

india

# mondo

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AN INITIATIVE BY

# STIR



Bijoy Jain  
*Immediate Landscapes, 2018*



## P 032

**SANJIB CHATTERJEE**  
KAARU

Chatterjee is an architect, furniture maker, interior designer and creator of lights and design installations. An alumnus of SPA Delhi, after graduation, he honed his skills and design vision, first training in Fine Arts and later working with architect and urban designer, Prof. K.T. Ravindran for several years. Chatterjee has authored articles for several design magazines and journals and has presented his thoughts on contemporary design at important design events in India. 18 years ago with Anjalee Wakankar, he co-founded KAARU, a design studio based in Delhi. KAARU's works, represented in India, UK and Japan, are considered unique in the realm of Indian contemporary design for its ability to bring modern technology, philosophical insights and creative processes which are innate in the Indian arts and crafts. *In this issue: Chatterjee opines on the intersection between architecture and product, shedding light on the meaning and relevance of these two elements of design.*



## P 020

**PRAVIN TALAN**  
PRAVIN TALAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Talan is an internationally acclaimed fashion and lifestyle photographer who has worked worldwide with brands as diverse as Fashion TV and United Nations. He is better known for his series, Taj Mahal and Its Inspirations, India's Men and Women in Uniform as well as many other projects creating centred on creating social impact such as, 'A Day in the life of sex-worker' for UNAIDS and 'The Butterfly Dreams'.

His work is widely regarded as creative, original and inspirational and has been featured in publications worldwide. A leading lifestyle magazine recently published a photo essay on his work titled 'Women-in-uniform', alluding to his immense work with the Indian defence services. Talan has photographed almost all Indian Defence and Central Armed Police Forces and many state police.

*In this issue: As part of the mondo\*arc india|STIR team, Talan visited Bijoy Jain's studio and captured in his lens the moods and words of the architect.*



## P 166

**REETA GYAMLANI**  
FARRAGO DESIGN

Gyamlani is the founder and principal designer of New York based Farrago Design offering high-end design services and heirloom quality home décor. Since its launch in 2003, she has been known for her singular vision, embodying an elegant fusion of Eastern and Western sensibilities and aesthetics. Hailing from Mumbai, she did her B.A. in Economics from Jai Hind College and Interior Design from Raheja School of Architecture and later Masters in Furniture Design and Design Management from the Pratt Institute in New York. Gyamlani curates rich, refined interiors thoughtfully layered with imaginative details and sumptuous furnishings celebrating diverse cultures, periods and styles. Her work has been showcased in galleries and showrooms in major cities around the globe and featured in leading national and international publications.

*In this issue: Gyamlani makes notes of recent trends and favourite picks at the NYC Design Week.*

## P 088

**ADREESH CHAKRABORTY**  
THE EARTH HOME

Chakraborty is an architect, interior designer, product and furniture designer. After a decade of practice, he went on to create The Earth Home in 2016 with his partner, Eena Basur - an acclaimed visual, brand and product designer and an international speaker. The Earth Home today provides architecture and interior design services, communication and brand design, and has its own line of products and furniture.

*In this issue: Chakraborty raises pertinent questions as to why we design the way we do today, referencing his discourse on the evolution of product design.*



Sanjib Chatterjee  
Pic: Courtesy of Kaaru

# ARCHITECTURE PERHAPS A PRODUCT OF OUR BEING

*Mrinalini Ghadiok, editor of **mondo\*arc india**|STIR in conversation with **Sanjib Chatterjee**, Co-founder and Head of Design, **Kaaru**.*

*As an architect, I have had many moments of doubt with respect to what was being designed or built. I often challenged what I saw on paper, even though it might have been a result of my own enquiries. I have questioned the norms as well as the unconventional, and I have tested the waters to desperately find answers to the many whys, hows, whats and wheres. When addressing the idea of 'Architecture' with reference to 'Products' or the intersection of one with the other, there were many more queries that arose. While I may not always get the answers I search or the clarity I seek, it is through conversations that ideas are cemented, uprooted or even fragmented. I speak with architect, designer, visualiser, thinker, challenger, Sanjib Chatterjee - who sheds light on some thoughts and redirects others towards a whole new universe.*

**Ghadiok:**

When architecture teeters on the edge of product design & products reflect on architecture.

**Chatterjee:**

(Disclaimer)

These are few thoughts, which I have attempted to articulate in response to your provoking queries. Considering my own ignorance about this Universe added with the fact that this is an endless area of study, contemplation and realization are only allusive, meagre and partial derivatives of the vast wisdom base that exists in India. These thoughts form only a tiny part of what I have heard and received from my teachers and people of sterling insights.

**Ghadiok:**

When we look at something minutely, in detail, close enough to be able to deconstruct or fragment it, or when we

move away to see these small elements as parts of a larger entity, components that comprise a whole, is when we begin to identify with them as 'fragment' or 'whole'. It all depends on the scale of our perception. Or does it?

**Chatterjee:**

**Dependent Origination and Relative Reality**

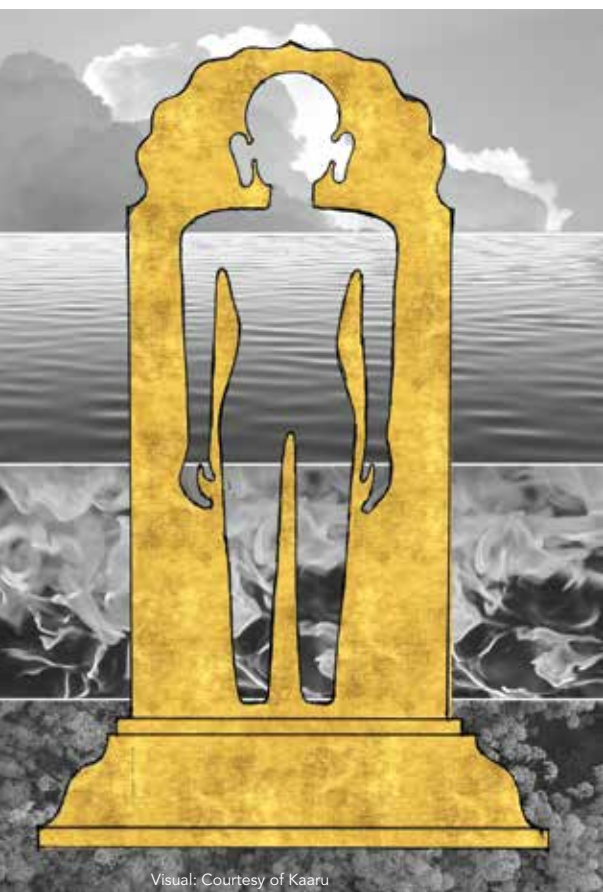
Your queries lead us towards one of the most profound truths of dependent origination pointed by Shakyamuni Buddha, two and half millennia ago. The essence of it summarizes as, 'all manifest or imaginable phenomenon that we perceive within our body or around it, originates dependently from other parts'. Therefore, they also hold a potential to fall apart anytime and are impermanent. In common circumstances, this is not apparent to us, due to a certain distance that our senses maintain from the objects.

**The Role Of Space Between The Perceiver And The Perceived**

This distance screens the fragments during the infinitesimal moments of our perception and paradoxically, makes our daily functions possible. Our intense habitual familiarity with this, very loosely, becomes Relative Reality or the Conventional Truth.

We normally do not think while shaking the hand of a person, of its subcutaneous fatty tissues, blood vessels, cells, protons and neutrons. Reversely, while looking at the Himalayas, we usually do not think of its demeanour as part of the Milky Way and the countless trillions of galaxies hovering over us. We, in a blink, believe that we are actually shaking his or her hand, and the mountain stretched in front of us is truly vast. This is Relative Sanity or Maintained Delusion at work.

This Maintained Delusion, due to the 'scale of our perception', also pervades into architecture and product design.



Visual: Courtesy of Kaaru

Illustration of ancient Jain iconography, Jain Tirthankara (realized teacher), traditionally used as a standing metal profile. It points towards the non dual nature of all phenomenon. What we perceive as solidly existing forms, is actually empty of that perception, due to dependant origination of the five elements.

#### *Ghadiok:*

Design is composed of a series of these elements that one may term, in their individual state, a product; and once assembled into a larger construct, perhaps architecture. Do details form constructs? Do elements make components? Do compositions become architecture? What does architecture assimilate, and what does it entail?

#### *Chatterjee:*

The film, 'Powers of 10', by Eames

Two and a half millennia after Shakyamuni, in a totally unrelated and not so well known incident, in 1977, two short films, 'The Powers of 10' by architects, Charles and Ray Eames, summoned our attention towards the relative sizes of things in the universe.

In the film the virtual eye of the camera simply moves in and out of the body in two different directions, one showing depths of increasingly tinier body parts, and the other moving outwards towards deeper mega fragments of the outer world, in different scales of space and time. Incredibly, both movements, in opposite directions, after a point of time, seem to lead us to one common element, just vast space. So where does this lead to?

#### The Five Elements- four of Form and the fifth as Space

As forms, my own human body and all physical phenomena that envelopes it, manifest due to five essential core materials, Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space. Even these elements are dismantlable into unfathomably tinier subparts when we begin to move closer towards them applying the analogy of Eames' 'Powers of 10'.

What I think as form, is actually embodied space, the fifth element. It is, however, perceived by our delusion as Earth, Water, Fire and Air. Form, metaphorically, would never acknowledge this; because by doing so, it loses its established perch as an 'entity', objectively and independently existing. This is how all conventional labels are established. This 'non-acknowledgement' includes 'ego' and 'architecture'. This leads to all forms being projections of the 'ego' and not of space or the 'silence' within that.

#### Seeing The Unseen - No Duality Between Architecture And Product Design

Within this context of reality, architecture and product design emerge as facets of one single symphony. As parts of the same symphony, they are distinguished only by their individual inherent gaps of fragments, which the designer/architect controls and conducts, using their sense of Relative Sanity. One facet might have gaps collapsing completely and coalescing in a distinct resonating musical note; the other, in a profusion of ecstatic expansions, have space rushing in from all available openings, which the architect has relented. The former would be labelled as a product or furniture, the later, as architecture.

So, the answer to your question, "whether compositions become architecture", in this sense - yes, they do.

#### From Design to Awareness - Form is Space

In an epic paradox of the visual, in spite of knowing about dependent origination, I would still continue to label what I see, as a whole, without fragments and independently existing forms due to my habitual patterns. However, time-to-time, if the perception actually slips towards dependent origination, even for a few seconds, the dualities between forms, architecture and product, inner space and outer space, will begin to dissolve. Designing, irrespective of whatever inspiring forms I can conjure, would then become an aware experience of knowing that I cannot, ever, intrude into space. I can only see reflections of my own delusions as its premises, peripheries, walls, roofs, thresholds, and elements of earth, water, fire and air. That is all I can do. The process of Architecture or Design, then, might not remain only an entanglement with the form any more, but lead to an awareness of space, a deep tranquillity, within and without. Since I realize that I am a collection of 'perceived fragments' of space, I can only pine for a transparency between me and space to grow, so that, one day if I am 87, perhaps the fragments will not be visible as distinct any more, but remain in a flux not only in the designs but also within me, as a human being.

[www.kaaru.com](http://www.kaaru.com)



Front Landscape  
Pic: Amit Pasricha

# CONTEMPORARY TRADITIONS

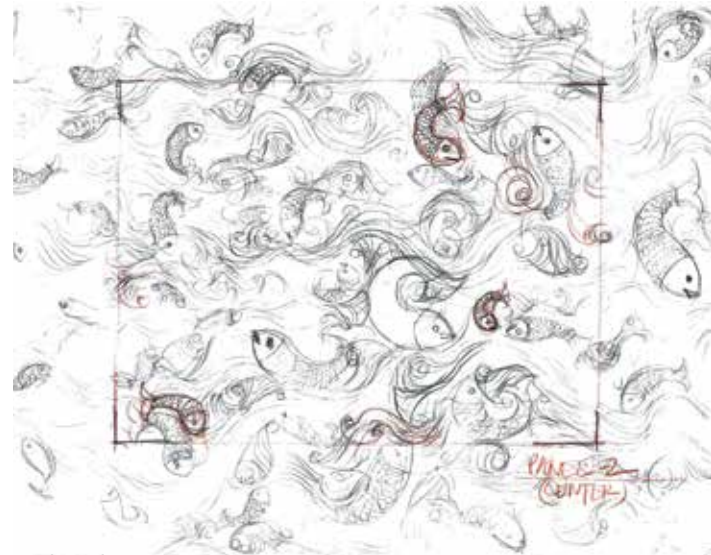
*While catering to a brief entrenched in the idiosyncrasies of Indian tradition, ancient mythology and fabled art, Kaaru delivers a design that is astute, an aesthetic that is contemporary, a space that is receptive and an experience that is ethereal. Architect Sanjib Chatterjee discusses the mind behind the matter with Mrinalini Ghadiok of mondo\*arc india|STIR.*

Design is laden with dichotomies; choices that often compel us to pause in our tracks of comfort and think - think about the 'what-ifs', weigh the options, and measure the alternatives. The duality of design is often evident in moments of either uncertainty or extreme confidence, further paving way for all sorts of paradoxes.

This New Delhi residence located in the very up-market locality of Golf Links was a canvas painted with such paradoxes - of ambiguities arising from inevitable realities, and affirmations born of distinguished beliefs. The clients' recent visit to the Kaladham Art and Cultural Centre in Bellary, Karnataka had left them particularly impressed, their memory imprinted with the motif and situation of a specific screen there. The search thus began for the designers who would transform their personal home, from what was a conventional and traditional

dwelling, to their aspiration of a subliminal but contemporary experience. It is essential to note that Kaaru was specifically commissioned to design a solitary screen for the residence, commemorating the encounter had in Bellary. Sanjib Chatterjee, co-founder and Head of Design shares, "Who knew that the strength of one element could be so strong that someone would want to connect through that product to a completely unrelated project. On the other hand, there was no question for us; Kaaru sees no barriers and we were confident that we could bring this particular element seen in an architectural project and make it integral to an interior design project." Hence began the metamorphosis. The house was an existing building and there were no interventions with respect to the interior structure, walls, apertures or spatial zoning. The clients, widely travelled, well

exposed and assured of their direction paved a well-carved path for their requirements. Devout Radha-bhaktas (worshippers), not only their spiritual living but even their physical environment was to be regarded as sacred. Kaaru's approach, thus, was defined by Chatterjee as, "Creating imageries to facilitate their devotion through our design." Beginning with a single screen, many conversations between the client and designers led to revelations and the further discovery of new ideas and possibilities. Before long, Kaaru was working on a complete transformation of the interior journey. This was achieved by striking a very delicate harmony between the inherited, conservative architecture and proposed innovative ideas for its refurbishment. The design needed to address the familiar, but offer excitement; it had to steer away from what had already been seen, and present



Fish Panel  
Sketch: Sanjib Chatterjee



Pic: Amit Pasricha



Pic: Amit Pasricha

something new. The brief also restricted the design in its response by requesting to build ideas around a collection of contemporary paintings by renowned artist, Laxma Goud. Received as gifts to the client's family, the epochal images of Radha-Krishna and Rama-Sita became critical points of focus. Chatterjee explains, "At the time of embarking on the project, the (three) artworks had already found their final places on the walls of the home. Kaaru chose to weave a design narrative which would take these unusual 'iconographic artworks' into account deriving important cues and beliefs ensconced in them." The architects visualised a broad palette of components as almost being extracted from the paintings. Splashes of colour transformed into textures and finishes, brush strokes evolved into physical formations,

the ethereal sense of light, sound and touch came alive as myriad design gestures, melding into a composition of space. "Three main theme areas, the arrival lobby, the main living and the main dining, were chosen to hold three bold narratives, including two on Radha and Krishna's courtship and the third on Sita and Rama's marriage, and related them to the depictions of the adjacent interior and exterior spaces, including two gardens in the front and one in the rear." Given the piecemeal approach to the design of the house, attending to one element after another, the space was not built as a 'whole', which contained a series of 'parts', but instead blossomed into a choreography of components that led from one to another, coming together to form an integrated and invigorating experience.

The main gates of the property part to reveal a sinuous driveway that holds in its embrace an adorned court. Setting the stage for a journey of visual delight, Kaaru took utmost care to deliver the most delicate details - from the meticulously configured paving to the robust stone sculptures that seem to float effortlessly on the surface of the placid water body; even the filigreed suspended lamps sandwiched between stone fins embody the serenity and stillness of what lays ahead. The large hand-carved Sandstone screen ruptured with the graphic of billowing waves veils a private indoor swimming pool from the public entrance. While daylight filters through its undulating perforations casting patterns on the water within, at night, the solidity of the stone transforms into a curling pattern as light washes across its surface.

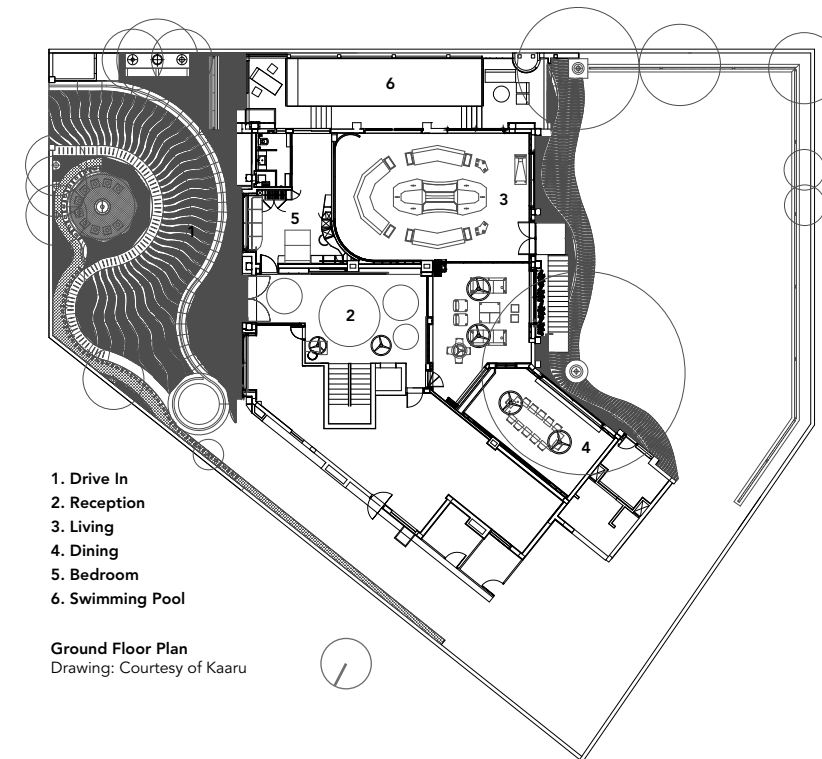
Moving towards the main door, one is greeted by an unusual tale. "The entrance of the house begins with a visualization of the 'Creation of the Universe' on the door. Believed to be Lord Vishnu's avatar, the famous fish guided and saved all of humankind, along with its originator, the Sage named 'Manu', on a boat through the great deluge," explains Chatterjee. This intricate rendition of Noah's Ark painted on one panel and sculpted into solid pieces of stone on the other, welcome one into the lobby to be faced with the pièce de résistance. Draped in the blue of the night sky, Krishna takes centre stage. The imposing painting of the Lord, Radha and numerable Gopis by Goud is the kernel from where emerges the intense Prussian energy and sprawls across

what was once a bare wall. It is now dressed in a deep sea of thousands of tiny exquisite pieces of Lapis stone, symbolic of Lord Krishna's infinite presence. The mainframe of the painting is expanded onto the landscape of infinity taking the form of rolling hills, rising clouds and grazing cows, drawn in pristine lines of glistening mother-of-pearl. The dense leafage of the trees extends beyond the canvas onto the ceiling to form an umbrella of hand-crafted lights. "The ceiling lights emerged as an idea to evoke a feeling of being under the canopy of a Kadambh tree, believed to be a favourite of Lord Krishna. The foliage pattern is an amalgamation of two contrasting yet resonating ideas. One is about sensitively capturing the subtle beauty of a Kaim/Kadambh tree being witness to the mythical

love between Radha and Krishna. The other references the same pattern simultaneously functioning as an effective diffuser for the radiating source of light," offers Chatterjee. Having done detailed studies of the foliage pattern, sketches were translated into full-scale drawings spanning 12 feet, which were then worked on by artists. "In an unseen reflection of deep love between the two most revered figures of Indian mythology, the design had to carry that intensity, as well as perform successfully in its technical role." It took over 45 days of hand embroidery and appliqué on three layers of cotton fabric that was specially hand woven in Benaras to construct these pieces of art. A team of traditional master textile artists worked to create the foliage with its radiating branches interwoven with

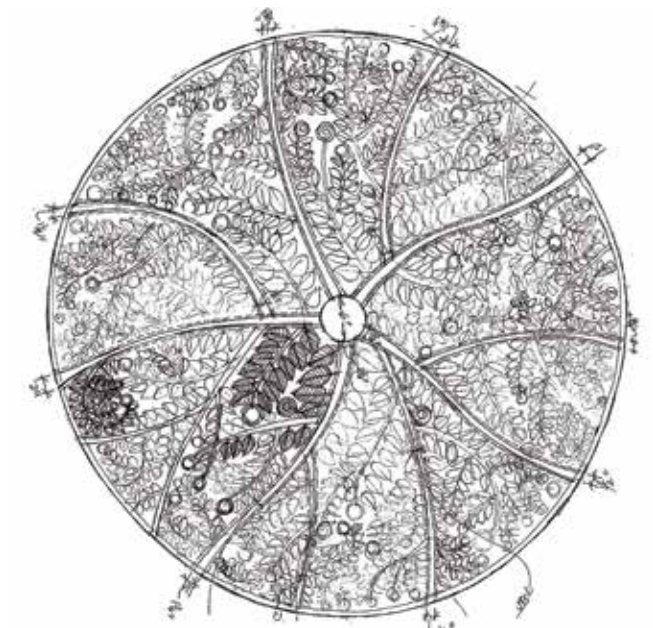


Pic: Amit Pasricha



1. Drive In
2. Reception
3. Living
4. Dining
5. Bedroom
6. Swimming Pool

Ground Floor Plan  
Drawing: Courtesy of Kaaru



Kadambh Light  
Sketch: Sanjib Chatterjee



Silver Wall  
Pic: Amit Pasricha



Making of Kadambh Lights  
Pic: Bibin Cheriyan



Making of the Silver Wall  
Pic: Sanjib Chatterjee

lacework on stretched wooden frames in Kaaru's studio. Hung across a stainless steel structure, they were fitted with LED light sources before being installed on site. The lights are controlled in a manner that can be dimmed to emanate a soft, gentle glow, or also provide intense pools of illumination in the lobby, catering to various moods and requirements. The sweet sound of Krishna's flute is further represented on the adjacent wall. Perfectly offsetting the depth of blue Lapis, silver panels depict a trail of cows helplessly being drawn by the mystical music emerging from within a tree. Deriving from the term 'Krish', which means 'to attract', the Lord entices the herd towards him. Large copper sheets were hand beaten to give the

embossed form of the cattle and then plated with silver to bring the monochromatic sculptural work to life. Stepping into the living room, the eye is immediately drawn to the far end of the linear space - to the vivid celebration of Rama and Sita's *vivaah* (wedding). The second of the three Goud paintings resides here, its bright yellow and orange hues framed perfectly against subtle tones of grey. Flanking either side of the painting are hand-chiselled stone panels with metal inlays in floral leitmotif taken from the artwork. Symbolic of Indian tradition and wedding celebration, the golden flowers commemorate the mythical occasion and its associated festivities, offering a procession

that leads one towards the newly wedded. Alluding to Rama-Sita's 14-year *vanvas* (exile), symbols derived from the forest are further referenced in the compelling copper plated ceiling installation, wherein large sheets laid out in an oval configuration are perforated in the form of branches with leaves and even birds, some perched and some in flight. The sprawling tree canopy shadows the entire room, which is dotted with a rather unconventional seating arrangement. Kaaru took it upon them to design and detail not only the layout of the living room but also custom-make its furniture. Addressing the need for large gatherings, and resisting nuclear clusters, Kaaru



Main Living  
Pic: Amit Pasricha

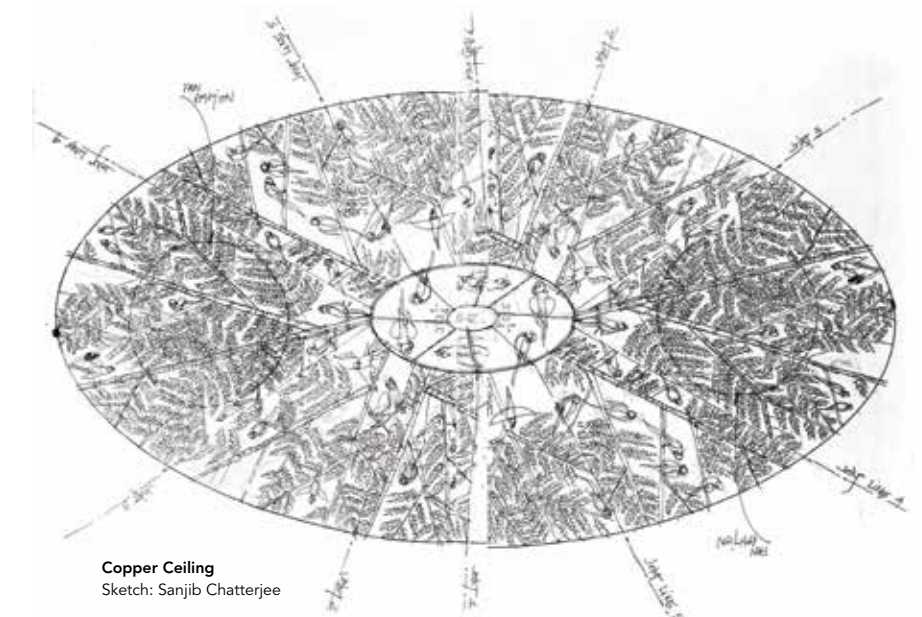


Pic: Amit Pasricha



Pic: Sanjib Chatterjee

dedicated a team member to solely design this space. Chatterjee explains, "We created an architectural setting, where the sofas were like buildings. The height of the backs of the furniture pieces was determined to allow maximum visibility of the painting. The sides were raised to create variation, and the modules were broken for flexibility. The centrepiece also holds seating." The two flanges that project out of each end of the centre table were carefully engineered with bespoke wheel systems so as to appear much lighter. These forms were achieved after rigorous research on fabrics and detailed exercises of making numerous models. Juxtaposed against the chromatic, gilded living space on one side is the sombre dining



Copper Ceiling  
Sketch: Sanjib Chatterjee



Pic: Sanjib Chatterjee

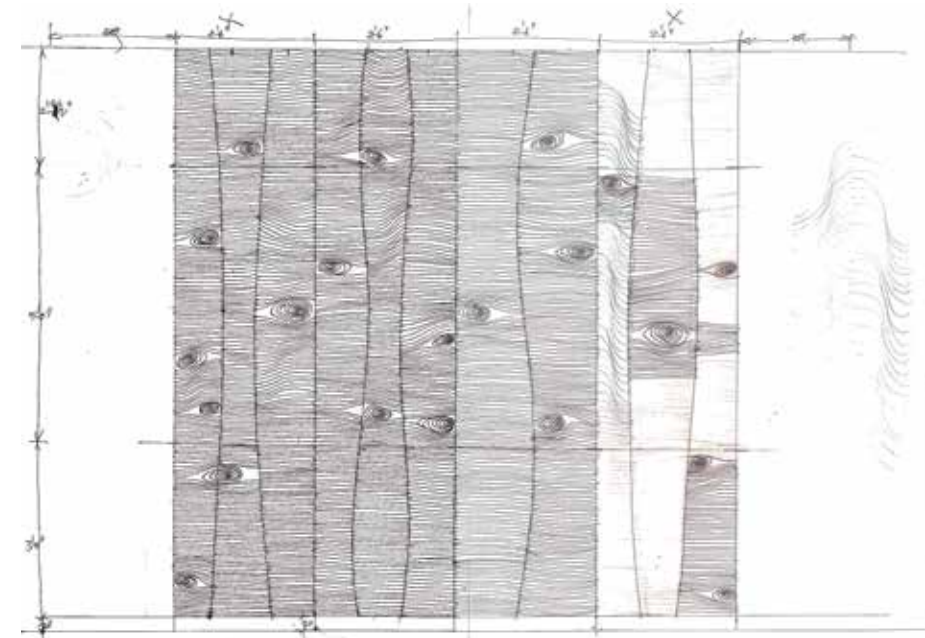


Pic: Sanjib Chatterjee

room draped in unsullied white on the other. The third Goud piece situated here is an anomaly in the collection. Stepping away from a vibrant palette, the artist casts Krishna in solemn hues as he imprudently peers through a window to watch Radha. His playful act is blanched by the muted strokes in the painting, the spirit of which extends to the design of the space as well, keeping the flooring and walls finished in white. Inspired by the soaring tree in the painting, believed to be a compound of the banana and *peepul* plant, Kaaru's rendition of the dining table was subtle - a white counter laid with banana leaf motifs set atop a simplistic

armature. The backdrop to the setting, however, is where one can notice the finest details. "A cascading water pattern on the wall is just a very light presence in the space," says Chatterjee of the white marble surface, which is sculpted by the deft fingers of master stone carvers from Gwalior and parts of Rajasthan. He adds, "The mural is flowing in four different cascades, with different visual notes, visible probably to the eye that has the patience to listen to its movement in lines. The soft stone texture belies the solidity of the material almost making the observer believe in its suppleness as actual water, occasionally broken with

small pools of hand-carved water swirls." Water was a very intentional introduction to the experience of dining in this space. While one relates to the sound of flowing water to calm the senses, in this case, the same effect was translated to a visual medium in absolute silence. It is the quietude of colour that caresses the multi-hued feast, and the tranquility of textures that heightens its assimilation. Kaaru has played a game of weights and balances throughout the house, be it with relation to colours and contrasts, symbols and references, tradition and progression or experiences and perceptions. While the



The White Wall  
Sketch: Sanjib Chatterjee



Pic: Sanjib Chatterjee

project was developed over a protracted period, one step at a time, stealing the opportunity for the designers to conceptualise the overall premise of their thematic, it also posed a challenge for them to navigate through the labyrinth of altering ideologies and evolving expectations. Chatterjee describes it as, "Thread by thread, the warp of twelve different living craft forms of India were laid together within the weave of contemporary design, to make this an abode for Radha, Sita, Krishna and Rama." Kaaru has braided within their work and their working independent constructs that amalgamate to conceive an integrated path. This is not a 'whole' made of parts; instead, graceful strokes of ingenuity have orchestrated a series of experiences that seamlessly accrue to nurture a homogeneous acquaintance.

[www.kaaru.com](http://www.kaaru.com)

#### PROJECT DETAILS

**Golf Links Residence, New Delhi**  
Architecture, Interior Design, Landscape Design,  
Production: KAARU  
Design Team: Sanjib Chatterjee, Raghendra Jha,  
Bibin Cherian, Navneet Srivastava, Rahil Jain,  
Mansi Singhal (Intern)  
Lighting Design: vis-a-vis



Pic: Amit Pasricha