



the
ISPRAVA
insider

VOLUME FIVE

Dear Readers,

2023 was an exciting and eventful year for The Isprava Group. All of our brands created many firsts and crafted several memorable experiences for our homeowners and guests.

Last year the Isprava family grew even bigger; we continued to create magic and set new benchmarks in luxury living. We handed over a record 47 homes, that takes our total to 292 luxury villas. This is not just a milestone for us as a brand but also for our homeowners who are at the very core of our special Isprava family.

We also launched our newest brand The Chapter, and sold-out the first project in record time. With The Chapter, we are able to provide accessible luxury driven through incredible and unique technology. Our first project will be handed over to the proud homeowners in 2025.

Lohono Stays achieved a remarkable milestone in 2023 as well. We have firmly established ourselves as the leading luxury villa rental brand in the country with over 153 properties in our portfolio in India and 185 properties in international locations while hosting about 38,855 guests through the year.

We also saw the handover of one of our most iconic homes, Estate de Quarencia. Situated in Siolim, a quaint and well connected part of Goa, the home is quite literally a work of art. It's beautifully designed and furnished to be reminiscent of the architecture of the years gone by, yet it boasts of all the modern amenities that one requires of an Estate of this kind. In Alibaug, we completed our latest gated community - Sienna Vaddo. These homes are a celebration of all things unique. The proximity to Mumbai and nearby beaches makes Sienna Vaddo even more special to its homeowners. Given the unique charm of Alibaug combined with its unbeatable proximity to Mumbai, we wanted to create a community that not only stands apart but also becomes a new benchmark for people living and visiting Alibaug.

And finally, let us take you through our theme for this year's edition - India's decade as a tastemaker. You will find a series of articles in this edition that put the spotlight on our ancient traditions, that are taking on a new avatar, largely led by new age brands, start-ups and various erudite individuals. While the world recognises India's prowess when it comes to creativity and craftsmanship, the history and effort that goes into it is often overlooked and artists don't get their due. That's why we decided to showcase a new way and perspective on Indian craft, through the curation of specific brands and products that are increasingly doing justice to the craftsman community.

This edition takes you on a journey, one that is replete with the finer things in life and the stories behind them. Much like our meticulously crafted homes and their befitting homeowners, who are the real inspiration behind the Insider.

We hope you take as much delight in reading this year's Insider, as we have, in putting it together. We truly believe that the next decade will be led by India and that our nation will be at the forefront of being a true tastemaker and trendsetter. It is with that conviction that we look forward to 2024, that promises to be a year of many milestones and greater accomplishments.



Nibhrant Shah
Managing Director & Co-CEO,
Isprava Group



Dhimaan Shah
Executive Director & Co-CEO,
Isprava Group



In October 2023, the 141st International Olympic Committee hosted a session in India after four decades. At the event held at the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre (NMACC), Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced his intentions to ensure that the 2036 Olympics are held in India.

One morning not long after, I scrolled through my Instagram, stopping at journalist Faye D'Souza's post summarising the recent S&P Global Market Intelligence findings that predicted India would overtake Japan by 2030 to become the world's third-largest economy. Clearly, we have an exciting decade ahead with all eyes on India.

It also reaffirmed the theme and message for this special fifth anniversary edition of *Isprava Insider*, in itself a celebration of luxury in India. Through the lens of design and craft, this issue looks to spotlight the country's incredible repository of traditions, skills, techniques and artisanry. But it's not all back-

ward-looking; the opposite, in fact. In the pages ahead you will see how our leading tastemakers in art, design, fashion and culture are moving the needle forward without forgetting the past.

In this issue you'll find conversations with people such as Princess Gauravi Kumari of Jaipur, who is taking craft and legacy forward in a very Gen-Z way; Karishma Swali of Chanakaya International, who has had a stellar year, including a collaboration with Dior that brought the house to showcase in India; Rooshad Shroff, an integral part of the *India in Fashion: The Impact of Indian Dress and Textiles on the Fashionable Imagination* exhibit at NMACC (as well as the centre's star-studded launch); and sisters Aditi Dugar and Shriya Naheta Wadhwa, in their first interview together, who are refining our palates with clean, organic produce and championing time-honoured techniques and traditions.

There's more—we've scoured the country for the labels in design and fashion that bring together craft and community, the art insiders who have their pulse on the next big thing, the Indian beauty traditions taking over the globe and the food trends that you'll soon see on menus, to name just a few stories worth bookmarking.

And of course, the Isprava homes we spotlight in this issue are also a perfect blend of the old and new. With every modern comfort, these homes celebrate a strong visual language that marries craft, texture, detailing and design.

As we forge ahead into year-end celebrations, I hope this issue gives you a little escape—creatively, mentally, even physically. Whether you are reading this at your holiday home in Alibaug, Goa or Coonoor, at one of Lohono Stay's magnificent villas around the globe, or even at home in the city, our wish for this edition is to celebrate the magic that is India in all its glory. And the exciting part is that there is no end to the stories we can tell. The team and I are proud to share this special edition, so sit back and enjoy this labour of love. Thank you, readers, for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Priyanka R Khanna". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

PRIYANKA R KHANNA
@priyankaskhanna

CONTRIBUTORS



**Olinda Pinto,
AVP, Marketing**

"As project lead and manager for *Isprava Insider*, I lead the marketing function at Isprava."

**Aashna Parikh,
Senior Manager,
Founder's Office**

"I'm involved in process excellence and strategy with regards to the execution of the magazine."



Behind the Issue

The Isprava team who helped make this edition a reality



**James Cornelious,
Senior Manager,
Marketing**

"With a background in advertising, I look after how the brand speaks and sounds across media."

**Tarana Sheth Sabharwal,
Chief Brand Custodian**

"As the architect of the brand, I have the privilege of shaping how the brand is perceived and represented across various media."



Ria Kanojia, Executive, Marketing

"I execute all marketing activities for the brand along with project assistance and magazine production for *Isprava Insider*."



Vedantini Bhogilal



Sanjoli Sharma

**Praachi Raniwala,
fashion and
lifestyle journalist**

In this issue: 'Global game', page 104
"There's a wave of Indian designers taking Indian luxury to the world: 'handmade in India' now means using centuries-old techniques, but made for a worldwide audience. It's only a matter of time till we have a global super brand from India."



On 'handmade in India'

**Gayatri Rangachari
Shah, journalist and
author**

In this issue: 'Maximum appeal', page 16 and 'The right advice', page 10

"Indian contemporary art today is the ultimate example of a strong 'handmade in India' story. Artists have many more platforms to showcase their creations and expand their oeuvres."



**Avanti Dalal-Mehta,
beauty editor and
content consultant**

In this issue: 'Back to your roots', page 110 and 'Scents and sensibility', page 112
"The new home-grown makeup brands that are going all out with fun packaging, great formulas and spot-on branding are exiting."



**Megha Sharma, travel
and culture journalist**

In this Issue: 'Paradigm shift', page 24
"A strong 'handmade in India' story spotlights the narrative of our karigars and the time-honoured techniques used by them and the artistry with which they transform raw material into enduring handcrafted pieces."



**Jasreen Mayal Khanna,
author and journalist**

In this issue: 'Tactile tales', page 132 and 'Shop talk', page 98

"Thanks to my travel writing career, I've interviewed artisans all over the country. India's karigars are its strongest 'handmade in India' story. From block printers in Ahmedabad and sozni embroiderers in Kashmir to the fine jewellery babus of Bengal and the carpet weavers of Bhadohi, it's been a privilege to tell their inspiring stories."





**Gauri Devidayal,
co-founder, Food Matters
Group**

In this issue: 'What is India eating?', page 116
"Our obsession with all things foreign is slowly but surely shifting to all things Indian. When it comes to food, the attention on local produce and regional cuisines is exciting. The India story is one you can no longer afford to ignore."

**Sheree Gomes Gupta, editor
and content strategist**

In this issue: 'Sister act', page 114
"Swadesh, Reliance Foundation's artisan-only store format which showcases authentic handcrafted products from across the length and breadth of the country while promoting rich Indian art forms globally, is the best recent example of 'handmade in India.'"



**Sid Mathur, founder
& director, Secret
Ingredient and Khoya**

In this issue: 'A fine balance', page 120
"For me, a strong 'handmade in India' story starts with history. A product that is quintessentially Indian but hasn't had the chance to be showcased in its true light. An example is Khoya, which brings back the magic of Indian mithai."



**Ayushi Gupta-Mehra,
agricultural economist,
F&B consultant and
creator behind The
Foodie Diaries**

In this issue: 'Jack of all trades', page 127
"Several millets are now produced across the world, but they remain emblematic of India's proud heritage in a global agricultural landscape."



**Chinmayee Manjunath, brand
sherpa and book publisher.**

In this issue: 'Crafting a legacy', page 94

"I am always thrilled to see craftspeople, niche brands and organisations use social media and technology to tell their stories and do business across the world. Watching this democratisation unfold is fascinating and I'm keen to see where it goes."





**Pri Shewakramani,
marketing
consultant**

In this issue: 'Family
ties', page 136

"It's about giving our
heritage a spotlight
in a meaningful
and memorable
manner. For example,
I love how Ahilya
has incorporated
Maheshwari textiles
into an essential
experience for any
hotel guest."



**Rujuta Vaidya, fashion features
editor and content strategist**

In this issue: 'Royal Touch', page 106
and 'Inside the fantastical world of
Rooshad Shroff', page 18

"Craft is so intrinsically tied to the
design and storytelling of our country
that it's hard to find such a marriage
anywhere else in the world. As
creators, we are each armed with two
languages of communication: talent
and craft. How we tell these tales to
a larger audience is up to us."

**Smitha Menon,
independent journalist**

In this issue: 'How to
change the world with your
plate', page 122

"The most exciting
'handmade in India' stories
draw from our roots to
interpret our traditions in
newer ways. Green Heirloom,
which makes sustainable
and eco-friendly traditional
cookware from artisans and
creators across the country,
is a great example."



**Ela Das, freelance
journalist and
creative consultant**

In this issue: 'The art of
craft', page 28

"The beauty of India
is that despite having
its urban cities at par
globally with a modern
way of living, a large part
of the country still lives
and thrives in a more
handmade way of life."



**Kimberley do Rego, multi-
disciplinary designer and stylist**

In this issue: 'Cover and Behind the
doors: Estate in Siolim', page 62

"Preserving culture and tradition,
adapting it to contemporary practices
and continuing the form through
teaching and relationships defines
'handmade in India' for me."

On the 'India story'



**Amrin Mukhi,
make-up artist**

In this issue: Cover and
'Corridors of Elegance'
page 74

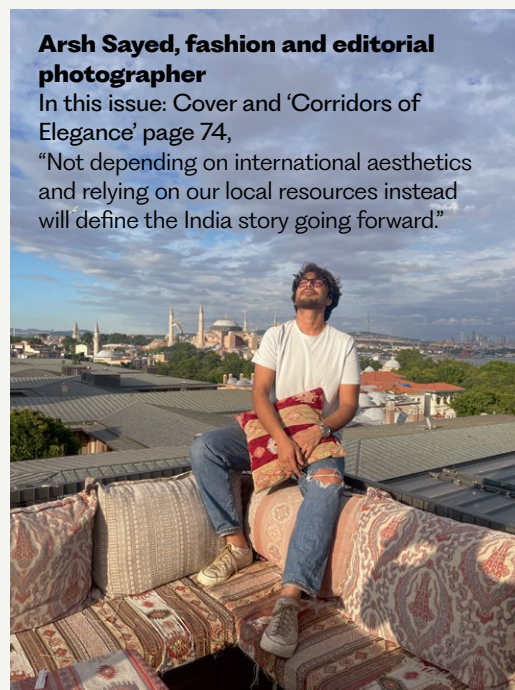
"I long to see Indian talent
shine on the global level.
Our time is now."



**Alicia Rezende dos
Santos, model**

In this issue: Cover and
'Corridors of Elegance'
page 74

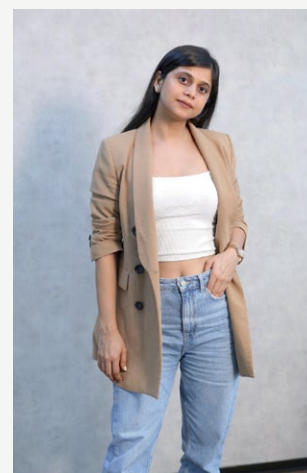
"The fusion of traditional
techniques and modern
aesthetics that is the
essence of India's
artisanal excellence and
cultural legacy."



**Arsh Sayed, fashion and editorial
photographer**

In this issue: Cover and 'Corridors of
Elegance' page 74,

"Not depending on international aesthetics
and relying on our local resources instead
will define the India story going forward."



**Neha Chugh,
fashion stylist**

In this issue: Cover
and 'Corridors of
Elegance' page 74

"Recognising the
artisans, respecting
their traditions and
compensating them
are integral for
maintaining our ancient
historical arts."

A woman with dark hair and a white flower in it is leaning against a large, textured tree trunk. She is wearing a long, white, lace-patterned dress. She is standing on a stone patio next to a swimming pool. In the background, there is a white building with arches and a red roof, surrounded by lush greenery.

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For artist Rithika Merchant, 2024 is turning into a year filled with creating as she gears up for a new show in Mumbai and an exciting new collaboration.
By Priyanka R Khanna

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An artistic home or a home of art, it's the perfect setting for beauty in all its forms.
Photographed by Arsh Sayed
Styled by Neha Chugh

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This Goan estate for a Delhi-based family is nothing short of grand
Photographed by Fabien Charreau

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India's most-sought-after collaborator has a mind like no other. Rujuta Vaidya speaks to the designer-architect on his design practice and why he honours craftsmanship and artistry above all else.

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With a mission to bring the best of India to the world and the best of the world to India, the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre has become an integral conduit for art, culture and experiences. Megha Sharma explores the venue's five most captivating elements

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Indigenous crafts are having a big design moment with contemporary designers giving them a fresh spin and transforming them into

collective pieces of intrinsic value. By Ela Das

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Across the bay, an innovatively constructed home for a Mumbai-based family offers a calm respite

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In Marna, Goa, a charming home blends Portuguese and global touches

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Isprava's homeowners are an eclectic group—entrepreneurs and tech gurus, sportspeople and bankers, doctors and real-estate titans—all united by a common interest to create a life that allows them to thrive. We spotlight five who have made their mark both in India and abroad

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It's been a big year for Karishma Swali of Chanakya International. A collaboration with Dior that brought the famed French fashion house to showcase at the Gateway of India, the expansion of her home-grown brand Moonray and her continuing work with the Chankaya School of Craft. But it's been decades of work that has brought Swali to this very moment, writes Chinmayee Manjunath

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Goa has an array of boutiques

that sell everything from clothing and accessories to home products made using India's extensive repertoire of craft. Jasreen Mayal Khanna uncovers some serious finds

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Translating craft into a language understood by the consumers of style is its own unique challenge. Rujuta Vaidya speaks to three labels engaging in conversations about cross-border referencing while championing artisanry

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It's Gaurav Gupta's world and we are just living in it. From international red carpets to runways, the designer is poised for global domination. Praachi Raniwala speaks to him about this new journey

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How a twenty-something princess is making heritage crafts Gen-Z forward while supporting the communities that preserve it. By Rujuta Vaidya

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This isn't your grandmother's oil massage that you used to try to escape. Now, beauty brands are modernising what the OG champi oil looks, smells and feels like. By Avanti Dalal

112 SCENTS AND SENSIBILITY

For a new generation of perfumers, classic Indian tradition married with contemporary notes crafts a fragrant bridge between the past and the present. Naso Profumi is one such brand. By Avanti Dalal

FOOD

114 SISTER ACT

Siblings Aditi Dugar and Shriya Naheta Wadhwa are changing the way India eats and thinks about food and quality ingredients, one venture at a time.

By Sheree Gomes Gupta
Photographed by Sarang Gupta

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Gauri Devidayal, co-founder of the Food Matters Group, which includes restaurants like The Table and Mag St Cafe, asks some of the movers and shakers in the F&B industry to share what they're most excited about when it comes to the future of food in India.

Illustrated by Shawn D'Souza

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The beloved Delhi restaurant Indian Accent finally makes it to Mumbai with a space at the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre. Food entrepreneur Sid Mathur talks to its culinary director, Chef Manish Mehtrotra, and Mumbai's head chef Rijul Gulati

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The future is delicious, especially with millets, say India's top chefs. By Smitha Menon

126 JACK OF ALL TRADES

Food influencer Ayushi Gupta-Mehra, aka @the_foodiediaries is known for her easy vegetarian recipes. Here, she charts the rise of the humble jackfruit that's becoming a mainstay on plant-based menus globally. *Illustrated by Shawn D'Souza*

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Rohit Khattar has created many well-known restaurant

brands. Here, he talks to Priyanka R Khanna about his journey and shares his five tips for success

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An inside look at Hosa, one of Goa's hottest restaurants.

By Pri Shewakramani

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Jasreen Mayal Khanna rounds up five activities with kids that go beyond the beach, deepen their curiosity and teach them independence and resourcefulness

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When it comes to travel, immersive experiences always come up trumps. And in a country like India, where heritage and tradition fold into the mix, you have a winning formula. We speak to a new generation of hoteliers who are providing travellers more than just a place to stay.

By Pri Shewakramani

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The editor picks the top 5 international jewels and why they pass the vibe check

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This fifth anniversary edition of Isprava Insider is dedicated to handcrafted luxury. And in these pages, we've celebrated the beauty of craft, tradition and techniques that date back centuries. It seems apt to close this issue with a tribute to the people who make magic with their hands every day.

The right advice

If you're serious about building an art portfolio, then these advisors should be on your radar. Gayatri Rangachari Shah spotlights the men and women across the country who are building private collections, one important piece at a time

Leonardo DiCaprio has one. So do Steven Spielberg, Victoria Beckham and P. Diddy along with many billionaires and royals around the world: the art advisor. This VIP navigates the complex, often opaque global market, now valued at \$67.8 billion, for advice, knowledge and future potential.

While India comprises a minuscule part of that, the market for Indian art is burgeoning, with many galleries, fairs, biennales and museums emerging. And the role of advisors is only becoming more instrumental for serious buyers and patrons.

It's not just corporate clients and wealthy individuals, but increasingly, younger, first-time collectors who are turning to these experts for guidance. The best advisors provide strategic and curatorial guidance on building a collection, informed by a collector's aesthetic vision and ambitions. They have expertise, experience, access and integrity. And discretion, which is key. Most work on retainer, rather than being paid on commission, because this leads to lopsided incentives (and collectors should understand that). Their fees could range anywhere from ₹50,000 per month to a few lakhs, depending on the nature of the project and the time commitment.

Here's our round-up of the most experienced art advisors and consultants in the country.





AMRITA JHAVERI

Responsible for pioneering art advisory in India, Jhaveri, a stalwart in the Indian art world, now runs Jhaveri Contemporary, the Mumbai-based art gallery, alongside her sister Priya. Having established Christie's in India, Jhaveri started her advisory business in 2005 but seldom takes on new clients. If she does, she does it very selectively.

Past clients include blue-chip businesses like TCS and billionaires like Nita Ambani as well as overseas galleries looking to produce exhibitions in India (such as the landmark Anish Kapoor show in 2010). A former student of comparative literature with advanced degrees in art, Jhaveri says that as an advisor, it is as important to advise a client on what not to buy. She prefers working on retainer as "you are clearly working on behalf of the person who has appointed you". Good advisors, she notes, have deep knowledge of the arts' ecosystem, great networks and a solid idea of the provenance of artworks. "I'm not interested in advising people in buying the hottest international artist, but rather, if you started your collection with Indian art, how do you broaden and grow that collection? Good advice comes at a cost. Bad advice comes for free."

Art in India: "Learn, visit artists' studios, go to galleries, see as many shows as you can. What is boring for me is to see young people buying old art. You should be buying artists of your generation and growing with them. And they should be a part of your journey because their work is going to reflect the issues that are current today."

JAI DANANI

Danani has been advising on art since 2007 and has worked with multiple family offices as well as on significant corporate collections in Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai. Armed with an art history major from Dartmouth in the US, Danani always knew his focus would be in the arts.

His area of expertise is modern and contemporary Indian art and how it fits within the larger historical context of the nation. He believes this enables him to bring more authenticity to someone's collection. His aim is to instill a passion for collecting and developing custodians for Indian art. Danani also happens to own one of India's largest art storage facilities, which helps collectors have the infrastructure support as their collection grows.

Art in India: "We are at an incredibly exciting time for Indian art because of the amount of fresh talent that is entering the art world. This is enabling collectors who are interested in a variety of mediums—from photography and sculpture to video—interact with this space in a more mature fashion. The art world is extremely dynamic and encouraging for new collectors and enthusiasts right now." →





MALLIKA SAGAR

Sagar, who focuses on her work as a celebrated auctioneer and specialist at Pundole's auction house, started her career at Christie's and began advising collectors in 2004.

Her exposure to art started early, thanks to her grandfather's vast art book collection and her father's enthusiastic expeditions to museums and galleries including what was then the Pundole Art Gallery in Mumbai's Fort area.

Today, her expertise includes 20th-century Indian art with a focus on post-independence and contemporary works. Her advisory role involves understanding collectors' needs, tastes, budgets and other requirements, so as to make the most appropriate suggestions of artists and artworks. She describes an art advisor's role as "a holistic one" that "extends far beyond the mere transactional aspects of the business".

She can't emphasise provenance and conducting one's thorough due diligence enough. Other aspects of her advisory include whether to keep a work, store it for future display, or simply rotate its place, depending on the artist and the collection as a whole. Insurance, maintenance and other practical details are key considerations. Sagar also works with clients on education, as well as on archiving materials, creating catalogues, writing essays and loaning works.

Art in India: "Unlike 15 years ago, when the market was defined by NRIs buying outside the country, the collector base and the associated spending power has seen a definite shift to within India. In value terms at the very top end of the market, as well as the sheer number of collectors across lower values, it is very much the local Indian buyer that is dominating the market. It is also encouraging to see the artists being actively collected increasing in number and widening in terms of school and style. It is no longer limited to a small number of modernists."

AMEYA DIAS, AMEYA DIAS CONSULTING

With over a decade of experience in the art world, Dias provides end-to-end advisory services for clients looking to navigate the art world. Mumbai-based Dias, who has an MBA and has studied economics and statistics, worked with the renowned South African artist William Kentridge on his 2013 show in India, an experience that immersed her in the local contemporary arts scene.

Today, through word-of-mouth, her roster includes clients in Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Dubai and London who are keen to build noteworthy collections. Dias provides clients with a comprehensive range of services from artwork acquisitions to entire collection management. In addition to acquisitions, her tasks involve knowledge-building, conservation consultation, framing, loaning works for museum shows, archiving and collection management, logistics and valuation.

Art in India: "After the pandemic, the Indian art market has been thriving at a record rate, driven by strong domestic demand. There is definitely a growing passion and interest in art beyond the traditional centres of Delhi and Mumbai. With the market expanding, we will see the addition of new gallery spaces, art centres and new fairs. We will soon also have to consider the role of AI in the industry."





BIRGID UCCIA, ACFA CONTEMPORARY

Austrian-born Uccia has been working as an art advisor in the Indian market for over a decade. Prior to this, she ran her own gallery showcasing international art in Zurich. Over the course of her career, she has worn many hats including curator, writer, gallerist and consultant.

Uccia works principally with international collectors whose focus is building in-depth collections of contemporary art from the Indian subcontinent. Her focus is on clients from abroad who are interested in building a collection and showing a commitment to the artists whose work they collect. She has helped build American collector couple Karen and Robert Duncan's celebrated collection, which includes Indian contemporary art. Many of Uccia clients' acquisitions are made on visits to India, where she organises visits to artist studios, galleries and other private collections. She negotiates acquisitions on behalf of clients, monitors post-acquisition logistics (such as shipping, condition reports and certificates of authenticity), advises on conservation, framing, installation and storage, arranges for museum loans, and delivers valuations for current market value purposes.

Art in India: "If one is ready to explore and engage fully, the scene presents fascinating opportunities. Unlocking opportunities for artists overseas, often in the form of residencies, is another way in which I feel I have supported the art ecosystem in India."

NATASHA JEYASINGH

Jeyasingh, who studied fine art and design, most recently worked alongside a larger team for the public art installed at the Bharat Mandapam in Delhi, the venue for the G20 summit. Other notable projects include the art collection of the Six Senses Fort Barwara Hotel, outside of Jaipur. She has been advising on art since 2012 but her work experience goes back to the mid 2000s. Her expertise, she says, is in providing turnkey solutions based on client needs. She notes that private clients like the idea of an art advisor but do not always ascribe value to their advice.

Art in India: "A lot of the younger audience has studied abroad and been exposed to contemporary art. They are coming back to India and looking into the art scene here. There is clearly a growing appreciation." →





FARAH SIDDIQUI, FARAH SIDDIQUI CONTEMPORARY ART

A fixture on the arts scene, Siddiqui provides art advisory to private collectors, museums and corporate clients as well as families. Foundations she has worked with include the Piramal Art Foundation as well as the Swiss-based Open Foundation. One project involved sourcing contemporary photography from the region while another involved curating contemporary art for an office space. Siddiqui also founded Cultivate Art in 2017, born out of the needs of her younger friends' interest in art, out of which emerged the successful Young Collectors' Weekend initiative in 2020. It draws 50 to 60 regular attendees. The idea is to build a connection between emerging artists and new collectors. She believes art advisors are a growing breed as people recognise the value of professional guidance in navigating the complex art market.


Art in India: "The Indian art scene is continuing to evolve, with a stronger emphasis on digital art, multimedia installations and a fusion of traditional and contemporary styles. The inclusion of more diverse voices and narratives in Indian art is likely to shape its future direction. I believe that the art an individual selects for their collection mirrors their own self-expression."

KESHAV MAHENDRU AND POONJI NATH, FAQ ART

Mahendru and Nath teamed up to found FAQ Art in 2019, to bring a more professional, structured approach to navigating the art world. Nath cut her teeth at Delhi's Vadehra art gallery, helping to mount the shows of some of India's best contemporary artists like Arpita Singh, Rameshwar Broota, and Atul Dodiya, while Mahendru worked for Paddle8, the New York-based auction house, prior to returning to India.

The duo have placed works with the Glenbarra Art Museum in Japan, the Eight Foundation in Delhi and Ark Foundation in Vadodara, in addition to helping build private collections in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Pune, Chennai, Dubai, New York, London, Amsterdam and Basel. They work on every aspect of advisory, from acquisitions to provenance research, collection management, valuations, conservation, logistics, documentation, producing exhibitions and publications support.

They have two distinct categories of clientele. The first consists of those steeped in the art ecosystem—artists, galleries, museums and seasoned collectors—while the other is those who are new to the art world and would like to foray into collecting but are in need of a roadmap along with some reliable advice.

Art in India: "There hasn't been a better time to be a part of the art scene in India." 



DAYA SANSARE (FARAH)



* Actual picture of Isprava's Estate de Frangipani, Goa

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Maximum appeal

Mumbai played host to its very own art fair when Art Mumbai debuted in November at the Mahalaxmi Racecourse. Gayatri Rangachari Shah shares the mission behind this new experience

The idea of the fair was to democratise art for all,” says Dinesh Vazirani of Saffronart, about the mission of the inaugural Art Mumbai. Vazirani, one of the most recognised players in the Indian art scene, is a co-founder of the fair along with his wife and Saffronart’s president, Minal Vazirani, as well as Nakul Dev Chawla of Chawla Art Gallery and Conor Macklin of Grosvenor Gallery in London.

India Art Fair in Delhi, first held in 2008, is now an established platform for galleries and artists from across the country and the world. So the founders of Art Mumbai reasoned that it was about time that the country’s financial capital deserved

its own show too. “Mumbai is the financial capital of the Indian art world,” says Macklin. “There is a broad collector base. The auction houses are based in Mumbai and there are many galleries here too. It needs an art fair.” For its first edition, more than 50 galleries from across India as well as the Middle East and the US signed up to participate.

PERFECT TIMING

According to the ‘State of The Indian Art Market Report FY23’ by Grant Thornton Bharat and Indian Art Investor, the Indian art market is valued at almost \$145 million

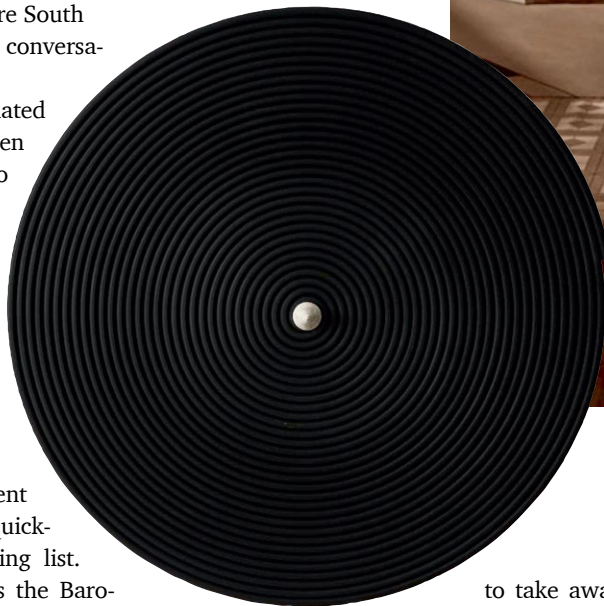
Above, from left: Conor Macklin, Sumanth Ram, Minal Vazirani, Teesta Bhandare, Dinesh Vazirani, Nakul Dev Chawla and Rhea Kuruvilla. Below: Blue Head with Golden Bun by G Ravinder Reddy





in 2023. Coupled with the opening of more galleries and museums, an increased appetite for consumer spending and general market confidence, the timing appears fortuitous. “India is at an interesting juncture in history, where South Asia as a whole has entered the global conversation on art and culture,” says Minal.

The idea for Art Mumbai germinated prior to the pandemic. “We’ve all been brainstorming collectively on how to build the art community,” explains Chawla. “India still has a long way to go, and even with auctions and fairs happening across the country, we still need to expand the market to catch people’s attention and attract new buyers.”



SUPPORTING TALENT

It was only in April that Art Mumbai sent out feelers to galleries. The show quickly sold out, with a substantial waiting list. Amongst those who participated was the Baroda-based non-profit Space Studio, which supports artist residencies, exhibitions and projects. “Art Mumbai is another avenue for us to support artists and showcase the work we do,” says Krupa Amin, Space Studio’s founding director. “Baroda’s proximity to Mumbai allows us to bring our artists to one of India’s most important art cities.” Gallerists from other cities hope to tap into a wider collector base too. Journalist Shoba Narayan, writing in the *Hindustan Times* on Bengaluru’s arts scene, quoted the example of Gallery Sumukha in Bengaluru: “We have never had anyone from the IT industry visit our gallery or buy our work,” said its owner, Premilla Baid. “We’ve always wondered why.”

AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

The fair was a creative festival of sorts, offering the best of Mumbai in terms of art, design, fashion and film. The racecourse played host to various food outlets, bars and performances. The private members’ club Soho House created a lounge. The fair also included panel discussions via a speaker series along with a collaboration with Karan Johar. The opening night included a fashion show and a party. Dinesh is quick to note that this was “not

to take away the seriousness of the art, which is the main focus. But we want to continue to show what Mumbai has to offer.”

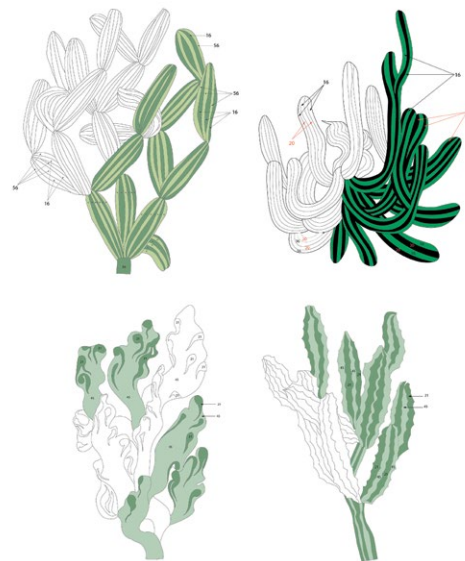
Art Mumbai’s aim is to become part of the global arts calendar and draw international collectors, curators and museum professionals. Arun Nayar, the well-known London-based art connoisseur was excited about this new event in the art calendar. “Indian creativity has really blossomed in the last five years and a lot of young talent is actually being shown and gaining traction, so it’s important to support it.”

But can India annually support two art fairs? Is the interest strong enough? Art Mumbai’s founders are betting on it. Dinesh cites the example of the boom in development in central Mumbai alone, where premium residential apartments command anywhere from ₹40-₹150 crore, to explain today’s level of consumption. “I know so many young professionals who reached out to us to ask how they could attend the fair,” he says. “We want to continue to generate excitement for people to be part of the art world. It’s not a snobby world. It’s a world of fun and learning, and more people should participate.” 96

Clockwise, from top left: Life Goes On by Paresh Maity; Intrigue/The War by Pushpamala N; Pit -I by SSB X Art Mumbai X Sashikanth Thavudoz

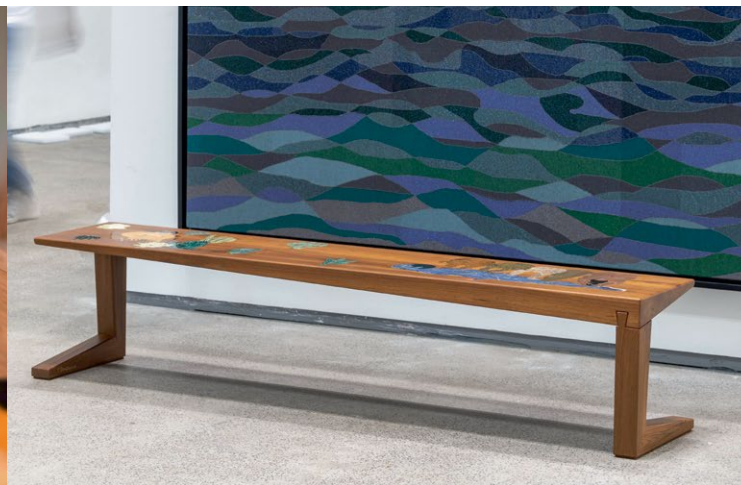
Inside the fantastical world of Rooshad Shroff

India's most sought-after collaborator has a mind like no other. Rujuta Vaidya speaks to the designer-architect on his design practice and why he honours craftsmanship and artistry above all else



When you break ground on researching a subject like Rooshad Shroff, most stories written about him marvel at the long list of triumphs of his decade-old design practice. It is dizzying not just from the perspective of excellence but from the sheer amount of work he's put out consistently over time. I wonder if Shroff's mind stops imagining for a split second a day. I have seen him at work—he stands firmly behind his line of thought, holds an audience when the time demands it, and has the ability to transform blank space into unforgettable experiences. There's referencing, research and a sharp knowledge of materiality that flows in from years of practice. You could watch him in action for hours.

Shroff, who comes from a family entrenched in design, says, "My father, brother and sister-in-law are all architects and my mother is an interior designer. My exposure to the industry—and to design as a concept—at a very early age forged this all-encompassing self-awareness of my environment. It was further honed by the opportunity to travel while growing up, visiting museums, exhibitions and art galleries." His practice spans architecture, interiors, events, window displays, furniture and objects. There's a quiet confidence he works with—one that can only come from having exercised creative muscles to the point of mastery. For Shroff, it's not so much about the finished product as it is about the journey of arriving at it. His design process is iterative and relies on intensive research. "My practice is based on the philosophy of integrated design with an established presence across the spectrum.



Shroff comes from a family entrenched in design. For him, form and function, craft and collaboration triumph in his aesthetic.

It's not so much a matter of dividing one's focus or efforts, but rather consolidating it toward the task at hand. The exploration doesn't always conclude with a finished product. For example, a year or more down the line we may rework it, add a variation, push the form further, or lend it new contours. It's not about a prescribed aesthetic but rather about celebrating craftsmanship," he says.

MULTIPLIERS OF THOUGHT

Inextricably, fashion is tied to Shroff, who once interned at Issey Miyake. He lives just on the fringes of the fashion ecosystem and perhaps is able to see it more clearly from his vantage point. His work with Hermès might be the best known in the space of global luxury, but Shroff is working on another exciting project, the details of which he doesn't divulge for obvious reasons. The new Louis Vuitton flagship at the Jio World Plaza in Mumbai has

been created in his vision. A few years ago, to support The Rajkumari Ratnavati School in Jaisalmer, Shroff worked with the Citta Foundation to translate designs by 12 multidisciplinary designers for the Gyaan Project. The list included the likes of BV Doshi, Olympia Le-Tan, Manish Arora, Sabyasachi and more. T. Venkanna, one of the buzziest names in the art world, best known for his erotic paintings, is one that comes up often when scrolling through Shroff's list of collaborators. "I have always enjoyed the raw, primal nature of Venkanna's themes. After coming together for the Gyaan Project, we found ourselves collaborating for a private clientele and then on a new line of furniture. It all happened organically." Evidently, the list of creatives wanting to work with him on unconventional projects is likely to grow longer.

Shroff is a busy man, who spent the greater part of last year working on the launch of the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre. Shroff worked with the multi-hyphenate Patrick Kinmonth, a leader in the space of the arts, to design *India in Fashion: The Impact of Indian Dress and Textiles on the Fashionable Imagination*, the debut exhibition at the cultural centre. From sound design to carpets and thematic interpretation of iconic landmarks, every last detail of the space was thought through. "I think the immersive nature of the exhibit, the intent to provide visitors with more than mere visuals, and to translate it into a sensory experience was the most rewarding aspect of *India In Fashion*. Through our conversations, Patrick and I came up with spaces that helped foster a narrative surrounding every display. Each chapter had an integration of graphics, lighting, print and colour. We had bespoke carpets laid in many sections, →



each with distinctive prints. Certain spaces had projectors running to further enhance the experience. The Mughal section with the chintz garments, for example, had ripples such as those seen on a body of water, running on both the carpet and on the projector. You were meant to take in more than just the historic references and ensembles.”


I ask about the synergistic nature of his projects, and the way I envision two creatives working on a project immediately changes. “When it comes to design, collaboration requires that you bring out and consolidate each other’s strengths. The term ‘middle ground’ implies compromise. Collaboration cannot be compromised; it must give you further reach than individual effort would,” Shroff explains. Perspective is everything. It explains how he calmly navigates projects of tremendous scale, layered with detail, seemingly without breaking a sweat.

CRAFTCORE

“From its very commencement, my practice has centred on the implementation and revival of Indian handicrafts across the design spectrum. That in itself, I can safely say, has been the most challenging and satisfying aspect of my work.” Shroff’s practice has often spotlighted the dexterity of his atelier by way of the talent he has worked with. There is a certain dialogue required amongst creatives on evolving craft for it to survive over time. “One need not view craft with a new perspective, per se. What is required is recognising its true significance and cultivating an appreciation that enables it to find a place in the designs of today. I haven’t modernised any craft techniques. In fact, we do our best to preserve them as they have been handed down from generation to generation for centuries. What we do attempt is to contemporise each craft, rendering it relevant in today’s design language.” His embroidered C-section sofas are an excellent example of a marriage of centuries-old techniques viewed in a new light.

Scroll through his feed to find underwater sea creatures embroidered in sequins by Les Ateliers 2M dance with a bottle of Hermès Twilly in the window of the French luxury house’s Horniman Circle flagship in Mumbai. A virtual video highlights marble sconces placed in an experiential train. Corners of Sonam Kapoor Ahuja’s powder room make it to the pages of *Architectural Digest*.

Pressed flowers are preserved eternally on table tops. The display of his work highlights the expansive nature of his vision with each area of practice exhibiting its unique identity. To quote Mary Kondo, in a space far away from the land of minimalism: all of it sparks joy.

“My appreciation of art is linked to the artisanry involved. To me, handmade, centuries-old techniques hold an endless fascination. Our country is rapidly losing its wealth of artisanry dating back hundreds of years, and if I can contribute meaningfully to its survival in any way, that will mean more to me than the largest commercial project,” he shares. 



Shroff’s marble inlay wall sconces and lights, perfectly represent his belief in rendering craft relevant in a contemporary design language.



Terraformation (2022 - 2023)

Coming home

For artist Rithika Merchant, 2024 is turning into a year filled with creating as she gears up for a new show in Mumbai and an exciting new collaboration. By Priyanka R Khanna



At the very heart of artist Rithika Merchant's work is continuity in thought and narrative. The Mumbai-raised artist—who honed her craft at Parsons School of Design in New York in fine art and at Hellenic International Studies in the Arts in Paros, Greece—is known for her oeuvre that is rich in symbolism and unites histories of myths and traditions across the lines of geography, race, gender and politics. Using celestial and botanical imagery as well as mythological elements, Merchant's work has long caught the eye of collectors in India and abroad, as well as the fashion house Chloé, with which she collaborated on several collections,

most notably the house's spring/summer 2018 line.

As she delves into her brand of mystical and mythical storytelling, Merchant hopes that her work will continue to leave room for interpretation. We catch up with the artist as she settles in her hometown and shares what a day in her life looks like.

Welcome home! How has moving back to Mumbai been for you?

It's been pretty easy. I've always spent long periods of time in Mumbai, so coming back full time has felt quite natural. We transitioned over slowly though, by first spending longer and longer periods here, then setting up our own apartment and getting comfortable before we put down roots.

My husband isn't Indian. As much as he likes living here—and has spent lots of time here in the years prior—I was conscious of the fact that a slow transition into full-time Mumbai living was the best course of action. We've been nesting and making our home a little sanctuary. We're both homebodies and we also both work from our home →

“I’ve been working on a series of paintings which have all led into each other through the years”

Festival of the Phoenix Sun (2022)



CURRENT OBSESSIONS

READING: A collection of Isaac Asimov’s short stories

LISTENING: The Grateful Dead

WATCHING: The TV series *Foundation* and I recently rewatched *The Witch*. I love horror and sci-fi films so I’ll pretty much watch anything within those two genres

FOLLOWING: @stephenellcock for the best esoteric and visual references. He always presents them as a commentary on the world. I’m also very into the work of @rajniperera. I think she is one of the most visionary artists

OBSESSED: With mangoes, the monsoon and swimming outdoors

studio/office space, so it’s been essential to create a space that really cocoons us. It’s also been lovely to be so much closer to family and old friends.

How is Maximum City inspiring you?

My studio is tree-level. All I can see from my windows are trees, which in Mumbai feels like a real treat. I feel like I work in a tree house now, which is beautiful. My work already deals with nature and botanical elements, so having so much of it just outside my window is incredible. I feel grateful to be able to create in such a lush space, where I get to look at birds and trees all day. Being back and in closer touch with the other artists at TARQ has also been great. It’s a lovely little community that I feel lucky to be a part of.

On the flip side, challenges include dealing with mountains of paperwork that is needed for every small thing. I recently had to export my works to London for my show and it was a time-consuming process. I do feel like I learned a lot, though, and I can say that I am now pretty proficient in shipping and logistics.

Can you take us through your work process and a day in your life?

I like to rise early and start the day quietly with breakfast in bed before I read the news and check my emails. By 10am, I shower and sit at my desk. I work till lunch and then take a break. I go back into my studio till about 5pm. Somewhere in between I usually lie down and have a 30-minute nap (it’s a really important way for me to recharge creatively and if I skip it, I feel it).

In the evening I hang out with my husband—tea, snacks and then a swim or some sort of exercise. Dinner is almost always home-cooked and then we either wind down for the day with Netflix or reading in bed. If I have a deadline coming up or I’m just in the mood for it, I go back into my studio after dinner and work for a few hours.

What are you currently working on? Where do these pieces stand in the trajectory of your career?

I’ve been working on a series of paintings which have all led into each other through the years.

In *Birth of a New World* (2020) my ‘beings’, which are proxies of us, are coming to terms with what we have done to our planet and looking for answers in the sky, in the water and on land.

In *Return to Stardust* (2021) I look to a more primordial time. I focus on the sky, using a holistic vision of the universe to try and answer what comes after the Holocene and Anthropocene, when the earth started changing in a much more rapid and real way. Each hoop is named after a star or star system. For example, the waxing and waning



The Requiem
(2023)

brightness of Sirius is a metaphor for how civilisations rise and fall. From dust to stardust, the cycle is endless. Throughout history, comets have been viewed as portents of either disaster or some sort of huge change. My collages are visual totems or altars to these powerful forces.

In *Festival of the Phoenix Sun* (2022) my beings look into the past to find solutions and wisdom. They begin to figure out ways to evolve by tapping into alternate realities. In this body of work, they prepare to leave their old ways and world behind in an effort to endure as a civilisation.

Following this, in my most recent series of works *Terraformation* (2022 - 2023) my beings have left our planet and are now rebuilding a more utopian world elsewhere. I explore what that looks like.

Building on the idea of *Terraformation*, I look at what the next steps would be to sustain life for a nascent, neo-primitive society that is starting afresh. I explore what it might be like to create more complex structures and environments, looking at the architecture we leave behind on our old planet as well as new forms inspired by nature.

You've had some incredible moments already in your career. What has been your biggest highlight?

Most recently, my monograph *The Eye, The Sky, The Altar*. This is my first monograph and I'm excited. It's a look at the last four or five years of production and it's a nice overview of how my work has evolved during this period of time. It also includes an insightful conversation with the writ-


er Fariha Róisín, a dear friend. We worked with Zeenat Kulavoor at Bombay Duck Designs and she designed this incredible book which ended up being a beautiful art object.

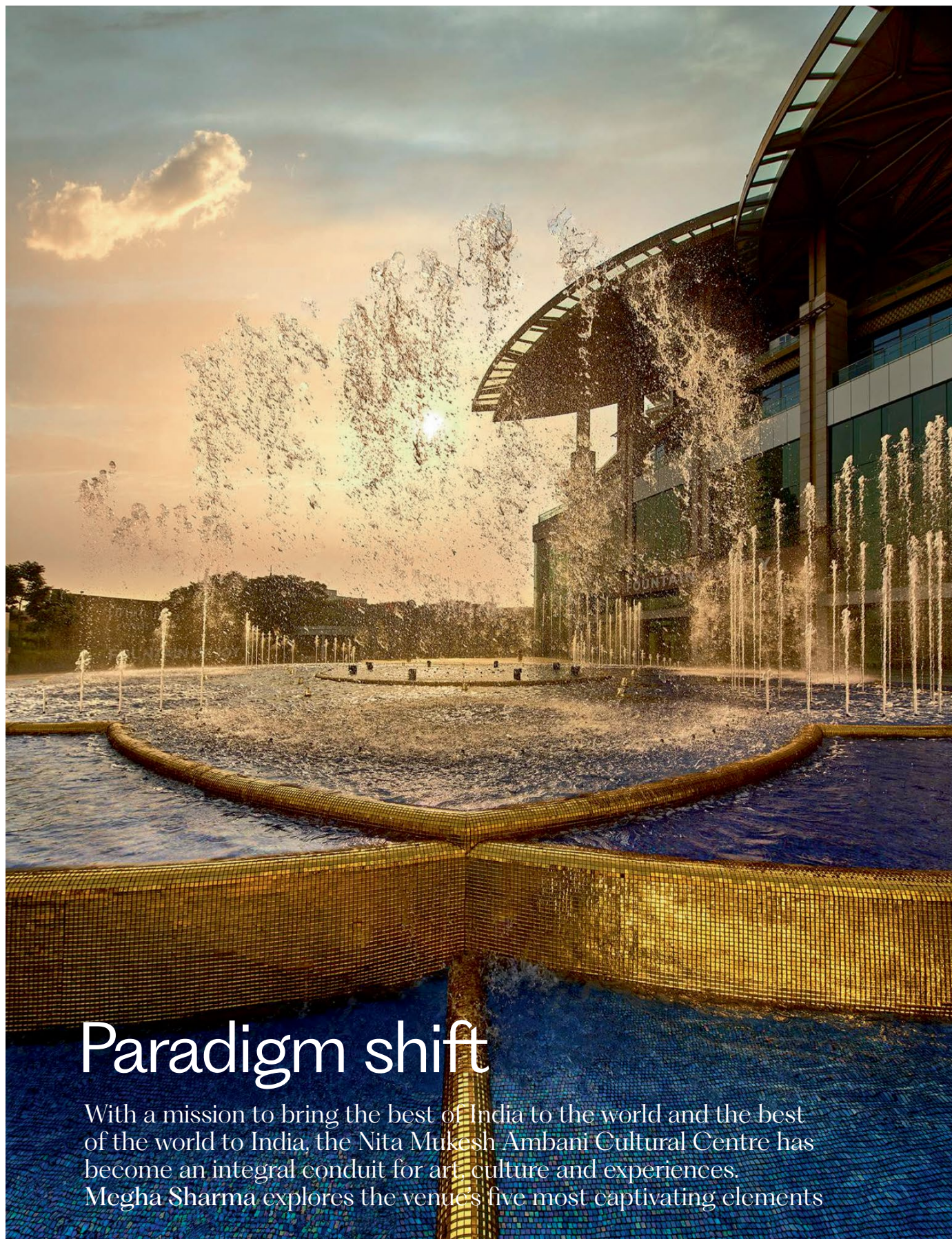
The monograph has been arranged according to themes rather than chronologically. It's been interesting to see how symbolism has evolved in my work. It has been great to look back at what I was thinking when I made those works and where I was in my own creative journey. It feels affirming. I try to be present while I'm making the work—and before I've absorbed it fully once it's done. My works go to exhibitions and then I never see them again, so it makes me feel accomplished to look back on them all and see them all in one place.

What continues to inspire and motivate you?

Nature, animals, outer space. Art in the form of fairy tales, illustrated books, graphic novels and music videos—the idea that you can create a feeling or step into another world through these mediums is amazing to me. In my own work, I love the fact that I get to create and inhabit all the new worlds I build. It's exciting to tell a story and create a world and characters in and around it.

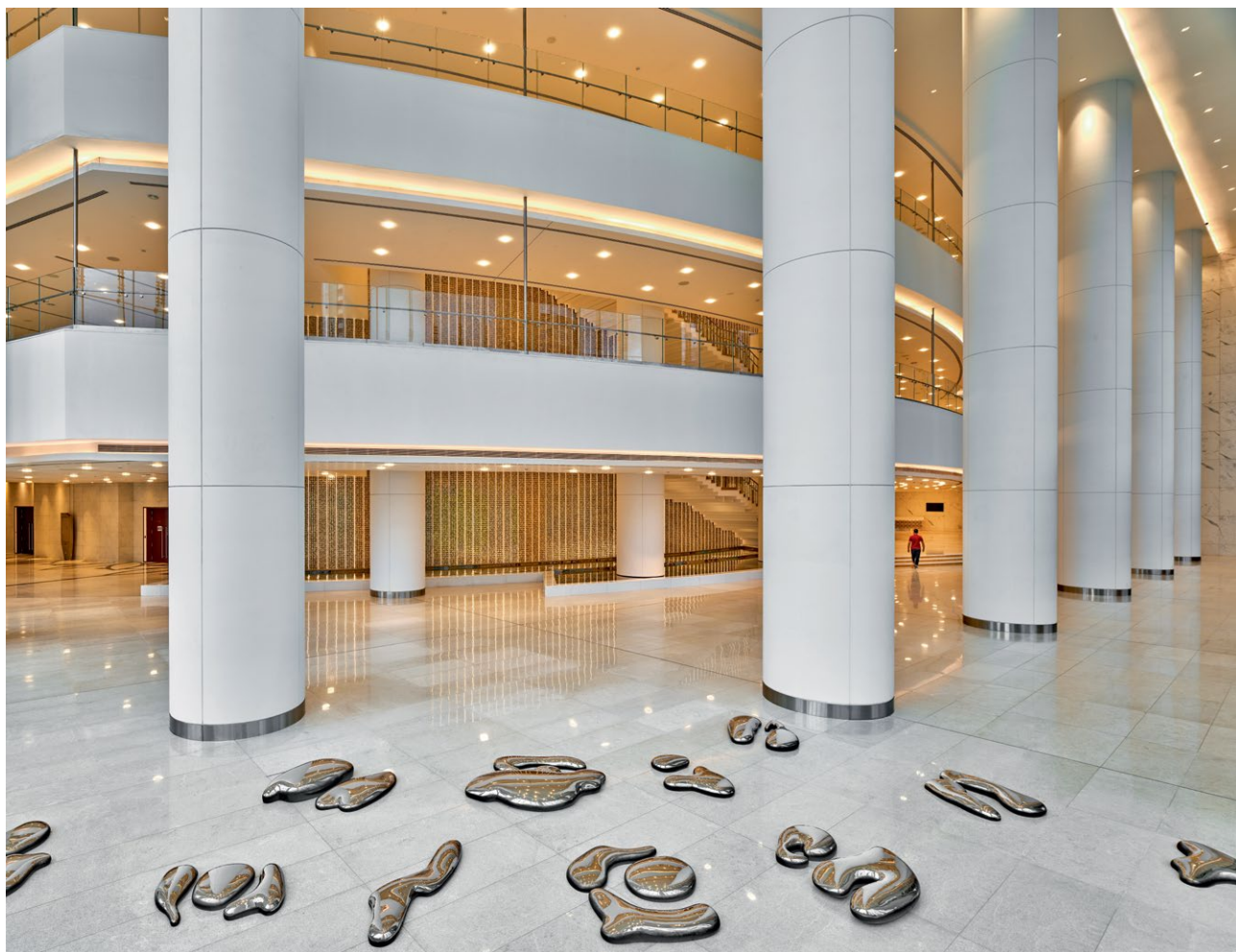
What is next for you?

I'm currently working on my upcoming solo show at TARQ, which will open in mid-2025. I'm also in the midst of working on an exciting collaboration which will also be revealed in early 2025. 2024 is shaping up to be a productive year for me and I could not be more thrilled. 



Paradigm shift

With a mission to bring the best of India to the world and the best of the world to India, the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre has become an integral conduit for art, culture and experiences. Megha Sharma explores the venue's five most captivating elements



Within a year of its opening, the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre (NMACC) has engaged children and adults, music lovers and art aficionados, cultural grande dames and fashion fans alike with its multitude of experiences.

Named after its founder, Nita Mukesh Ambani—who wears many hats including art patron, educationist and philanthropist—the NMACC has become a hub for creative expression. When its doors opened in Mumbai in March 2023 with a star-studded launch that boasted global heavyweights from the worlds of fashion, film and art, it signalled a strong cultural shift in India's landscape.

At the opening, craftspeople skilled in traditional Indian art forms were seen live in action; artworks by renowned international creators were brought to the country for the first time (*Sangam/Conflu-*

ence curated by Jeffrey Deitch and Ranjit Hoskote); the influence of Indian dress and textiles on international fashion aesthetics was celebrated with a vast exhibition curated by Hamish Bowles (*India in Fashion: The Impact of Indian Dress and Textiles on the Fashionable Imagination*); the glorious cultural history of the nation was traced in a musical performance (Feroz Abbas Khan's *The Great Indian Musical: Civilization to Nation* at the Grand Theatre) followed by *The Sound of Music*, *Paw Patrol*, *West Side Story* and *Mamma Mia!*. Then there was the zany, highly immersive *TOILETPAPER: Run As Slow As You Can* exhibition and a variety of more intimate performances across dance and music. In a short span of time, the NMACC has become a cultural cornerstone for the city and the nation.

Here, we zoom in on the venue's five most interesting elements. →

Above: 'Clouds' (2019) by Yayoi Kusama. Opposite page: The exterior of the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre

THE DESIGN

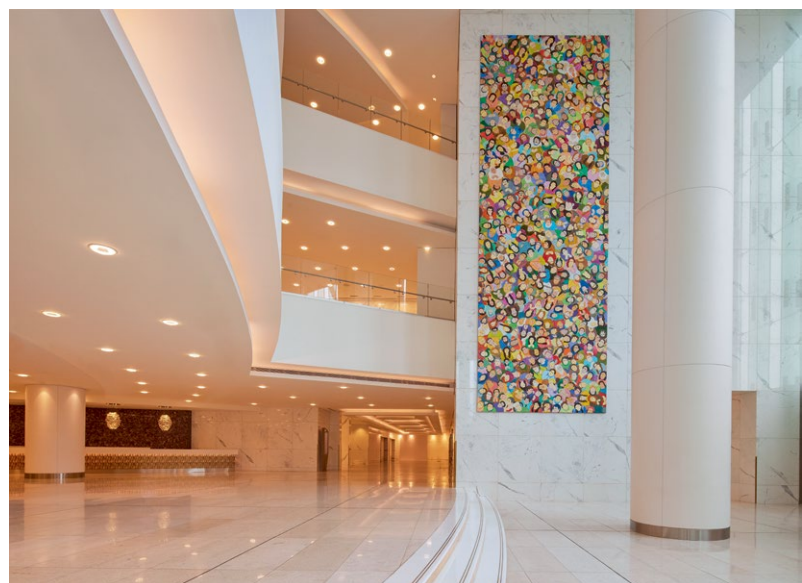
Using a fully bloomed lotus as its signature element, the design details at the NMACC take the experience of visitors up a notch. One can find this intricate motif adorning several parts, from the crystal-studded ceiling of The Grand Theatre to the gold façade of the Art House. It's seen dotting the former from floor to ceiling, discreetly referenced on the wall jaalis that surround its private seating boxes and its sculptural chandelier.

THE SPACE

Housed within the Jio World Centre, the NMACC has a distinct identity. The only way to describe the Grand Theatre is grand. Spread across three levels, the 2,000-seat theatre is designed by Steve Clem and Nick Wolfcale at TVS Design in collaboration with Brian Hall of Theatre Projects Consultants. A crystal-studded lotus chandelier creates ambient experiences and 18 diamond boxes along the sides add an extra layer of exclusivity for visitors. The space aims to introduce Indian audiences to world-class theatrical productions. Adjacent to the Grand Theatre, the Studio Theatre is a 250-seat space designed for more intimate performances. As the stage allows for quick transformations to accommodate diverse needs of the shows, the flexibility makes the space ideal for experimental performances and cutting-edge productions. A variation of the traditional black box (a simple, typically square room with black walls and a flat floor), The Cube, a 125-seat space, is a platform for emerging Indian artists from the fields of new and experimental theatre, spoken word, stand-up comedy, music and more. Draped in wood-toned acoustic boards that offer a neutral backdrop, it provides a clean canvas that adapts to the requirements of an event. A multistorey gallery space for visual arts, the Art House, brings together celebrated artworks from around the world. It's equipped to host exhibitions, group shows, educational events and more. Most recently, the space housed *TOILETPAPER*'s largest exhibition to date, *Run As Slow As You Can*.

THE EXPERIENCE

Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama has long been fascinated by the concept of endlessness and infinity.



Below, from left: The Grand Theatre; The Cube. Opposite page, from top: 'Kamal Kunj' (2019-20); 'Seekers Paradise' (2021) by NS Harsha




Her artistic style is characterised by the exploration of patterns, repetition and the interplay between art and the observer. Often challenging the perception of space and reality, her work invites viewers to immerse themselves in her universe. One such installation by her is the *Infinity Mirrored Room*, which has found a spot at NMACC. Here, Kusama transforms a small, enclosed space into an otherworldly realm. The room's interior—including the walls and the ceiling—is entirely covered with mirrors, creating the illusion of an infinite expanse that stretches in every direction. There are also strategically placed objects, often featuring her signature polka dots and colourful LED lights.

THE FOOD

A spot for art and culture aficionados, the venue also extends its embrace to epicures—with Amadeo by Oberoi as one of its culinary gems, the first standalone outpost by the hotel chain. Led by a team of talented chefs, the restaurant features a menu that adds a touch of innovation to global flavours.

The NMACC also boasts Indian Accent, arguably one of the country's most well-known Indian restaurants. Here, chef Rijul Gulati continues Manish Mehrotra's tradition of innovative pairings, intricate plating and reinvented traditional favourites in an Art Deco-inspired space.

THE ART

Besides the 15,000-square-foot Art House, continuing with the mission to democratise art, 10 public art installations are showcased throughout the venue for guests to experience and enjoy. Spotlighted are works by a host of Indian and international artists including a spectacular 56-foot Pichwai titled 'Kamal Kunj' by Raghunandan Sharma and Pichwai artists from Nathdwara. It is the largest work commissioned in this space and showcases the Reliance Foundation's support for this tradition and its artisans. There's also Yayoi Kusama's 'Clouds', a 90-piece stainless steel structure that mirrors the sky and delights the viewer as well as a symbolic artwork by Jagannath Panda that depicts our cosmos as a layered wonder. 



*Clockwise, from left: Jaipur Blue Pottery and Channapatna Bead Stambh by Ashiesh Shah; Anica by Mana Collective; at Julia & Sita, an embroidered pop art-style portrait on raw silk of Venus inspired by Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* using the tambour technique of embroidery with metallic wire, sequins, glass beads, crystals and pearls*

The art of craft

Indigenous crafts are having a big design moment with contemporary designers giving them a fresh spin and transforming them into collective pieces of intrinsic value. By Ela Das



India's age-old crafts are getting a fresh twist with designers blending ancient techniques with modern styles to create collectible pieces of value and meaning. This isn't just a throwback to the past; it's about celebrating and adapting timeless art in today's fast-paced world with a mix of old and new that mirrors India, a country that is proud of its rich history but is always looking to innovate. In an intricate dance between the time-honoured and the contemporary, these designers and galleries across the subcontinent are pushing the boundaries of craft to make a resonating impact on the global design stage.

ÆQUO

"æquō commissions collectible design, making precious pieces of furniture that will exist forever.

These are the antiques of the future," says Tarini Jindal Handa, founder of the Mumbai-based gallery, which within a year of opening has showcased the beauty, range and versatility of indigenous arts from across the country. From shining a light on carpentry from Mysuru, metalwork from Jaipur and bronze-casting from Mumbai, as well as the embroidered screens of the Chennai workshops of Jean-François Lesage, the gallery's vision is "to make blue-chip names of previously unknown master craftsmen. I want people to know about Jeeveram the carpenter from Alibaug or the bidri of Mohammed Abdul Rauf," says Jindal Handa, when sharing her endeavour to elevate Indian artisans to the same pedestal as renowned names like Fabergé or Ghianda.

"æquō is creating the market for collectible design in India and creating an entirely new market, globally, for fine Indian artisan techniques too. There is a collector both in the country and abroad who appreciates the intrinsic value in pieces we are commissioning. The talent of a master craftsman is deeply underappreciated if you compare it to a contemporary artist of similar stature. They are not celebrated in the same way. But that's going to change fast. In India, our national treasures are our craftspeople," Jindal Handa points out.

SUFFERING MOSES

"We are not businessmen but nourishers and protectors of a heritage that has passed through generations," says Muzaffar Sadiq Wani when talking about his handicraft store in Srinagar, one of the oldest in Kashmir, established in 1840. Papier-mâché was introduced to Kashmir by the Persians. Among them was Wani's family from Sabzevar (in present-day Iran), who brought this art to the valley. "The finished product of papier-mâché is the culmination of two distinct artworks by two different artisan groups—the Sakhtsaz and the Naqash. The Sakhtsaz make the artefacts on which the Naqash then paint," he says, describing the dual artisanship, quality and execution of which is meticulously inspected by him. "The skill that these masters endure is extremely toiling, with detailing being so minute, it takes a toll on an artist's vision over time."

Wani underscores the urgency of preserving these traditional arts, the survival of which teeters precariously on the edge, with younger generations lured by alternative prospects. Yet for collectors and appreciators, each creation from Suffering Moses isn't merely an objet d'art but a fragment of history, a story in time spun from the threads of an ancient cultural tapestry. "Any fine work done in a traditional way will always appreciate with age. The older it gets, the prettier and more priceless →

Office Bar by æquō. Opposite, page, clockwise: Miniature artist Riyazuddin's illuminated leather works show gods at play, such as Ganesha playing in the rain; the artist Gargi Chandola's works at KAASH; a papier-mâché work at Suffering Moses



it becomes,” concludes Wani, affirming that in the world of art, true value transcends mere monetary assessment.

ATELIER ASHIESH SHAH

The architect reflects on his journey working with local artisans which “began as a research cell, driven by an interest in discovering new materials sourced from within India’s ecosystem. Our initial focus was to understand how and where we could make a difference, embarking on a gradual and methodical process of working with one craft at a time.”

Shah’s collaborations have always been about pushing boundaries. His goal is clear: “Traditional crafts are often relegated to being gift shop products or accessories. We aim to work in this unexplored space, interpreting crafts through our unique perspective.” His dedication to fusing contemporary design with age-old craftsmanship has led to masterpieces like the *Channapatna Stambh*,

a larger-than-life representation of a toy-making craft dating back to the 18th century.

As for the collectability of his pieces, Shah believes that the melding of unique voices and time-honoured techniques ensures their lasting value. “I design objects that seamlessly blend with contemporary living yet possess a timeless quality. These pieces stand as enduring markers of their time, bearing the distinctive essence of their creators and the profound interplay between tradition and innovation.”

KAASH

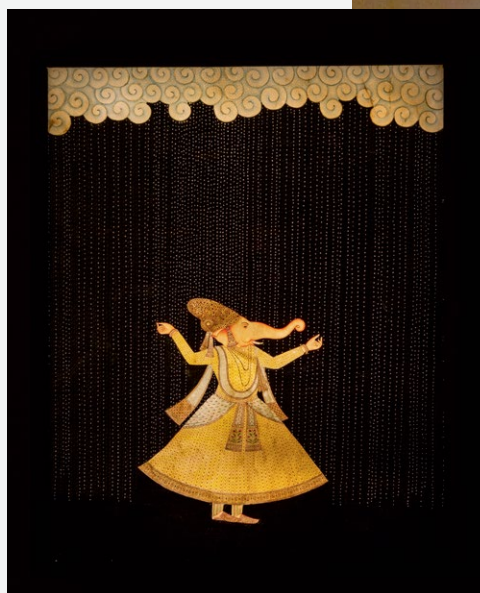
Bengaluru-based gallery KAASH, founded by Sridhar Poddar along with Manju Sara Rajan, focuses on supporting the diversity and intricacy of craft skill sets by collaborating with craftspeople to create works that blur the line between design and art. Creating a space for collectible crafts, where indigenous techniques merge with a modern design language, a recent exhibition titled *PLAY: Experiments with Indian Miniatures* displayed the works of miniature artists Dr Vijay Siddramappa Hagargundgi, Gargi Chandola and Riyazuddin, who have reimagined an age-old technique of painting with their own contemporary language and storytelling. For Riyazuddin’s festive series of gods at play, KAASH has engineered and produced a first-of-its-kind set of leather boxes that intricately illuminates the art, giving it a never-before-seen dimension and dynamism.

“There’s a hierarchical difference between contemporary art and craft, and craft has this sort of saviour complex attached to it. We want to change that because the people working within the craft segment...they are putting their hand to brush to paper, spending time, and boldly owning the techniques. We believe that there is a space for crafts as collectible items, but what that requires is bringing in a certain contemporary newness to it.”

JULIA & SITA

The brainchild of sisters Sita Mahan and Julia Mahan, the Chennai-based brand Julia & Sita is an ode to their blended Indo-Austrian heritage and childhood. “Julia and I were born in London but moved to India as young children, where our mother was a pioneer in setting up couture embroidery for European designers in Madras in the ’90s. While our mother’s dream was short-lived, destiny drew us back into the world of embroidery,” Sita explains, describing how they set up their unit specialising in interior design and haute-couture embroidery.

The brand vibrantly merges traditional embroidery techniques with modern aesthetics, seamlessly blending inspirations from sacred Yantras to Gustav Klimt, resulting in exquisite creations



ranging from embroidered jewellery to wall hangings.

Its pièce de résistance, *The Zodiacue Clock*, showcased at this year's AD Design Show, encapsulates its ethos perfectly.

"Using gold wire, thread and brass beads, it celebrates the essence of time in craftsmanship," says Julia. The key


to the sisters' success is their collaboration with craftsmen like Ravi Dhanabal, a master embroiderer, who, with three decades of experience is "an embodiment of traditional skills adapting to modern aesthetics," says Julia.

MANA COLLECTIVE

The Kathmandu Valley is renowned for its rich artisanal practices, and one craft that stands out here is wood carving. Even in the modern age of mechanics, this tradition, dating back to the 18th century, continues to thrive, with skilled craftsmen dedicating themselves to their craft for generations. "Traditional furniture struggles to find its place in contemporary homes, which made us look at indigenous crafts through a modern lens," share

Aditi Kedia and Harshita Agarwal, the co-founders of Mana Collective

"After tons of research, we delve into the essence or meaning of each craft," explains Kedia, describing the collection *Dhyan*, inspired by the meditative process of each craftsman. Comprising five objects carved meticulously using materials ranging from American white ash to Indian rosewood and teak paired with brass plates, each piece is unique not just in terms of the technique but also in form.

Agarwal recalls, "It took us about two years to bring our ideas to life. One of the reasons was because of how technically challenging these products were to perfect. With each iteration and design, we discovered new intricacies of joinery, tools and limitations. Every experiment presented us with a different challenge, fuelling our quest to develop innovative designs. Our path led us to a workshop in Bhaktapur, where the current owner's family had been practising wood carving for generations. Trained as a mechanical engineer abroad, he eagerly embraced our experimental approach and his technical assistance helped us understand the strengths and weaknesses of the craft." 



“Built for a family of four, this home borrows liberally from the Tropical Modernism movement”

Behind the doors: RiyuVann Estate

Across the bay, an innovatively constructed home for a Mumbai-based family offers a calm respite

In the past few decades, Alibaug, a formerly sleepy coastal town south of Mumbai, has gained a reputation as the Hamptons of India. Miles of beaches, ocean-front views and beautiful homes provide city dwellers a much-needed sense of peace, just a short speedboat ride away.

One of the newest structures is the quietly decadent and brilliantly constructed RiyuVann Estate. Built for a couple and their two children, this home borrows liberally from the Tropical Modernism movement, which adopts minimal design keeping in mind the environmental and climatic conditions of tropical states. This style, famously championed by Sri Lanka's Geoffrey Bawa, allows for innovative design, global influences and a regional charm. →

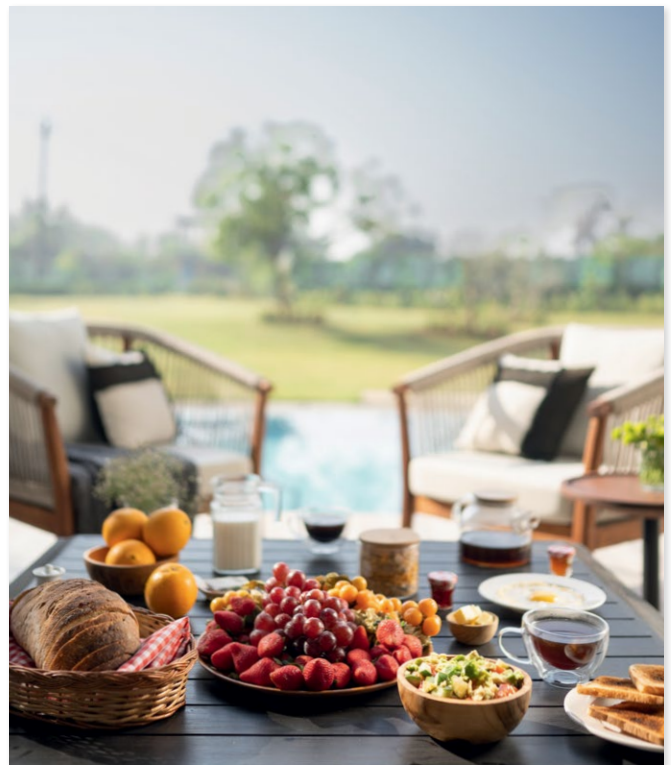


Neutral tones with graphic, geometric accents, sophisticated furnishings and contemporary styles create a calming sanctuary just a few hours away from the bustle of Maximum City





A solid wooden table steals the spotlight in the dining room and is the perfect spot for gathering family and friends



The idea of merging the indoors and outdoors continues with wooden flooring and accents as well as lush plants that brighten up corners of the home



A captivating fusion of grand design and tranquil blue, our feature unveils a stunning modern estate with a sleek industrial edge. Dive into luxury as geometric lamps illuminate the façade, casting a spellbinding glow on the cerulean expanse.





A black and white rug and cushions add a graphic element to the classic design. The alfresco dining area allows residents to entertain outdoors, a rare feature in homes here



Spread over a plot of 62,990 sqft, the estate, built over 365 days, using over 8,000 stones, offers the best views of Alibaug's lush vegetation and open skies. Incorporating Tropical Modernism's idea of merging the inside and outside, interesting design touches accentuate the openness of this home: floor-to-ceiling sliding doors, when open, create the illusion of singular large spaces as well as a signature receptive space; the manicured outdoors feature a beautifully constructed tree house and a swimming pool with several sit-outs with panoramic vistas. An alfresco dining area, a kitchen garden and an intimate gazebo—all waiting to be discovered—allow residents to enjoy the outdoors. The space within the home has been crafted in such a way so as to eliminate barriers between the kitchen, living room and dining room, so there is always a degree of connection without compromising on privacy and personal space.

Innovative technology, employed in both construction and materials, delivers a clear aesthetic that runs through the house while blending with its verdant surroundings. Earthy elements and muted hues come to life through details and an overarching philosophy of chic design. Carefully selected patterns in flooring and furnishing, the use of classic and contemporary styles in cane, ceramic and wood fused with metal, textured upholstery, and traditional European panelling all add warmth to the minimal setting. And the many artworks create different visual experiences while the use of geometrical lines and minimum clutter enhance the idea of space.

Continuing with Isprava's commitment to respecting surroundings, over 48 trees, 54 shrubs and 84 flowering plants have been planted in and around the home. The team continues to develop methods to minimise damage caused to the environment with drip and sprinkler methods of irrigation that ensure an efficient use of water (thereby saving 40 percent of water that would have normally been used). Waste management through standardised colour-coded German bins and a strong waste segregation system work towards keeping Alibaug clean. The compost from dry waste is used for gardening in the homes while a home composter kit is used to create manure from food.

Imbuing the house with a sense of calm through its design and aesthetic, RiyuVann Estate promises to be an oasis for its residents. This is a global home with a regional soul that doesn't compromise on modern comforts and amenities. 96

Social network

At Isprava's Siena Vaddo in Alibaug, a community of professionals, entrepreneurs, and creatives come together at their home away from home

With the rise of condos in cities across India, 'community living' is the latest buzzword. And while these homes may boast the latest amenities that allow people to gather, in India, where neighbourly relationships have always been given importance, this is not necessarily a new idea.

What is relatively new, however, are gated communities for second homes. These spaces, like Isprava's Siena Vaddo in Alibaug, a short boat ride from Mumbai, often attract like-minded individuals. This makes socialising and networking a seamless extension of the living experience.

In the Vaddo, no two houses are the same. They each have their distinct identity, just like their owners, which makes them stand out. The amenities that come with life in an Isprava gated community, like a pickle ball court and a landscaped garden, are dedicated to bring people together. Here, some of the homeowners tell us more. →

"When we saw our finished home for the first time, we fell in love with everything"

— **SONAM THADANI**





Neo-classical wooden furniture set against a tropical theme, illuminated by soft sunlight in Sienna Vaddo, Villa H is the perfect setting for a meal or memories for a lifetime.



TARAK PATEL

MANAGING DIRECTOR, GMM
PFAUDLER LTD

What drew you to community living?

We were looking to get away from the hustle and bustle of Mumbai. Isprava's Siena Vaddo in Alibaug fit the bill perfectly. It is surrounded by greenery and is just a short drive from the jetty. It really is the perfect spot that we are happy to call our second home. Being part of this small community has been a great experience. And even though we've made friends with many villa owners, we all respect each other's privacy.

What has been the biggest highlight of your home?

The modern and minimal interiors, especially the tropical theme and the floor-to-ceiling windows. Our home has become a sanctuary and a place of rejuvenation for us that we can access throughout the year.

How do you spend time in Alibaug? What can you recommend to visitors?

Long runs and walks around local fishing villages and paddy fields, followed by a refreshing swim and an afternoon barbecue. Our home is a great space for us to de-stress and come back refreshed and recharged. →



“Our home has become a sanctuary and a place of rejuvenation for us”

— TARAK PATEL

SONAM THADANI

SENIOR CONSULTANT, OKAY.COM AND SHABAD THADANI, MANAGING DIRECTOR/PARTNER AT ARKKAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

What drew you to community living?

Our relationship with Isprava is one of the most special things in our lives. We got married in Goa in Jan 2020 and rented out nearly all of Isprava's Goa villas for our 180 guests to stay in for three days. It was during those days that we experienced 'vaddo' living for the first time as a lot of our friends were staying at Fonteira in Assagao. We had rented all eight homes. For us, having that feeling of community a stone's throw away, yet being able to retire peacefully to the most beautiful quiet villa after a big night was an amazing parallel. The interiors of each villa are unique, but they all come together and fit well, like a jigsaw puzzle. Some of our closest friends own villas in Siena Vaddo along with us, so to know that we have that feeling of lifelong community around makes it special.

What has been the biggest highlight of your home?

Everything has been a subtle surprise. Discussing mood boards with the design team can only take you so far, but when we saw our finished home for the first time, we fell in love with everything. The views, the omnipresent light in the living room that has a 'glass house' look, the blue doors against the red brick wall, the outdoor patios on both floors, the swimming pool, the upstairs swing, the walk-in closet—we're really lucky to have bought a house that took less than five minutes to feel like a home.

How do you spend time in Alibaug?

Alibaug still feels like much more of a 'stay at home' destination as compared to Goa. It's almost like what Assagao, Parra and Siolim were probably six or seven years ago, and there's something quaint and soothing about that. As we live in Hong Kong now, we've only had one trip there together so far, but it was so relaxing. We hung out at home for the most part, took multiple naps a day, had a Lohono chef with us the entire time and spent quality time with family, relaxing and unwinding in the pool. It's a place to slow down and take a few deep breaths, admire the greenery and then go back to eating dosas for lunch, bhel and chilli cheese toast for evening snacks and prawn curry for dinner. →















**DR NUPUR
JHUNJHUNWALA**
DENTIST AND SLEEP
SPECIALIST, TOOTHWISE

What drew you to community living?

Communities provide enjoyment and pleasure. One can live independently but participate in community activities at the same time. Alibaug is special because it's close to Mumbai yet feels like a vacation home thanks to the greenery and the Isprava and Lohono hospitality.

What has been the biggest highlight of your home?

Quick access to Siena Vaddo. Once inside, the swimming pool experience, the elegant furniture and artefacts, the maintenance and staff have been the highlights. It has been wonderful.

How do you spend time in Alibaug?

We have been spending most of our time at home, but we look forward to exploring the area around us further. There are a number of things that one can do in Alibaug—visit the beaches and food spots, trek, learn about the heritage and take in the temples. The lake near Siena Vaddo is a stunning place to walk, too. 🌿



A four poster bed that is sleek and spacious at the same time becomes the centrepiece set amongst modern mid-century inspired furniture, unique carved niches and cozy textures.

Behind the Doors: Villa Maraville

In Marna, Goa, a charming home
blends Portuguese and global touches

What is it that you would want in a Goa home? A sense of light, of airiness, of space, a space that brings together the languid Goan ease with the comforts of contemporary living—your own little tropical paradise in the sunshine state.

Villa Maraville is all that and more. Just a half-hour drive from the international airport, Villa Maraville is perfectly situated in the peaceful bylanes of Siolim, close to the white-sand beaches of Morjim, Anjuna and Vagator and around the corner from popular haunts such as Thalassa,

Ciao Bella and Gunpowder. But even if its prime location wasn't enough, the home itself has many unique attributes.

Built in 386 days and using 8,000 stones, Villa Maraville combines the old and the new through the use of bespoke architectural elements including arched windows and doors and a stained glass dome at the entrance foyer. The inimitable charm of Portuguese architecture comes alive through design details, but the fact that this home has been built brick by brick by locals, thereby empowering the community it's housed in, is what gives it a →

Flanked by stately pillars, discover an infinity pool that seamlessly merges with lush greenery, extending its allure to a mesmerizing paddy field panorama.



The recreated European dome, a testament to the seamless blend of history and modern luxury. Step into a world where time-honored architecture meets refined design, offering a glimpse of opulence rooted in the beauty of the past.



Embark on a visual odyssey through opulence as a grand staircase gracefully winds its way through a home adorned with meticulously designed tiles. The library, a sanctuary of sophistication, is draped in the rich allure of Persian blue.



A glimpse into modern luxury with an expansive living room featuring double-height ceilings and arched wooden windows that span the entire wall. The pristine white interiors create an atmosphere of understated elegance, offering a serene haven for those who appreciate the beauty of simplicity.





Elegance in Every Detail: Step into the lap of luxury with interiors boasting exquisite arches, meticulously carved wooden headboards, and a palette of opulent greens. Our visual journey unveils a sanctuary where sophistication meets nature's hues, creating an atmosphere of timeless refinement and unparalleled comfort.

truly authentic Goan soul.

The idea behind this four-bedroom home's design was to create a space of versatility, transforming it easily from a relaxing weekend home to a place where you can entertain and bring together family and friends. The villa features chic, luxurious elements that seamlessly connect the indoors and outdoors—think, a private swimming pool that extends into the lush greenery of the surrounding paddy fields—making it the perfect tropical escape. Arched motifs in doors, windows and the ceiling pay homage to traditional colonial style, while also allowing for endless vistas; the use of a delicate colour palette brings in vitality and freshness; the entrance foyer is fitted with large doors that amplify the double-height ceilings, where a stunning skylight bathes you in sunlight through

most of the day; the private swimming pool extends into the lush green paddy fields surrounding the property while a gazebo perched at the end allows for stolen moments. A custom-made staircase leads to the first floor, where the master suite opens onto a terrace with a built-in bar.

Adding to these details are bespoke tiles that deliver an innovative flooring concept. The living room features cool stone tiles that contrast with its distressed cream furniture, while the bathroom sports a variety of prints that borrow inspiration from New York's subways for a current, on-trend vibe. Each room's versatility is enhanced by the use of furnishings and motifs, a careful blend of classic and contemporary, but with an eye on plushness and comfort. Minimal prints and linen complement the white walls and the cerulean →



pool. Inside each bedroom, you will find a spectacular hand-painted bed that is the centerpiece. Hues of beige, cream and black with hints of lapis, ruby and dandelion dot the space with delicate accessories in the form of customised wall hangings from local artists.

At Villa Maraville, an innovative mix of unique hues, antique artefacts and modern materials have been used to construct a home that is strong on design and modern comforts but will last for generations to come. 98

GREEN COUNT

Isprava's focus to a better future

125 trees

596 shrubs

596 flowering plants

Drip and sprinkler methods of irrigation

Waste Segregation

Compositing

Uncover an infinity pool that effortlessly blends with verdant surroundings, captivating with its charm as it stretches towards a mesmerizing panorama of paddy fields.







Behind the doors: Estate in Siolim

This Goan estate for a Delhi-based family is nothing short of grand

The seaside village of Siolim in Goa is a hotbed of history and culture. With traditional Portuguese architecture, churches dating back to the 1500s and cultural gatherings that showcase the melting pot that is this region, it's no wonder that Siolim is on every traveller's must-visit list. From pristine beaches to quaint little cafes and curated boutiques, it has something for everyone.

While the dynamism of Siolim is inimitable, there also is a quieter, calmer side to it. Isprava's newest and most magnificent home, Estate in Siolim, is located in a secluded area and brings together a seamless union of old and new. A short 30-minute ride from the Manohar International Airport at Mopa, this light-filled home provides the perfect escape for a family of entrepreneurs.

From its inception, the primary goal was to build a home that was bathed in sunlight and embraced nature in all its glory. Whether you are curled up indoors or enjoying the outdoors, the idea was to envelop the home in its surrounding →



A grand dining area bathed in the warm glow of abundant sunlight, accentuated by the elegance of high ceilings and arched doorways, with a touch of opulence reflected in the expansive mirror. Juxtaposed with a bedroom adorned with ceiling-to-floor length glass doors that open to reveal a breathtaking view of expansive lawns, creating a serene and harmonious retreat.

The design
language
celebrates the
richness of
Indo-Portuguese
culture







A majestic stairway adorned with unique art pieces, bathed in the soft glow of sunlight streaming through tall French windows, creates an enchanting interplay of artistry and natural light.



A charming powder room exuding understated elegance, featuring delicate cane light fixtures and walls adorned with hand-painted subtle forest scenes, create a serene and stylish ambiance.



With a focus on handcrafted details and a strong Goan story, this property reflects the cultural cauldron that is the sunshine state.

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From its inception, the primary goal was to build a home that was bathed in sunlight and embraced nature in all its glory. Whether you are curled up indoors or enjoying the outdoors, the idea was to envelop the home in its surrounding environment via large, unadorned windows that let in lots of natural light, the gentle sea breeze and the melody of birdsong.

The orientation of the home and the focus placed on visual connectivity and transparency has resulted in a space that not only incorporates

a design language that balances modernity and tradition but is also in harmony with the outdoors. It is an experience that brings together Portuguese architecture, Indian contemporary design and breathtaking greenery. The estate stands out from the ordinary with its interesting blend of patterns, materials, styles and volume.

Influenced by Portuguese detailing, the facade features ornamental mouldings while the flooring, doors, furniture and decor reflect an artful blend of diverse textures, moods and materials. The design language celebrates the richness of Indo-Portuguese culture and embraces design influences from the region's cultural transformations, local demographics and inventive use of materials. Large arches and sloping roofs evoke a feeling of timelessness and heritage, while minimalism in decor adds a contemporary elegance. Geometric influences and shapes further enhance the estate's architectural allure, forming a pattern of charming pockets and corners throughout the property.

This play on contrast—of indoors and outdoors, of timelessness and heritage, of local and international, of texture and minimalism—is at the heart of Estate in Siolim. With a focus on handcrafted details and a strong Goan story, this property reflects the cultural cauldron that is the sunshine state. 







A quaint powder room designed with a picturesque view in mind, featuring a window as its frontal focus that opens to lush greenery, with a tastefully placed mirror on the side to reflect the natural beauty, creating a harmonious and refreshing space.



Corridor, Estate in Siolim
Jacket and Skirt Set,
Arpita Mehta
(@arpitamehtaofficial).
Neckpiece, **Minerali**
(@minerali_store).

CORRIDORS OF *elegance.*

Our estate in Siolim is a home that emulates an art gallery, housing prolific works from artists around the world, sourced by the homeowner and housed in our work of art.



Garden, Estate in Siolim

Co-ord Set, **Kohra** (@shop_kohra). Earrings, **Misho** (@misho_designs).

Dining Area, Estate in Siolim
Earrings, **Misho** (@misho_deigns)



Master Bedroom, Estate in Siolim
Co-ord Set, **Studio Rigu** (@studiorigu).





Area leading into the garden
from the Guest Bedroom,
Estate in Siolim

Co-ord Set, **Kohra** (@shop_kohra).
Earrings, **Misho**
(@misho_designs).





Living Area, Estate in Siolim

Earrings; bracelet, **Misho** (@misho_designs).



Living Area, Estate in Siolim

Seychelles Set, **Since 1988** (@since1988.in). Earrings; rings, **Misho** (@misho_designs)



Staircase, Estate in Siolim
Teavora Set, **Since 1988**
(@since1988.in).
Necklaces; rings; bracelets,
Minerali (@minerali_store).

Living Area, Estate in Siolim

Teavora Set, **Since 1988** (@since1988.in).

Necklaces; rings; bracelets,
Minerali (@minerali_store).





Outhouse, Estate in Siolim

Cape set, **Arpita Mehta** (@arpitamehtaofficial). Earrings, **Putstyle** (@putstyle07). Bracelets, **Minerali** (@minerali_store)





By The Pool, Estate in Siolim
Kaftan, **Kohra** (@shop_kohra).
Earrings, **Misho** (@misho_designs)



Secret Garden, Estate in Siolim
Co-ord Set, **Kohra** (@shop_kohra).
Earrings, **Misho**
(@misho_designs).



Master Bathroom, Estate in Siolim
Dress, **Kohra** (@shop_kohra). Heels,
House of Prisca (@houseofprisca_)
Earrings; Cuffs, **Minerali**
(@minerali_store)

Home and away

With villa offerings in Goa, Alibaug and Coonoor, Isprava's homeowners are an eclectic group of individuals spanning the country. They are entrepreneurs and tech gurus, sportspeople and bankers, doctors and real-estate titans all united by a common interest to create a life that allows them to thrive in every way. We spotlight five homeowners who have made their mark both in India and abroad

< MINI MATHUR TV HOST AND ACTOR

What has been your biggest career highlight so far?

That I have been fortunate to have been at the precipice of every change in the entertainment business. From the advent of satellite channel Zee and hosting the country's first game show (*Tal Mol Ke Bol*), first travel show (*Namaste India*) and first show on beauty (*Khoobsurat*) to then moving to Mumbai to be a VJ with MTV, which gave me the chance to connect with the youth of India for five years. I then moved on to Indian Idol. I feel lucky to have longevity in a business that has an incredibly short memory.

What advice would you give the younger generation as they look to make their mark?

To never skip an education. That's the building block of who you will turn out to be in any field. Do not be in a hurry because

“I love the Isprava aesthetic. It’s luxe, earthy, classy and calm”

— **MINI MATHUR**

there’s a right time and place for you to shine. Read, learn and build awareness and opinions on society, people and politics.

What’s the best piece of advice you have received?
To never take out of a box more than you put into it.

What attracted you to the idea of a holiday home?
I’ve been stalking the birth of Isprava ever since it built its first home. I’ve stood at almost every new plot and imagined my home there and regretted it as they sold like hot cakes. I finally bought my dream combination: location, landscape and size. I love the Isprava aesthetic. It’s luxe, earthy, classy and calm. The team has a fantastic eye for beauty, privacy and comfort.

What do you like to do when you are not working? How do you like to unwind?
I place great emphasis on a well-rounded life. I travel, go diving and enjoy gardening. I meet my friends, love to cook and spend time with my girl tribe.

What makes the India story so important currently on the global stage?
I think India has always been a land of greatness. We have skill, natural resources and a population with a burning ambition to rise. If we can keep religion out of politics, we are going to be a superpower.



^ **SUNIL MANOHAR GAVASKAR** CRICKET LEGEND

Believed to be one of the greatest opening batsmen of all time, Sunil Gavaskar retired from playing professional cricket in 1987, but continues to be an icon of the sport

What has been your biggest career highlight so far?
Being a member of the team that won the 1983 Cricket World Cup.

What is the best piece of advice you have received?
Not to take myself too seriously.

What advice would you give the younger generation as they look to make their mark?
I wouldn’t dare to give advice to the new generation because the world has changed and so has the thinking. Maybe I’d just say that they should try to do one good deed every day.

What drew you to a holiday home?
The attraction of a holiday home is to be able to go where one can unwind along with family and be the master of one’s time. There’s nothing quite like sleeping to unwind or taking time out to read.

What’s your favourite corner in your Isprava home?
The terrace. I can go there and just relax with a book.

What makes the India story so important currently on the global stage?
The India story, as far as cricket is concerned, is to see that those who looked down on us are now looking up to us to keep the game going in their countries.

What’s next for you?
I have no project going on or planned. Where I am at this stage of my life every day is a bonus and I try to make the most of it. After my nine to ten hours of sleep, of course. →



^ CHANAKYA CHAKRAVARTI PRIVATE EQUITY REAL ESTATE INVESTOR

With over two decades of experience in the real estate and financial markets, Chanakya Chakravarti is known for his sharp business acumen

What has been your biggest career highlight so far?

Bringing to life four start-up ventures from scratch; three of which are successful, scaled franchises today.

What is the best advice you have received?

Treat people around you as you would expect to be treated and abhor mediocrity in whatever you do or associate with.

What advice would you give the younger generation as they look to make their mark?

Stay humble, stay foolish, and accept life's curveballs as learning opportunities. Work hard but smart, and without compromising your scruples.

What is your favourite aspect of your Isprava home?

It's contemporary, fresh and without an air of formality, yet with a touch of class. We love the home and equally the entire Isprava team. They are so incredibly committed to delivering excellence in product and service. It's been such a pleasure.

How do you like to unwind?

I like to hit the gym and watch sport. I also love reading and observing global geopolitics and economic trends and their impact.

What makes the India story so important currently on the global stage?

Our unique plural heritage and culture, our ability to innovate—despite the chaos around us—and its ongoing efforts to drive scaled, inclusive, sustainable growth. I believe India is at the cusp of becoming an economic superpower in the next decade. The ongoing economic and geopolitical churn will act as a further catalyst. On our part, we need to strive to compete with the best by continually innovating while staying humble.



^ RITWIK BHATTACHARJEE CHIEF INVESTMENT OFFICER, EMBASSY REIT, FORMER GLOBAL INVESTMENT BANKER

What has been your biggest career highlight so far?

Listing Embassy REIT on the Indian stock exchange in 2019. Reits in India at that time were unproven securities. It was a herculean effort to unlock the value of commercial real estate and open up the sector to the investing public.

What advice would you give the younger generation as they look to make their mark?

Don't crave visibility. Sign up for the hard jobs. And don't use jargon. Keep it simple.

What's the best piece of advice you have received?

Plenty, but a couple stand out. When I was junior: "The firm's clients aren't your clients. Your bosses are your clients." Now: "Never negotiate to make the other party feel disrespected." And that empathy and EQ (in most cases) trumps IQ.

What is your favourite aspect of your Isprava home?

The airiness and light that permeates the house. The idea of a great holiday home is to have the outside world melt away when you enter. At our Isprava place in Goa, that's exactly what happens.

What do you like to do to unwind?

I read, play golf and I am a thought leader for my four dogs (my teenagers want nothing to do with me).

What makes the India story so important currently on the global stage?

The potential of India lies in its working-age population that can work for any company. The world's best companies look to hire Indian talent, as we are building the infrastructure in pretty much every sector. We have all the ingredients to become a developed country for the next generation.



RATNA D REDDY >

FOUNDER, CHIREC INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL; FOUNDER AND TRUSTEE, VENI RAO FOUNDATION

In the past three decades, Ratna Reddy has transformed education in India, starting with a pre-primary programme and then expanding her pedagogy into later years. In 2018 she was awarded the Icon of the Year by Education Today.

What has been your biggest career highlight so far?

In April 1989, I started what I thought would be a small summer camp offering an innovative approach to kids' learning. By June the same year, it grew into a pre-primary school with 60 students.

More than 30 years later, CHIREC now has over 4,200 students across multiple campuses and has been a pioneer in advancing the cutting edge of education in India. The opportunity to build CHIREC into one of the leading educational institutions in the country has been my biggest career highlight and I'm so pleased to see the school continuing to grow, thrive and innovate under new leadership.

What advice would you give the younger generation as they look to make their mark?

There is no substitute for hard work, but taking the time to have clarity of vision about what you are working for can make all the difference in achieving real, lasting success. The two years I took for graduate school in early childhood education at the University of Iowa before launching CHIREC gave me the foundation to build the school into what it is today. Success comes with many compromises and to sustain it is even harder. But patience and persistence pay off.

What's the best piece of advice you have received?

From my parents I learned to be true to myself, be disciplined, work hard, always be honest, do the best I can and love my life.


What attracted you to the idea of a holiday home?

My children joke that I am busier in retirement than I ever was while working. But their teasing aside, after decades of being super busy, I take great pleasure in having a holiday home that can be a place of respite and relaxation for me and my family.

What do you like to do to unwind?

I enjoy listening to music, watching a movie, going for a walk or catching up with old friends.

What makes the India story so important currently on the global stage?

Part of what made CHIREC such a success was that we identified the need and took a risk to try something new to India in school education. By providing a modern education to children of professionals moving back from abroad, we contributed to Hyderabad's growth and emergence as the economic powerhouse it is today. I say that because when I think about the India story today, I recognise similar dynamics at play on a national scale. It's not entirely obvious what the future holds for India on the world stage, but we can all see India emerging as a new force globally. As we enter a new phase of our history, the opportunity for Indians today—especially those who are young and entrepreneurial—is to seize that moment and be part of where the future is going by building what the next generation will demand. 

FASHION

Crafting a legacy

It's been a big year for Karishma Swali of Chanakya International. A collaboration with Dior that brought the famed French fashion house to showcase at the Gateway of India, the expansion of her home-grown brand Moonray and her continuing work with the Chanakya School of Craft. But it's been decades of work that has brought Swali to this very moment, writes **Chinmayee Manjunath**



The love for a handmade object is never a fleeting one. Once you start to understand the time, attention, effort and detail that goes into its creation, your appreciation of it grows manifold. To dedicate your life and work to the art, craft and evolution of what is handmade is not just a decision but a calling. Which is where Karishma Swali thrives.

The managing director and creative director of

Chanakya International, the Chanakya School of Craft, and Moonray, Swali is a prolific force in not just championing Indian artisans but in empowering them to learn, grow, future-proof and shape the vocabulary of the country's wealth of crafts. And she has had a busy year. With the focus on India and Chanakya, her long-time collaborator and friend Maria Grazia Chiuri, Dior's creative director, chose to shine a light on India and Chanakya by

showcasing the fashion house's fall 2023 collection at the Gateway of India in Mumbai in March.

What catalysed that globally-celebrated moment was not just the work that Swali has done for decades at the company that her father Vinod Shah founded in 1986, but her deep passion for, knowledge of and commitment to the artisan. With Moonray, a brand she has co-founded with her daughter Avantika, Swali hopes to build another important chapter in her personal and professional journey by tapping into an India-proud zeitgeist and allowing what is handmade to be celebrated and incorporated into people's daily lives. A conversation with Swali is a masterclass in understanding circularity and the vital essence of craft.

What does 'handcrafted' mean to you? It is such a layered and vast concept.

Yes, and everyone has their own interpretation of it. I think we are so incredibly fortunate to be

in India where 'handcrafted' is not restricted to a specific genre or school of craft. Every region uses it as a passport or identity to really celebrate its specific skills and legacies. So for me, 'handcraft', in many ways, is a way of finding your identity and a way of being able to stand for certain values as a community.

If you look at these [pointing to the ethereal muslin drapes that not only shield the room from Mumbai's harsh afternoon light, but also dapple it with intricate shadows], they are jamdani and are completely handcrafted. You may see this as just surface ornamentation, but for me, handcraft is the very soul of a specific textile.

Most people look at it as decorative. It's not decorative at all; it is an identity. And it's also the core of luxury because what would luxury be without the perfection of a handmade skill? So whether you're looking at the way they mould the soles or the uppers in Scandicci in Florence (which is their specialty) or the way they make a leather bag →

"Handcraft, in many ways, is a way of finding your identity"

— **KARISHMA SWALI**



Looks from the Dior fall 2023 show held at Gateway of India, Mumbai in March 2023. *Opposite page:* Swali at the Chanakya School of Craft



“In all our efforts, the underlying core thought is really the same: conservation and preservation”

— KARISHMA SWALI

or a jacket by hand, it really is what defines luxury.

You are firmly rooted in craft as part of your family, your work and your own deep interest in and passion for it. At a time when fast fashion is still a huge part of the zeitgeist, even as the movement towards sustainability is gaining momentum, how do you see craft in the context of India today?

I think we're incredibly fortunate because the villages of India still live craft every single day. And when I visit them, I can't help but be inspired at how circular they are in their approach.

My last trip was to Kutch. The people who spin the fabric are there, as are those who have grown the cotton. And the cattle that are being bred are there as well. Everyone—from a shepherd to a dairy farmer to a spinner and a weaver—understands how interdependent they are and how important it is for everyone to work and thrive together. And there's so much beauty in that deeper understanding.

For me, being able to learn from them and be able to find our own way of being circular is really

the way forward—without forcing it in any way. It's got to be an organic way of finding circularity because in India we are all coexisting and depending on one another. It is important to respect that.

You have had an eventful and incredible time with the Dior show, Moonray and the attention being paid to the Chanakya School of Craft. Could you talk a little bit about that?

We work with over 1,200 artisans, some of whom are ustads, masters, typically 12th- or 13th-generation artisans. For us, they're national treasures. But at some point, we realised that craft hasn't been institutionalised in India, and it has not been inclusive to women. Maria Grazia actually brought that up when she said to me once, “Where are the women in your ateliers? They're all men.”

So we started it for these two reasons and we were very clear from day one that the learning needs to be robust and our students need to eventually become cultural ambassadors who can uphold their legacies.

Once we began, we realised that a huge part of the preservation exercise is innovation and finding ways to keep crafts relevant. We want to be able to open up our students' visual and design languages into a versatile dialogue. This is something we work on continually with different communities of craft and within the school.

From January 2024, we're going to start artist residencies, blurring the lines between art and craft and standing for a more unified language. So in all our efforts, the underlying core thought is really the same: conservation and preservation. Because if our future generations don't have this, it will be a more disintegrated identity for our country and our collective identity will be lost. 96



Actual picture of a home in Castello Vaddo, Goa

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Shop talk

Goa has an array of boutiques that sell everything from clothing and accessories to home products made using India's extensive repertoire of craft. Jasreen Mayal Khanna uncovers some serious finds



RANGEELA GOA

One of Goa's oldest retail stores, Rangeela is equally popular with residents and travellers for its commitment to preserving craft and empowering artisans. Located inside a beautifully restored Goan home, complete with a leafy courtyard, its products encompass Goan terracotta pottery, Balinese carved deities, banana-leaf basketware from Hampi, clothing made out of shibori, bandhini and chikankari textiles, shell decorative items from Kanyakumari and a lot more.

Rangeelagoa.com



CHESHIRE CAT GALLERY

This jewellery brand was founded in 1999 in Amsterdam by Kees van Anandel and Karen Peace who moved to Goa in 2004 and set up shop. Their new flagship store in Parra also houses their fine jewellery line, Van Anandel and Peace, which stocks handcrafted pieces made from upcycled gold and silver as well as precious and semi-precious stones sourced from Jaipur. Each item is uniquely designed and crafted by their in-house goldsmiths and silversmiths. The duo also have a vibrant line of beaded costume jewellery created by Goan women.

Vanandelandpeace.com; [@cheshirecatgoa](https://www.instagram.com/cheshirecatgoa)



JOSMO STUDIO

Founded by Anjali Mody in late 2010, Josmo is an award-winning furniture brand that makes products that are inherently Indian with a strong global appeal. Mody uses solid wood, intricate cane weaving techniques and precision metalwork to create cool, contemporary pieces. Josmo's product range extends to all kinds of furniture for residences and hotels, but its most popular products are the Bunai Mamba Chair, Lima Lounger, the Live-Edge tables and the Dali and Memphis sofa sets.

Josmostudio.com



SIROI

Sapna Kabra started this life-style store to direct her passion for preserving India's rich craft heritage and to provide a platform to local artisans across the country. Accordingly, her curation at Siroi is craft-led. Think stained glass from Goa's Mosaic Imprints, vibrant carpets from Ahmedabad's Resham Dor, The Green Collective's cane products, clothes made out of the Goan kunbi fabric, recycled tin garden decor, paintings and sculptures by renowned artists as well as imported home decor from Bali and Africa among other places.

Siroigoa.com



FLAME

Goa's most glamorous clothing and lifestyle store is best known for its effortless resort wear—tiered dresses, chic coord sets and vibrant menswear made using textiles such as Ajrakh from Bhuj, block prints from Sangner, ikat from Andhra Pradesh and muslin from West Bengal. Flame has three outlets across north Goa and it also sells lifestyle and home products such as metal ware from Moradabad, jewellery from Gujarat, pottery from Jaipur, coir from Kerala, cane artefacts from Nagaland and more.

[@thefflamestore](https://www.instagram.com/thefflamestore) →





FREEDOM TREE

This Mumbai-based home design studio has a quaint outpost in a restored Goan home in Sangolda. Freedom Tree works with craftsmen all over India to imprint a signature design language on its unique range of homeware. It upgrades the artisans' skills to produce hand-screen printed home textiles, handwoven wicker furniture and lights, inlay and carved pieces alongside its popular handpainted ceramics in bold colours.

Freedomtree.in



MORAL SCIENCE

Founded by Isha Ahluwalia, this slow-fashion design label makes playful and subversive clothes with a futuristic, whimsical theatricality to them. Think functional and finely tailored garments that are deeply rooted in the myths and crafts of India. Take, for example, the collection called Moral Science, where Banarasi brocade is used to make bomber jackets, aari embroidery is featured on belt bags, Kutch appliqué finds its way onto T-shirts and mangalgiri cotton is used to create breathable safari suits.

Moralscience.in





THE SANGANER COLLECTIVE

The Sanganer Collective sources all of its products from the colourful state of Rajasthan, bringing Rajput splendour to Goa. Despite sourcing from one region, its range is wide and diverse—Jaipur's blue pottery and block-printed textiles share space with Jodhpur's covetable furniture as well as wooden and metal handicrafts from Barmer and

Jaisalmer. The store's layout makes shopping a pleasure: there are separate zones for wooden and metal handicrafts, home textiles, clothing and distressed furniture. +91 98290 30002



THE KARMA COLLECTIVE

This vintage store launched in 2005 and now resides in a Goan home which is also the founder's residence. Its aim is to make traditional handicrafts and textiles attractive to contemporary buyers. It transforms vintage Kutchi mirror work textiles into cushions, clothes and handbags (which are further embellished with shells, fringes and tribal jewellery). It also buys old wooden furniture and sells stone statues carved by artisans in Uttar Pradesh.

Karmacollectiongoa.com



PAPER BOAT COLLECTIVE

This concept store showcases the work of designers who make handcrafted products. Paper Boat Collective aims to create an experience, not just sell products. The white-walled Goa store is full of hidden gems: handmade jewellery, unique books, quirky stationery and pop-coloured linen clothing from the label Renni, amongst others. It curates its products from makers and artisans who practise crafts such as weaving, printing and dyeing, as well as basketry, embroidery and wood turning.

Paperboatcollective.in 96



Can future vintage nostalgia give craft the ultimate push?

Translating craft into a language understood by the consumers of style is its own unique challenge. Rujuta Vaidya speaks to three labels engaging in conversations about cross-border referencing while championing artisanry

Craftsmanship of the Eastern worlds has long been the backbone of European fashion houses. Only recently have storied maisons started sharing credit with those who make their dream come alive. And while accruing long-overdue external validation for home-grown crafts is important, the problem lies within the constraints of design that we may have unknowingly burdened ourselves with. It is often argued that design intervention needs to solve a problem that is typically technical in nature, rarely decorative. However, for craft to be adopted in the same lens as fashion, design intervention has to come from a place of modernity and must exist in the same lexicon used by the generation, which defines trends.

SUPPORT SYSTEM

For Rikki Kher of Kardo, the solution by which craft can be conserved is as simple as helping craft-people commodify their skills by “not gatekeeping craft, by supporting the artisans, by paying them well and on time, by making good products that the world wants, by ensuring we deliver products of the highest quality on time to customers”. Kher’s foray into design followed an unconventional route. After spending a decade in sourcing and buying textiles, he found the system lacking in the kind of clothes he wanted to wear. After experimenting at a friend’s workshop, Kardo was born. The London-based designer works with craftsmen all over India to create a product that champions slow fashion. “We have to understand the craft techniques, the artisans, their capabilities, their limitations, and which craft can be translated into purposeful clothing.”

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

Engaging in active dialogue at the grassroots is the only way to strike gold. Harsh Agarwal of Hara-go understands that researching craft forms is the crux of his work. “It is the most critical aspect, which in fact lays the foundation of every single piece. The thought process starts when we discover a new craft and how we incorporate design so as to be able to provide a livelihood to the community working on it. And more than just livelihood it’s about contributing to taking the legacy of that artisanal craftsmanship forward,” says Agarwal. Jaipur-based Hara-go retails with the likes of



Above: Story mfg.
Opposite page,
from left: Harago
and Kardo



Matchesfashion.com. The unique design sensibility of the label ties in perfectly with Gen-Z and millennial proclivity towards the future vintage aesthetic. I ask him to identify the inflection point where craft transforms into good design, and he responds: “When it has been thought out in its execution and made relevant for the niche market needs.”


Translating craft into design that fulfils a consumer’s needs is its own challenge. “We work with handloom weavers in West Bengal and Kutch, hand-knitters in Kullu, embroiderers in Rajasthan, appliqué artisans in Kutch. I spend time with artisans when we are making samples. There is a lot of brainstorming in terms of what’s possible and what’s not. We try various swatches for combinations of colours and design types, work out a placement for design and then select the best of many explorations to make the final sample. It feels so good when we get to the final outcome.”

ASCRIBING VALUE

Saeed Al-Rubeyi, one half of Story mfg, hails from Iranian and Irish descent and works with his wife, Katy Al-Rubeyi, to create contemporary designs born out of storytelling that are laden with influences and reflections of the world. Built on the tenets of minimising waste, regenerative agriculture, kindness towards animals and pragmatism, Story mfg is about solving problems at a deeper

level. Conserving centuries-old techniques is a greater challenge than we may realise, so finding the right collaborators and patrons is important to keep a brand like theirs going. “Craft is inherently challenging; you need to accept that to be in the ecosystem,” says Saeed.

To create a product with recall is no mean feat. Story mfg has made these discrepancies the hallmarks of its aesthetic, and working with other creators and embracing the journey are key to its success. “We come up with a design and then work with block printers, weavers and dyers to realise it. That means changing it here and there to work with the craft, and things always come out a little different to what we all expect, but that’s the chaotic element nature provides that is the cherry on top,” says Saeed. Story mfg works with studios and craftspeople in India and other countries that are aligned with the brand’s vision, such as Auromics and The Colours of Nature in Auroville as well as individual artists like the stone carver Murugan.

While craft occupies the buzzy concern and acknowledgement of the fashion capitals, inducing change in the system is a long way ahead. “The predominant issue facing all artisans is the impact of new weather patterns disrupting the normal cycle of weaving, printing and artisanal craft that rely heavily on stable seasonality,” Kher explains. But to take the momentum up a few notches is a task cut out for designers, communicators and creators alike. Agarwal believes that by training artisans in innovation and striving to make the best quality of work will show the change we are looking for. “It will ultimately find its right value at its right place.” 

Global game

It's Gaurav Gupta's world and we are just living in it. From international red carpets to runways, the designer is poised for global domination. Praachi Raniwala speaks to him about this new journey

Gaurav Gupta hadn't sat at a sewing machine in 15 years. But that changed two hours before his second show at Paris Couture Week this July. The reason? A last-minute confirmation of attendance by American rapper Cardi B, and her outfit needed a few nips and tucks. She ultimately sat front row in an embroidered gown with a hood (or "ghoonghat", as Gupta would rather call it), making it an important moment for the designer. Close on the heels

Beyoncé dressed in the Athena sari gown from the 'Hiranyagarbha' A/W 2023 collection for her Renaissance World Tour in Atlanta



“The more global I go, the more I internalise India in my thought process”

of his show's success, Beyoncé wore bespoke creations by Gupta on her Renaissance World Tour—not once, not twice, but three times, barely a few days apart—a feat that not even many international brands can boast of. One of them included the neon green Athena sari gown from his 'Hiranyagarbha' Paris Couture Week collection.



Gupta launched his eponymous label in 2004 after graduating from Central Saint Martins in London. From the get-go, the Delhi-based designer gained recognition for his forward-thinking approach to design, which places surrealism at the heart of his sartorial narrative: made in India with indigenous techniques and embroideries, but with architectural construction that has global appeal.

After capturing his home market, it was only a matter of time before Gupta set his sights on the world stage. Today, he is a fixture on international red carpets with his clothes seen on everyone from musicians such as Megan Thee Stallion and Lizzo to actors including Sharon Stone and Jenna Ortega. He's also shown at Paris Couture Week twice and is slated to tour the US with Neiman Marcus for a series of private trunk shows.

As his brand continues to make history one headline-stealing moment at a time, Gupta is conscious about “working with people who carry culture, not just celebrities, to create meaningful moments,” while keeping his roots intact. We speak to him about how he's taking Indian crafts to a global stage.

We have to start this conversation by talking about the three looks you created for Beyoncé. Tell us how it happened.

We made a few looks for the Renaissance World Tour with stylists Karen Langley and Shiona Turini, and they were even tried on by Beyoncé's body double in Paris (she was initially to wear them earlier). And then one day, I woke up to the news of her wearing the infinity crystal bodysuit paired with crystal legging boots in Charlotte, North Carolina. Then she wore the Athena sari followed by the Moondust crystal-encrusted orbit gown. These moments are so big, and everything is dependent on so many factors.

You've made some big moves internationally in a short time. What's the journey been like?

We are in a fortunate position to make our brand go global and be a part of history. India and the Indian diaspora market has been our focus for the last 18 years, and they now feel a sense of pride as they see our brand go international or when they

buy from our Paris Couture Week collections. They want to be a part of this movement. The Western audience is now perceiving us as a new global brand, which has had its roots in India since the last two decades.

Why is this the right time for India's version of handcrafted luxury to go international?

The [contemporary fashion] industry is very young; we are only 30 years old. It takes time for an industry to build up to this stage of growth and to establish a network. It's like the wave of Japanese designers in the '90s. From marketing and administration to merchandising and infrastructure, everything has to come together. Along with the socioeconomic development of the country. It's all connected; we can't grow in isolation.

Take us behind the experiences of preparing and showcasing on a world stage like Paris Couture Week.

The first season, our debut, was stressful. We had to carefully build the right team and partnerships. While some things are similar to India, many of the systems and processes are different. It's a more hands-on involvement in the planning and it is both intense and exhilarating. The professionalism and knowledge simply elevates your work.

What have been the big lessons and how has your brand's language evolved as a result?

We have evolved in workmanship and detailing. The more global I go, the more I internalise India in my thought process to put a modern yet knowledgeable foot forward from the country. I am also conscious about adding more soul to my work now. Take the concepts of 'shunya' and 'hiranyagarbha' that the PCW collections have been inspired by. Seeing Korean and Russian bloggers trying to explain them and engage with the concepts is a big cultural win too. Also, all our clothes are made in India by Indian artisans using Indian techniques. There is zardozi in almost every garment but I tend to treat it in a different way.

How do you now strike a balance between what you offer to the Indian and international markets?

We are making nearly ten collections a year, but they do overlap. We showed a more extended version of 'Hiranyagarbha' at India Couture Week with lehengas for the Indian market. But we are also noticing that the Paris pieces are selling in India too. We've had both Indian and Western customers buy the sari worn by Beyoncé. ⁹⁶



Princess Gauravi Kumari and Claire Deroo. *Opposite page, from left:* Lotus quilted table-mats; Kota shirt with Jaipur skirt and beach top; Manju, an artisan, working on a patchwork jacket; a tote bag, all from The PDKF Store

Royal touch

How a twenty-something princess is making heritage crafts Gen-Z forward while supporting the communities that preserve it.
By Rujuta Vaidya

Historically, craft has thrived on the patronage of royalty. In a modern democracy, what happens to those communities? Princess Gauravi Kumari, the granddaughter of the last ruling Maharaja of Jaipur is passionately using her communications degree to promote the crafts of Rajasthan through an elevated, vibrant lens. Glimpses of her life on social media highlight the two worlds she lives in: scenes from almost-romantic heritage sites followed by shots of her coolly posing in PDKF gear.

Championing the craftspeople of Jaipur comes



“Job stability with fair wages for fair work was the need of the hour”

naturally to her, both as an entrepreneur and as a custodian of the Princess Diya Kumari Foundation. “I consider myself fortunate to be able to create, learn and interact with these ladies every day. It almost doesn’t feel like I’m at work because the atmosphere is so cheerful and welcoming,” she says. Here, the princess discusses what it takes to see craft through a refreshed lens.

How did you arrive at the concept for The PDKF Store?

I realised early on that skills and training alone would not be sufficient to bring about the very real change of self-reliance. Financial independence and job stability with fair wages for fair work was the need of the hour. Another realisation that occurred during this time was the need to revive and promote the heritage arts and crafts of our state. As we skilled our women in these crafts, each day we saw more and more closely how difficult it was becoming for people associated with these crafts to keep them alive.

The PDKF Store was born from these realisations—as an effort to help keep these craft traditions alive in more contemporary avatars (to attract a younger, trendier and newer audience) and eventually to create a stable source of work for the women we were training.

What is it like to collaborate with Claire Deroo?

Working with a talented designer like Claire on this project has made the impact of The PDKF Store much greater. I am grateful for that opportunity. I think when you collaborate, you amplify your creative imagination as well as double your productivity and vision. Claire has a great design

sensibility as well as a sense of style and colour. I think our work ethics complement each other, which makes us a strong team.

In many ways, you’re living the fairy-tale girls grew up hearing. What did you, as a princess, wish to achieve from a young age?

Inclusivity. I think that as a princess living a ‘fairy-tale life’ in the eyes of the beholder, while being painted as glamorous, is also quite isolating. You are set aside as someone less real, less relatable than everyone else. And while the perks and privileges of my background are significant—and something I take pride in and which I’m aware of—I cannot stress the need enough for the acceptance of all people. The one thing I found in common with the women I work with at the foundation is the feeling of being left out. Hence, I wanted to create a safe space where everyone is equal and issues, big or small, are addressed openly and by all. That is the impact I wished to make.

What does a day in your life look like?

I sit in my office for the first half of the day and deal with work related to the store such as stocking, buying, branding, social media planning and shoots. After lunch I go to Badal Mahal, the headquarters of the foundation in Jaipur. Afternoons are spent working with the team, interacting with the women and planning our projects and programmes. Evenings are for family and friends.

The only difference here is the time I take out to attend to ceremonial and familial duties at the palace in my role as one of the custodians of the historical and cultural heritage of Jaipur. It gives me great pride to represent and promote this →

FASHION

heritage and sometimes even help preserve it through various platforms.

Apart from financial compensation, how do the craftspeople working with you benefit from The PDKF Store?

Financial compensation is only one part of the benefit they derive from working with the store. A much more far-reaching compensation for them is the satisfaction of seeing the skills they have learnt take shape in the form of the collections we make and stock, and the confidence they derive from watching people buy their creations.

At the store, we have always been conscious about our story and communication representing the people behind the brand—the craftspeople. From our tags to our marketing materials, even to our social media content, it all talks about the people who make the products. This is one of the greatest benefits that our craftspeople derive from the store as their stories are reaching millions of people around the world.

Tell us about the assortment of the store. Were you focused on textile crafts in particular? Will you look at adding more categories in the future?

When planning the inventory at the store, both Claire and I focused on curating a collection that would best showcase the skills that the foundation was training the women of PDKF in. Textile products were initially our widest range since stitching, embroidery, block printing and beadwork were our first few training modules. Another popular range is our heritage stuffed toys collection, as that was born from the traditional craft that the women of our Sawai Madhopur centre specialise in.

However, we have been widening our range as our training modules expand to crafts like blue pottery and paper products.

Talk to us about your style. How do you seamlessly blend Indian ethnic with contemporary fashion?

The crafts of Rajasthan are vibrant and varied. While perceived as largely traditional, they can be blended easily with contemporary design to create modern, comfortable and utilitarian fashion. I think my personal style reflects the same theme: colourful, everyday comfort with an ethnic element running through it.

I like to blend block prints, comfortable materials, traditional embroidery and handcrafted embellishments with modern-day style to create not only utilitarian fashion like dresses, shirts and suits but also lounge wear and vacation wear.




Making Rajasthani crafts contemporary and accessible for a larger audience is the mission behind The PDKF Store

The sari, however, continues to be my favourite formal wear and I feel it has a timeless elegance that can be assimilated in myriad modern ways through different drapes and by mixing it up with halters and other contemporary apparel for a style revamp. That's my style quotient: an amalgamation of the heritage and the contemporary.

India is of great interest in the global landscape of fashion. How do you feel about the unique position we are in?

India has inspired the world through the ages and I am excited with where we are as a nation that boasts such a rich heritage of craft forms. We have a large, young workforce that has had the advantage of a modern education and seamlessly assimilated it with their cultural bringing-up. Our trendsetters have a dual vision and our entrepreneurs are equipped with the best learnings from both worlds in their arsenal. Nothing can stop us.

Around the world, how can craft and the communities surrounding it be conserved?

The main tool that must be implemented to preserve crafts and the communities that relate to them is conscious consumerism. Slow fashion, slow travel, eco-friendly practices, a sense of responsibility towards our planet as a whole, and responsible use of resources are some of the main ways to preserve crafts. 

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Back to your roots

This isn't your grandmother's oil massage that you used to try to escape. Now, beauty brands are modernising what the OG champi oil looks, smells and feels like.
By Avanti Dalal

Every Tuesday and Thursday when I got home from school, it was champi time. I would come home to the smell of warm coconut oil wafting through the air and my mum ready to begin massaging. I would sit cross-legged on the living room floor as she gently massaged my scalp, kneading in all the right places. Afterwards, I would wash out the sticky oil and comb out my shinier, glossier strands.

Then came college. I switched out hair oil for bond-building hair treatments, heat-protection serums and hydrating masks that were far easier to use. They didn't make a mess in my bathroom or need a whole three hours to work, and they smelled better too. Fifteen minutes between class and the gym is all it took—homemade hair oil didn't stand a chance over efficiency.

Fast forward to eight years later. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, after a workout, I decant a pre-packaged hair oil that has all the ingredients my mum added to it (but with a better scent) and





settle in to give myself a champi. It's not as good as when she did it, but the effect on my mood and my hair is still amazing.

AT THE ROOT OF IT

Brands today are not only bringing the OG champi back, they're also making it easy. Champi has been a part of Indian culture for centuries. Historically, it was a ritual performed by mothers and grandmothers, who passed down the knowledge of the perfect hair-oiling technique over generations. The practice was cherished not just for its potential beauty benefits but also for its ability to foster emotional connections within families. Every family had its own signature recipe.

Despite its historical significance and benefits, champi fell out of favour. In the mid-20th century, as Western beauty ideals began to dominate, people began turning to boxed products that were easier to use. Champi was seen as outdated, inefficient and unpleasant. So to bring oiling hair back into focus, brands needed to do more than simply offer traditional oils in a modern package—they had to reimagine the entire experience and make it appealing to a new generation of consumers, especially the diaspora who craved both efficacy and aesthetics. Enter Indewild, Fable & Mane and Ranavat.

PUT DOWN ROOTS


All three brands have been built by Indian-origin founders, with a mission to bring nostalgic rituals to 2023, but without diluting their essence. And consumers are buying into it. When Ranavat launched its Mighty Majesty Fortifying Hair Serum, it had a 3,500-plus person waitlist. Created by Michelle Ranavat, who was struggling with postpartum hair loss, this serum, infused with cold-

pressed amla extract, sunflower oil and jasmine, promises to protect strands from free-radical damage, improve scalp health and prevent breakage, and is a supercharged version of the product she used as a child. "In developing it, I wanted to preserve the traditional champi techniques that I grew up experiencing with my mother and sisters," she says.

Diipa Büller-Khosla, a content creator and the founder of skin-care and haircare brand Indewild, says, "My mother has been an inspiration in my life and was the catalyst for our Champi Hair Oil. In fact, this formulation is grounded in family heritage and, of course, Ayurvedic wisdom that has been handed down from generation to generation." Büller-Khosla, who was born in Delhi and lives between Amsterdam and Mumbai, says that her brand encompasses her two worlds. "This is a recipe that has been fine-tuned over 40 years for optimal results by my mother Sangitha Khosla, an Ayurvedic doctor and dermatologist." The result is a hair oil that boasts 11 active ingredients (like castor oil, hibiscus and brahmi) to leave strands hydrated and healthy. She says that the product is a marriage between tradition and innovation, with the best of clinically-proven Ayurvedic ingredients and effective actives all in one mix. "In a lot of ways, this balance can be seen as an extension of myself, someone who has been raised with respect and admiration for tradition and my Indian heritage whilst also wanting to open myself up to new ways of thinking and innovating."

The same goes for Fable & Mane's founders Akash and Nikita Mehta. "When Akash and I were children, Nani would visit us from India and we'd sit in a hair-oiling train while she massaged our heads with a handcrafted blend of Ayurvedic plants and herbs. Her healing hands would help melt away any stress or anxiety and she'd tell us magical fables of India's rich plant and animal kingdom," says the latter of their brand's origin story.

Their hair oils aren't the pungent, sticky oils of champis past. Instead, Fable & Mane's two pre-wash oils (HoliRoots Hair Oil and SahaScalp Amla Soothing Scalp Serum) are formulated to be super lightweight. But the kicker is the scent: it has been crafted by world-renowned master perfumer François Demachy, the nose of Dior Parfums.

The key to these brands' success lies in their ability to sell nostalgia while embracing modernity, thereby striking a balance between honouring tradition and offering an upgraded version. But how do they do this without whitewashing the concept? By respecting the roots of champi and speaking to those of South Asian heritage while building newer communities. 

From left: Diipa Büller-Khosla, founder of Indewild, with her mother Sangitha; Akash and Nikita Mehta, the co-founders of Fable & Mane; Michelle Ranavat of Ranavat



Scents and sensibility

For a new generation of perfumers, classic Indian tradition married with contemporary notes crafts a fragrant bridge between the past and the present. Naso Profumi is one such brand. By Avanti Dalal

For Astha Suri of Naso, whose lineage in perfume-making dates back to 1952 (she's a fourth-generation perfumer), the past and the present are intertwined. Growing up amidst the aromatic ambience of Lucknow homes, she was particularly enchanted by the scents of rose petal and tuberose. Yet, her contemporary inclinations have led her brand, Naso, to embrace unconventional ingredients you wouldn't normally see in traditional fragrances, such as pepper, tamarind and orange blossom. "The country we live in is so rich with its herbs, spices and minerals. It was a shame coming back home to no home-grown perfume house that was global in nature," she says. So that's exactly what she set out to do.

"I wanted to create Naso as the avenue of ancient Indian crafts. I wanted the traditional methods of perfumery to be brought back into focus," she says. Her goal is two-fold: to relaunch attar, which she deems "the most important sustainable compound in today's perfume market" and to create one-of-a-kind fragrances that pay homage to tradition without looking, feeling or smelling outdated. Attar, an ancient form of perfume, made through the hydro-distillation of flowers, herbs and spices into a base oil, has been a part of Indian culture for millennia. Brands are now rediscovering it not just as a standalone product but also as a base for more complex fragrances. The richness of attar, combined with other notes, can create scents that are both layered and long-lasting. To balance the strong and almost too-potent attar, Suri pairs it with lighter, fresher ingredients like marigold and jasmine. The end result? A wearable fragrance that works well for brunch but will actually last all day.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

From the fragrant sandalwood of Mysuru to the lush tuberose of Tamil Nadu, the country offers an olfactory palette that is both diverse and profound. Local brands like Naso Profumi are tapping into this reservoir, not just for the novelty but also for the depth and complexity these ingredients bring. Suri sources jasmine from Uttarakhand, rose from Uttar Pradesh and saffron from Kashmir. But the actual scents have a more global approach.




Suri wanted to cultivate the wide variety of herbs, spices and minerals in India to create a home-grown fragrance brand



When Naso Profumi launched, its first collection was an ode to an Italian summer. "The first collection at Naso was inspired by Indian herbs and Italian oils. We wanted to bring the two cultures and their love of food together," she confesses. Take Palo Santo E Limoncello, for example. It has notes of cedar, limoncello, mint, palo santo and rose, all of which blend together to create an earthy but ultra-fresh scent that transports you straight to the Sicilian countryside.

BREATHE IT IN

Scents are linked to memory due to the anatomy and physiology of the human brain. The olfactory bulb, which processes smells, is part of the brain's limbic system, an area closely associated with memory and emotion. This proximity means that the pathways of scent and emotion are intertwined. Most modern fragrance brands aim to target this, making fragrances luxurious memory-triggers. "All Naso flavours are made to adhere to the smells you've never smelt before. We pay attention to scents that evoke nostalgia. Next, we imagine the fragrance's composition and align it with these olfactory memories. The process is detailed and deeply intuitive." To put Naso Profumi squarely in 2023 (and beyond), being green has become paramount. "We implement sustainable measures, such as recycling and reusing raw materials, we utilise solar energy for our facilities and harvest rainwater at our distilleries," says Suri. "For a start-up, ensuring a sustainable supply chain is challenging."

So what's next? Luxury that gets a little more accessible. "We are preparing to introduce a sub-entity in our brand structure. As we start to expand into different markets, this will provide a pathway to a notably affordable range of Naso products," says Suri. 

ARMCHAIR TRAVEL

D.S. & Durga crafts evocative scents encapsulating the essence of India in olfactory form. Try 'D.S.' EDP, which is all frangipani, saffron and sandalwood.

Imagine a fragrance with ingredients from Madurai but crafted and reimaged in Grasse. The result is LilaNur. Try 'Malli Insolite' EDP, which boasts the intoxicating scent of jasmine sambac harvested at its peak.

Love your morning chai? Bottle it with Bombay Perfumery's 'Chai Musk' EDP which mingles the smells of hot milk, ginger and citrus.

Byredo is a testament to the confluence of Swedish minimalism and Indian opulence. Try 'Mumbai Noise' EDP for a whiff of amber, davana, agarwood and tonka beans.

Sister act

Siblings Aditi Dugar and Shriya Naheta Wadhwa are changing the way India eats and thinks about food and quality ingredients, one venture at a time. By Sheree Gomes Gupta

PHOTOGRAPHED BY: Sarang Gupta



Aditi Dugar and
her sister, Shriya
Naheta Wadhwa

In the vibrant tapestry of India's culinary landscape, sisters Aditi Dugar—CEO of the Mumbai fine-dining restaurant Masque and director of Urban Gourmet India Pvt Ltd—and Shriya Naheta Wadhwa—the founder of Zama Organics and a certified health coach—are leading a transformative gastronomic journey that is redefining not just the way Indians eat, but also how they perceive and appreciate the indigenous ingredients that the country offers.

For the first time, the well-known restaurateur and her younger sibling—known for her pioneering farm-to-fork venture that is becoming a household staple—speak in an exclusive feature on shared family traditions, their love for local and seasonal produce and the trajectory of their careers.

A FAMILY LEGACY

For Dugar and Naheta Wadhwa, their culinary adventures are deeply rooted in traditions. “Raised in a sprawling joint family, the dining table was more than just a place to eat; it was a stage for celebration. Our diverse dietary preferences and restrictions turned every meal into a production of sorts—the kitchen became a bustling hub, churning out meals for 25 to 30 people from 7am to midnight every single day,” recalls Dugar. The household, being strictly vegetarian, placed a strong emphasis on seasonality.

Naheta Wadhwa, a decade younger than Dugar, didn't enter the kitchen during her early years. “I just enjoyed eating the food being prepared. We had too many cooks in the family anyway,” she says. Her culinary curiosity blossomed during her travels with her sister. “I'm still no chef; the ingredient element is what interests me.”

FROM FINANCE TO FOOD

Dugar's journey into the world of food was a gradual one. She initially pursued a career in finance. “After my second child was born, I decided to become a full-time mum. I also started spending more time with my own mum, who, at the time, had her own cooking classes [eventually leading to their very successful catering business, Sage & Saffron], which further piqued my interest in food,” says Dugar, who refined her baking talents in London at two-Michelin-starred Le Gavroche and La Petite Maison, in addition to training extensively with a street vendor in Thailand, among other stints.

Seven years later, despite initial scepticism from many in the industry, Dugar's vision came to life

with Masque, listed among Asia's top 50 restaurants in 2023. Located in an unconventional spot in a former textile mill, the restaurant thrived, becoming a haven for ingredient-focused cuisine. Masque's tasting menu, offering an innovative dining experience, was one of the few in India. “We continue to travel the length and breadth of the country to find produce—farmed or foraged—and meet with farmers to understand how they cook and eat. We've even had meals in tribal homes,” she adds.


In less than a decade, Dugar's portfolio has grown to include TwentySeven Bakehouse, ARA-KU Coffee and SEESAW, besides several collaborations, with Circle Sixty Nine at Kathiwada City House being among the more prominent ones.

THE BIRTH OF ZAMA ORGANICS

While Dugar was making waves in the culinary world, Naheta Wadhwa found her calling in a different niche. After graduating from the University of Southern California, she returned to Mumbai, where a trip to farms with her sister ignited a passion for organic and healthy food. Struck by the variety and quality of produce available in India, she decided to bridge the gap between consumers and these wholesome ingredients, leading to the creation of Zama Organics in 2018.

“The vision is to inspire consumers to embrace the essence of India within their own kitchens by indulging in the array of organic offerings we provide,” she says. With an impressive selection of over 300 stock keeping units encompassing everything from fresh fruits and vegetables to daily essentials and groceries, the brand is currently thriving in Mumbai, with plans to expand to other cities in the near future.

A FUSION OF TRADITION AND INNOVATION

For both sisters, discovery, conversation and storytelling are the core of their businesses. “We love sourcing stories and ingredients from across India, unearthing hidden culinary treasures and bringing them to the forefront,” says Naheta Wadhwa. Recently, Dugar along with Masque's chef Varun Totlani and the team ventured to the south of Goa where they collaborated with marine biologists to harvest seaweed and explore the potential of this abundant coastal resource, something that is not just novel but unheard of. “In our own small way, we're touching communities in India and bringing their stories to life, not just in India but globally too,” says Aditi. 

“We love sourcing stories and ingredients from across India”

— **SHRIYA NAHETA WADHWA**



What is India eating?

Gauri Devidayal, co-founder of the Food Matters Group, which includes restaurants like The Table and Mag St Cafe, asks some of the movers and shakers in the F&B industry to share what they're most excited about when it comes to the future of food in India

Illustrated by Shawn D'Souza

VANIKA CHOUDHARY
FOUNDER & CHEF AT
MINDFUL COOK PRIVATE
LIMITED



Indigenous cuisine and ingredients coming to the forefront

There are multiple facets about the food in India that excite me. Micro cuisines are slowly taking centre stage. Our food is layered and has so much depth, and chefs and restaurateurs are trying to bring cuisines and ingredients that are pivotal to indigenous communities to the forefront. At Noon, we work closely with indigenous communities, native ingredients and ancestral cooking techniques. Through our food, we strive to preserve and intro-



duce more individuals to ingredients and culinary tales that don't ordinarily make it to fine dining. Our latest menu, Forgotten, Foraged & Fermented, weaves together foraged, wild greens that sprout during the monsoons and uses the preservation techniques advocated by communities across the country to sustain themselves during these wet months.

Women getting their due

Another aspect of food in India that really fills me with joy is to finally see women—who I feel are the true custodians of our culinary heritage—get their due. At Noon, we work with a close-knit community of more than 35 women farmers in the most remote regions of Ladakh. They shelter food recipes and culinary techniques that are decades old and are a veritable encyclopaedia of the indigenous ingredients that grow in and around their hometown. The more time I spend with them, the more I realise how crucial it is to document and preserve their rich culinary wisdom.

Growing awareness of the hyper-local

One more dimension of the Indian food scene that really fascinates me is the growing awareness of hyper-local and lesser-known ingredients amongst people. Indigenous and seasonal ingredients such as kantola (spiny gourd), ambadi (roselle plant), karonda (Christ's thorn) and kasrod (fiddlehead fern) are coming to the forefront and taking the lead. Restaurants across the country are consciously championing these indigenous ingredients in innovative ways and encouraging diners to look beyond the ingredients that are abundantly avail-

able to them. At Noon, we work with foraged ingredients which usually have a short life. From mahua flowers to skotse (wild garlic chives) to kadu kand, we pay homage to them through the alchemy of fermentation.

DEEPINDER GOYAL FOUNDER & CEO, ZOMATO



A buffet of options

Biryani and pizzas, year after year, continue to be the bestsellers on Zomato. Having said that, customers are also experimenting a lot more, and we are seeing tastebuds evolve for sushi, gourmet pizzas and burgers. Even traditional North Indian fare is being modernised by the likes of truffle kulchas, galouti sliders and butter chicken samosas.

Bowls are easy, convenient meals for one

In the top cities, many food brands are adding meals in a bowl to their menus. This is certainly a new trend, particularly near large office complexes. These are typically biryanis, salads and Asian bowls served as meals for one. These customers are also very particular about the entire experience and call out to our team if the food packaging is not sustainable.

Healthy meals are growing

What delights me personally is that more and more customers are also opting for healthy meals. Nearly five percent of our monthly orders are now for healthy food, and this segment is growing steadily.

KUNAL VIJAYAKAR BROADCASTER, YOUTUBER AND FOOD WRITER



Innovation is appreciated

The trend in the last few years within the Indian food space has been to discover local menus and recipes made with indigenous, heirloom ingredients →

and spices—to stick to the basics of Indian flavours while at the same time create lots of excitement around combinations, pairings and presentation.

An evolving palate

I foresee this creativity of excitement around combinations, pairings and presentation as preparing Indians to open up their palate to slightly robustly flavoured global food. Millennials began embracing global foods with a great fondness for cuisines such as Mexican, Italian, Lebanese, Turkish, French and Chinese. Even at home, when it comes to ease of preparation, European and Asian food is easy to cook, which makes it a convenient choice for working people. A recent study also shows that with the evolving Indian palate, one sees the consumption of Western food increasing in Indian households with at least one meal per week. This will also create a growing trend in upscale dining.

DIGANTA CHAKRABORTY HEAD OF BRAND AT THE SOUL COMPANY, A DISCOVERY PLAT- FORM FOR ALL THINGS F&B, ART AND CULTURE



Room for experimentation has soared

In the way we have seen the Indian F&B story develop after the pandemic at The Soul Company, there are many reasons for excitement—from concepts that focus on produce or technique or niche cuisines, to the real mainstream acceptance of Indian cuisine, chefs, and a deeper love and understanding of Indian food outside India too. From my travels across South East Asia to see concepts such as Ahāra with Chef Vikramjit Roy come alive in Singapore, to a concept like Thambi, which brings together Tamil and Korean food finding mainstream acceptance, or even a Mrs Maria and Mr Singh bringing together Indian and Mexican flavours, the room for experimentation has soared because of the acceptance.

Exposure to lesser known cuisines

I believe we will see a lot more lesser-known cuisines across India find a commercial audience both in India and abroad over the next few years. To see

a Jhol in Bangkok finding an audience for an Indian coast-to-coast culinary experience or a Trèsend Studio being the only two Michelin Star restaurant in Dubai, the stories we see emerging with a take on Indian food show that the uni-dimensionality of Indian food is escaping its current perception and we will begin to see layers and far more context with regards to food from home travelling to the rest of the world.

SMITHA MENON INDEPENDENT MUM- BAI-BASED FOOD AND TRAVEL JOURNALIST



The celebration of regional Indian cuisine

When it comes to food in India, I love how genuinely excited we are about regional Indian cuisine, cooking techniques, practices and rituals. This is a huge shift from when I was growing up, when Indian food was only eaten at home. No one really talked about Indian food beyond the realms of the home. Now we're celebrating it on all kinds of national and international platforms. It's not just chefs but diners and travellers too, who are passionate about our culinary heritage and are seeking local experiences to understand and appreciate the treasure trove that is regional Indian cuisine. ॐ





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A fine balance

The beloved Delhi restaurant Indian Accent finally makes it to Mumbai with a space at the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre. Food entrepreneur Sid Mathur talks to its culinary director, Chef Manish Mehtrotra, and Mumbai's head chef Rijul Gulati

In early 2010, I walked into a relatively new restaurant at a cosy boutique hotel in Delhi. It wasn't very busy and we were taken to our table immediately. That restaurant was Indian Accent. Somewhere between the blue cheese naan and the galouti kebab with foie gras and strawberry chilli, I knew it was going to be a game-changer.

India was on the brink of a restaurant and dining revolution that would change the F&B landscape of the country. But then Covid struck, and it's no secret that the hospitality industry was amongst the worst affected during the pandemic. Thankfully, it bounced back. Tables are once again

booked weeks in advance, restaurants are buzzing and new spaces are opening weekly.

But it's only the serious players who can make a real impact on the dining scene. Indian Accent, which has been on the World's 50 Best Restaurant List for nearly a decade, is one of them. After opening in New York as well as expanding with a bigger space in Delhi, it finally launched in Mumbai at the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre.

Here, Manish Mehrotra, the group's culinary director, and Rijul Gulati, the head chef of the Mumbai outpost, talk about culinary influences and inspirations, the chefs and collaborations they'd love to explore, and more.

"Regional culinary differences make Mumbai and Delhi unique

— RIJUL GULATI

Sid Mathur: From Singapore to Melbourne to Dubai, this seems to be the year of pop-ups for Indian Accent. Which of your pop-ups surprised you, and why?

Manish Mehrotra: Every pop-up has different challenges. In Melbourne, you have to do everything from scratch because you cannot carry a single ingredient. In Bengaluru, you are working in a five-star hotel, so the work style is totally different. We did a pop-up with Chef Himanshu [Saini] in Dubai. It was such a proud and happy moment to see him come out of the shadows and spread his wings. The food that he created for our pop-up was unique. Yes, there was a little bit of Indian Accent, but in a completely different way. I think it was one of the best pop-ups for me.

SM: What are differences you've noticed in people's eating habits between Mumbai and Delhi?

Rijul Gulati: The food scene in Mumbai is shaped by its coastal location and cultural diversity, with a

greater emphasis on vegetarian and seafood dishes as compared to landlocked Delhi, where North Indian and Mughlai flavours are dominant. These regional culinary differences make both cities unique, which we try to reflect in our menus too. We have Jain and vegan tasting menus as well as plenty of seafood dishes too, such as crab with XO balchao, baked fish Amritsari masala butter, and tawa salmon to name a few.

SM: Mumbai is the hub of the entertainment industry. Is there any visitor in particular that you were excited to serve?

RG: It is always exciting to serve Bollywood personalities, or any celebrities, but our primary responsibility is to ensure that all our customers have an enjoyable dining experience. We always treat them like any other guest. Though I would say, I am still waiting for Shah Rukh Khan to dine with us. It would be a fanboy moment.

SM: What's next for the team? Are you looking at any other international outposts?

MM: Indian Accent in Mumbai is our focus at the moment. The city is a challenging market. We have

Below, from left: Chef Rijul Gulati, head chef at Indian Accent, Mumbai, with Chef Manish Mehrotra, culinary director, Indian Accent; the Mumbai outpost at the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre. Opposite page: Hundred layer paneer with tamatar chaman and kohlrabi




to make sure that our outpost there is as good as the Delhi one, or even better. About future international outposts, I'm sure when the right opportunity arises, we will look into it.

SM: People may not know how versatile your cooking is and that you started your career as a Pan-Asian chef. Today if you had to create a brand new restaurant, what cuisine would it serve and what would be that one thing that would make it stand apart?

MM: I would like to go back to Pan-Asian cuisine and do my version of Pan-Asian food. Not with

SM: Chef collaborations are popular now, and it's always amazing to see great minds coming together. If you could choose anyone to collaborate with, who would it be?

MM: Collaborations bring fresh perspectives and ideas to the table. When chefs from different backgrounds or regions work together, they combine their expertise and culinary traditions to create innovative dishes, which results in unique experiences for diners. My picks would be Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, as I have grown up watching him on TV and Chef Guillaume Galliot from Caprice for the highest calibre of French tradition and technique. 

How to change the world with your plate

The future is delicious, especially with millets, say India's top chefs.
By Smitha Menon



A delicate earth-brown crisp that artfully curled as it was fried is sitting beside a warm, rose-shaped pumpkin dish in front of me. When I close my eyes and take a bite, it tastes nothing like I expect: I taste crispy dosa and a zingy podi. Ragi crisp, pumpkin is just one of the unique millet experiments on the menu at Mumbai's Ekaa, an ingredient-forward restaurant set in Fort, where chef Niyati Rao and her team blend Indian ingredients with modern kitchen techniques from around the world.

"Most shy away from using ragi and stick to the usual wheat or rice for the crisp," says Rao. "We believe that the organic flavour and crispy texture that millets lend to pumpkin on our menu remain unmatched." Rao is just one of the many chefs around the world who are now experimenting with these planet-friendly grains to bring unexpected flavours like caramel-nuttiness to their menus.

MILLET TO WIN IT

When the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations announced 2023 as the International Year of Millets, it was with the intention of bringing some of our forgotten food back into mainstream conversation while developing a larger market for millets, given their nutritional properties and resilience in adapting to climate change. Since then, millets have emerged as superfoods that are not only rich in fibre, protein and minerals and naturally gluten-free, but also as notably hardy crops that use little water, making them ideal for the future of the planet.

For India, of course, millets have always been a part of our diet: they are some of the earliest cultivated grains in the Indian subcontinent. An archaeological discovery in 2010 from the ancient town of Farmana near Delhi, revealed a recipe for 'proto-curry', a 4,000-year-old recipe that combined millets with ginger, turmeric and aubergine. Millets are mentioned in some of the oldest Indian texts such as the Yajurveda, in which they are identified as 'priyangava' (foxtail millet), 'aanava'

(barnyard millet) and 'shyaamaka' (black finger millet). Over the years, millets have fallen out of favour in our kitchens, but thanks to initiatives like the International Year of Millets, they are finding delicious paths back to our plates.

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

This is not to say that Indian chefs have not been looking to their grandmothers for inspiration prior to 2023. Eight years ago, chef Manu Chandra, who is widely credited with making millets cool again, was the chef and partner at Toast & Tonic. After a conversation with then Minister of Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda about promoting millets, he created a host of dishes such as vegetable kibbeh with foxtail and kodo, ragi and jowar tacos, and ragi crepes stuffed with five-spice shredded duck meat to delight diners in Bengaluru and inspire a generation of chefs to look at millets with fresh eyes. At LUPA, the sprawling restaurant he launched early this year, he uses millet tacos as a wholesome vehicle for roasted shiitake and slow-roasted chermoula cauliflower.

Despite its ever-changing seasonal menus, The Bombay Canteen's barley jowar salad has steadfastly retained its place on the small plates section of the menu for years, owing to its instant popularity ever since it debuted. In 2022, chef Hussain →



Clockwise, from left: Chef Manu Chandra; Chandra's restaurant LUPA in Bengaluru



From left: Chermoula cauliflower and roasted shiitake tacos at LUPA; sesame ice cream

Shahzad experimented with a millet haleem, a rajma stew slow-cooked with millets and barley and topped with puffed millets and crispy lotus root for an extra crunch, served with lamba pao. Just a few months ago, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in New Delhi, spouses of leaders attending the event were served a seven-course lunch menu dreamed up by none other than Indian Accent's Manish Mehrotra, who whipped up delights like pumpkin and coconut shorba, Naga black rice bhel, wild nettle raita and herb jowar rotis for dignitaries to relish. At the restaurant's New Delhi outpost, millets make an appearance on the à la carte menu in the form of millet khichdi, served with tandoori bacon prawns and lentil papad.

A GLOBAL SUPERFOOD

"Anyone with half a brain will be able to tell you that we need to grow foods that indemnify us against climate change. What we're seeing with millets right now is encouraging," explains Chandra. "It might take two decades to see millet consumption and production rise to double digits in India, but the fact that this is now a mainstream conversation is exciting. As long as it's a topic that continues with the same amount of gravitas and seriousness and doesn't become a fad, we're headed in the right direction."

Beyond India's borders too, millets are trickling into conversations and high-end dining menus. At Noma, the award-winning, genre-breaking restaurant in Copenhagen headed by chef René Redzepi, a tapioca and millet dumpling is showered with orange petals from the kitchen garden and served to guests as part of the 18-course tasting menu that showcases vegetable season in the region. At Taiwan's Akame, which featured on 2023's 50 Best

Discovery List earlier this year, Chef Alex Peng spotlights rural Taiwanese cuisine with a contemporary presentation. As a nod to his indigenous roots, he serves handpicked wild vegetables with cheese aged with millet wine (a traditional aboriginal ingredient), roasted peanuts and a half-boiled egg to tame the vegetables' bitterness and create layers of complexity and flavour.

Per Chandra, restaurants can only start the conversation; the real challenge lies in bringing it to life, day after day in our homes. "There's a lot of virtue signalling and guilt these days about what we should and shouldn't eat, but I believe the path to a planet-friendly future is a delicious one," he says. "You don't have to go to a fancy restaurant and ask the server to sprinkle some puffed millets on your salad. I think that if one meal a day is tweaked slightly to incorporate millets, it could make a huge impact in terms of the production and distribution of millets, thus impacting the future of the planet. All it takes is one delicious dish." 🌾

5 millet dishes to try across India's top restaurants

Ragi crisp, pumpkin at Ekaa Mumbai

Barley jowar salad at The Bombay Canteen

Spicy millet and sweet potato burger at Sienna Café, Kolkata

Tomato and millet at Avartana, ITC Grand Chola, Chennai and ITC Royal Bengal, Kolkata

Kodo millet salad at Fig & Maple, New Delhi

* Actual picture of a nook in the master bathroom in Estate de Frangipani, Goa



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Jack of all trades

Food influencer Ayushi Gupta-Mehra, aka @the _ foodiediaris is known for her easy vegetarian recipes. Here, she charts the rise of the humble jackfruit that's becoming a mainstay on plant-based menus globally

Illustrated by Shawn D'Souza

The first time I tried jackfruit was in 2017 aboard a barge near London's Paddington Station. The rustic boat housed a vibrant Australian-style restaurant which was well ahead of the plant-based trend with eclectic dishes starring the unsung heroes of vegan cuisine. I remember the moment being a revelation, centring on a simple curry elevated by a meaty depth of flavours.

Fast-forward to 2023 and jackfruit is now a ubiquitous feature across menus globally as more and more people embrace a plant-forward lifestyle. Of course, in India, the spiky tropical fruit has always held prominence, not just in our cuisine but also as part of Indian culture and history, having been used for everything from medicinal purposes to warding off evil spirits. Today you can order jackfruit ice cream from your local Natural's ice cream parlour or bring home a bag of organic jackfruit flour from a new wave of grocery-oriented start-ups such as Praakritik. The unorganised processing sector along coastal Maharashtra has also given rise to an intriguing assortment of snacks made from jackfruit. Marketeer turned chef Keertida Phadke speaks nostalgically of 'fruit leather' which is commonly available across local vendors in Konkan. Made with dried jackfruit pulp and sugar, this unusual creation is not unlike the fruit roll-ups beloved of our childhood, albeit healthier.

A ZERO-WASTE INGREDIENT

Food historian KT Achaya traces the roots of jackfruit as far back as 3,000 to 6,000 years to Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala. The fruit is still integral to many regions and sustained the local community of Kerala's Kasaragod district in 1941 following a destructive wave of floods. The strength of jackfruit, after all, is in its versatility—it can be prepared in a multitude of ways and in a number of delicious forms. You can cook with raw, ripe or semi-ripe jackfruit, it can be had dried and even used for both sweet and savoury dishes. With a zero-waste approach, even its seeds can be consumed—they can be boiled, roasted or stir-fried into a quick snack with a startling creaminess.

WORTH THE EFFORT

Working with raw jackfruit requires some prep. You will inevitably get your hands messy, given the slimy gum-like sap of its fleshy pulp. Chef Rahul Akerkar's advice is to spread newspapers or paper towels out on the work table and in the tray you're using to collect the cleaned fruit, as it is difficult to later clean the sticky sap off surfaces it comes into contact with. He also suggests applying vegetable oil onto your knife and hands before you start in order to prevent the sap from sticking to them.

Akerkar's familiarity with jackfruit has translated to a repertoire of recipes including a vegetarian riff on La Genovese. His rendition replaces the meat with young, green jackfruit, resulting in a pasta sauce that is just as rich and with a texture that is uncannily similar to the original.

If you're wondering how to integrate jackfruit into daily dishes, here is some more inspiration, followed by Akerkar's recipe for jackfruit genovese. →

Five delicious ways to cook jackfruit

Jackfruit chips: Deep-fry or air-fry thinly sliced jackfruit until crisp and crunchy. This is a snack commonly served with chai or coffee in South India

Jackfruit shake: Blend jackfruit pieces with milk and honey and a handful of ice for a creamy and refreshing drink

BBQ jackfruit sliders: Slow-cook chopped young, green jackfruit with BBQ sauce and seasonings until it simmers down to a texture similar to pulled pork. Sandwich this meatless filling along with heaps of coleslaw between buns for a hearty sandwich

Jackfruit nachos: You could also pile cooked jackfruit over nachos with jalapenos and lashings of melted cheese for a twist on this classic sharing dish

Jackfruit ice cream: All you need is coconut milk, sugar and ripe jackfruit (finely chopped and in puree form) to blitz together a very unique ice cream



CHEF RAHUL AKERKAR'S JACKFRUIT GENOVESE

Ingredients

50ml olive oil
150gm unsalted butter
1,200gm jackfruit flesh
 (cleaned and processed as
 explained on the right)
50gm diced celery
50gm diced carrots
50gm peeled, whole
 garlic cloves
20gm tomato paste
2 bay leaves
200ml white wine
1,800gm sliced white
 onion
1,000gm sliced red onion
15gm chopped marjoram
10gm rosemary leaves
100gm chopped
 kalamata olives
30gm washed and
 drained capers
25gm chopped parsley
50gm grated parmesan
 cheese
 Salt and pepper

Mise-en-place


Cut the jackfruit into chunks and wipe clean the sticky sap that oozes out. Cut each piece further into smaller, more manageable sizes and cut off the leathery, prickly outer skin and discard. You're left with the waxy, yellowish-white fleshy fruit segments with large seeds. If there's excess sap oozing out of the cut jackfruit, continue cleaning it up with a paper towel. Cut off the inner white portion at the top of each segment, remove the seeds and chop the raw jackfruit into thin slices or cubes depending on how you want to use them later. Discard the seeds. Transfer the jackfruit pieces to a bowl with water to prevent to keep them from discolouring and to clear any excess sap.

Method

Heat oil and butter in a large pot over medium heat. Once the butter melts, raise heat to high and add the drained jackfruit flesh to the pot. Season with salt. Cook and stir till the liquid released from the jackfruit begins to evaporate and the pulp caramelises and browns. Reduce heat to medium-high. Add the celery, carrots, garlic cloves, salt and pepper. Cook for about five

minutes stirring often, till the vegetables soften. Add a heaped tablespoon of tomato paste, bay leaves and white wine. Cook and reduce for another 2-3 minutes. Add sliced onions. Reduce heat to medium. Cover pot and cook for 30 minutes without stirring.

After 30 minutes, stir until well mixed. Cover again, and cook for another 30 minutes before stirring again. Reduce heat to low and cook uncovered for 45 minutes to an hour, stirring occasionally. Skim off and discard any fat or froth that comes to the surface as the onion-jackfruit mixture cooks. If the sauce gets too dry, add water or vegetable stock as needed to maintain a thick, sauce-like ragout consistency.

Cook until jackfruit and onions completely combine with each other and are nicely browned. Add the olives and capers, combine well, and then remove from the flame. Add the rosemary and marjoram. Combine and cover the pot, holding warm till the pasta is ready to be served. Boil and cook fettuccine. When the fettuccine is al dente and ready, remove from the water, drain and toss it into a mixing bowl. Add the jackfruit to the pasta and mix. Add parmesan cheese and continue mixing. Serve topped with more parmesan and parsley. 

A full plate

Rohit Khattar has created many well-known restaurant brands. Here, he talks to Priyanka R Khanna about his journey and shares his five tips for success

In 1990, Rohit Khattar founded Old World Hospitality Pvt Ltd, with his first restaurant Chor Bizarre in New Delhi. A few years later, the restaurant found its way to London, where it remained, for many years, a must-visit for Indian cuisine. Today, he has under his patronage two of the country's most-talked about spaces. In 2009, he created the Indian Accent concept with outposts in Delhi, New York and Mumbai. In 2022, he opened doors to Hosa Goa. Here's more:

You are involved in both Hosa and Indian Accent. What do you believe is the USP of each?

Indian Accent is widely regarded as the world's premier modern Indian restaurant that remains faithful to Indian flavours but weaves them imaginatively to create dishes that are precedent-shattering. Its USP is largely its unconventional approach to contemporary Indian food, which infuses nostalgia to create a memorable fine-dining experience. I created the Indian Accent concept in 2009. It took a couple of years for people to understand what we were doing, and for it to become the pioneering restaurant for inventive Indian cuisine. Fourteen years later, it is still at the forefront.

Hosa means 'new' in Kannada. With this restaurant, we wanted to go beyond familiar dishes from South India to create a slightly more approachable and contemporary interpretation of the cuisine. The USP lies in presenting dishes that are unique but which at the same time retain their authentic flavours. Since Indian Accent is our best-known brand, people end up comparing Hosa to it, which is unfair since it is at one-third the price point and caters to its own demographic.

Where can we see outposts next?

Restaurants at the price level of Indian Accent can only open in a few major world cities (including Delhi and Mumbai) while Hosa is a much more casual, approachable brand, more like our other restaurant Comorin, which speaks to people from all walks of life and has a greater rollout potential.



ROHIT'S 5 TIPS FOR SUCCESS

PASSION AND PATIENCE to keep going, and following your heart in whatever you do. In this industry, there are no shortcuts


PUT IN THE HARD WORK. There is no room for complacency in the hospitality business. You have to be on top of your game at all times

TRY AND TRY AGAIN. We go through many trials and tweak things along the way before finalising anything.

COLLABORATE with your colleagues as they may offer different ways of looking at a particular concept

SWEAT OUT THE DETAILS. It's my favourite sentence right now to our ever-expanding breed of managers

What do you think it takes for a restaurant to make a mark in this crowded industry.

If one creates a concept and stays true to it, any restaurant can succeed. However, in this competitive landscape, all ingredients need to score at least a nine out of ten—design (ambience, vibe and buzz), food (quality and pricing), service (warmth and efficiency). And be backed by dollops of luck. 



Southern spice

An inside look at Hosa, one of Goa's hottest restaurants. By Pri Shewakramani

The transformation of Goa's food scene over the past decade has been nothing short of remarkable. A mere ten years ago, dining in Goa outside of five-star hotels conjured images of charming beach shacks and a few open-air eateries. The very notion of fine-dining was alien to Goa's culinary landscape. Today, Goa has unquestionably emerged as a culinary hub, solidified by the noteworthy achievement that seven of *Condé Nast Traveller's* Top 50 restaurants in India are here.

New restaurants are cropping up at a fast pace, driven by locals, digital nomads who moved here during the pandemic and restaurateurs from metropolitan cities who have recognised the untapped potential of Goa. EHV International, the compa-

ny renowned for Indian Accent, recently opened a contemporary South Indian restaurant, Hosa, in Siolim. Hosa, meaning 'new' in Kannada, is housed inside a restored Portuguese villa with St Anthony's church on one side and the Chapora River on the other.

Chef Suresh DC, brand chef of Hosa, started his career in Bengaluru and then moved to Thailand to hone his skills amongst world-class chefs. A chance meeting with the chairman of EHV International led to the perfect match for Hosa. Here, we speak to Chef Suresh to discover his approach to South Indian cuisine, the importance of inventiveness in cooking and his favourite places to eat in Goa.

What is the philosophy behind the food at Hosa?

My culinary philosophy has always been to elevate the essence of South Indian gastronomy, making it accessible to a wider audience. I'm committed to pushing the boundaries of innovation, ensuring that our cherished flavours not only endure but

also evolve with changing tastes and preferences. Our approach is rooted in simplicity and freshness, maintaining the authenticity of traditional recipes while also rekindling age-old culinary traditions.

What are your favourite items on the menu?

One dish that stands out is the curry leaf cured snapper. The inspiration for this creative masterpiece struck me during one of my trips to Mangaluru, where sol kadhi is a beloved part of Western coastal Indian cuisine. With Goa's abundance of fresh seafood, I decided to pair the sweet and acidic notes of kokum with snapper. The result is a delightful dish where the snapper, cured with curry leaf podi and sea salt, is presented in a pool of beautifully mauve-hued kokum and curry-leaf oil rassa.

Why does the drinks menu have an AM to PM concept?

Varun Sharma, the mastermind behind the award-winning bar at EHV's Comorin, also leads the beverage programme at Hosa. His vision was to craft a cocktail menu that caters to various times of the day, progressing in ascending order of potency. We've maintained our focus on using locally sourced ingredients with a South Indian twist, resulting in unique cocktails like Soul Kadhi (with tequila, kokum, coconut and paan) and Rasam Mary (infused with tomato, tamarind, mustard seed, curry leaf and chilli).

What do you love most about the interiors at Hosa?

As you step inside, you'll find our grand bar, the centrepiece of the establishment, with a breathtaking triple-height ceiling. To the left, there's a captivating private dining room adorned with a permanent exhibition by Rohit Chawla, paying tribute to the legendary artist Raja Ravi Varma. The patio, which exudes an old-world charm, is especially delightful during winter months.

Tell us about the art on the walls at Hosa.

The idea is for Hosa to also function as an art exhibition space. In recognition of our cherished 100-year-old Goan bungalow, we've recently inaugurated a new exhibition titled *Over A Hundred Summers* that is curated by Samira Sheth of Work of Art, Goa. It showcases the remarkable works of Goan artists such as Dr Subodh Kerkar, Shripad Gurav, Siddharth Kerkar and photographer Ulka Chauhan.

The artists involved in this exhibition have taken on the task of exploring various aspects of Goan



"I'm committed to pushing the boundaries of innovation, ensuring that our cherished flavours not only endure but also evolve"

architecture, particularly the vernacular expressions of homes constructed during the colonial era. Through a diverse range of mediums such as paintings, photographs and works in graphite, wood and copper, these artworks aim to capture the timeless beauty and character of Goa's historic homes, which have played an integral role in shaping the vibrant landscape of the region.

Which are your favourite places to eat in Goa?

When I'm in the mood for authentic Goan cuisine, my go-to spot is Avos Kitchen in Assagao. The restaurant has a beautiful ambience, making it the perfect place to unwind. Another hidden gem I recommend is Durga Mess, a charming family-run eatery renowned for its Goan thali and seafood dishes. For late-night relaxation, I often find myself at Cajy Bar in Arpora, where I can indulge in good Goan food, enjoy great music and soak in the vibe. 🍷



Tactile tales

Jasreen Mayal Khanna rounds up five activities with kids that go beyond the beach, deepen their curiosity and teach them independence and resourcefulness

FARMING AT EDRICIA FARM

Tanya Carvalho Fernandes runs The Space on her organic farm located in Siolim, where she offers gardening, art, pottery and aerial yoga classes for adults and children. The story goes that she converted her dairy farm to an organic vegetable farm in 2018 and began supplying fruits and vegetables to locals and restaurants. When some clients saw her verdant plot, they requested that she teach their little ones to garden. That's how she started teaching farming classes where kids learn how to grow their own vegetables and understand the seasonality of produce. She makes children weed, plant, sow, harvest and water their own vegetables so they can learn to garden independently. She's also roped in experts to teach yoga and clay moulding and has recently started offering a palm-weaving class, which is reviving the traditional art in Goa and is popular among kids. @thespace1517

Children immerse themselves in activities at Edricia Farm, from gardening to pottery

Goa has always been a child-friendly destination thanks to its seaside location, but most families tend to spend their time building sandcastles or splashing around in the pool. Now, a few professionals are running fun and unusual classes and activities that promise to excite and engage your little ones. We've picked five spots that will get your kids to use their hands in creative ways. Activities such as therapeutic finger-painting, working on an organic farm and making your own museum souvenirs are going to make you popular with the kiddie crowd. And for all you know, you'll end up enjoying them more than the children do.





The Gallery Space inside the Museum of Goa

MUSEUM OF GOA

A museum is certainly not the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of Goa, but you'll be pleasantly surprised by the Museum of Goa located at Pilerne Industrial Estate. Far from boring your children, this institution will captivate their imagination with artworks themed around everyday Goan life as well as the sea and its inhabitants. From swaying boats to light-up merlions, hanging chillies and sculptures made of mussels and clams, the collection here has a playful quality to it. The museum was founded by the artist Subodh Kerkar and houses art from his family. Plan for a two-hour visit because in addition to the three-floor gallery space, there's a documentary room, infinity-mirror corner and a sculpture garden with an adjoining cafe, as well as a wonderful gift shop with art, curios and a selection of children's books. On the top floor, kids can also select marine-themed ceramic souvenirs (fish, conches, ships) and paint them. → Museumofgoa.com

PAINTING PARTY GOA

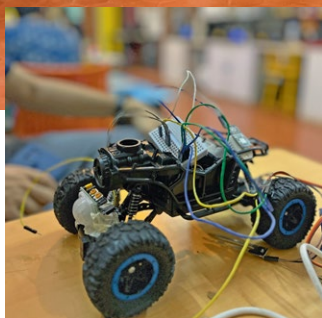
Surabhi Janardhanan is passionate about making art accessible to everyone, so she started holding paint-and-sip parties for baby showers and birthdays in 2019. Now she has a studio in Aldona where she hosts weekend art classes for adults and kids and does private set-ups for groups celebrating milestone events. She conducts painting workshops at Neighbors cafe in Assagao. She specialises in therapeutic art such as finger-painting, where there are no brushes involved, coffee-painting for children older than eight and sand art which is popular with the little ones. She does themed workshops such as making Christmas trees and snowmen in December. Her most popular themed class is Starry Night By The Lake, which her pupils often compare to a kind of meditation. Janardhanan likes to take a well-known painting and break it down so that anyone is able to attempt recreating it—and more importantly, enjoy themselves while doing so. Her approach is customised as per the group, so for instance, with younger kids, the class is more about art exploration than completing a canvas. Her personal favourite is when she teaches multigenerational families as private groups with everyone from grandparents to parents to babies making different variations of the same art.

@paintingpartygoa



Children and adults dive in to Painting Party Goa's classes



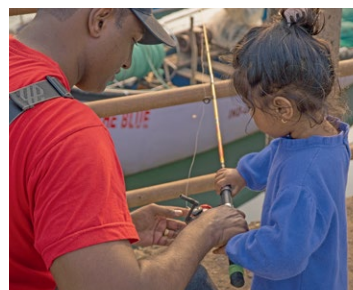


With facilities such as 3D printers, drones and virtual reality headsets, Maker's Asylum is dedicated to help artists, designers and engineers experiment, innovate and collaborate


MAKER'S ASYLUM

This community lab began in Bandra, Mumbai in 2013 and moved to Moira at the start of the pandemic. With facilities such as 3D printers, drones and virtual reality headsets, the space is dedicated to help artists, designers and engineers experiment, innovate and collaborate. Its educational workshops and community solution projects are age-agnostic, but it also has a few programmes and workshops for preteens and teenagers interested in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) careers. Its innovation school for kids aged 13 and up is a hybrid online-classroom programme culminating in a weeklong residency where children work on their own projects. Shorter week-long workshops in woodwork, art and design, digital fabrication and 3D printing are on offer throughout the year as are summer and winter Maker's camps.

Makersasylum.com; [@makersasylum](https://www.instagram.com/makersasylum)



THE GOAN FRIEND

This adventure company wants to make the outdoors accessible to all groups: little kids, teenagers, adults, even senior citizens. So it's the perfect pick for a family activity. Its team comprises local, likeminded experts in numerous fields ranging from wildlife conservation to marine biology. Don't miss the chance to go tide-pooling with a marine biologist and discover amazing crustaceans and other sea creatures during low tide. Its most popular activity is fishing and it offers catch-and-release shore fishing, yacht fishing expeditions, spin fishing and sea fishing trips in South Goa. You can also sign up for camping, outdoor cookouts, clam catch-and-cook or go crabbing and learn how to cook authentic crab xacuti. 

Thegoanfriend.com; [@thegoanfriend](https://www.instagram.com/thegoanfriend)



The Goan Friend, whose team comprises local experts across fields and disciplines, wants to make the outdoors accessible to everyone

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Family ties

When it comes to travel, immersive experiences always come up trumps. And in a country like India, where heritage and tradition fold into the mix, you have a winning formula. We speak to a new generation of hoteliers who are providing travellers more than just a place to stay. By Pri Shewakramani



Clockwise, from above: Boating at Ahilya Fort, Maheshwar; the loom workers of REHWA

YESHWANTRAO HOLKAR

PARTNER, AHILYA FORT, MAHESHWAR

Yeshwantrao works alongside his father, Prince Richard Holkar, who transformed their ancestral home (originally built by Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar in the 1700s) into a luxurious hotel in the year 2000. “The traditions and programmes that Maharani Ahilya began in terms of Maheshwari handloom weaving and employing artisans are very much part of the ethos today,” emphasises Yeshwant. In addition to carrying on Ahilyabai’s legacy, Richard founded the Holkar Cultural Centre which documents and holds cultural programmes highlighting the rich legacy of the Holkar family.

Must do: “One of the most magical experiences is visiting the southwestern turret, which has a beautiful view of the sunset. The sun goes down behind the Narmada and behind Baneshwar Temple, a sacred temple in the middle of the



river, believed to be the centre of the universe. Next, walk down to Rehwa Society and listen to the sound of the looms as you walk amongst the weavers and watch them create beautiful textiles. Once you understand the amount of effort, care and tradition that goes into each textile, you find a new appreciation towards what those pieces of art mean.”

Insider tip: “From a local cuisine perspective, try the ambadi (leaves of the Roselle plant) bhaji, a typical dish of the Nimad that is only available during the winter.”



HUSNA-TARA PRAKASH

FOUNDER, GLENBURN TEA ESTATE & BOUTIQUE HOTEL, DARJEELING

Glenburn Tea Estate was established by a Scottish tea company in 1859 and later found its way into the hands of the Prakash family. Husna-Tara and her husband Anshuman Prakash opened up the estate in 2002 by restoring four bedrooms and reimagining it into a truly distinctive experience for guests. Today, the property has grown to eight rooms spread across two charming bungalows where antique furniture seamlessly blends with modern amenities. “We have created a model where guests can live the grand life of a tea planter and discover why it takes a population of over a thousand workers and 1,600 acres of land to produce their morning cuppa,” Husna-Tara says.

Must do: “Hike to the Glenburn Lodge campsite located four hours from the estate. Along the way, you will be treated to spectacular views of the hill station of Kalimpong and the river Rangeet, which flows through the valley below. Following a barbecue lunch, trek to the Manjitar suspension bridge. This spectacular structure was built by the British in 1902, after the original cane bridge was washed away by the floods of 1899. About 200 feet across and at least 100 feet above the river, crossing this footbridge is an adventure in itself.”

Insider tip: “Immerse yourself in the local tea culture and Nepali community. Explore tea-making from bud to cup, visit local schools and tuck into local cuisine. Try my favourite dish, tea-leaf pakoras—fresh tea leaves from the tea fields are dipped in a tempura batter and lightly fried to perfection.” →



Clockwise, from top left: The front veranda of the Burra Bungalow; tea pickers at work in the lush fields; the drawing room of the Glenburn Penthouse



Left, from top: Stok Palace in Ladakh; dining on the ramparts; the queen's bedroom



RAJA JIGMED NAMGYAL

OWNER, STOK PALACE HERITAGE HOTEL

Stok Palace was built in 1820 by King Tsepal Namgyal and continues to be the home of the Namgyal family. Jigmed Namgyal opened six rooms in the property to the public in 1980. "The craftsmanship and architecture of the palace is extremely unique along with the murals that adorn the walls," says Namgyal, whose commitment to preserving the heritage of Ladakh and the royal family led to the establishment of the Stok Palace Museum. The museum serves as a cultural repository, offering visitors a glimpse into the rich history and traditions of Ladakh through a stunning collection of ancient relics.

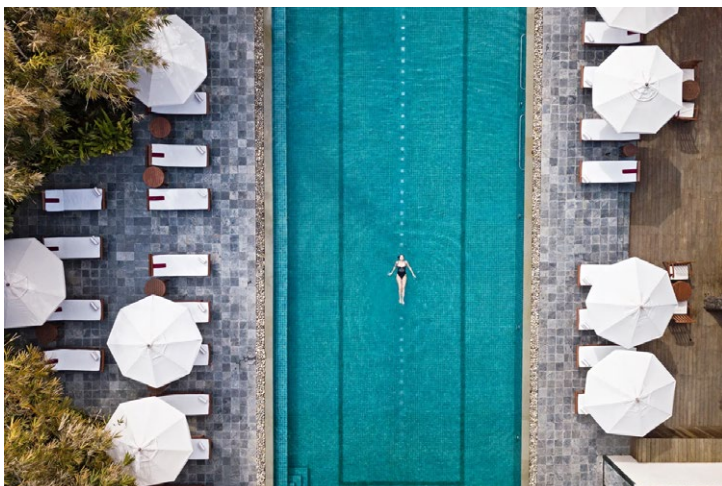


Must do: "One of the most enchanting times of the year in Ladakh is during the Hemis Festival, traditionally celebrated in June. The festival commemorates the birth of Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism. During the festival, the resident monks of Hemis Monastery come together to perform sacred mask dances known as cham. Additionally, giant thangkas, or Buddhist paintings, are ceremoniously unfurled for the public to see."

Insider tip: "Embark on a visit to the private Buddhist temple within the property with a resident monk. It's a spiritual journey like no other."

Below: Rohet Garh, Jodhpur; the hotel's terrace with its breathtaking views of the lake; the Garden View suite






The pool at Ananda in the Himalayas, Rishikesh.
Below: A bird's-eye view of the property

AASHICA KHANNA

DIRECTOR, ANANDA IN THE HIMALAYAS, RISHIKESH

The Ananda Palace Estate, sprawling across 100 acres with a stunning view of the Ganga, was once the property of the Maharaja of Tehri Garhwal. Ashok Khanna, Aashica's father, conceived the idea of a wellness resort rooted in yoga, Ayurveda and Vedanta principles, finding the estate to be the perfect canvas for this transformative vision. Aashica, who oversees operations and business development at Ananda, says, "For centuries in Indian culture, this region has been renowned for its healing attributes, as well as its profound peace and spiritual significance. These qualities form the very essence of what Ananda represents today. Moreover, the palace itself contributes a significant physical and historical dimension to the experience."

Must do: "Ananda, known for its unique integrative approach towards holistic wellbeing, is possibly the only place in the world that integrates Ayurveda, yoga, Vedanta, Chinese medicine, physiotherapy, western healing traditions and emotional healing. Engage in our comprehensive wellness programme that brings together all these modalities. Additionally, visit the nearby Kunjapuri Temple, one of the most revered Shakti Peeths dedicated to the goddess Shakti, which has stunning views of the Himalayas and palpable spiritual energy."

Insider tip: "Visit the private abode of the spiritual guru Ma Anandamayi for meditation. It's a special experience." 



KUNWAR AVIJIT SINGH

DIRECTOR, ROHET GARH, JODHPUR

The Rohet Garh fort and castle have been the Singh family's home since 1622. Originally, most of the fort functioned as an administrative centre. In 1990, the family decided to transform one of the buildings within the complex into a hotel. "We then chose to set ourselves apart by prioritising guests' experiences," says Singh. This led to pioneering the concept of village safaris, providing travellers with the unique opportunity to delve into the customs and traditions of the Bishnois, the tribal community that resides in this region. The Bishnois also have a special relationship with nature, including the blackbuck antelope, which can be spotted during the village safari.

Must do: "Rohet Garh is renowned for its stable of Marwari horses. The riding experience can be tailored, ranging from a few hours to several days. The picturesque terrain surrounding Rohet Garh offers ideal riding conditions, allowing guests to explore various villages and encounter a diverse array of birds and antelope species."

Insider tip: "While many plan their visits to Rajasthan during Holi, only a handful are privy to the Gangaur festival, which takes place a few weeks after. It pays tribute to the celestial union of Lord Shiva and his divine consort, Parvati."



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Our Top 5 International Jewels and Their Inimitable Auras



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For the worldly wanderer with an insatiable thirst for extravagance, here are the top 5 Lohono international destinations, each shrouded in an aura of exquisite grandeur.

1. VILLA TAMAN AHIMSA, BALI

Enter the realm of pure enchantment at Villa Taman Ahimsa, where tranquility and elegance intertwine. Traditional materials enhance the breathtaking natural environment, and Indonesian artifacts adorn the interiors. Surrender your senses to the culinary artistry of the villa's skilled chef. Villa Taman Ahimsa is an experience etched in Bali's enduring charm.

Vibe check: Elegance Beyond Words: A Garden of Peace



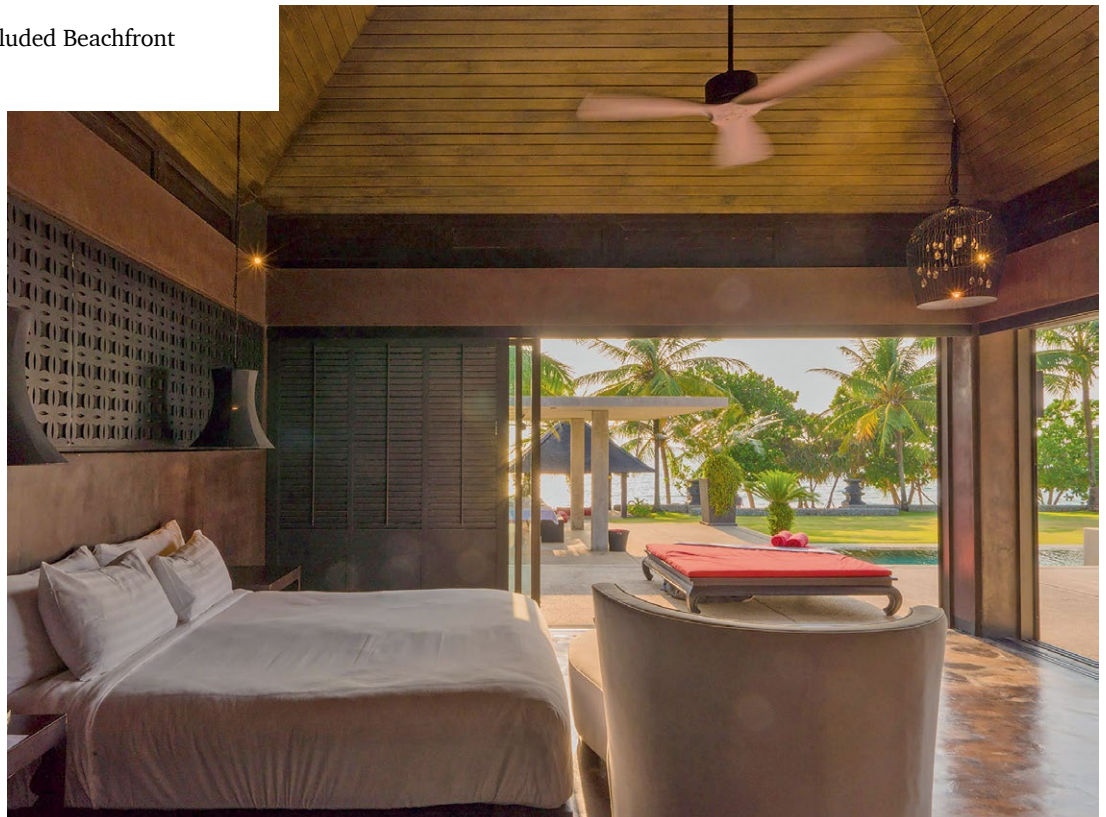


2. VILLA SAANTI, PHUKET

Villa Saanti, nestled on a clandestine stretch of powdery white sand, epitomizes beachfront opulence. Six ensuite bedrooms, luxurious living spaces, and captivating pools await. Villa Saanti is where memories are made, and secrets of Natai Beach are unveiled.

Clockwise, from above: View of Bali's southwest coast from the villa; Bird's-eye view of Villa Saanti overlooking the Natai beach; Master suite seamlessly blending indoor-outdoor living; The pool at Taman Ahimsa

Vibe check: A Secluded Beachfront Sanctuary





Clockwise from above:
Infinity pool at The Amilla
Villa Estate overlooking the
beach; one of the many
al-fresco dining areas;
Bird's-eye view of the
property

3. THE AMILLA VILLA ESTATE, MALDIVES

The Amilla Villa Estate graces the Maldives' coral-fringed paradise. Crystal lagoons, private pools, and sophisticated living spaces redefine luxury. Explore Amilla Fushi resort's world-class amenities. Paradise, as Kate Moss says, is here.

Vibe check: Where Paradise Meets Luxury



4. OCEAN'S EDGE, SRI LANKA

Ocean's Edge offers colonial-inspired charm on Sri Lanka's serene south coast. A lush garden, a tranquil pool, and spacious living areas create an oasis of comfort. Explore deserted beaches and let nature's embrace envelop you.

Vibe check: Seclusion by the Sea




Clockwise from above:
View from Tawantok Beach Villa, Koh Samui;
The pool at Oceans edge; *Below:* A bird's-eye view of the property



5. VILLA TAWANTOK BEACH, KOH SAMUI

Tawantok Beach Villa 1, an exquisite beachfront gem, welcomes up to 10 cherished guests. Infinity-edge pools, inviting dining spaces, and masterful design await. Memories are etched in the sands of Lipa Noi Beach.

Vibe check: A Beachfront Rarity

At Lohono Stays, we invite you to explore these extraordinary destinations, each with its own unique aura—an ensemble of opulence and serenity awaiting your presence. It's time to embark on a luxury odyssey that transcends boundaries, redefining your perception of travel. 



Indian Luxury Travel for the Global Wanderer

Top 5 Lohono Destinations and the Unique Vibes They Offer

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1. SRINIVAS - THE ROYAL RESIDENCE, JAIPUR

Persona: Regal Rajasthan

Above: Bathroom of the Royal Tikka Sahib Room at Srinivas - The Royal Residence, Jaipur

Step into the realm of regal living amid the rich heritage and grand palaces of the Pink City, Jaipur. Srinivas Royal Residence, the erstwhile

private residence of a royal family of Jodhpur, welcomes you with pink sandstone walls, jaali windows, and dome Ghumtis, immersing you in a universe of grandeur, heritage, and art. Each of its six cozy bedrooms features elegant Rajasthani furniture, Kali Ghero paintings, Jodhpur stone-work, and terrazzo floors, reflecting the cultural legacy of its erstwhile royal members.

Immerse yourself in Rajasthan's rich heritage through tailor-made experiences with Lohono, from performances by the Manganiyars and Langa to yoga, meditation, and spa treatments amidst the Aravalli Hills. Srinivas also hosts breathtaking weddings that seamlessly blend tradition and luxury, making it an ideal venue for your dream celebration.

2. AVALON DOMES, KANATAL

Persona: Himalayan Serenity

Perched high in the Queen of hills, Mussoorie, Avalon Domes is a heavenly abode that offers tranquility far away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Surrounded by lush green mountains and crisp, fresh air, this secluded retreat allows you to unwind in style. Each cozy dome seamlessly blends with the natural landscape, providing a warm and inviting atmosphere.

Wake up to the soft sounds of nature and soak in panoramic views of the hills from the comfort of your dome. At Avalon Domes, we create a relaxing environment that allows you to reconnect with the natural world, embracing pure bliss.



Above: View from the domes; Bird's-eye view of the dome-shaped structures nestled amidst the Kanatal mountains.
Below: Perched high, The Ray in Alibaug overlooking the entirety of this enchanting coastal haven

3. THE RAY, ALIBAUG

Persona: Balinese Paradise, hours from Mumbai city...



Discover the spirit of Bali in Alibaug at The Ray, an oasis of luxury and natural beauty. This east-facing villa, named after the Manta Rays in the Arabian Sea, offers a unique experience where spaces seamlessly blend into each other. The villa features a mosaic manta ray, floor-to-ceiling windows, a glistening pool, and a well-manicured garden. Decorated with natural materials like stone walls, sand, and tropical foliage, The Ray is full of mysteries waiting to be explored.

Enjoy the infinity pool, secret doorways, lounge area, and bar, all while surrounded by the warm embrace of nature. The Ray also serves as a splendid venue for soirées and other events, creating unforgettable moments of celebration.

4. THE HOMESTEAD, JIM CORBETT

Persona: Wild Tranquility

For the thrill of forest living and the tranquility of nature, The Homestead is your gateway to the Jim Corbett National Park. Located within India's oldest tiger reserve, this picturesque resort offers a calm getaway spread across 170 acres of land. The living areas are inspired by local flora and fauna, and the 12 bedrooms bring the outdoors in with leafy decorations. Enjoy activities such as guided stargazing, bird-watching, archery, and paragliding, or simply unwind by the poolside, under the trees, or in the Jacuzzi. The Homestead promises an unforgettable getaway amidst wild natural beauty. It also serves as a perfect setting for private celebrations and corporate events, where the tranquility of the surroundings enhances the experience.



Top to bottom: The Fleet: go-karts, ATV bikes, buggies, golf karts, and the glider – all part of the Homestead experience; Treehouse at the property; The Golf course



Above: The outdoors of our Portuguese marvel in Goa, Estate De Frangipani
Below: The chic master suite of Estate De Frangipani


5. ESTATE DE FRANGIPANI, GOA

Persona: Portuguese Elegance

Embrace the chic and luxurious lifestyle at Estate De Frangipani in Goa. Influenced by Portuguese architecture, this stunning estate blends awe-inspiring grandeur with natural beauty. Sweeping arches, muted earthy tones, and plush furnishings adorn the interiors. Outdoors, the expansive lawn, yoga deck, glasshouse, and swimming pool offer a picturesque setting against the lush backdrop of Assagaon fields. With double-height ceilings, chic living rooms, and four ensuite bedrooms, this estate provides the perfect setting for relaxation and celebration. Pop a bottle of champagne on the terrace at sunset and experience luxury at its finest.

Estate De Frangipani is the perfect canvas for soirées, weddings, and other events that require a touch of elegance and natural beauty.



At Lohono Stays, our homes are handcrafted for the A-class traveler, offering a unique blend of luxury, sophistication, and the perfect backdrop for curated celebrations. It's time to live the Lohono life and embark on a journey that redefines your perception of luxury travel and event experiences. 



PHOTOGRAPHED BY: Hashim Badani

TURNING POINT

This fifth anniversary edition of *Isprava Insider* is dedicated to handcrafted luxury. And in these pages, we've celebrated the beauty of craft, tradition and techniques that date back centuries.

It seems apt to close this issue with a tribute to the people who make magic with their hands every day. Intrepid photographer Hashim Badani, whose work has been featured in publications globally, is recognised for his documentary style of photography that spans travel, food, fashion and culture. Here, he shares some of the images he took of the women who make up the Rehwa Society in Maheshwar and his experience shooting this photo tribute.

"The idea behind the Rehwa Society, which was set up in 1978 on the banks of the Narmada, is twofold—to empower local women (and thereby the community) and to protect the heritage and culture of the region. The Rehwa Society encourages the Maheshwari style of weaving—intricate, fine and complex—that produces some of the most delicate and beautiful saris in the country. Meeting these women was an experience like no other. Spending time in their space, seeing the community they've built, witnessing the collaborative atmosphere and telling their stories has been a privilege. Each sari celebrates the beauty of 'made by hand', which, to me, is the truest definition of luxury. These artisans and so many like them make up the fabric of our culture", he says. १६



