 clove garlic, smashed and
finely chopped to a paste

Kosher salt and freshly ground
black pepper

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

2 cups red and yellow grape
tomatoes, halved

1 cup pitted Kalamata olives

2 green onions, thinly sliced

2 pickled cherry peppers, diced

1 small red onion, halved
and thinly sliced

½ English cucumber, cut into
small pieces

Feta cheese, for sprinkling

(METHOD)

Make the dressing: Whisk together the lemon juice, vinegar, oregano, garlic and some salt and pepper in a small bowl. Slowly whisk in the oil until emulsified. Let sit at room temperature while you prepare the salad to allow the flavours to meld.

Cook the quinoa: Rinse the quinoa in a strainer until the water runs clear. Combine the quinoa, 2 cups water, 1 tsp salt and ½ tsp pepper in a small saucepan, bring to a boil and cook until the water is absorbed, and the quinoa is tender, which takes about 15 minutes.

To serve: Transfer to a bowl, fluff with a fork and let it sit for 5 minutes to cool slightly. Add the tomatoes, olives, green onions, cherry peppers, red onions, cucumbers and dressing and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, and up to 8 hours before serving. The longer it sits, the better the flavour.

Just before serving, transfer to a platter and sprinkle feta on top.

A quick dinner



SERVES 2
MINUTES 10

Spinach & artichoke chicken

(INGREDIENTS)

Makes 4 portions

4 pieces chicken breasts
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt – to taste
3 tbsp butter
3 cloves garlic, minced
Baby spinach
1 can artichoke hearts, chopped
Sliced roasted red peppers
1 cup half-and-half cream
¾ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
¼ cup Parmesan cheese grated
Freshly ground black pepper – to taste
½ tsp dried oregano

(METHOD)

Season the chicken: Season it with salt, pepper and oregano. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat olive oil. Add the chicken and cook until golden, for about 6 minutes per side. Remove the chicken from the skillet.

For the sauce: Melt butter in a skillet, stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, for about 30 seconds. Stir in baby spinach, artichokes and red peppers and cook until the spinach starts to wilt. Add half-and-half cream and bring the mixture to a simmer. Stir in the mozzarella and Parmesan and season with salt and pepper.

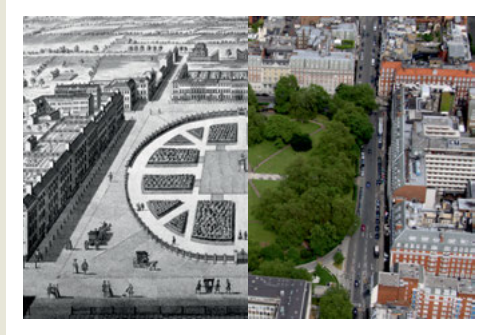
To cook the chicken: Return the chicken to the skillet and cook until the sauce has thickened slightly, and the chicken is completely cooked.

Serve the chicken warm with sauce, artichokes and spinach.

The Evolution of

By Naomi Price

Grosvenor Square



The historic square at the West End of London is seeing the biggest transformation in a century, with new hotels, restaurants and upscale residential developments.

“THERE IS NOW A NEW SQUARE called Grosvenor Square,” proclaimed the *London Daily Post* in 1725, “which, for its largeness and beauty, will far exceed any yet made in or about London.”

A fine example of early Georgian symmetry and proportion, the façade of this series of townhouses was of pale Portland stone and deep terracotta brick with elliptical arches, neoclassical columns and reed window surrounds. Now, 300 years on, nothing has changed. Apart from one

big difference: every single brick and stone of No.1 Grosvenor Square has been completely dismantled, cleaned, restored, numbered and prepared for reassembly in exactly the same order, just like one enormous jigsaw puzzle.

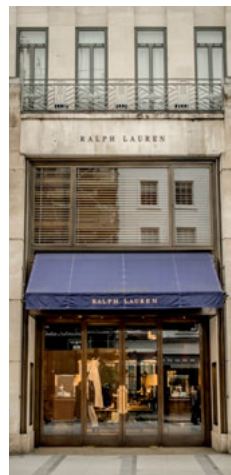
Like one giant anniversary secret, it’s currently secretively wrapped up, giving no clue to the extent of the operations in the 1,55,000sq.ft. of space within. Almost three centuries after its construction, one of the most prized addresses in London will finally be visible in all its restored glory. Right

in the very middle of Mayfair, on the spot of the most coveted square of the board game Monopoly, the location doesn’t get more prestigious than this.

Mayfair has remained consistently exclusive since it was first developed in the early 1700s by Sir Richard Grosvenor, heir to the surrounding 100 acres of the West End and forbear of the current Duke of Westminster.

The neighbourhood that the nobility loved

Hundreds of years ago, Mayfair



No.1 Grosvenor Square looks exactly as it would have in the 18th century, but with modern advantages; (Right) Luxury retail is part of the elite neighbourhood.

was all meadows and orchards.

As the name suggests, it was the venue for a fair that was held annually in May. It passed to Sir Richard Grosvenor from his father, who had married into money and with it, Belgravia, Mayfair and most of the West End. It was in 1720 that he set about developing it into a fashionable residential address.

Unlike other areas of London where fortunes have fluctuated, Mayfair has remained chic through the centuries. No.1 Grosvenor Square stayed fashionable with the nobility and the glitterati (Irish author and playwright Oscar Wilde lived there, as did several of the characters in his plays and novels).

There's a strong American connection at Grosvenor Square. John Adams, the second president of the United States, lived there from 1785 to 1789. In 1938, the US Embassy was established at No. 1 itself, and the Square became known as Little America. General Eisenhower set up his military headquarters at No. 20, while No. 23 was used as the US Navy building. Adlai Stevenson died at Grosvenor Square. To encourage presidential aspirations in his son (whose career Stevenson had ironically enabled), Joseph Kennedy turned part of the ground floor into a replica of the Oval Office.

The former embassy is now being converted into a hotel. The £1 bn project, due to be finished in 2023, will become a 137-bedroom property, with five restaurants and a 1000-person capacity ballroom.

Readapting to modern times

This historic garden square is undergoing a massive transformation.

New building apartments and hotels are under construction. The Grosvenor Estate is rejuvenating the square, while international investors and developers are revamping the buildings. New hotels and restaurants are opening up in the neighbourhood.

Inside No.1 Grosvenor Square

From the outside, the building is now exactly as it would have been in the 18th century with the benefit of modern advantages. Internally, at around four metres, the ceilings are now amongst those of any historic London property. There are some 21st-century twists like the penthouse suite. Occupying the whole of the footprint of the building, it's constructed to provide a complete 360-degree view that reaches far over the leafy square of the plane and cherry trees, onto Hyde Park and as far as the London Eye and the Shard. And in line with Lodha's emphasis on privacy, the penthouse will be completely invisible from the exterior.

Rules surrounding listed buildings are inconvenient but are in place to ensure that their integrity is not compromised. It's not without irony that Eric Parry Architects has gone out of its way to adhere to conditions that should have been imposed to treat the building with the sensitivity that it deserves.

The reception room of some of the apartments benefit from huge sash windows that open onto a view of Grosvenor Square gardens, flooding the beautifully appointed west-facing rooms with morning and late afternoon light. The layout of the apartments is linear so that one room progresses into the other in one grand flow of muted luxury. No expense has

A guide to good living in Grosvenor Square

The Royal Academy, five minutes' walk away on Piccadilly, hosts collections of major artists every two to three months. Lucien Freud's paintings are currently on view, and Anthony Gormley's work is due from September this year. You can become a 'Friend of the Royal Academy', which entitles you to priority access and private views.



Just over the road on the other side of Piccadilly is your local supermarket, Fortnum and Mason's (well, it's the ultimate upmarket department store, holding the Royal Warrant). Purveyor of the finest foods, it has its brand of pretty much everything. Have tea at Fortnum's in the elegant early Georgian Tea Salon. The shop has several restaurants and also offers private dining in beautiful surroundings.

After tea, you can progress on to more tea at the Ritz, or for cocktails in the Rivoli bar, a perfect example of Art Deco design. A short walk away along Piccadilly, it's another historic building and now part of the Leading Hotels of the World group.

Staying on Piccadilly, you could finish off the evening with dinner at the Café Royal. Built by John Nash in the early 1800s, it opened in 1865 and was frequented by everybody who was anybody, from the aesthetes of the Bloomsbury Set in the Twenties to film stars of the present day.



The townhouses, made from pale Portland stone and deep terracotta brick, display Georgian symmetry and proportion. (Right) A statue of American statesman Franklin Roosevelt.

been spared – from the grand reworking of the structure itself down to the smallest details: bedrooms with their suede-lined wardrobes, kitchens whose marble worktops have been sealed so carefully that you can feel the texture of the ancient stone veins underneath the surface.

The rooms bear the stamp of international design team Yabu Pushelberg, who has complemented the simple elegance of the architectural detail with neutral colours and textured backdrops by Chanel, Hermes and other iconic luxury houses, to enhance the artworks from world-renowned artists. They'll be in a strong position to augment their series since Lodha works closely with Sotheby's on exhibitions and events.

Besides the apartments, there are a further 10,000sq.ft. given over to a 25m swimming pool, a vitality pool, clubroom, gym, spa and cinema. Residents will also have 4000sq.ft. of a Michelin-starred restaurant – chef to be announced. The level of service will be five-star without being either intrusive or impersonal, with round-the-clock concierge and valet staff for whom no job will be too big or too small. "Clients want a home, not a hotel. They spend enough time in luxury hotels and want to come back to something meaningful," says Charles Walsh, a director at Lodha.

And here's a whimsical touch: as homage to the hard-partying, hard-driving Bentley Boys who lived at Grosvenor Square during the Roaring Twenties, there'll be a Bentley at residents' disposal for running around town.

Not that there's any need to drive anywhere. Claridge's, Le Gavroche,

the Connaught, the Dorchester and 21 other Michelin-starred restaurants are on the doorstep. The main couture houses are just a stroll down the road. Mount Street, which now commands higher retail rates than Bond Street, is at the heart of the Mayfair Village, a thirty-second walk from the Square. Sotheby's is in the next street, as are all the main art dealers.


Owning a piece of living history

For Lodha, which undertakes exciting and demanding projects, No.1 Grosvenor Square has been a very interesting project. The whole building was ripe for modification. The Square was built with the nobility in mind in the eighteenth century and it's hardly surprising that a few things would have to change to bring it up to date. The changes have been simultaneously subtle and drastic. For Eric Parry Architects, which wins awards for restoration projects and ultra-modern designs alike, one of the most complex aspects of the project was the alteration of the ceiling height, which was necessary for the process of returning the building to gracious modern living, suitable for Lodha's standards of luxury.

Privacy is paramount. Once in residence, owners will have the protection of embassy-level security and state-of-the-art biometric access and laser beams. The layout of the underground car park and drop-off is discreet, which ensures that people can't be seen getting in and out of their cars. There's even a secondary escape into an unexpected exit.

Lodha has emphasized the historical aspects of No.1 Grosvenor Square, like the Oval Office replica room, which has been preserved in

its entirety to form part of the area used by residents to access their apartments. "People want a piece of history in London," says Walsh. The apartments are available under leasehold terms of 999 years, which takes posterity well into account: "It's a bit like a Patek Philippe watch" – a legacy which the company says you don't own but curate for future generations. It's part of the enduring nature of their purchase.

We won't be around in 300 years, but the descendants of No.1 Grosvenor Square will be. Permanence is what it's all about. This is a one-off. Says Walsh, "We'll never build a building like this again." 

Claridge's, Le Gavroche, the Connaught, the Dorchester and 21 other Michelin-starred restaurants are on the doorstep of No.1 Grosvenor Square.

In little over 17 years, Patricia Urquiola, the Milan-based virtuoso, has transformed herself into one of the most celebrated women in the male-dominated world of global design.

By Maria Louis

The

experimental

designs *of*

Patricia

Urquiola





LET ME BEGIN WITH a roll call of diverse places where you will find the stamp of a living legend in the world of architecture and design – the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Barcelona; Das Stue Hotel in Berlin; the spa of the Four Seasons Hotel in Milan; the Room Mate Giulia Hotel in Milan and Il Sereno Hotel in Como; showrooms and installations for Cassina, Gianvito Rossi, Missoni, Moroso, Molteni, Officine Panerai, H&M and Santoni.

And this is in addition to an astounding variety of designs for renowned international companies – from furniture and design majors such as Agape, Alessi, B&B Italia, Baccarat, De Padova, Driade, Flos, Gan, Molteni, Moroso, Rosenthal and Verywood, to luxury car brand BMW

and fashion house Louis Vuitton.

Multidisciplinary is a word that has acquired currency of late, but it fits architect-interior designer-product designer Patricia Urquiola like a glove ever since she began her career around three decades ago. Hers is a remarkable story of success, especially considering that she belonged to a rare breed of women that had only just begun populating the field of architecture then. Her passion took her places, admittedly, at times by happenstance.

But change has been her constant companion. By her own admission, Urquiola is always changing, learning and evolving from what she does and the reality she lives in. “Therefore, so does my work,” points out the

designer. “When I work on a new project, I give it my 100%; it becomes sort of an obsession. Then, I move on to the next project that awaits. It’s part of the learning process.”

For Urquiola, the learning process began relatively early. Not all of us are blessed with such clarity when it comes to life decisions; but she knew she wanted to become an architect when she was a teenager. Proficiency in mathematics and a fondness for drawing were telling signs, even at the impressionable age of 12. The Spanish designer studied architecture at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid and, later, at the Politecnico di Milano, from where she graduated in 1989.

Opening her own studio in 2001 was a turning point for this pioneer.



(Left) The Cassina Perspective installation at the Milan Design Week 2019;
 (Top) Caule for Flos is an outdoor lighting collection for which Urquiola has referenced the botanical structure of a flower.

“Thinking about sustainability while designing has now become a necessity, and we are already seeing changes in this field.”

“People were telling me that it was time to take this step, that if I had something to say, I had to try – so I did,” she recalls. Over the years, she has worked with different people and brands, but acknowledges that it was Patrizia Moroso who really believed in her in the beginning, way before fame smiled brightly upon her. “It was with Moroso that my reality as an independent and established designer began, with a series of seating solutions in the early 2000s.” It is a tribute to their relationship that, 20 years later, Patricia and Patrizia are still collaborating.

Urquiola arrived in Milan in the late 1980s, after studying architecture in Madrid. Her playful use of unusual shapes and colours was in sharp

contrast to the prevalent Italian design language then, which veered towards postmodernism.

The inspirations

Every successful professional usually has a mentor, someone who – unwittingly or by design – steers you in the direction your life and work will eventually take. For Urquiola, that someone was Italian architect Achille Castiglioni, under whose tutelage she blossomed. “I felt the need to step out of my comfort zone and explore new places, so I moved to Milan to finish my studies,” she explains. “That is where I met Achille Castiglioni; he was my professor and my thesis mentor. The reason I began becoming interested in industrial design.”



(Top) The Budri showroom is conceived as a theatrical space that highlights the beauty of its surfaces.

(Right) The Moroso Gogan sofa draws its form from the Japanese stacking stones, which are sculpted by wind and water.



Describing Castiglioni's classes as "incredible", Urquiola recalls that he would arrive with a big bag of objects every time. "We would talk about everything – the form, the relationship with the human body, the layers of popular knowledge that gave life to incredible objects..."

There have been other influences and inspirations too. "I have always admired Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson. He is an incredible artist who works with elements that are very important to me – like space, light, water, air. He is obsessed with his research and, at the same time, very easygoing. I was lucky to work with him on a small project some years ago."

Urquiola considers herself

fortunate to have worked with great mentors through her early years that shaped her thoughts and work ethic. Aside from Castiglioni, Vico Magistretti, an Italian architect and designer and Maddalena De Padova, founder of the Italian furniture company De Padova, taught her the importance of experimenting and the value of mistakes. "These people had a big impact on my journey. They all taught me things I still carry with me today," declares the designer, crediting her revolutionary spirit to her family of strong women and her progressive engineer father who encouraged her to move beyond her comfort zone.

Drawing from eastern cultures

One country that Urquiola often

turns to for inspiration is Japan. At the Salone del Mobile in Milan this year, the Italian furniture company Moroso presented the intricately irregular Gogan sofa, designed by Urquiola, which draws its inspiration from Japanese stacking stones. "It is a country I love, with so many traditions and beautiful places. I have always dreamt of taking a gap year there," she discloses. "But inspiration is not something you can find and catch: it's not linear or logical. It is a mix of stored emotional memory and immediate reaction to what surrounds us, sometimes a little detail becomes an obsession – which eventually develops into an idea."

India has contributed to the designer's 'obsessions' as well. At the

Milan Design Week last year, Urquiola unveiled a daybed and side table that she designed to complement the Garden Layers collection for the Spanish textile brand Gan. Rooted in 16th century India, it references the architecture and traditions of the Mughal empire, which lasted for almost three centuries in the country. In those days, it was customary to sit on a carpet-covered floor – so the first pieces launched in 2017 were a series of rugs, mats, roll pillows and cushions that one could arrange to create a relaxed outdoor lounging space reminiscent of the Mughal times.

While the daybed comes as a single or double, the side tables take a square or rectangular form and are made of powder-coated aluminium – just like the frame of the bed. Urquiola came up with the design after visiting an exhibition of miniature art in India. “Mughal culture celebrated nature and outdoor spaces, and gardens and terraces were common spaces to relax and talk,” explained Gan in a statement released then.

Where craft meets industry

Urquiola’s work has found space in some of the world’s best art and design museums, via exhibitions. In November 2017, Philadelphia Museum of Art celebrated her work with a show titled *Patricia Urquiola: Between Craft and Industry*. The survey of her solo career included work dating from 2002, soon after she first set up her own studio in Milan, to 2016.

At that time, Donna Corbin, the decorative-arts curator at the museum and the creator of the exhibition, had analysed her influence on the world of design in an interview to *The Wall Street Journal*, “Ms. Urquiola manages

to combine human-scale craftsmanship with the industrial demands of mass production – an achievement that sets her work apart. She has introduced the hand to the machine,” citing her 2008 Crinoline armchair, produced by Italy’s B&B Italia furniture label.

Among her breakthrough designs at the exhibition was the Fjord armchair and stool, inspired by a trip to Scandinavian cities – an asymmetrical riff on typically bulbous, mid-century modernist chairs made by the Italian furniture company Moroso.

Following her success with the numerous hospitality projects under her belt, Urquiola took on her first residential project – Lodha’s Lincoln Square, a model of luxury lifestyle set in the heart of London. To mark her design of the shared spaces in this high-end development of apartments, the award-winning designer was commissioned by Lodha to create a symbol for the new building’s opening. She devised an exquisite hourglass – not only to reflect her distinctive style, but also to speak of the time it takes to design and construct such an extraordinary building.

Crafted from glass produced in Venice’s world-renowned Murano workshops, there are only 30 of these distinctive handmade sculptural pieces available, each individually signed and numbered. “At Lodha, we pride ourselves on working with the best designers in the world,” declared Gabriel York, co-CEO, Lodha UK. “Patricia’s attention to detail and aesthetics is in keeping with our approach to design and construction.”

Urquiola, who has also designed the clubhouse at Lodha Park in Mumbai, believes that we are in the

Urquiola is involved with a company in a more holistic and all-encompassing way – from what technology, material and packaging to use, to the company strategy.





Il Sereno hotel has a glass-fronted façade, in a stark departure from the neighbouring Renaissance-style edifices.



middle of an important moment of transition for design. “We need to find ways to rewrite the rules of this industry, to reinvent the way in which we design, the materials we source, the processes we use... Thinking about sustainability while designing has now become a necessity, and we are already seeing changes in this field,” insists the designer, who is experimenting with a new kind of leather made from apple skin. Her studio is collaborating with Cassina on this project.

Another collaborative project, this one with gallerist and design impresario Rossana Orlandi, was shown at the Design Week in Milan in early 2019. Her studio developed a giant sneaker-daybed made entirely from upcycled PET. With Mutina,

a company that makes ceramic tiles, they are working with new processes that use less water in the production of ceramic.

Educating the next generation of designers

Certainly, there is a lot on Urquiola’s plate. Still, she finds the time to serve as a visiting lecturer at universities across the world, such as Bocconi University, Harvard University, Domus Academy in Milan, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and, of course, at her alma mater, the Politecnico di Milano – where she is, quite understandably, on the advisory board. The designer is also part of the Scientific Committee for the Fondazione Museo Del Design, and

A pick of Patricia Urquiola’s best

Travelling exhibition for Ferrari

To commemorate 70 years of Ferrari, in November 2017 Patricia Urquiola realized a travelling exhibition, *Under the Skin*, which told the story of the Italian automotive company, exploring its rarely seen material such as design models, personal letters, drawings and memorabilia from private collections. The exhibition explored the engineering, design and materials that go into making of a classic Ferrari.

Band armchair, Kettle

The idea behind the Band Armchair is the breaking down of structure; an object designed using an ensemble of pieces. The chair’s design intentionally challenges the classic sophisticated lines of furniture design. It is a structure with repetitive angular shapes that give centre-stage to its raw materials.

Gogan sofa, Moroso

The sofa’s curvy, oversized components reference Japanese stacking stones that become smooth over time thanks to the wind and water. The plush, irregular shape is perfectly positioned to hold its form. The bouclé fabric used for the sofa references a ‘70s fabric found in the Moroso textile archive.

Il Sereno, Lake Como, Italy

The unabashedly contemporary hotel sits on top of an old boathouse; its glass-fronted façade is in stark departure from the neighbouring Renaissance-style edifices. Urquiola has designed the interiors with sleek industrial flourishes. The lobby is dominated by a vertical living wall, the work of French botanist Patrick Blanc. The rooms, with softly-lit bathrooms and huge beds encased in Porthault linen, all have panoramic views of the lake.



Clockwise from left: The Bowy-Sofa for Cassina has soft inviting curves, a steel tubular frame and rounded arms; the Caule outdoor light collection; The L.A. Sunset Extension tables are painted in midnight blue or copper colour.





For Nuances, a project in collaboration with Spanish company Gan, Urquiola reinvented felt as a material to make it more sustainable; (Left): The Moroso Stand for the Salone del Mobile 2019 reflects the simplicity of material and colour palette.

was the ambassador of the Milan Expo in 2015.

When she began, she mainly focused on the product. But now Urquiola is involved in a more holistic and all-encompassing way – from what technology, material and packaging to use through to the company strategy, recyclability and how to explain the hidden values of the piece through advertising and promotion.


A long list of achievements

Urquiola has been the art director of Cassina since 2015. She is much awarded and acclaimed by her peers in the industry. Consider the range of awards she has received: a Gold Medal of Merit in the Fine Arts, awarded by the Spanish Government, Order of

Isabella the Catholic; Designer of the Decade from two German magazines; Designer of the Year for *Wallpaper*, *AD Spain* and *Architektur und Wohnen Magazine*; *EDIDA Designer of the Year* in 2005 as well as 12 *EDIDA* product awards.

Some of her work is displayed in the best of world museums and collections, such as the MoMA in New York, the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris, the Museum of Design in Munich, the Vitra Design Museum in Basel, the Stedelijk in Amsterdam, the Victoria & Albert Museum, as well as the Design Museum in London.

Life has come full circle for her, and the once-mentored youngster is a mentor to young designers today. “The world of a student now is very

different to mine when I was studying; the access to information has completely changed, and so has the approach to education,” Urquiola observes. “Nowadays, designers and architects can learn so much from their various devices, they are constantly connected and systems have expanded and intertwined. I sometimes hold lectures at universities and institutes, and I see this change in approach. I learn a lot from them.” One lives and learns, yes... but for this living legend, learning never stops. 

Maria Louis is the founder editor of the decade-old Architect and Interiors India, published by ITP Media India.

The changing workplace

The workplace is not what it used to be. New office spaces, even in India, are being designed with the employee as the central focus. The idea is to create an environment that fosters creativity and innovation through a combination of work, leisure and comfort, which eventually would lead to higher productivity.

By Gretchen Ferrao Walker



“The design fraternity is teaming up with well-being experts to craft spaces that lay emphasis on better air quality, regulated noise levels and natural lighting.”

IN 2018, THE FELLOWES *Workplace Wellness Trend Report*, an annual study by the British office products company, revealed that 87 per cent of employees want healthier workspace benefits. The options ranged from sit-stands and ergonomic seating to wellness rooms, healthy meals, flexible workspaces and company fitness benefits.

It seems only logical, considering today's always-on-work culture that has the average professional spending 40 hours-a-week (if not more) on the job. It is also telling of a more health-conscious worker demographic that's seeking workplace wellness rather than purely fitness. A survey carried out by British retailer Furniture123.co.uk said a little more than half (53 per cent) of job seekers would turn down a role if the workplace design and environment weren't up to scratch.

Before we look at the aspects that define today's office design, we must understand how the way we do business has evolved. UK-based environmental psychologist Dr Nigel Oseland calls this the 'Quarternary' period in the workplace — a new economic age where creativity and innovation are key to maintaining a company's competitive edge. A generational shift and advances in technology call for a dynamic work environment that influences the whole employee experience.

As more businesses realise that people are their biggest asset, there's greater investment in office design, facilities and conditions for maximum performance and well-being. “Organizations are increasingly looking to work out of spaces that are functional and efficient while being

comfortable and classy. The definition of work has evolved and is about staying flexible while being able to connect and network,” says Francois Gramoli, Creative Director, WeWork India, a network of co-working and flexi workspaces.

In today's context, shaping an effective workplace is about more than rethinking its architecture. It requires designers and employers to look holistically at the organization's culture, its criteria for success, and its place in the world. The Mumbai team of global design and build firm Space Matrix agrees that eye-candy workspaces are on their way out. Taking their place are tech-enabled, people-centric designs, which aim to influence employee productivity, engagement and eventually, retention.

While many a work trend story has focussed on the needs of the millennial, internationally renowned workplace strategist Neil Usher cautions against the short-sightedness of this approach. “The ideal workplace is a blend of all generations considered equally and fully – experience and insight interwoven with energy and ambition,” says Usher, who is Chief Workplace Officer at GoSpace, a unique cloud-based AI set-up that dynamically allocates team space.

The architecture of wellness

The design fraternity is progressively teaming up with psychologists, neuroscientists and well-being experts to craft spaces that work for the worker. At its most basic level, this translates to offices which emphasize comfort, better air quality, regulated noise levels and natural lighting. Usher, who authored *The Elemental Workplace* (published

One Lodha Place is designed by New York's Pei Cobb Freed & Partners.



by SAGE in India), a solution-oriented approach to office design, says, “A workplace succeeds or fails in the minutiae, which is why washrooms and storage feature as two of the twelve elements [of my book]. Each of the 12 elements reduces to the highly personal, however important they are on a grand scale.”

A recent report, developed by Japanese electronics multinational Sharp and Dr Oseland, says increased fresh air and good lighting in offices and meeting rooms could boost worker performance by 20 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. Also, employees in offices with windows reported 46 minutes more sleep at night compared to those without them. Biophilic design [an architectural concept used to increase occupant connectivity to the natural environment] psychologically feels good, but has also been shown to help with restoration and enhanced performance, both for creativity and focussed work,” explains Oseland. Space Matrix, for instance, brings the outdoors in via daylight, living walls, exposed brickwork and handmade heritage tiles.

Stepping towards sustainability

Siddhartha Gupta, CEO of Gurgaon-based online talent assessment firm Mercer | Mettl talks about how compensation and benefits are just table stakes for small and mid-size businesses. For high-performing individuals, the work environment is equally a deciding factor while taking up a job. He adds, “Employees want to associate themselves with their brand and its vision, and fulfil personal aspirations through consistent support.”



Bathroom solutions company Jaquar’s focus on sustainability is highlighted by the location and architecture of its corporate headquarters in Manesar, Haryana. The glass building sits on a plateau, cushioned by landscaped gardens and water bodies. Besides its people-centric interior design, the company’s commitment to wellness for the planet is visible in its LEED Platinum-certified structure. With net zero power consumption, it boasts recycling facilities for water and waste.

At the Palava Business District, in the Palava City by Lodha, a mix-use development in Maharashtra, sustainability takes centre stage. The effort has been to create a sustainable eco-system. Solar panels that are fitted across all office buildings and most amenity buildings generate a solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity of over 2.5MWp. Total water recycling, along with rainwater

harvesting facilities, results in 50 per cent lower water usage. Additionally, the 4-star BEE-rated and/or Gold LEED rated buildings ensure a 33 per cent savings in electricity costs. Intercity transportation is green too, with multiple cycling stations, including 30+ fitness cycles and 30+ electric cycles. Electric vehicle charging stations, currently deployed at Palava Phase 1, are available for commercial tenants. The place is as important as space for today’s employee looking to strike the right work-life balance. Oseland, who has conducted almost 100 post-occupancy evaluations, confirms that you get a sense of how well the workplace works even before a visit. Some cues include: location, easily available directions, accessibility to public transport, hospitality and security on arrival, etc.

Tapping into this need is a slew of mix-use real estate developments that offer walk-to-work (or play) options.



At the Palava Business District, in Palava City, a mixed-use development in Maharashtra, sustainability takes centre stage.

Lodha Excelus at New Cuffe Parade (NCP), for instance, is LEED Gold-rated business centre with access to residential units, entertainment destinations, fitness hubs and educational institutes. A private shuttle service ensures easy connectivity between the NCP neighbourhood and nearby public transport stations.

Similarly, at the pedestrian-friendly Palava City, residents can walk to 'live-work-learn-play'. That is, the commercial developments at Palava are master-planned with the 5-10-20 minutes principle, where over 80 per cent of residences are located within 1.2km of a commercial hub. Office buildings and commercial hubs are planned within 500m from the proposed transit hub. Moreover, the Palava City Management Association (PCMA) offers frequent and well-networked outbound and internal shuttle services. The air-conditioned

buses feature WiFi, food and beverage, reading material, charging points, etc.

Looking within

A culture of collaboration and creativity has led to agile, inclusive designs. The Dilbert-esque cubicle has been replaced by flexible spaces with customised interiors that encourage movement and engagement. This allows an organization to function as a workplace laboratory, modifying and adapting to changing needs. For instance, multifunction spaces (over conference rooms), let you do more. Roof terraces, cafes, breakout zones and meditation areas allow equally for meetings and individual focus. Pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline recently introduced 'phone rooms' into their offices, where employees have a private place to use their cellphones.

The open office has been further defined via an ecosystem of

neighbourhoods that offer choice and customisation. The team at Gensler explains how physical movement is encouraged through the day via well-planned circulation schemes and destinations around collaboration, learning, food or recreation.

Spaces are demarcated via sensory-driven elements – one of the final frontiers of office design, according to Usher. Space Matrix recalls its work on the lobby at Lodha iTHINK, a business hub, off the Eastern Expressway in Mumbai, where areas are designed by function. "Colour and materials are important for a space sensory perception. It has direct effects that are symbolic, associative, synthetic and emotional. Finishes have a profound influence on a space and the people in it," they say.

Gensler encourages physical interaction with the interiors through a tactile material palette, which includes wood, concrete, metal and fabric; digital interventions (interactive media); and personalization boards that offer an opportunity to impact the space. At WeWork locations, lighting is used to define areas and increase productivity. While warm lighting in common areas creates a relaxed, interactive environment, cool lighting in meeting rooms incites hyper-productivity.

To address the growing concern of workplace noise pollution, design firms rely on the expertise of acoustic consultants. "The key is to design for dispersing sound, not eliminating it. Workplaces in India don't do well with complete silence," observes team Gensler.

Design that bears a cultural context is just as important. "No



A generational shift and advances in technology call for a dynamic work environment that influences the entire employee experience.



Workspace design essentials

While every office interior must be customised to suit the nature of the business, here are five broad types of spaces that are perfect for modern offices:

Experiential spaces: As time-out becomes as important as time-in, workspaces are incorporating relaxation and recreational options into the office plan. Examples include: Salons and spas, meditation nooks, yoga studios, rock climbing walls and espresso bars.

Third spaces: The Third Space is the one between the desk and meeting room that caters to more agile work practice. These areas usually sport a lounge-like design, replete with natural lighting, relaxed seating and maybe a coffee bar.

Collaborative spaces: Not your conventional meeting room, they have facilities for a team of three or four to work together.

Organic spaces: Biophilic office design is a global trend. A variety of natural finishes and unusual material combinations lend a playful touch to otherwise streamlined layouts. Also common are nature-inspired green corners that foster well-being, for instance living walls or vertical gardens and landscaped gardens with seating nooks. Acoustic panels are used to drown out the noise.

Flexible spaces: Good workplace design must offer a variety of ‘activity settings’ that are accessible to all. Tech-smart spaces that account for communication needs are a must. These include everything, from basic power outlets to video conferencing technology and wireless charging stations.

textbook or design course will teach you about the human factors,” adds team Gensler, referring to the ability of workplace design to constantly surprise. The team recalls a project where employees weren’t keen on the efficiency of the elevators at their new campus as it cut short social time. At another location, collaboration areas weren’t being used because couches with high partitions were too intimate, and gave the wrong impression if two teammates of the opposite sex used them.

Coming home to the office

As workdays extend beyond the traditional 9 to 5, employees want a home away from home. Enter the age of Resimercial design, a concept that blends the institutional formality of commercial aesthetics with the warmth of residential elements. Employed by powerhouse brands such as Microsoft, Google and Airbnb, the style has proved to positively impact employee retention, productivity and creativity.

It’s about giving employees a choice of environments. Lobbies, like drawing rooms, have a warm personal feel. The industrial canteen has been replaced by trendy cafes and pantries, stocked with health foods. Work pods and nooks channel the quietude of the home study. And the game room is where everyone gathers to unwind. Much like high-end residential complexes, offices are often replete with gyms, swimming pools, kickboxing rings, and even cycles at desks, offering employees a more holistic experience.


The people-centric approach

While evidence shows a

correlation between design and workplace wellness, Usher reminds us that it addresses the issue too far downstream. “We have become excellent mitigators yet terrible investigators. It’s about people being excellent to each other. That’s where we deal with stress and remove the need for coping strategies,” he says.

Experts agree that the people-centric approach ought to be systemic with programmes and policies that further enable workplace design. Gramoli stresses on the human connection of all WeWork initiatives. The Wellness Wednesdays’ programme, for instance, offers members fitness classes ranging from yoga to Zumba. And Monday blues are kept at bay, courtesy a complimentary breakfast.

At Mercer | Mettl, corporate activities are tailored for different personality types; individual working style is encouraged, with minimal micromanaging of staff. Incentive schemes urge employees to avail of wellness perks such as health camps. Other organizations are widening their network of doctors, so more employees can benefit from medical insurance without the stress of switching current healthcare providers.

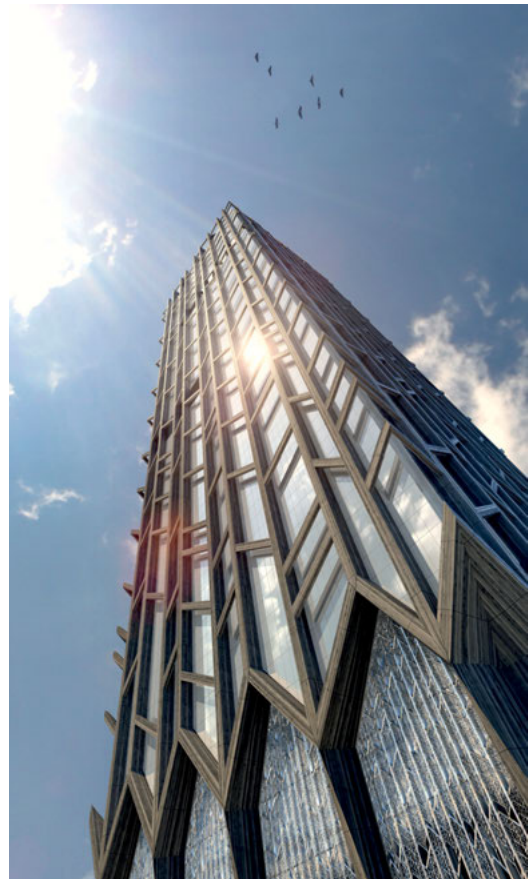
Summing it up, Gupta says, “Wellness and employee engagement go hand-in-hand. When an employee is happy with their job, it positively affects their health. When an employee is healthy and feeling their best, mentally and physically, they’ll feel happier in the workplace, which automatically results in improved productivity, strengthening company culture, reduced burnout and lower attrition.” 



Lodha iTHINK is at an unbeatable location, close to business and transport hubs in Thane, Maharashtra.



Nature-inspired green corners foster well-being.



Lodha Excelus at New Cuffe Parade, Mumbai is LEED Gold-rated business centre.

A ticket to the Olympics? A booking for an exclusive dinner cooked by a visiting Michelin-star chef at a luxury hotel close by? Or even something as simple as the best vet in town for your dog — there is nothing that the Saint Amand team cannot deliver to your doorstep.

A Concierge Like None Other

By Abhishek Mande Bhot





WHEN A GUEST CHECKED into Mumbai's Taj Lands End in 2009 to watch the IPL, she was horrified to learn that the tournament had shifted to South Africa that year. It's the kind of mix-up that's, well, rare. But when she mentioned in passing that she'd have loved to be in South Africa, she didn't realise it was something Sachin Singh would actually arrange. Singh worked as a concierge there at the time and made a few calls. When the guest returned after her day out in Mumbai, she was presented the option of flying out to South Africa, with a planned itinerary and complimentary tickets to watch the IPL game. The guest was over the moon.

On another occasion, during Singh's first major assignment, at the Taj Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur, a room service colleague accidentally broke a bottle of expensive perfume belonging to a journalist who had been invited by the hotel. In 2005, Jodhpur was still a sleepy town with almost no store that Singh could've bought the perfume from. The next day, when the guest left Jodhpur and checked into the Taj Palace in New Delhi, she found a note from Singh with an apology and a brand new bottle of the same perfume. Turned out, the bottle was a gift from someone special and she was profoundly moved by Singh's gesture. These are just two of the many times Singh has pulled a rabbit out of a hat for his guests.

Conveniently, he'll be doing the same for the residents of Lodha Luxury residences as part of Saint Amand.

Saint Amand is an elegant British five-star hospitality brand from the Lodha Group that caters to all requests from the Lodha Luxury residences in London, and now, in Mumbai. Singh is among the select experts who bring with them a global network of concierges, local knowledge and the warmth and expertise of the best luxury hotel companies in the country. So when you move into Maison, Lodha Altamount, or The World Villas, Singh and his team of concierges and butlers will be ready to orchestrate every detail of your everyday life. Just think of it as checking into your personal five-star property where everything you need will be taken care of.

But there's a difference, Shyam Kaikini, who manages the hospitality division at Lodha Group, points out. "Guests check out after a few days and if something goes wrong, you offer them a complimentary upgrade or a spa treatment and make it up in some other way. Here, people come in to stay for life. And, so, the service has to be significantly better."

What can you expect from Saint Amand?

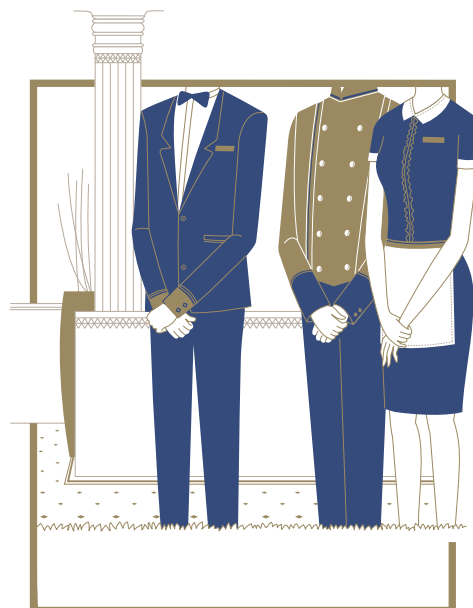
In several ways, the digital age in which we live is an age of 'Concierge Economy'. Think of it and you'd likely agree that the most successful businesses have been those who've thought and acted like a concierge. Take your favoured food delivery, dating or travel app. Or the granddaddy of the Concierge

economy — Google search. And so it's perfectly logical to question the need for a human concierge when everything you need is, quite literally, at your fingertips.

Kaikini has probably been asked this several times over and his response has an air of practised ease, yes, but also a grain of truth. Of course, you can find anything on the Internet, he admits, but points out that there is no substitute for time. "Most of our residents are people for whom time is the biggest luxury. What we do at Saint Amand is free up their time so they'd rather spend it with their family and loved ones. A concierge will always have local knowledge that an internet search or app won't be able to give you. Whether it's a pop-up jazz club that's opened up for the weekend or a restaurant that serves the best vegetarian kebabs or a store that sells great fabrics — our concierge will know it all and recommend to you the best, based on your preferences."

Kaikini reveals that only impeccably trained hospitality personnel are hired to serve as a Saint Amand concierge, since the idea is not just to achieve the highest standards of service (which those who have worked in luxury hotels are well-trained to deliver), but also ensure that this service is delivered with utmost "discretion and privacy". The Saint Amand team in Mumbai boasts several ex-employees of luxury hospitality groups such as the Oberoi and the Taj.

As part of the Saint Amand



Saint Amand is an elegant British five-star hospitality brand that caters to all requests from the Lodha Luxury residences.



The Saint Amand concierge service in London and Mumbai is entirely bespoke and offers an unsurpassed level of courtesy, hospitality and discretion to its residents.





training programme, concierges and butlers are encouraged to experience the services themselves — a budget has been set aside for this exercise — so they're able to honestly recommend them to residents. They're also encouraged to foster close relationships with residents — learning about their personalities, likes and dislikes and special occasions so as to anticipate their needs and make them feel truly at home.

But a Saint Amand concierge can do much more for you. It could be as unsexy, but essential, as helping you get a gas connection or change your address on your Aadhar card or find you a domestic help. Or it could be something way cooler like getting you a spot at a big-ticket ball, a sold-out show or the Cricket World Cup final. "Our first response will never be no," Kaikini says. "We'll try our best to get you what you've requested for and in the remote possibility that we can't, we'll provide you with alternatives."

Each Saint Amand team prides itself on serving the brand's discerning residents with attention to detail, along with discretion and confidentiality. With their signature warm, friendly and courteous approach, residents' comfort, security and happiness are their top priority. The idea is to be efficient and discreet, but also empathetic.

Which is where Abhishek Sharma comes in. Sharma, whose responsibility includes hospitality and property management at the Lodha Group, also runs training modules for

all Saint Amand associates. He gets them started with an orientation programme that highlights the Saint Amand service culture, core values and philosophy, before introducing hospitality essentials, the business of luxury, and the Saint Amand service drivers. Almost on cue, I am presented with a card that spells out the service drivers. Sharma says that all the Saint Amand staff has one such card that reminds them of the guiding principles of the service — attention to detail, courtesy, empathy, responsiveness, and sensitivity.

You can see aspects of these in different ways. The pieces of furniture in the show apartment at Maison, for instance, are perfectly aligned, the cutlery on the table placed at a perfectly measured distance — a butler who pays attention to what you need even if you may not have spelt it out to him. This is an outcome of the rigorous Saint Amand Concierge Programme that emphasises on listening skills and the art of asking questions while taking requests so that concierges can help residents make the right choice every time.

The Saint Amand Butler Program incorporates all hospitality essentials required for a butler to deliver an exemplary luxury service experience. This includes equipment, cover laying, menu and courses, wines and spirits, order taking skills, and handling miscellaneous requests.

All of this also extends to No.1 Grosvenor Square, London, where Paul Irving will make you feel at home

as you walk into the show apartment where he re-enacts a version of what you'll buy at this tony residential project. "We take their coats on arrival, offer beverage on a sterling silver tray and serve with a silver spoon and shortbread sourced from the Prince of Wales' business while the sales person shows them a video of the property. There's a great deal of attention to detail that goes into creating the experience," he says.

No.1 Grosvenor Square has been home to British aristocracy since the 1700s and at the centre of fashion and status ever since the first stone was set by Sir Richard Grosvenor. Located at the heart of the Duke of Westminster's Grosvenor Estate, No.1 Grosvenor Square has a unique history as a site of true global power, both as the Canadian High Commission and the US embassy where young JFK was raised.

And quite like in Mumbai, the Saint Amand concierge service at No.1 Grosvenor Square is entirely bespoke and offers an unsurpassed level of courtesy, hospitality and discretion to its residents. Comprising a team of experts from London's finest hotels, restaurants and the most exclusive private members' clubs — operating at embassy-level standards of privacy and security — no request is too big or too small.

All you need is a phone call to your personal concierge who'll pull a rabbit out of a hat. 

The

A guide to the most exciting
watches of the year.

Best of

By Dhiram Shah

2019



**Breguet Classique Tourbillon
Extra-plat Squelette 5395**

The slim, skeletonised watch is as much technical as it is artistic. The emphasis is on craftsmanship, with an unobstructed view of the magnificent hand decoration on the self-winding tourbillon. Just 3mm thick, it is one of the thinnest movements of its kind ever created. The gold plate and bridges have been hollowed out, making it extremely lightweight, while still providing 80 hours of reserve power. It sits in a fluted 41mm case, topped by a domed glass-box revealing the movement with applied hour markers in blued gold. The design is rounded off with traditional blued moon-tipped hands and soldered horns in the distinct Breguet style. Water-resistant to 30 metres, the watch is available with a grey movement in a rose gold case, or with a rose movement in a platinum case. It comes with an alligator leather strap with a gold folding buckle.



**Harry Winston
Histoire de Tourbillon 10**

This watch marks the 10th anniversary of the Harry Winston collection dedicated to the tourbillon. Having used tourbillons with single, double and triple axes, combined (or not) with single or double tourbillons and carousels in the earlier version, the 2019 model is equipped with four tourbillons arranged in symmetrical order. They are collectively made up of as many as 673 components, because of which the watch is housed in a massive rectangular case, 53.3mm wide and 39.1mm tall. The open worked movement can be seen in the four corners of the case, housed in a glass box supported by two transverse bridges. The dial is a single component sapphire piece. Its central hollow circle hosts the 12-hour markers for the chapter ring. It extends upwards and downwards through a rectangular extension that carries the two large numbers, 6 and 12. The bezel is chamfered and bevelled and features higher elevation at 6 and 12 o'clock, marked by two notches, which, together with the variation in height, trace the three Harry Winston arches, a tribute to the architecture of the entrance to the brand's iconic Fifth Avenue showroom. The 18k gold watch comes in three limited editions, white gold and rose gold (10 pieces each) and a special edition Winstonium model, limited to just one unique piece.



Jaeger-LeCoultre Rendez-Vous Moon

Seven years ago, Jaeger-LeCoultre launched the Rendez-Vous line as the first watch family designed exclusively for ladies. This year, the Swiss watchmaker has updated the model by adding a larger, lacquered moonphase display. The reworked moonphase can be seen through the guilloché decorated aperture at 6 o'clock. The polished moon waxes and wanes against a lacquered blue starry sky. As compared to the earlier version, this model features an additional halo of 47 diamonds at the centre of the dial, in addition to the 60 brilliant-cut diamonds on the bezel of the 34mm case. Caliber 935A is an automatic movement with a 40-hour power reserve.



Hermès Arceau L'heure De La Lune

This classy timepiece presents a unique take on the double moonphase complication. Visible at first glance is a stunning pair of stationary mother-of-pearl moons with a complementary pair of lacquer dials floating over the top. The lacquer dials rotate around the main dial once every 59 days, which in turn cover and uncover the moons to indicate its current moonphase in the two hemispheres simultaneously. The moons are in an inverted position, with the lower one representing the northern hemisphere and the top one the southern hemisphere. While one of the floating dials displays the hours and minutes, the other shows the date. The watch comes in a 43mm white gold Arceau case with a choice of two dial colours, a meteorite with graduated grey lacquered discs, and aventurine with white lacquered discs. It is limited to 100 pieces.



Cartier Panthère de Cartier Manchette Cuff

In 2017, Cartier surprised everyone by resurrecting the Panthère de Cartier line of watches, which was first launched in the 1980s and discontinued subsequently. The 2019 version is a cuff watch available in a variety of precious metals with black lacquer and diamond details. The dial sits off-centre in an open-worked jewellery chain with the bezel set with diamonds. The partially open-worked chain subtly reveals a glimpse of the skin, making it a gorgeous piece. The watch is powered by a quartz movement.



Hublot Spirit of Big Bang Tourbillon

This impressive new addition to the Spirit of Big Bang collection features, for the first time, a tonneau-shaped 42mm case, made of carbon-fibre that integrates black or blue composites. The HUB6020 movement powering the watch was developed explicitly for this new design. The airy, skeletonized dial has the tourbillon at 6 o'clock, a 5-day power reserve indicator at 8 o'clock, and an off-centred time display at 3 o'clock. The 'One-Click' fastening system for the strap also makes its appearance on the Spirit of Big Bang collection for the first time. It is limited to 100 pieces.

The World of Lodha

Residents explore their built spaces and natural green surroundings, through the various activities and festivals organized by the Lodha community. A round-up.



Urban Forest at Amara

The word, Amara, is drawn from the Sanskrit word, Amar, meaning eternal or timeless. Amara, located in the heart of Thane, is an attempt at offering a perfectly balanced life amidst a lush 40-acre urban oasis.

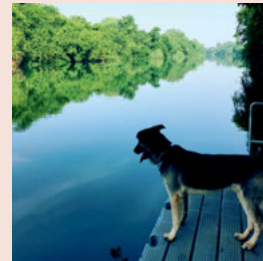
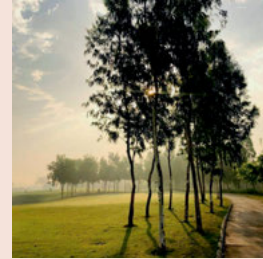
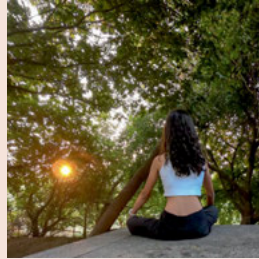
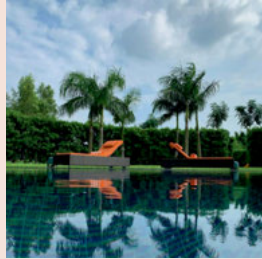
Within this green expanse is a two-acre private forest, with over a thousand trees. At the centre of this urban forest is a 75-year-old Banyan tree, considered to be one of the richest sources of oxygen. The complex has been designed in a way that several old trees have been preserved. The biodiversity within and around includes trees and herbs such as Wild Sage, Spanish Cherry, Weeping Fig, Gulmohar, besides a host of indigenous trees such as Banyan and Mango.

The urban forest was inaugurated

on May 19, 2019, with nature-bound activities such as forest walks, introduction to the trees in the forest, as well as butterfly spotting. Residents planted a few fruit trees such as Bor, Jamun, Rai Amla, Amla, Mango and Ramphal. A tree house within this urban forest doubles up as a meditation centre, and resting corners have been created across the expanse.

The site of the urban forest is a paradise for birdwatchers, who can track birds such as Red Whiskered Bulbul, Barbet, Green Bee Eater, Paradise Flycatcher, Red Munia and Sunbirds. The private forest is also home to several species of butterflies, many of them on the verge of extinction such as Plain Tiger and Blue Tiger.

The Lodha Belmondo community is now on Instagram



Lodha Belmondo, a 100-acre luxury riverside resort, has become the ‘Ultimate Weekend Home’ for many families over the last few years. Belmondo’s residents have become its greatest advocates by posting several beautiful images of the development on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. The official Instagram handle @lodha_belmondo showcases the ‘#LifeAtBelmondo’ moments captured and shared by the residents on Instagram.

The genesis of the page can be traced back to the time when residents began posting photographs of the beautiful time they have had across Belmondo – from the pool area to the golf court and the basketball court, or while bonding with nature at the riverside and within the green

expanse. The Instagram account features photographs of residents cruising down the river. To promote the Instagram page and get residents to post more, the #LifeAtBelmondo Wall was installed at Club Belmondo, as a unique testimony by the residents showcasing Belmondo’s grandeur through images captured by them.

As a part of developing this unique community, Belmondo has hosted several interesting events for the residents. At the Masterclass event the in-house chefs – Chef Sameer Shah and Chef Akhil Ranjan prepared a Quinoa Salad and a Risotto, while explaining the concept of farm-to-fork that is practiced at Belmondo. ‘A Dazzling Night Of Star Gazing’ had the experts talk about the basics of stargazing and constellations, followed

by a stargazing session under the Belmondo sky. A guided nature trail introduced the residents to the fascinating flora and fauna near the Pavana River. The Belmondo Residents’ Golf Tournament had several residents participating, while a wellness session was conducted by the wellness experts at Belmondo – Serena Spa by Heaven on Earth.

Experiencing Palava



(From left) Palava Tarang, a two-day community festival hosted several music and dance performances; the Palava Corporate Challenge; the customers experiencing Palava 9DX.

Spread across 4,500 acres, Palava has been ranked India's no. 1 smart city*. And in just nine years, the city has become home to over 1 lakh residents, making it the fastest growing new city in India. The multitude of world-class amenities offered and the sheer size of the city are conveyed in an avant-garde, lifelike manner to the residents and the potential customers with the aid of an innovative experience – Palava 9DX.

Real estate industry's first 9D experience, it is a high-tech, immersive cinema experience designed to offer customers a sense of what 'Life at Palava' is like. The fancy gear used to offer this 9D experience, encompasses a personal VR screen combined with features such as sensor-equipped motion seats, mist, wind, fragrance, and much more that captivates the senses.

The life of the residents at Palava

is as colourful as the city itself, where several events and festivals are hosted regularly. Residents meet, bond and have memorable experiences. Amongst them is Palava Tarang – the city's annual cultural fest. This year, over 7,000 residents and guests attended the two-day festival, which hosted scintillating performances by Kabir Café and Shahid Mallya, special acts by Chhota Bheem and friends, besides a slew of food trucks and stalls.

Palava Corporate Challenge – Season IV was also held over two weekends, beginning April 14. The tournament saw over 70 corporates participating in sports such as football, squash, tennis and swimming. More than 500 players from corporates such as Reliance, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, J.P. Morgan and many more, battled it out in the qualifying rounds at the FIFA-standard football field and the Olympic Sports Complex in Palava. Deloitte and Willis Towers

Watson took home the trophy for men and women's football.

Staying true to its identity as a 'Green' city, Palava celebrated World Environment Day with much enthusiasm and fervour. Month-long activities included green walks and pledges, eco-friendly workshops, cleanliness and awareness drives. The spirit of appreciating and conserving nature is embedded in the thoughts and actions of every Palavian and these activities helped spread the message clear and far.

**Ranked by JLL in its 'Liveability Quotient – A Paradigm Shift in India's Emerging Cities' Report 2017.*

Lodha Park celebrates community living



A 'Phoolon ki Holi' was played Vrindavan-style at Lodha Park; flower petals were used instead of colours.



Historically, the world's most sought-after residences have always been located around great urban parks. Central Park in New York and Hyde Park in London are some of the most desirable neighbourhoods to live in, pulsating with vibrant life and activity. Lodha Park now brings the buzz and lifestyle of these landmark urban park neighbourhoods, to Mumbai. Set in the largest development in South Mumbai, this 7-acre park sits within a massive 17-acre development of a quality that India has never seen before. With 1,000 trees of different species and abundant nature, Lodha Park is a complete ecosystem unto itself.

The project is innovative in several ways. It is, for instance, so immense that it took almost two years to excavate 3.2 million cubic metres of the earth in multiple phases, and the mud excavated was enough to fill the Great Pyramid of Giza. It also has

one of the world's largest foundation footprints with a combined raft slab of 35,000 cubic metres. Lodha Park is designed by WOHA, the internationally acclaimed, Singapore-based architecture firm.

You enter the residential development through a magnificent, air-conditioned entrance lobby. High-speed elevators take residents up to their luxurious abode. Every square inch of Lodha Park is designed to be functional and aesthetically pleasing. The 50,000sq.ft. Clubhouse at Lodha Park is inspired by the shape of a crystal, in a glittering blend of luxury-meets-grand architecture. The Clubhouse houses fitness facilities, where expert trainers follow a regimen created by Ramona Braganza, personal trainer to several Hollywood celebrities. The Clubhouse also spans a gourmet restaurant, elegant hospitality venues and a private theatre. Across Lodha Park, you will

find several thoughtfully crafted spaces, where residents spend time with their families and neighbours.

Celebrating festivals together is a way for the community to bond. One of the last festivals to be celebrated was in March 2019. A 'Phoolon ki Holi' was played Vrindavan-style; flower petals were used instead of colours. The idol of Lord Krishna was showered with rose petals while the residents played with the petals of marigold, jasmine and chrysanthemums. This ancient tradition was revived in association with ISKCON. From the gardens of Vrindavan to the greens of Loda Park, Holi was celebrated the way stories mention Lord Krishna celebrating the festival of colours. The festivities included a spiritual discourse by Shri Nityanand Charan Prabhuj of ISKCON, a Bharatanatyam performance and concluded with Holika Dahan. 🌿



The Farnsworth House

DESIGNED AND BUILT by the legendary German-American architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, in the late 1940s as a weekend home for a wealthy Chicago client, Farnsworth House is counted foremost amongst the famous houses in the world, a masterpiece of the minimalist International style of architecture. Along with the likes of Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies is considered to be one of the founders of modern architecture. Farnsworth is one of his famous works, a residential property that is still studied by architects for

its pioneering use of space, material and the way it blends with surrounding nature.

The International style of architecture is characterized by an emphasis on volume over mass, the use of lightweight, mass-produced, industrial materials, rejection of all ornament and colour, repetitive modular forms, and the use of flat surfaces, typically alternating with areas of glass, according to the Art & Architecture Thesaurus of the Getty Research Institute. Farnsworth is one of the earliest examples of this style with its

free-flowing interiors, all-glass walls set against a wooded countryside. Nature and light are as much part of the property as the materials used in its making. It is a one-room house with hardly any partitions to separate the different areas. Only an all-round, wall-to-floor curtain ensures privacy when needed. Farnsworth House is part of what Mies once described as his “attempt to bring nature, houses, and human beings together in a higher unity”. It is now classified as a US National Historic Landmark.

RARE. EVEN FOR MALABAR HILL.

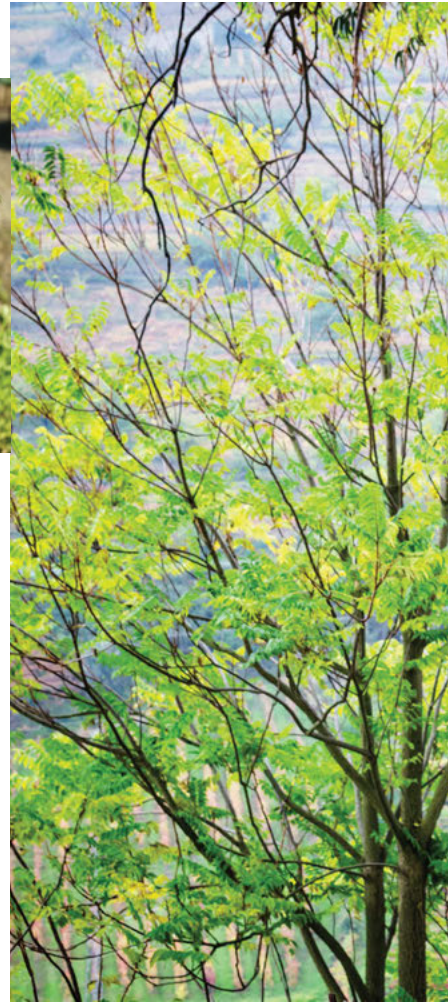
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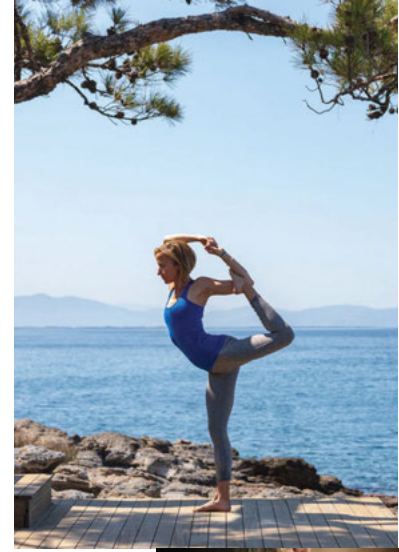
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