

There are as if only two crutches in Indian contemporary aesthetics. An adopted western imagery that more often than not has little contextual bearing, or the dependence on Indian craft, fused as fragments that results in a pastiche confused aesthetic.

For years we have slaved ourselves to western doctrines of design. Now, when the circle of light is on us, we scramble for aid, in our unpreparedness and seek an easy disguise for our inefficiencies and the lack of an exploratory deductive thinking, in history, tradition and culture. Often this is an over glorification to hide our sedimented complacency.

On the other hand, the glib western imagery that designers so quickly rush to adopt, in the garb of the global, remains equally unimpressive. Neither come from intelligent interrogative derivations of ideas and context.

## **The local vs. the global**

There is a single planet but there are several worlds within ...

Geographies that have derived cultures, make a strong case for regional contextualism, the local, and the indigenous.

So oodles of doodles of concrete, or the posed, minimalist, reductive starkness are both deceitful ploys that stage to demonstrate a derived intellectual thought that does not make its existence any more relevant than being trendy and fashionable and are hugely inconsiderate of the finer human sensibilities.

History of evolution has shown that civilization emerged in different parts of the world simultaneously. Languages, agriculture, medicine, etc were the inevitable outcome of the imperative evolutionary process. I am not making a case for an insular retarded propagation but am attacking the overt western plagiarism, that plagues us, without a deeper understanding of the regional context.

## **Craft**

Has often been misunderstood as ornamentation and embellishment. It is essentially the art of product making. It is the manner in which materials and forms are composed into a product, an element, a building. It is detail in design.

Mass production has been both, a boon and a bane. While it served to meet the minimum basic requirements of the larger people, it depleted us of exclusivity human rigour and passion, and an intuitive aesthetic.

The advantages of the former will not help this discussion. But, its banality may be resisted and denied, whenever allowed.

Standardization is the outcome or perhaps the precursor to industrialization. It is universal.

Customization in almost any form, material and process happens in India. There is a tome of knowledge that lies latent in the history of Indian architecture that needs to be explored and imbibed with experience and not through its textual documentation alone. Mistakes and failures are imperative to an evolutionary process and we haven't yet begun.

Borrowing technology has speedier results, but a self attained methodology has larger impacts and consequences in posterity.

Understanding of craft, process and material characteristics, from the local genius, who still remains untainted from western education and redefining his role in our industry, can lead to another aesthetic identity that we must seriously dwell upon.

Let us measure and calibrate our skills.

Let us collaborate with craft to create an Indian contemporary identity.

## **Start**

In the absence of a serious professional, for several years the profession of interior design is claimed by fashionable women with acquired taste, who went on to be termed stylists, and architects who donned this hat, out of personal interest or desperation.

In case of the stylist, there was a complete lack of understanding of the contexts and the commission was mostly treated as a collection of beautiful objects from across the world. The architect on the other hand, having trained essentially in space and building, limited the scope of design to altering the spatial context, to create programmatic relevance and re-rendering the space, ignoring the skills required to make furniture, tapestry, light fittings etc, which he purchased.

Inadequately qualified for the profession, the architects find themselves at a loss, when for instance, the spatial contexts are intact, and

# TOWARDS AN AESTHETIC IDENTITY

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the space does not need redefining, but its architecture is of superior quality.

What new concept and context can then be woven into such defined space? It would have to take a position and define its existence without hinging itself on a mere redressing of the existing space.

Perhaps this, and questions such as these could lead to a theory of contemporary interior design in India, that has for long been unestablished or even as much as discussed.

In the young course of my career, I have had the good fortune of handling various kinds of projects, which allowed me different understandings of design, and the role I needed to play as well.

In this presentation, I will show projects that needed remodeling of the space itself,

Then those where I was allowed the opportunity to create the space, and then lastly, those where the spatial context is beautifully established, and the interior design needed a clear definition and position.

The struggle has always been in the pushing of boundaries, to emanate a new aesthetic that holds its own in the mire of all that which is presently considered supreme.

Scales vary, but the struggles continue.

Unlike art, architectural and interior design is experiential, and programmatic. It is nevertheless equally aesthetic as well as sensual.

Every act has to be considered as an expression of art, on behalf of the end user. a sensual response to a need.

Design will manifest itself from notions, from concepts, from fables, from accrual of experiences. It will manifest from understanding materials and processes, from unspoken needs and desires. It is a continuous day dream.

It is a self contained enterprise that will never cease to emanate joy to its owner.

Interior design is not temporal. It is timeless.

With this focus alone, we continue the struggle.



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