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DESIGN DIARY

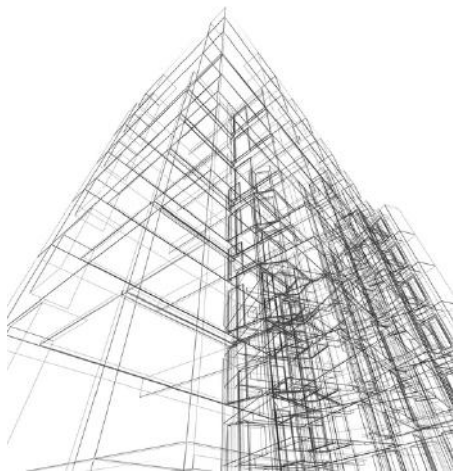
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DESIGN DIARY

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Founder's Note

Every magazine has a first step. For Design Diary International, this is ours — and we wanted it to feel like opening a door. Not the ordinary doors we pass through each day, but those ancient portals carved from wood and brass, the kind that make you pause before you enter. In this issue, doors become storytellers, holding centuries of craft and memory in their weight.

We carry that spirit of storytelling into other journeys too — through India's temple treasures like Meenakshi Temple and Konark, where architecture is not only stone but devotion, geometry, and living heritage. We celebrate Surabhi's Chitrakari, a brand that reimagines Indian artistry for today, proving that tradition is not a relic but a language still alive.

And because design is also about looking outward, we travel across borders. You'll meet Enzo Catellani, founder of Catellani & Smith, whose lights are less products than constellations — bending, reflecting, and reinventing the way we see space. We also bring you the season's international launches, objects that remind us how imagination continues to shape the everyday.

This first issue is a weaving together: temples and thresholds, global masters and homegrown brands, memory and innovation. It is our way of saying that design does not belong to one time or place. It flows, like light through a lamp, like pattern through a carved door, like music through stone corridors. As we step into this new chapter, I invite you to read not just with your eyes but with your senses. Feel the weight of a temple's silence, the glow of a handmade lamp, the rhythm of a door closing behind you. That is design — not just what you see, but what stays with you.



(Founder- Design Diary)

DECOR

FURNITURE

ART

DESIGNER

PROJECT

BRAND PROFILE



IN THE FRAME

NE@T eco and Eidos Pro

Two Paths, One Shared Vision for the Modern Office

The workplace has changed. What was once a grid of identical desks now feels more like a living organism, shaped by the way people interact, pause, focus, or share ideas. The desk, in particular, is no longer a neutral slab but a tool that influences how we think, move, and connect.

Newform Ufficio has been watching this shift closely. Their answer comes in two directions—NE@T eco, created with Progetto CMR, and Eidos Pro, designed for the hybrid rhythm of today's office. Different in character, yet both carry a similar intent: to make the office less rigid, more human, and much more responsive to daily life.

NE@T eco leans towards openness. Its design borrows from desk-sharing culture, stripping away barriers so that the workstation doubles as a meeting ground. Colleagues can drift into conversation without the awkwardness of walls or partitions. Sizes vary, legs come in either wood or metal, and every choice hints at flexibility. What stands out most, though, is the attention to comfort—stations built to support posture and prevent the slump that long hours bring.

Eidos Pro takes the opposite angle. Here, the individual is at the centre. Its defining gesture is the height-adjustable surface, shifting smoothly from 62 to 128 cm, whether by manual or electric control. This simple feature transforms the desk into something far more generous—it adapts to mood, energy, or need. Sit, stand, lean, return again. The design respects the stop-and-go rhythm of a working day while keeping the space clean, orderly, and focused.

Put side by side, the two systems read like siblings: one extroverted, eager to spark collaboration, the other introspective, built for focus and personal flow. Together, they sketch a vision of the modern office not as a fixed landscape but as a flexible ecosystem.

With NE@T eco and Eidos Pro, Newform Ufficio suggests a quiet truth: the freedom to choose how we work is as important as the work itself.





Simply Sofas



Orange Tree



Nismaaya



Anemos



Magari



Objectry



Shivan and Narresh



Home Centre



India Circus

IAAH



Pottery Barn



Ellementry



Furniturewalla



BLUEPRINTS

Zephyr by Studio Nilasha: A Serene Blend of Texture, Tone, and Timelessness

Project name: Zephyr
Design firm: Studio Nilasha
Area (in sqft): 3,000 sq.ft
Location: Filmnagar, Hyderabad
Principal Designer/s: Nilasha
Photographer: [Talib Chitalwala](#)
Styling: [Samir Wadekar](#)

Nilasha, the originator and chief architect of Studio Nilasha, designed a peaceful home in Hyderabad that is 3,000 square feet in size. Soft whites and beiges make up the home, and the texture of the walls tells the story. The home was built for a young couple and has a muted color palette that isn't meant to be a background but rather a purposeful foreground that draws the eye to the surface, grain, and play of light. Wood, sandstone, lime plaster, and linen work together to create a delicate harmony that is rich, deep, and warm. This shows that when color is less important, substance may take the lead.









Nilasha explains what she means by this: "Our clients were drawn to a minimalist, Scandinavian style, and they shared our love for natural materials." By integrating this way of thinking with materials and skills from the area, we were able to create a complex picture of modern Indian life. The outcome is a calm, grounded, and tactile expression.

The threshold is where this common sensitivity shows itself. When you go into the calm entrance, you see sculptural wicker objects, such as a wall-mounted bench and flowing pendant lights by Wicker Story. These pieces grab your attention right away. Wicker is woven into these buildings in a way that adds texture and art to the area that is being added. The entrance has a warm and inviting feel that quietly shows off the home's simple elegance. It looks even better with walls that have been plastered with lime and panels made of oak wood.

When you walk into the house from the foyer, all you see is a carefully planned rhythm of space and surface. The house has simple lines and no extra stuff, and it opens up with quiet confidence. The ceiling is likewise covered with the same lime plaster that is used to coat the walls. This makes the shell smooth and unbroken. Nothing is seen as unimportant, and every surface is taken into account. The materials used to make the walls, floors, and ceilings are all meant to make the space feel more comfortable.



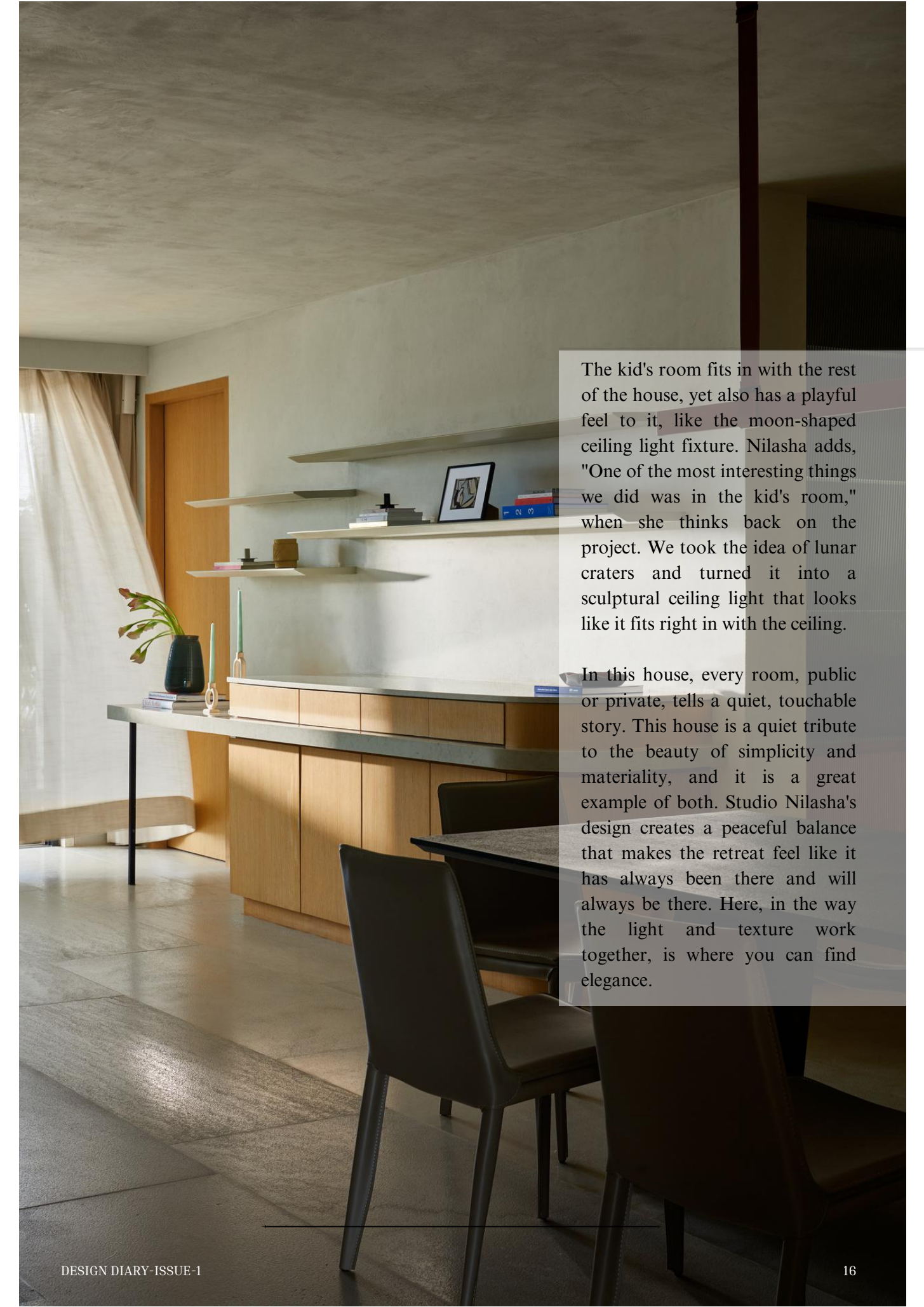


Stonelife provided the beige sandstone from Rajasthan that was sandblasted and laid down on the ground. Its less obvious grain gives the area a sense of grounding. On one side of the room, there is a pleasant sitting space with cushioned sofas. On the other side, the dining and bar areas are open. These places are calm but welcoming. There is a long table in the dining area that is held in place by a linear pendant light. The chairs are sleek and keep the room's simple look. The space for eating is calm and peaceful.

A wood louvered barrier with two distinct colors is put up to provide the media room next door some privacy without entirely closing it off. There is a simple stone and wood console in the bar area. Above it are shelves that display everyday and personal belongings. It is made to keep things private while letting the smell of incense slowly fill the space. The pooja area is surrounded by a louvered fluted glass screen that is between the dining and living rooms of the house. The bathroom room, which is next to the eating area, makes the setting feel deeper and more immersive.

Fluted stone with distinctive veining makes a dramatic background here, while an organically curved mirror and a concrete basin made to order by Nuance Studio complete the look. The composition's sculptural and beautiful attributes turn the small space into a peaceful sight. It's vital to remember that the design language stays the same as we go into the private areas. The master bedroom is a peaceful and beautiful retreat thanks to the custom fluted wood paneling and flooring, the upholstered bed, the handmade rugs, and the linen bedding. This mix helps to make a space feel cozy. The guest bedroom has seamless paneling that goes all the way around to make the bed and side tables, which gives the room a sense of harmony and calmness.





The kid's room fits in with the rest of the house, yet also has a playful feel to it, like the moon-shaped ceiling light fixture. Nilasha adds, "One of the most interesting things we did was in the kid's room," when she thinks back on the project. We took the idea of lunar craters and turned it into a sculptural ceiling light that looks like it fits right in with the ceiling.

In this house, every room, public or private, tells a quiet, touchable story. This house is a quiet tribute to the beauty of simplicity and materiality, and it is a great example of both. Studio Nilasha's design creates a peaceful balance that makes the retreat feel like it has always been there and will always be there. Here, in the way the light and texture work together, is where you can find elegance.

plumeria house is a safe haven for living well

Name of Project: Plumeria House

Design Team: Ar. Sudhir Ambawata,
Ar. Saumya Khanna, Ar. Srishti Yadav

Location: New Delhi

Size: 9000 sq. ft.

Photo Courtesy: Tarang Goyal

In the busy metropolis of New Delhi, where space is frequently a luxury, the Plumeria House stands out as a peaceful example of a new sort of luxury: one that is practical, deeply connected to nature, and always respectful of its surroundings. This 9000-square-foot home was designed by the talented team of Ar. Sudhir Ambawata, Ar. Saumya Khanna, and Ar. Srishti Yadav of SSDA. It is more than just a house; it is a living story constructed around a beautiful Plumeria tree and a philosophy of modern, practical architecture.

Ar. Saumya Khanna, Co-founder of SSDA, says that the project's main idea came from a basic but strong client brief. "When we were asked to design a home that was all about practicality, we decided to make it feel modern and bring in the idea of nature," she explains. The design was based on a purposeful choice to restrict the amount of ground coverage on the large half-acre property. This careful decision let the team create a landscape full of green spaces, like big backyards, carefully planned gardens, and open-air decks that flow seamlessly from the inside to the outside, all of which help people feel connected to the outdoors.



The architecture of the house says a lot without being too loud. It is a study in modern design, with clean lines, a smart play of volumes, and a carefully chosen mix of modern materials. The colors used in the design are both rich and simple. They include metal highlights, clear glass, warm wood, textured paint, and stone. The stone finishes were given special care, with unique treatments that provide depth and character to the overall design. The front of the house is a soft gray color, which makes for a peaceful background that is delightfully enhanced by the warmth of natural wood accents.

The way the rooms are arranged in the house is a great example of functional zoning. The house is carefully divided into two levels: the ground floor is designed for the parents to make everything easy and accessible, while the first floor is designed for the son's way of life. There are entertainment areas on both levels that are placed in a way that keeps the family together while also giving each person a sense of independence. The ancient science of Vastu, which helped shape the arrangement of the space with purpose and harmony, is what this whole plan is based on. Natural light is a big part of this home's story.











There is a lot of light coming in from the north and east, which makes every room feel open and welcoming. The double-height living room has huge windows that go all the way up to the ceiling and beautiful hardwood ceilings. It is decorated in neutral colors that make it feel even more like nature. The simple design of the staircase in the south gives the room a strong sense of verticality, and a beautiful sculpture in gray and vivid royal blue tones adds a striking flash of color, bringing the neutral palette to life.

The courtyard that holds the Plumeria tree is the real heart of the Plumeria House and its most interesting design feature. The courtyard is the center of the residence, and the whole space is layered and connected. A double-height wall made of a peculiar textured stone called Raymond stands close behind the Plumeria. This wall provides a sculptural backdrop that makes the tree's natural beauty stand out even more. The visual frame is a peaceful scene with a quiet body of water in the foreground, the beautiful Plumeria in the middle, and the textured Raymond stone wall as a grounding, artistic feature.

The most amazing thing about this place is how it interacts with the things around it. Saumya says, "The light hits the wall at a sharp angle, making shadows that change throughout the day, bringing the textures of the stone to life and making the composition come alive." The eating space, which can hold ten people, is next to this peaceful view. A mirror is carefully placed across from the tree to make this immersive experience even better. Saumya says, "The mirror reflects the same composition while you eat, giving you an immersive view that brings the outside in and makes everyday moments peaceful."

BLUEPRINTS

the satori house by the arch studio

Area: 1600 sq ft

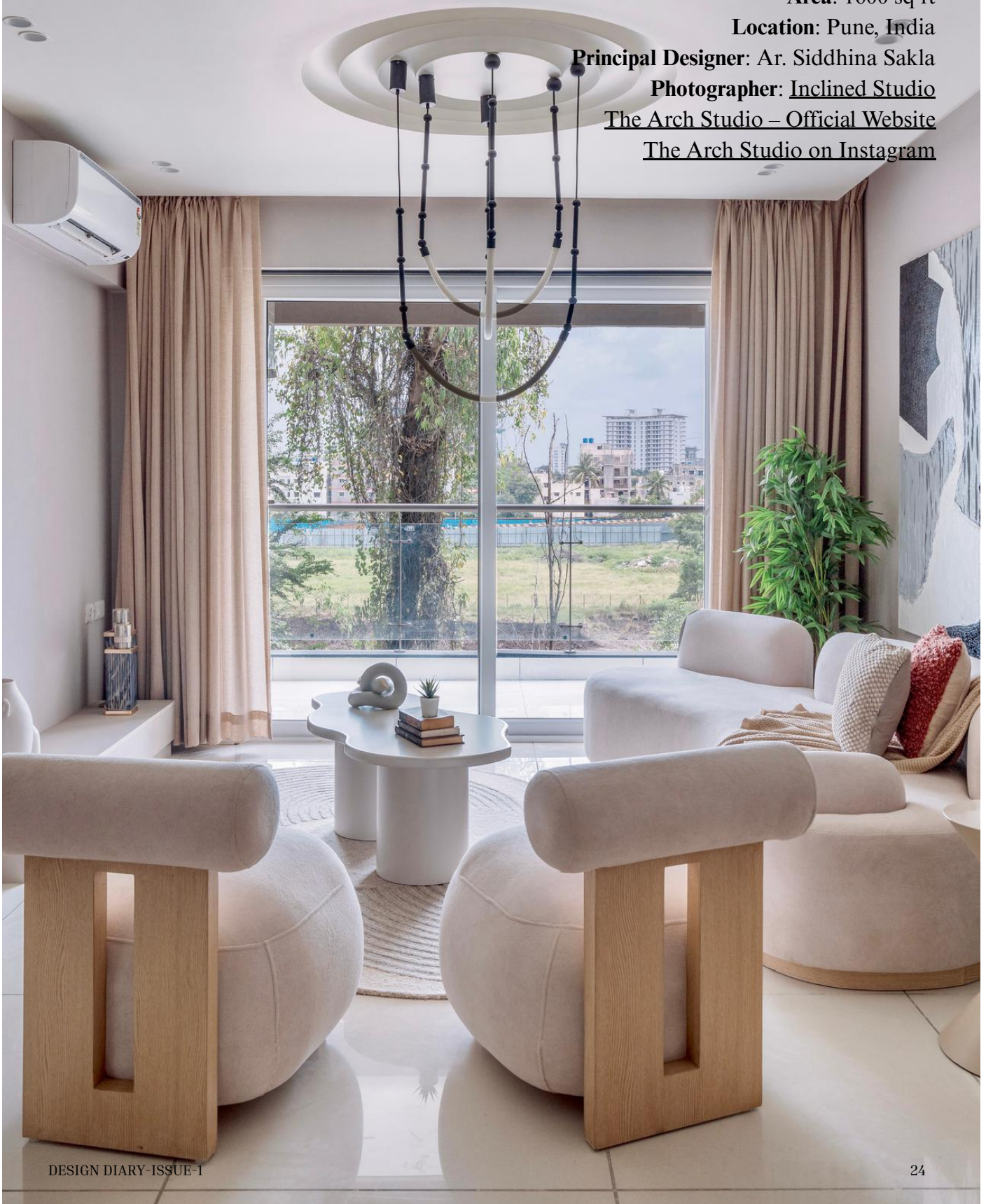
Location: Pune, India

Principal Designer: Ar. Siddhina Sakla

Photographer: Inclined Studio

The Arch Studio – Official Website

The Arch Studio on Instagram



In Pune, a city where architectural styles often jostle for attention, a residence by The Arch Studio takes a more measured approach. Designed by architect Siddhina Sakla, The Satori House is an elegant exercise in restraint, where luxury is not declared with opulence but suggested through balance, proportion, and touch.

The commission came with its share of challenges. The apartment needed to be made liveable within a compressed timeline, and the structure's existing finishes could not be overhauled. Instead of treating these as obstacles, Sakla leaned into them, finding ways to work around, through, and occasionally against the givens. The result is a 1,600-square-foot home that demonstrates how constraint can lead to clarity.

This is a great example of how smart design can make everyday life better. The living room is the heart of the home and exemplifies the minimalist luxury for which The Arch Studio is known. When you walk in, you're greeted by a warm, welcoming space that feels both big and small. The room is anchored by a custom-made three-seater sofa with an organic shape, and the accent chairs add character. The room gets a lot of natural light from the floor-to-ceiling windows. At night, a low-hanging chandelier casts a soft, warm light. The ceiling is designed to be simple in order to prevent the space from feeling cluttered. There are no levels or recessed lights, just a smooth, flat surface that keeps the focus on the carefully chosen items below.

Another impressive thing is the smart use of art, which is what really makes this living space come alive. The walls feature a blend of textured and pop art, creating visual focal points that attract the eye and enhance depth. Every piece was carefully selected to create a modern, sophisticated ambience, making the room a serene space to relax and a visual delight.



As you move into the dining area, you see that the space feels twice as big because of the smart use of bronze-tinted mirrors. These reflective surfaces not only make the room look bigger, but they also make it feel more luxurious. The dining table is a work of art in and of itself. It has a smooth marble top and thin metal legs, and the upholstered chairs that go with it are both comfortable and stylish. The console in the dining room serves two purposes: it holds a lot of cutlery and looks great against the fluted walnut panelling. There are grooves in the walls that subtly guide the eye and make the apartment feel more cohesive by emphasizing its linearity.

The long, straight hallway that connects all four bedrooms was one of the hardest parts of this project. The goal was to break up the monotony and give the space a sense of flow without changing the architecture that was already there. Siddhina's answer? Mirrors, art, and smart lighting. She turned the hallway into a gallery-like space by adding big mirrors and pieces of art. This made it feel bigger instead of smaller. They added warm lighting fixtures to make the area brighter and make the transition between the different spaces feel more welcoming.









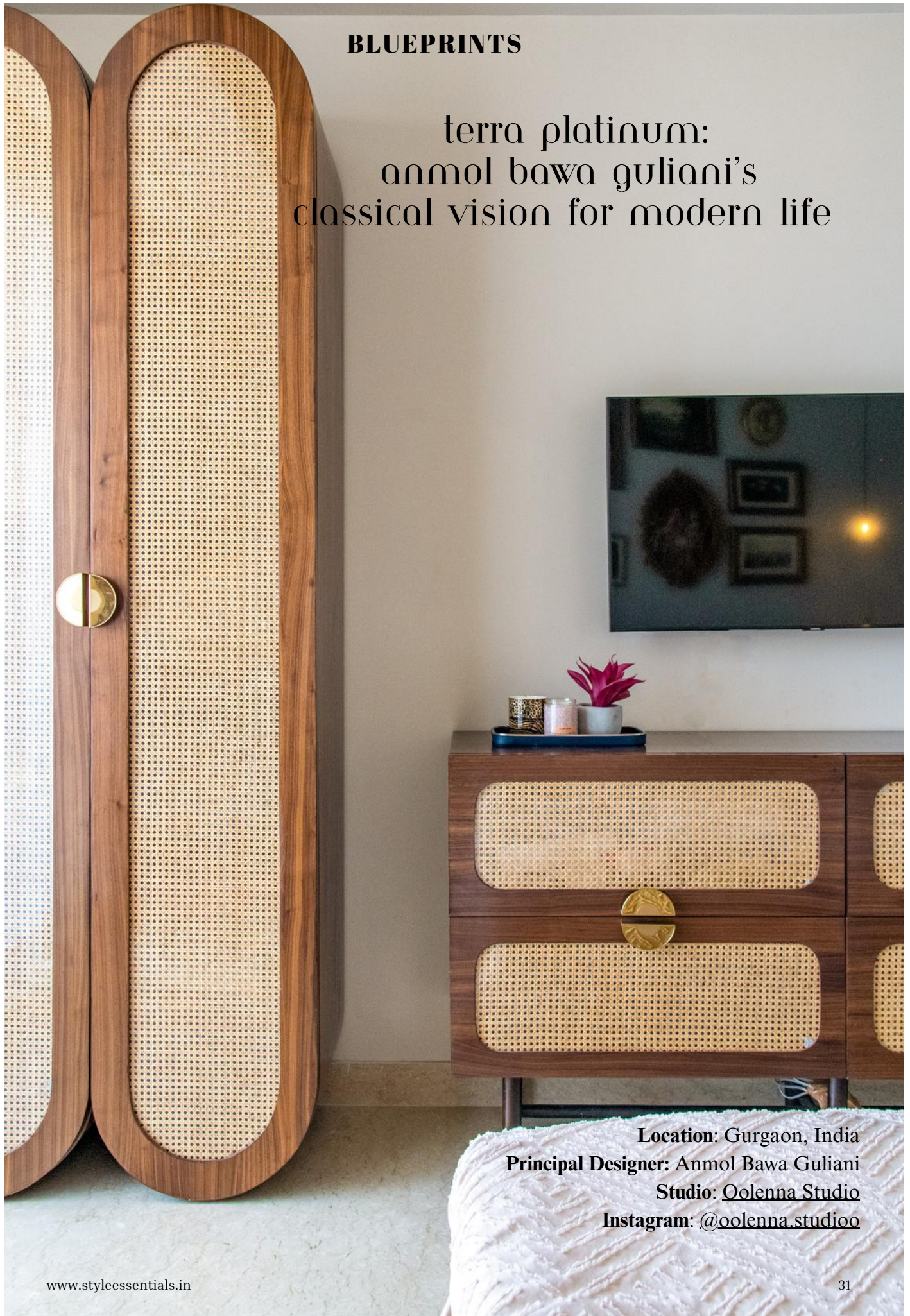


Each bedroom in this apartment has its own feel, but all have a theme of minimalistic luxury. For instance, the master bedroom's black floor and rich tan leather bed create a striking contrast. The white wall behind the bed has a texture that makes it a subtle backdrop, letting the unique lighting fixtures and bold wallpaper stand out. The end result is a room that feels both fancy and welcoming, a place to relax after a long day. The red-ceiling bedroom is one of the best rooms. Siddhina made a brave choice by painting the ceiling a deep rust red and adding matching light fixtures and upholstery. The red color adds an unexpected burst of color that draws the eye up and makes the small room look taller. This design choice is both experimental and successful; it shows that sometimes all it takes to change a room is a splash of color.

The grey and yellow bedroom is fun and makes you feel young and smart at the same time. The big, colourful painting is the main focus, and the study nook makes it a great place for a young adult. This room is both useful and stylish, so it can be used as a guest room or a room for a teenager. The last bedroom, which is also the parents' room, is a small, private space that is meant to make you feel calm, comfortable, and luxurious. It feels like the master bedroom, but on a smaller scale, making it a peaceful place for the homeowners to relax. The room is a great mix of simple and elegant. The goal is to make it a calm place to be with soft, harmonious details. These design choices come together to make a home that is a masterclass in how to balance form and function. Siddhina Sakla's design for this Pune apartment shows how she can change spaces with smart, creative design. Every part of the room, from the custom furniture to the carefully chosen art, works together to make it a beautiful and very useful space. The end result is a home that not only meets the client's request for it to be ready to live in right away but also one that makes you want to stay, explore, and fall in love with its many layers.

BLUEPRINTS

terra platinum:
anmol bawa guliani's
classical vision for modern life



Oolenna Studio's Terra Platinum is not just a home; it's a reflection on how classical beauty may fit into the rhythm of modern living. The 3,150 sq. ft. home is tucked away in the high-rise lanes of Suncity Platinum Towers in Gurgaon. It feels like a place that was not only decorated, but planned out. Every corner has been tuned, and every proportion has been carefully thought out, so that the whole apartment has a rhythm that is both timeless and highly modern.

The story started with a brief that was both bold and clear. A young family of four with two kids under seven wanted a space that reminded them of old buildings but didn't make their lives feel heavy. They wanted something that was both elegant and fun, big and close. Anmol Bawa Guliani, who started Oolenna Studio, came in here. He didn't want to impose a single style; instead, he wanted to create a home where the past and present could talk to each other as equals.

The entrance opens up like an overture. The arched corridors lead the eye in smooth arcs, giving the layout a rhythm that sounds almost musical. Lantern-style lighting makes the drama less intense by giving it a warm glow instead of a formal one. The choice of Sabyasachi wallpapers adds another depth to this story. The wallpapers have elaborate patterns that suggest skill and culture, but they don't demand attention; instead, they reward it when you do notice them. This is how Terra Platinum creates the mood from the start: a mix of serene beauty and lived-in comfort.



Materials move the story along. Marble doesn't only stay on the flooring; it climbs up walls, wraps around bars, and gets into the furniture. Its veins flow like rivers through the house. This continuity lends the interiors their sculptural weight, yet the treatment never gets too heavy. The brass embellishments that go with the marbles shine like breaks in conversation: never too loud, always thought out. The velvety surface on the panelled walls makes them feel good to touch, and each fabric, whether it's for upholstery or curtains, was chosen not simply for how it looks, but also for how it makes you feel.

Each room has its own words, but they all belong to the same family. The guest room has a classical symmetry, and the frames and paintings that were made just for it give it a sense of quiet grandeur. Another area has jewel tones that make the normally neutral colors look like punctuation in text. The wallpapers here are never the same, but they are always related. This is a reminder that variation may bring people together and that unity doesn't have to mean sameness. The kids' playroom comes to life with color thanks to a climbing wall that turns a modest area into a theatre of imagination.











The design here loosens its collar, showing that usefulness and fun may work together instead of against each other. Even when playing, accuracy is still important. All of the panelling was made in modular formats, so the house can change over time without losing its visual language. The most impressive thing about Terra Platinum may not be its wealth of materials, but its sense of completeness.

The longer you stay, the more the details come out. The way light plays off of brass trim, the way footsteps sound softer on marble, and the way an arch frames not just space but also perspective. Every gesture is a discussion between the past and the present: the respect for old forms and the ability to change how things work now. Everything feels planned and nothing feels rushed. Instead, the house reads like a novel where every word was carefully chosen to sound good.

For Anmol Bawa Guliani and Oolenna Studio, Terra Platinum is a pure expression of their ideas. The studio has made a name for itself by weaving personal stories into material wealth in more than 450,000 square feet of luxury homes in buildings like DLF Camellias and other towers in Suncity.

Terra Platinum doesn't wow you with its sights; it stays in your mind. It's not beautiful just because you see it once; it's beautiful because you live with it every day, like the way a marble vein catches the morning sun or a wallpaper pattern keeps showing new details months after you move in. Luxury here isn't loud; it's quietly unforgettable. This home will hold its family's story for years to come, and Oolenna Studio has carefully sculpted the language of design that will live on.

Surbhi N Bagla's Chitrakaari — From Bedtime Tales to Bespoke Wall Art

Surbhi's journey into design was part instinct, part discovery. She always had a love for visual aesthetics and storytelling, but it was through her search for meaningful design for her own space that she found herself drawn deeper into surface design.





Sometimes, starting a brand isn't about a grand vision. It's about fixing something that feels personal. For Surbhi N Bagla, the founder of Chitrakaari, it all began when she was setting up her kids' room. She was looking for a wallpaper that felt meaningful — something that wasn't mass-produced or borrowed from Pinterest. But everything she found felt repetitive, Westernised, or simply too ornamental with no real emotional connect.

"I wasn't trying to start a business," she says, laughing at the memory. "I just couldn't find a design that felt like it belonged in my home."

That's how Chitrakaari was born — a surface design studio that doesn't treat walls as an afterthought but as a canvas for storytelling. It's not a wallpaper company in the traditional sense. It's more like a boutique art studio that creates large-scale wall art, deeply rooted in Indian crafts, culture, and personal memory.

Surbhi's journey into design was part instinct, part discovery. She always had a love for visual aesthetics and storytelling, but it was through her search for meaningful design for her own space that she found herself drawn deeper into surface design. "I realised there was this gap — there weren't enough options that blended Indian heritage with contemporary design sensibilities. Wallpapers felt either too western or too blandly commercial."



The approach at Chitrakaari is intentionally slow. It begins with references that are personal — sometimes it's a textile, sometimes a verse, sometimes even a photograph from a temple visit. From there, Surbhi and her team hand-sketch the visuals, layer them, and slowly build the composition. Once the sketches are ready, they're digitised and refined by Lahari Ashwin, Chief Designer at Chitrakaari, to ensure they maintain their intricacy when scaled to large walls.

But Surbhi doesn't just rely on visuals. "We often test our designs emotionally — showing them to our own kids or asking clients how it makes them feel. It helps us avoid designs that might look good but don't evoke the right emotion," she explains. It's a process that's deeply intuitive and grounded in real human reactions.

Her latest collection, the Alankara Series, is perhaps the most personal yet. Inspired by Lord Krishna's stories, particularly the ones she grew up hearing from her grandmother, Alankara is a layered, textural journey into the landscapes of Mathura and Vrindavan. The collection features seven distinct designs — each one carefully interpreting devotional icons like peacocks, cows, vines, lotuses, and temples into immersive wall art.

"I wanted to give form to that feeling of stillness and sanctity. It wasn't about decorating a wall. It was about creating an atmosphere where you feel connected to those stories," she says.

The visual language draws heavily from traditional Pichwai paintings but with a modern lens. The gestures, the colours — soft blues, deep greens, vibrant yellows — all pulled from her own childhood memories. The designs are printed on silk and then finished with hand embroidery, using pearls, zardozi, and aari work. Collaborating with Kolkata-based artisans, Chitrakaari ensures that every piece carries that tactile depth which is becoming rare in today's fast design culture.

One of the things that sets Chitrakaari apart is their decision not to sell by roll. "We don't believe in repeat designs," Surbhi says firmly. Every wall is custom-designed, keeping the space, story, and client in mind. "It's not scalable in the traditional sense, but it's what keeps the work authentic."





For Surbhi, textures are everything. She's drawn to materials like raw canvas, silk, and feather paper — surfaces that have a certain grain and imperfection, making the designs feel alive and not digitally manufactured. "Texture adds character. It makes the wall breathe," she says.

While the Alankara collection is a natural fit for prayer rooms, Surbhi also points out how these designs can transform transitional spaces like entryways and passageways, places that are often overlooked but have immense potential to create atmosphere.

In recent years, she's seen a noticeable shift in how Indian homeowners view wallpaper. "People are moving away from plain paint or random decals. Wallpapers are now seen as an investment in atmosphere and identity. It's less invasive than stone or large art installations, but it has a powerful impact."

But running a design studio isn't all about the creative high. Surbhi is very clear that operations are just as important. "You can't sustain beautiful designs without building a strong backend. Creativity and operations have to go hand-in-hand," she says. Over time, her understanding of success has evolved. "Earlier, I thought success was about being seen — features, visibility, name recognition. Now, it's about the depth of our relationships with clients and collaborators. It's about how meaningful the work feels, not how loud it is."

When it comes to staying creatively inspired, Surbhi doesn't believe in over-the-top strategies. "I take simple breaks — travel, observe things around me. Even watching light play through leaves or going to a museum with my kids sparks ideas. And I always keep a sketchbook for loose thoughts. It helps me reconnect when things get overwhelming."

For her, Chitrakaari isn't just a design studio. It's a space where stories, emotions, and crafts come together to create something that's personal and timeless. It's not about trends. It's about connection.

"When someone lives with our designs, I want them to feel like it's a part of their story—not a piece of a trend. It should bring warmth, memories, and a sense of calm every time they look at it."

In a world chasing fast design and mass production, Chitrakaari is choosing slowness, choosing depth, and most importantly, choosing stories that deserve to be lived with, not just looked at.



An ode to artistry, the Sanctum Art Cabinet bridges craftsmanship and cultural heritage with a hand-rendered Pichwai surface—where traditional narrative meets modern restraint.

Buy: [Sanctum Art Cabinet](#)





COLLECTIBLE

The coloured glass floor lamp “Wanted” is crafted using the traditional Venetian Balloton technique, where molten glass is blown into a mould to create its signature diamond-patterned texture. Light passes through the shaded glass in a soft, rippling glow, enhancing its faceted surface. Stacked lampshades, encircled by transparent rings, lend the impression of fluidity to solid crystal — an elegant testament to the mastery of hand-worked glass.

Buy “Wanted” by Cattelan Italia





COLLECTIBLE



Ethimo's latest outdoor collection carries a rare sense of timelessness — designed not just to inhabit a space, but to become a part of it. Built with enduring materials and refined details, the pieces are as much about permanence as they are about beauty. They adapt with ease, whether placed in a sunlit courtyard, on a coastal terrace, or high in the mountains. Among forests and snowy peaks, the collection feels equally at home, balancing tradition with modernity, natural warmth with understated sophistication.

Buy: [Ethimo Collections](#)



Superbly printed in gold on mirror glass, the Luxe Leopard Side Table showcases a vintage-inspired hand-drawn leopard amidst tropical foliage. Finished with gold-toned rim and legs, it leaves an indelible mark of class in any space.

Buy: [Luxe Leopard Side Table](#)



COLLECTIBLE

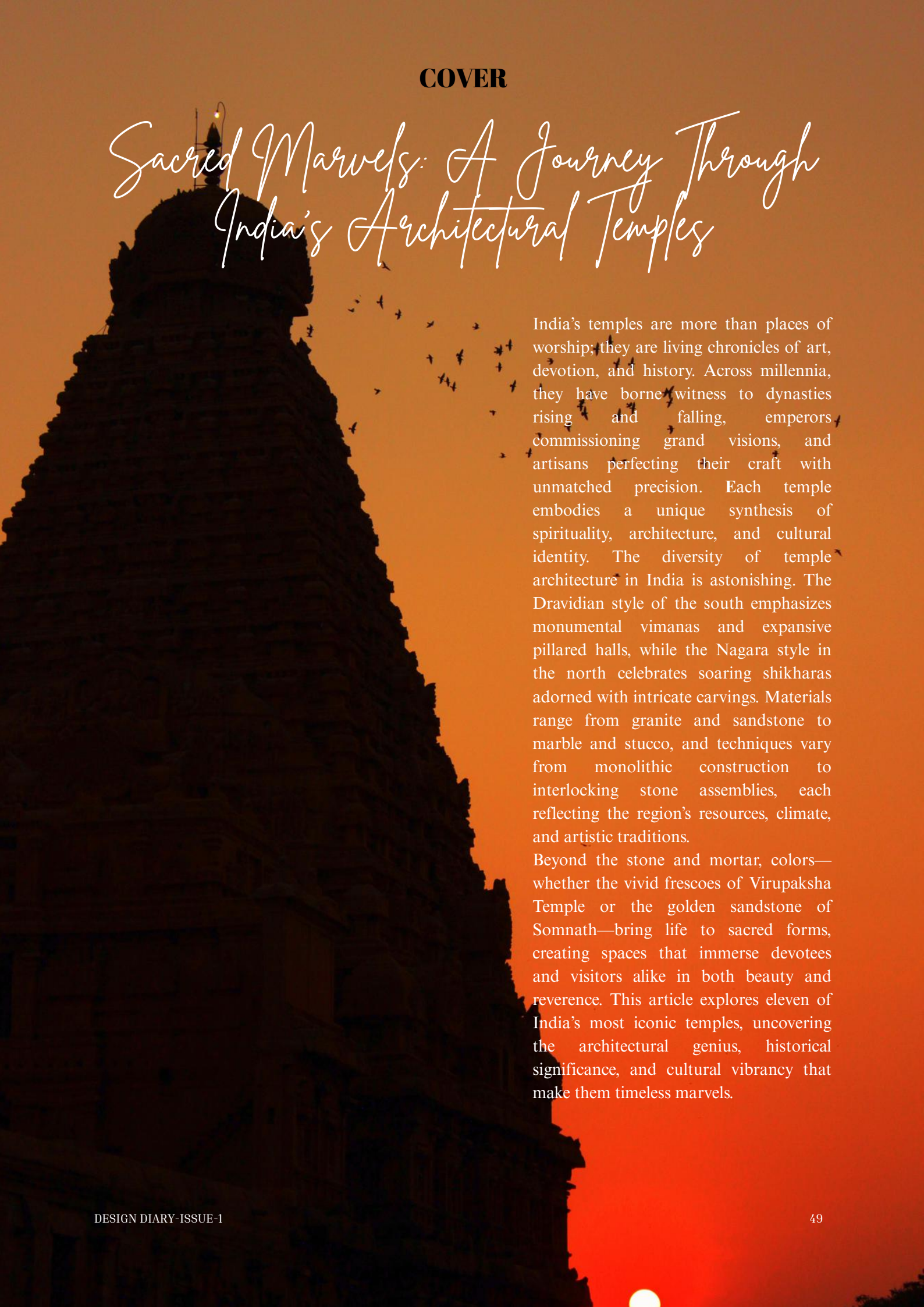


Carpet Edition celebrates the visionary spirit of Ken Scott with a vibrant collection of rugs, flowers, and tapestries. Known as the “gardener of fashion,” Scott’s iconic motifs from the 60s and 70s—florals, geometric patterns, and animal prints—are reimagined through luxurious materials like New Zealand wool, linen, and Tencel, crafted with hand-tufting and 3D carving. The Flower Collection features eight striking designs, from Eula to Lady S, available as rugs or 100x100 cm wall tapestries, with Eula also offered in a large 200x300 cm version. Each piece blends design and fashion, transforming interiors into living art.

[Buy the Ken Scott Collection](#)

COVER

Sacred Marvels: A Journey Through India's Architectural Temples



India's temples are more than places of worship; they are living chronicles of art, devotion, and history. Across millennia, they have borne witness to dynasties rising and falling, emperors commissioning grand visions, and artisans perfecting their craft with unmatched precision. Each temple embodies a unique synthesis of spirituality, architecture, and cultural identity. The diversity of temple architecture in India is astonishing. The Dravidian style of the south emphasizes monumental vimanas and expansive pillared halls, while the Nagara style in the north celebrates soaring shikharas adorned with intricate carvings. Materials range from granite and sandstone to marble and stucco, and techniques vary from monolithic construction to interlocking stone assemblies, each reflecting the region's resources, climate, and artistic traditions.

Beyond the stone and mortar, colors—whether the vivid frescoes of Virupaksha Temple or the golden sandstone of Somnath—bring life to sacred forms, creating spaces that immerse devotees and visitors alike in both beauty and reverence. This article explores eleven of India's most iconic temples, uncovering the architectural genius, historical significance, and cultural vibrancy that make them timeless marvels.

Meenakshi Amman Temple



MEENAKSHI AMMAN TEMPLE

Madurai, Tamil Nadu

The Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, is one of the most iconic examples of Dravidian temple architecture, celebrated not only for its monumental scale but also for its explosion of colors, sculptural detail, and urban integration. Dedicated to Goddess Meenakshi (a form of Parvati) and Sundareshwara (Shiva), this temple is both a religious and cultural nucleus of South India.

PATRONAGE AND PERIOD

Although the temple's sacred origins date back to early centuries of the Common Era, the structure we see today was largely built during the Nayaka dynasty (16th–17th centuries CE). The Nayakas, ruling Madurai after the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire, were responsible for expanding the temple into a gigantic complex that not only honored the divine but also symbolized civic pride and economic prosperity.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Meenakshi Amman exemplifies the Dravidian style in its most exuberant phase:

- **Gopurams (gateway towers)**- The temple is renowned for its 14 towering gopurams, the tallest rising to about 52 meters (170 feet). These pyramidal gateways are encrusted with thousands of brightly painted stucco figures of gods, goddesses, demons, mythical animals, and celestial beings.
- **Vimana (tower over the sanctum)**- Unlike the gopurams, the vimanas over the sancta of Meenakshi and Sundareshwara are gilded, giving them a distinct sacred emphasis.
- **Enclosures**- The temple complex is organized in concentric rectangular enclosures (prakaram), each layer symbolizing the progression from the worldly to the sacred.

MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE

The core structures were built of granite, ensuring longevity, while the elaborate gopurams were constructed using brick and stucco. The figures were coated with lime plaster and painted in mineral pigments, renewed over centuries. The technique of polychromy—repainting every few decades—ensured the temple's enduring vibrancy.

LAYOUT AND FLOOR PLAN

The Meenakshi-Sundareshwara complex is sprawling, covering about 14 plus acres, with a planned geometry that integrates shrines, mandapas, tanks, and corridors.

Key components:

1. **Meenakshi Shrine**- dedicated to the goddess, the focal point of devotion.
2. **Sundareshwara Shrine**- houses the Shiva linga, symbolizing her consort.
3. **Aayiram Kaal Mandapam (Hall of Thousand Pillars)**- A pillared hall showcasing remarkable sculptural variety and symmetry, used for ceremonies and cultural events.
4. **Golden Lotus Tank (Potramarai Kulam)**- A sacred pool where devotees bathe before entering shrines, surrounded by colonnades.
5. **Mandapas (pillared halls)**- Each with a unique function; wedding halls, dance halls, and festival spaces.

SCULPTURAL AND ARTISTIC PROGRAM

- **Stucco Figures on Gopurams-** The most striking aspect is the sheer density and color of figures—over 33,000 sculptures, painted in vibrant blues, reds, greens, and golds. These include deities, mythological episodes, animals, and even whimsical motifs.
- **Pillar Carvings-** The 1,000-pillared hall features yalis (mythical lion-like creatures), dancers, musicians, and deities in dynamic postures.
- **Murals-** The Nayaka rulers also patronized fresco painting, with scenes from the Shaiva and Vaishnava traditions adorning ceilings and walls.

COLORS AND AESTHETICS

Unlike many ancient temples that preserve the stone's natural hues, the Meenakshi temple is deliberately polychromatic. Its painted surfaces serve both ritual symbolism (color coding of deities and demons) and aesthetic spectacle. The gopurams become living canvases, renewed during temple festivals when artisans repaint the stucco figures.

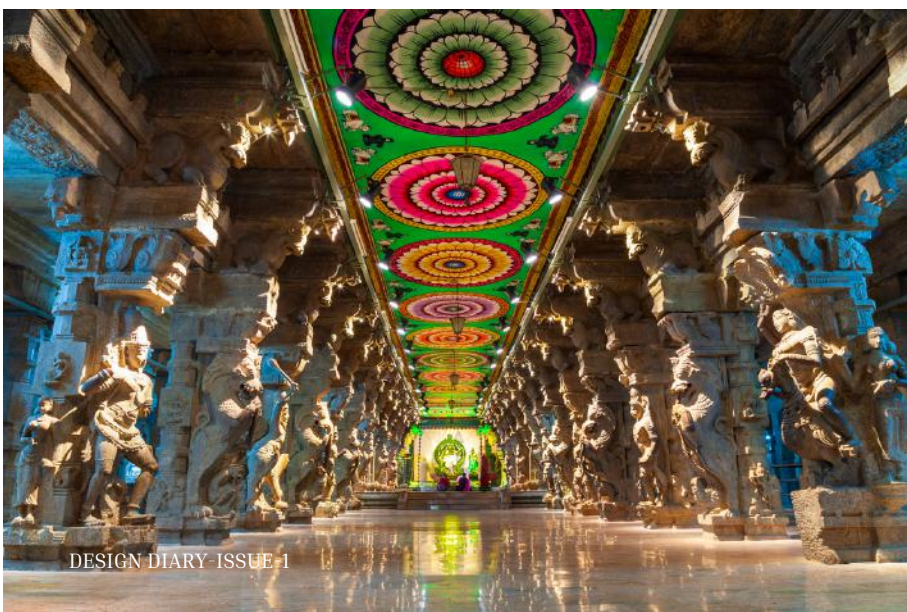
The contrast between the gilded vimanas and the riotous colors of the gopurams underscores the hierarchy of sacred space.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. **Dual Deities-** Rare among major temples, it is equally dedicated to a goddess (Meenakshi) and a god (Sundareshwara).
2. **Urban Integration-** The temple is the heart of Madurai city, with streets radiating out in concentric squares—an urban mandala.
3. **Living Vibrancy-** The continuous repainting ensures the temple always appears alive and resplendent.
4. **Festival Culture-** Hosts the grand Meenakshi Thirukalyanam (celestial wedding festival), drawing millions annually.
5. **Hall of Thousand Pillars-** A marvel of spatial rhythm and sculptural density.

TIMEFRAME OF CONSTRUCTION

- Early core may date to Pandya period (7th–13th centuries).
- Most of the present structure (gopurams, mandapas, halls) were completed under the Tirumalai Nayak dynasty (1623–1659 CE).
- Expansions continued until the 18th century.



Text References:

George Michell, *The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to Its Meaning and Forms*, 1988.
V. Vriddhagirisan, *The Nayaks of Tanjore*, 1942.
K.R. Srinivasan, *Temples of South India*, 1972.
Archaeological Survey of India, *Madurai Monuments*, Monograph Series.

Images: Pixabay

Brihadeeswarar Temple

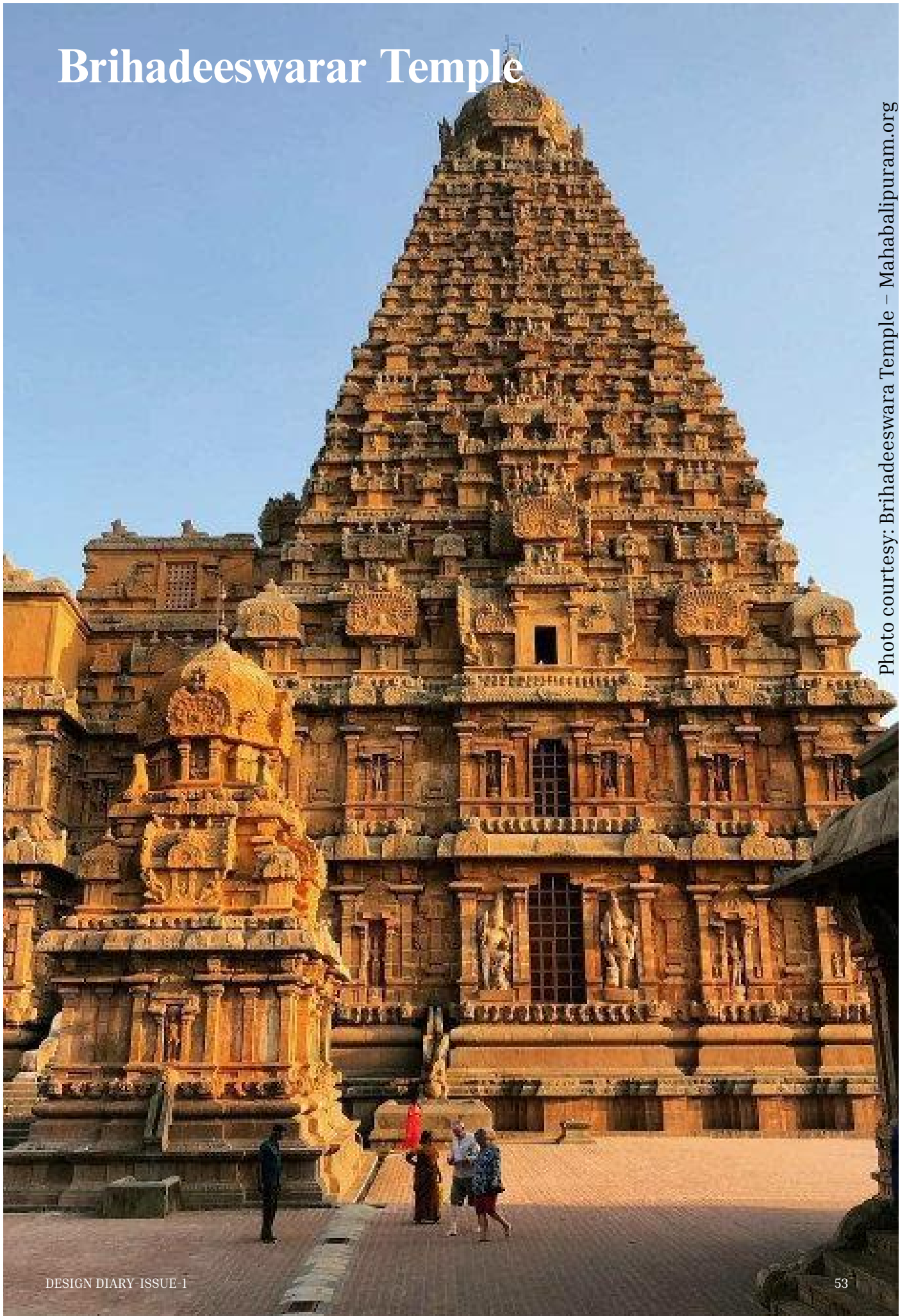


Photo courtesy: Brihadeeswara Temple – Mahabalipuram.org

BRIHADEESWARAR TEMPLE

Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu

The Brihadeeswarar Temple, also known as Peruvudaiyar Kovil or Rajarajeswaram, stands as one of the most extraordinary achievements in Indian temple architecture. Commissioned by the Chola emperor Rajaraja I in the early 11th century CE, the temple was completed around 1010 CE, marking the zenith of Chola architectural ambition. It remains not just a religious center but a precise demonstration of engineering, geometry, and artistic mastery.

PATRONAGE AND PERIOD

Rajaraja I, the greatest ruler of the Chola dynasty, envisioned the temple as both a political statement and a divine offering. By consecrating the temple to Lord Shiva, whom he regarded as Brihadeeswara ("Great Lord"), Rajaraja sought to legitimize his imperial power and eternalize his reign through stone. The temple inscriptions not only record donations and rituals but also document the names of the architects and artisans, making it one of the most historically transparent monuments of medieval India.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Brihadeeswarar is the finest example of Dravidian architecture. Its most iconic feature is the towering vimana (sanctum tower) that rises to a height of about 66 meters (216 feet), making it one of the tallest of its kind in the world. Unlike later South Indian temples with multiple gopurams (gateway towers), the Brihadeeswarar complex emphasizes the central vimana, creating a monumental vertical focus.

MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE

The temple is almost entirely constructed of granite, a material not native to the Thanjavur delta. Historians have long debated how the Cholas transported such massive blocks—some weighing more than 20 tons—from quarries located about 50–60 kilometers away. Techniques likely involved a combination of riverine transport and specially constructed ramps.

The vimana itself is topped by a massive monolithic granite capstone (kumbham) weighing approximately 80 tons. Legends state that a ramp nearly 6 kilometers long was built to haul it into position. Whether myth or reality, the feat remains unmatched in scale and ingenuity.

LAYOUT AND FLOOR PLAN

The temple complex follows the Dravidian axial plan:

- Garbhagriha (sanctum) houses a gigantic lingam nearly 4 meters tall.
- The sanctum is surrounded by a pradakshina patha (circumambulatory corridor) with walls inscribed with hymns and donor records.
- Mandapas (halls) include the mukha-mandapa and maha-mandapa, richly ornamented yet structurally disciplined.
- A massive Nandi pavilion facing the sanctum houses a monolithic Nandi measuring nearly 6 meters in length and 3.7 meters in height, carved from a single block of granite.

ORNAMENTATION AND COLOR

The Cholas preferred sculptural restraint compared to later Nayaka embellishments. Walls and pillars carry depictions of deities, guardians, and celestial figures, but always subordinated to the geometric clarity of the structure. Original traces of frescoes in the inner sanctum corridors suggest that vibrant colors once animated the sculptural program. These frescoes, among the earliest surviving in Tamil Nadu, depict Shaiva themes, royal portraits, and mythological narratives, executed with mineral pigments on a lime plaster base.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. **Scale and Proportion** – The temple is an exercise in monumentality without sacrificing harmony.
2. **Granite Mastery** – Use of granite on such a scale is almost unparalleled in South Indian architecture.
3. **Engineering Feat** – Placement of the monolithic capstone remains a marvel.
4. **Living Monument** – The temple continues to function as a vibrant place of worship after more than a millennium.
5. **Inscriptions** – Over 100 lengthy inscriptions survive on its walls, offering invaluable historical records of Chola society, economy, and administration.

TIMEFRAME OF CONSTRUCTION

Contemporary records suggest that the core temple was constructed in around seven years, a remarkably short period considering the scale. Additions such as frescoes and later shrines were completed soon after, but the main sanctum and vimana were in place by 1010 CE, marking Rajaraja's 25th regnal year.



THE “SHADOWLESS TEMPLE” CLAIM

A popular belief holds that the vimana of Brihadeeswarar Temple casts no shadow at noon. In reality, the temple does cast a shadow, but due to the tower's steep vertical rise and the geographic angle of the sun, the shadow tends to fall very close to the base and remains largely invisible to casual observers. This optical effect likely gave rise to the enduring legend of a “shadowless temple.”

Text Reference:

Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*, 1942.

Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, 1946.

George Michell, *The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to Its Meaning and Forms*, 1977.

Archaeological Survey of India, *South Indian Temples: Thanjavur District Inscriptions*, Vol. II.

Vidya Dehejia, *Art of the Imperial Cholas*, 1990.

Image Courtesy: Wikipedia

Sun Temple, Konark



SUN TEMPLE

Konark, Odisha

The Sun Temple at Konark, located on the coast of Odisha, is one of the most iconic monuments of Indian temple architecture. Built in the 13th century CE by King Narasimha Deva I of the Eastern Ganga dynasty, the temple was consecrated to Surya, the Sun God, and conceived as a colossal stone chariot drawn by horses. Though partially ruined today, it remains a profound testimony to India's mastery of stone architecture, geometry, and symbolic design.

PATRONAGE AND PERIOD

The Eastern Ganga dynasty, which ruled Kalinga (modern Odisha) from the 11th to the 15th century, was known for its ambitious temple-building projects. Narasimha Deva I commissioned the Sun Temple around 1244–1256 CE, not only as an offering to Surya but also as a statement of royal power following military victories. Inscriptions suggest it was intended to surpass earlier Kalinga temples in both scale and grandeur.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The temple represents the Kalinga style of Nagara architecture at its zenith. It follows the traditional Odishan plan of a rekha deul (sanctum tower) and a jagamohana (assembly hall), but with unprecedented elaboration. The sanctum tower once soared to a height of around 70 meters, crowned with an amalaka and kalasha, making it one of the tallest temples in India before its collapse in the 19th century. The unique feature is the chariot form — the temple is conceived as Surya's stone chariot, with 12 pairs of elaborately carved wheels on either side and seven prancing horses pulling it, aligned to the east-west axis to capture the first rays of the rising sun.

MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE

The temple was constructed primarily of chlorite, laterite, and khondalite stone. Chlorite was used for intricate carvings due to its fine grain, while khondalite formed the massive structural blocks. Laterite was used for foundations and hidden cores.

Evidence suggests advanced stone-joining techniques, including iron clamps and dowels were used. Local tradition also speaks of a lodestone at the summit, which allegedly disrupted compasses of passing ships, though this remains speculative.

LAYOUT AND FLOOR PLAN

The Konark temple complex followed the classical Kalinga triad:

- **Rekha deul (sanctum)** – now collapsed, originally enshrining a massive image of Surya.
- **Jagamohana (audience hall)** – still largely intact, richly carved with dancers, deities, and mythological scenes.
- **Nata Mandira (dance hall)** – a separate pavilion to the south, reflecting the temple's role as a cultural hub where Odissi dance was performed.
- **Bhoga Mandapa (offering hall)** – later addition for ritual offerings.

The entire complex sits on a high plinth, richly carved with elephants, lions, and friezes narrating daily life, courtly processions, and celestial imagery. The wheels of the chariot are not merely decorative; each has eight spokes and functions as a sun dial, capable of measuring time accurately with the movement of shadows.

ORNAMENTATION AND COLOR

Konark is a sculptural encyclopedia in stone. Themes include:

- **Erotic imagery** – similar to Khajuraho, symbolizing fertility and cosmic creation.
- **Courtly scenes** – musicians, dancers, royal hunts.
- **Mythological narratives** – depictions of Surya, Ganesha, Narasimha, and other deities.
- **Animal motifs** – elephants, horses, mythical beasts, all animated with lifelike detail.

While the surviving temple is monochrome, traces suggest that parts of the temple may have been coated with pigments and polished to shimmer under sunlight, enhancing its visual impact.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. **Chariot Form** – the temple itself embodies Surya's cosmic chariot, a unique architectural metaphor.
2. **Astronomical Precision** – alignment with the sun's path and functioning sundials in the wheels.
3. **Scale and Symbolism** – among the grandest Nagara temples ever attempted, projecting the might of the Eastern Gangas.
4. **Cultural Role** – integration of ritual, dance, music, and astronomy within a single sacred space.

TIMEFRAME OF CONSTRUCTION

The main structure is believed to have been completed in about 12 years (1244–1256 CE) under Narasimha Deva I. Subsequent rulers made additions, but by the late medieval period the sanctum had collapsed, possibly due to the weight of its tower and proximity to the sea. Despite this, Konark's surviving structures continue to dazzle with their intricacy.



Text Reference:

- Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*, 1942.
- Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, 1946.
- George Michell, *The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to Its Meaning and Forms*, 1977.
- Debala Mitra, *Konark, Archaeological Survey of India*, 1958.
- Thomas Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, Vol. III, 1987.

Kailasa Temple, Ellora



KAILASA TEMPLE

Ellora, Maharashtra

The Kailasa Temple (Cave 16) at Ellora is one of the most audacious architectural projects in the history of humankind. Carved in the 8th century CE during the reign of the Rashtrakuta king Krishna I, it is dedicated to Lord Shiva as Kailasanatha, symbolic of Mount Kailash, his celestial abode. What makes it extraordinary is not only its scale but the method of construction: it is a monolithic temple, carved top-down from a single basalt rock cliff.

PATRONAGE AND PERIOD

The Rashtrakuta dynasty, which ruled the Deccan between the 8th and 10th centuries CE, sought to demonstrate their imperial power through monumental architecture. King Krishna I (r. 756–773 CE) is credited with commissioning the Kailasa temple, with later Rashtrakuta rulers continuing minor additions. The project represented both devotion and political ambition, establishing the dynasty's authority as protectors of Shaivism.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The Kailasa temple is a stunning example of rock-cut Dravidian architecture, synthesizing southern temple forms with northern influences. Unlike structural temples built of blocks, this one is wholly hewn out of a basalt hill at Ellora in Maharashtra.

THE TEMPLE FEATURES:

A towering vimana over the sanctum, about 30 meters high.

A spacious mandapa (pillared hall) with intricate carvings.

Separate shrines, subsidiary chapels, and free-standing sculptures, all carved from the same monolithic mass.

Bridges and stairways linking pavilions, creating the illusion of a constructed rather than excavated structure.

The overall layout evokes a complete South Indian temple complex transplanted into solid rock.

MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE

Carved from basalt, the temple was created by cutting vertically into the hillside. Instead of excavating caves horizontally (as at Ajanta), artisans cut from the top down, removing an estimated 200,000 tons of rock. This technique avoided collapse and allowed simultaneous work by multiple teams.

Chisels, hammers, and iron tools were used to achieve both mass removal and fine sculptural detail. This engineering feat would have required precise planning, as a single error could have compromised the entire structure.

LAYOUT AND FLOOR PLAN

The Kailasa temple complex unfolds like a structural temple in plan:

Garbhagriha (sanctum) with a massive lingam of Shiva, crowned by the vimana.

Mandapa (hall) supported by exquisitely carved pillars, leading to the sanctum.

A colossal Nandi pavilion aligned directly with the sanctum, also monolithically carved.

Pradakshina patha (circumambulatory passage) around the sanctum.

Subsidiary shrines dedicated to deities like Ganesha, Parvati, and river goddesses.

A monumental gopuram-like entrance gateway, again cut from rock, announcing the temple as a freestanding building.

The design ingeniously imitates built temple architecture but surpasses it in unity, as all elements are one with the rock.

ORNAMENTATION AND SCULPTURAL PROGRAM

Kailasa is as much sculpture as architecture. Carvings depict:

- Episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, including the battle of Lanka.
- Shaivite legends, particularly the cosmic dance of Shiva (Nataraja).
- Colossal lions, elephants, and guardians that seem to animate the plinth.
- Ceiling reliefs of lotus medallions and cosmic diagrams.

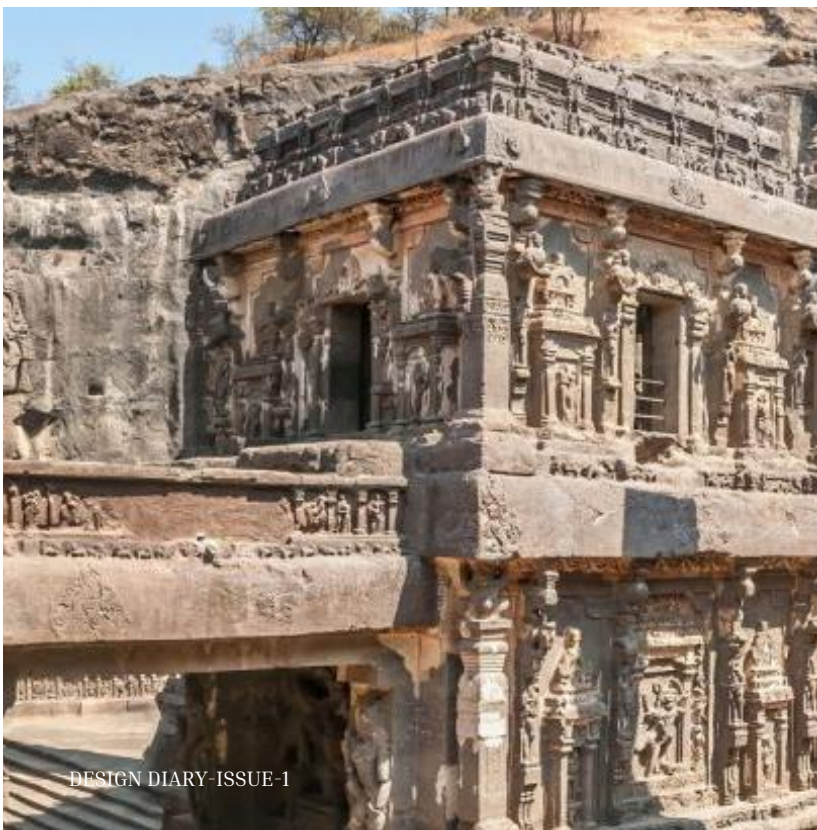
The scale of the sculptures, some reaching several meters in height, amplifies the monumentality. Originally, traces of plaster and pigments suggest the entire temple may have been brightly painted, adding a lost dimension of vibrancy.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. **Monolithic Construction** – carved from a single rock, unparalleled in scale.
2. **Top-Down Technique** – allowed structural stability and simultaneous work.
3. **Fusion of Architecture and Sculpture** – no separation between building and ornament.
4. **Symbolism of Mount Kailash** – embodying Shiva's cosmic mountain in earthly stone.
5. **Engineering Scale** – estimated removal of 200,000 tons of rock in a few decades.

TIMEFRAME OF CONSTRUCTION

Though exact records are absent, scholars estimate the main excavation and carving of the Kailasa temple took 20–30 years, given the sheer volume of rock removed and detail executed. Subsequent embellishments may have extended the work into later Rashtrakuta reigns.



Text Reference:

Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*, 1942.

Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, 1946.

George Michell & Mark Zebrowski, *Architecture and Art of the Deccan Sultanates*, 1999 (contextual notes on Ellora).

James Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*, 1986.

Archaeological Survey of India, *Ellora Caves*, Monograph Series.

Kandariya Mahadeva Temple



KANDARIYA MAHADEVA TEMPLE

Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh

The Kandariya Mahadeva Temple at Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, stands as the crowning achievement of Nagara-style temple architecture in northern India. Built around 1025–1050 CE by King Vidyadhara of the Chandela dynasty, it is dedicated to Lord Shiva as Mahadeva (“Great God”). It is the largest and most ornate temple at Khajuraho, often considered the zenith of medieval Indian temple architecture.

PATRONAGE AND PERIOD

The Chandelas (9th–13th centuries CE), ruling over Bundelkhand, were prolific temple builders. Their patronage created the Khajuraho group of monuments, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. King Vidyadhara, who resisted Mahmud of Ghazni’s invasions, commissioned the Kandariya Mahadeva temple as a statement of power, prosperity, and piety.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The temple is a classic example of Nagara style (North Indian temple architecture), characterized by its curvilinear spires (shikharas) and clustered tower-like forms. Unlike the rock-cut Kailasa at Ellora, this temple is a structural temple, built using sandstone blocks fitted together without mortar, relying on precision joints and gravity.

Key Nagara features include:

- Latina (curved) shikhara over the sanctum, rising to about 31 meters (102 feet).
- A series of urushringas (subsidiary spires) clustered around the main shikhara, creating a mountain-like profile symbolic of Mount Meru.
- The entire structure rests on a high jagati (platform) with steps leading up, enhancing its monumentality.

MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE

The temple is built of finely grained sandstone, quarried locally. Stone blocks were precisely cut and assembled with a tongue-and-groove system. No mortar was used; instead, weight and interlocking held the structure in place. This dry masonry technique allowed both stability and flexibility, essential for seismic endurance.

LAYOUT AND FLOOR PLAN

The temple follows the panchayatana plan (main shrine with four subsidiary shrines, though some are missing today) and a progression of spaces from outer to inner sanctity:

1. **Ardhamandapa (entrance porch)** – transitional space leading into the temple.
2. **Mandapa (pillared hall)** – used for congregational rituals, richly carved.
3. **Mahamandapa** – a larger hall with transepts, used for dance and music.
4. **Antarala (vestibule)** – a narrow passage to the sanctum.
5. **Garbhagriha (sanctum)** – housing the Shiva linga, symbol of cosmic energy.
6. **Pradakshina patha** – circumambulatory passage around the sanctum.

The vertical hierarchy of spaces parallels the spiritual journey from the earthly to the divine.

ORNAMENTATION AND SCULPTURAL PROGRAM

The Kandariya Mahadeva temple is famous for its profusion of sculptures, nearly 900 in total, carved on both exterior and interior walls.

Themes include:

- **Shaivite imagery:** Shiva in various forms, including the cosmic dancer (Nataraja).
- **Mythological narratives** from the Puranas, Ramayana, and Mahabharata.
- **Erotic sculptures (mithuna couples)**, symbolizing fertility, auspiciousness, and the unity of male and female energies (shiva-shakti).
- **Everyday life scenes:** dancers, musicians, warriors, and celestial beings.

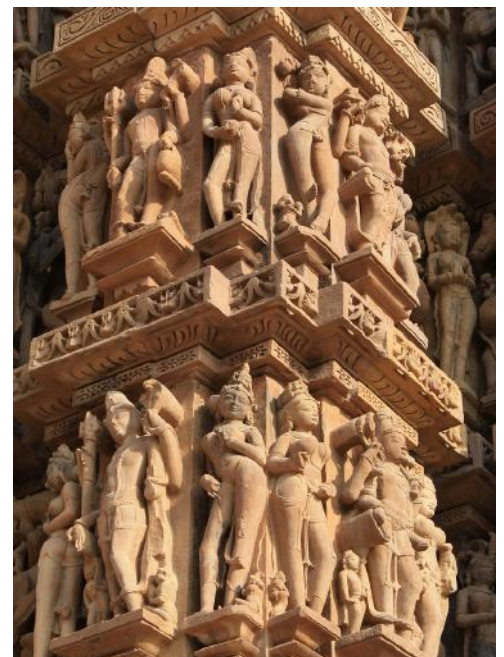
The carving is deep, plastic, and sensuous, with flowing ornamentation, intricate jewelry, and dynamic postures. Even ceilings bear lotus medallions, symbolizing cosmic order.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. **Peak of Nagara Architecture** – perfect proportions, clustered shikhara profile.
2. **Largest Khajuraho Temple** – 31 meters tall, dominating the landscape.
3. **Exquisite Sculpture** – a blend of sacred, erotic, and secular themes in harmony.
4. **Symbolism of Cosmic Mountain** – vertical ascent mirrors spiritual rise.
5. **Integrated Spatial Plan** – progression from light-filled halls to the dark sanctum.

TIMEFRAME OF CONSTRUCTION

Scholars date the Kandariya Mahadeva temple to 1025–1050 CE. The temple was likely completed within two decades, during King Vidyadhara's reign, at the height of Chandela power.



Text Reference:

George Michell, *The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to Its Meaning and Forms*, 1988. Michael Meister, *Khajuraho: The Art of Love*, 1995. Devangana Desai, *Khajuraho: Monumental Legacy*, 2000. James Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*, 1986. Archaeological Survey of India, *Khajuraho Group of Monuments*, Monograph Series.

Photo courtesy: kevinstandagephotography



Vartaman, a Solo Exhibition by Yashika Sugandh

Date: 27th September – 1st October (Bikaner House)

Timings: 11 AM – 7 PM

Venue: Living Traditions Centre, Bikaner House, New Delhi

Extended Venue: Till 31st October at Black Cube Gallery, New Delhi.

Sanya Malik, Founder and Director of Black Cube Gallery, presents Vartaman, a solo exhibition by contemporary artist Yashika Sugandh. The show is a poetic reflection on the fragile balance between humanity and nature, capturing the present moment with imagination that fuses the two realms. Yashika's work conveys both wonder and remorse for our encroachment on nature, urging us to restore harmony with the world we share. Tree branches, a recurring motif in her practice, symbolise nurturing and interconnectedness. Drawing on the precision of Indian miniature art, her technique creates a visual language that stirs memory and emotion. Vartaman asks viewers to reflect on their responsibility toward the environment. Rooted in the ethos of humility and selfless service values echoed in the Bhagavad Gita, her work becomes a call to honour the quiet generosity of nature and to live with reverence for all beings.



34th Annual Ravi Jain Memorial Foundation Exhibition & Awards 2025

Date: September 29 – October 15, 2025 (Sunday Closed)

Timings: 11 AM – 7 PM

Venue: Dhoomimal Gallery, G-42, Outer Circle, Connaught Place, New Delhi

Awards Ceremony: October 14, 2025

Dhoomimal Gallery, India's oldest modern art gallery, presents the 34th Annual Ravi Jain Memorial Foundation Exhibition & Awards 2025. Launched in 1991 by Smt. Uma Jain in memory of her husband, the legendary gallerist Ravi Jain, the initiative continues to nurture and celebrate young voices in Indian art. This year's edition transforms the gallery into a dynamic space alive with more than 120 works by 60 emerging artists drawn from across India. Visitors will encounter a wide spectrum of practices — paintings that reflect both abstraction and figuration, delicate works on paper, bold sculptures in experimental materials, as well as video and digital installations that engage with technology and the changing face of contemporary life. Each medium adds to the larger narrative of what it means to create in present-day India, offering glimpses into personal stories, cultural memory, and urgent social concerns.

The exhibition has been carefully curated to highlight diversity, not just in medium but in perspective. Some works speak in quiet tones, inviting reflection through detail and intimacy, while others confront viewers with scale and immediacy. Together, the show becomes a mirror of a restless generation of artists negotiating between tradition and innovation, between the weight of history and the pull of the future. For audiences, the experience is not just to view but to engage, to see how multiple visual languages can coexist and challenge each other under one roof.

On October 14, the Foundation will present the Ravi Jain Memorial Awards to four selected artists, each receiving ₹1,00,000 and mentorship opportunities. The awards are a continuation of a legacy, but the real essence of the exhibition lies in the works on display — in the voices of 60 artists who may well become the defining figures of tomorrow.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW | DESIGN DIARY



Enzo Catellani,
Founder of Catellani & Smith

Founded in 1989, Catellani & Smith has become one of Italy's most distinctive voices in lighting design. Handmade in Bergamo, every piece reflects Enzo Catellani's belief that light should move beyond function into poetry. With iconic works like Fil de Fer and sculptural collections that blur craft and art, the brand has earned global recognition while staying true to its artisanal roots. In this exclusive interview for Design Diary, Enzo Catellani speaks about the philosophy, inspirations, and spirit that continue to shape Catellani & Smith.

Catellani & Smith was founded in 1989, almost as a spontaneous experiment. How did those early years shape the brand's identity?

More than a spontaneous experiment, it all began in an unexpected way, almost like a miracle. I started building my lamps without knowing if I would ever sell them. Having come into contact with the lighting world and its key players at the end of the 1970s, I began studying how materials interacted with light and created my first models in my small workshop, assembling components, welding, and shaping materials. Later on, I had the opportunity to present these objects to an international audience on the occasion of the Ambiente Fair in Frankfurt. These first entirely handmade lamps achieved immediate success, resulting in more than 1,400 orders. To fulfill those orders, I had to enlarge my production and found Catellani & Smith, which continues to reflect my personal idea of a company built on the value of Made in Italy and artisanal craftsmanship.

In the following years, new collections joined those first “Timeless Objects”: Luci d’Oro, Stchu-Moon, Lucenera, Fil de Fer, PostKrisi... composed of handmade articles. Even today, as at the beginning of my career, when I create a new lamp, the starting point is not a drawing but a prototype, because the idea must immediately take shape and become an object, the result of a craftsman’s work. Only afterwards does the actual design phase begin: feasibility, technical features, and so on.

Since 1989, things have changed with the growth of the company, increased production, continuous attention to the most innovative technologies, and extensive research that has allowed us to patent innovative solutions for making our lamps—but Catellani & Smith lamps are still made in Italy, in our workshops along the river Serio, near Bergamo, and they are still entirely handmade.







Catellani & Smith lamps are often described as poetic, sculptural, and expressive. How do you translate these qualities into design?

The creative process stems from the desire to create “illuminating objects” capable of producing an emotional, engaging, delicate, decorative, and relaxing light, while at the same time being objects able to personalize the room and the space in which they are placed. The study of how different materials interact with light has given rise to many diverse collections, but shapes, finishes, colors, and lighting effects all express my research into light in different forms—from minimal and poetic lamps that emit a delicate glow (i.d. Light Stick, For You...) to more technical lamps like Lucenera and finally to sculptural objects that diffuse light or create surprising effects on a wall (PostKrisi, Ensō...). As I mentioned earlier, it is an idea of light that takes shape in my mind, and then I need to translate it into an object.

What does “handmade” mean in your practice, compared to industrial production?

Our production consists of pieces that require significant artisanal work, giving life to lamps that are unique in every detail. Unlike industrial production, which is based on repetition and standardization, our handmade approach relies on the uniqueness of the artisan’s hand working each piece, making it one of a kind. Catellani & Smith lamps are not mass-produced, nor made from molds or using energy-intensive machinery, but from the manual work of our skilled artisans. Even small imperfections do not represent flaws but characteristics of craftsmanship, since it is the artisans’ hands—with their experience, sensitivity, and attention—that transform each lamp into an object “with a soul.” Moreover, we do not keep stock in our warehouse; we make each lamp to order, which allows us to be more flexible in meeting the needs of clients and the requests made by professionals for custom lamps. In our workshops, there is no assembly line or repetitive work all day long; instead, our collaborators alternate between the various phases of production and work in large workshops with parquet floors,

wooden furniture, and background music. Therefore, we give each lamp the necessary time to ensure its quality, without any rush.

Which material has surprised you the most for its creative possibilities?

Considering the last years, I would say that brass has surprised us the most for the endless creative possibilities it offers. It can be drawn, milled, turned, laser-cut, engraved, or spun; it can be purchased in bars, tubes, sheets, or wires of any section. Brass materials allow for both lightweight structures and heavy elements, according to the various needs. It can be welded, given galvanic finishes, and painted, and it is an excellent electrical conductor. We are forgetting some of its qualities, and we will continue to discover new possibilities with this material.

Fil de Fer has become a symbol of Catellani & Smith. What makes it timeless, and how has it evolved since its creation?

Fil de Fer is a timeless creation, recognized as a work of ingenuity worthy of copyright protection for its creative and artistic value. Aluminum wire is shaped and intertwined to create a sphere illuminated by numerous light points, capable of generating evocative lighting effects. It is a lamp that recalls the universe with its countless stars. It is a sculptural object, despite the lightness of its structure. It captures attention, creates unique atmospheres, and can be placed in both classically furnished interiors and modern homes, private residences, renowned hotels, and public spaces. I believe this versatility is the key to its success, which has made it the company's icon.

The project dates back about 25 years: I was asked to design a light fixture that was lightweight yet voluminous for Palazzo Poli, near the Trevi Fountain in Rome. Among the prototypes I created for the project—though not the one I installed, which is still placed in the Dante Room of the Palace—there was a sphere, born almost spontaneously while working with iron wire. This prototype gave birth to the Fil de Fer lamp, which takes its name from “iron wire”: it is a sphere entirely handmade by our artisans, who bend the aluminum wire and weave it into a spherical shape and then insert, one by one, the tiny bulbs.

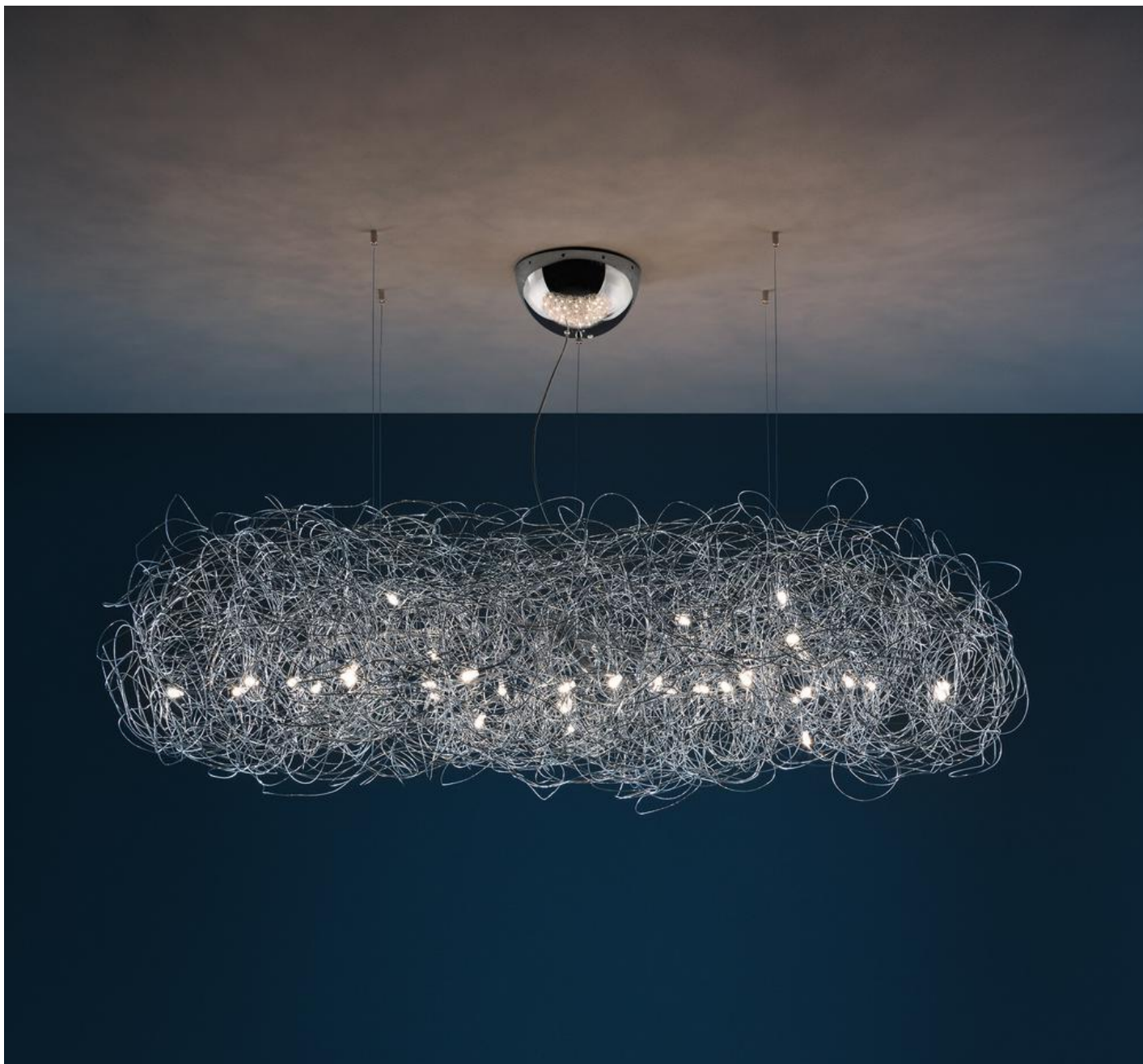
The original iron wire was soon replaced by aluminum wire, known for being more malleable and luminous; Fil de Fer quickly achieved great success worldwide and is now part of the permanent collection of Italian Design at the Triennale Design Museum and the Expo Museum in Shanghai, as well as the "Quirinale Contemporaneo" collection located in the Palace of the Presidency of the Italian Republic in Rome.

Fil de Fer has also been developed in different models and sizes, including outdoor versions and a gold anodized finish. Just to mention a few of them: in the Uomo della Luce lamp, the sphere is supported by the sculptural arms of an iron silhouette; in smaller dimensions, the sphere becomes Sweet Light, which turns on/off with a simple touch; in the Nuvola model, it takes on a new shape, as in Cascata or Corrimano. We have also made custom-made versions of Fil de Fer for special projects, in large dimensions.



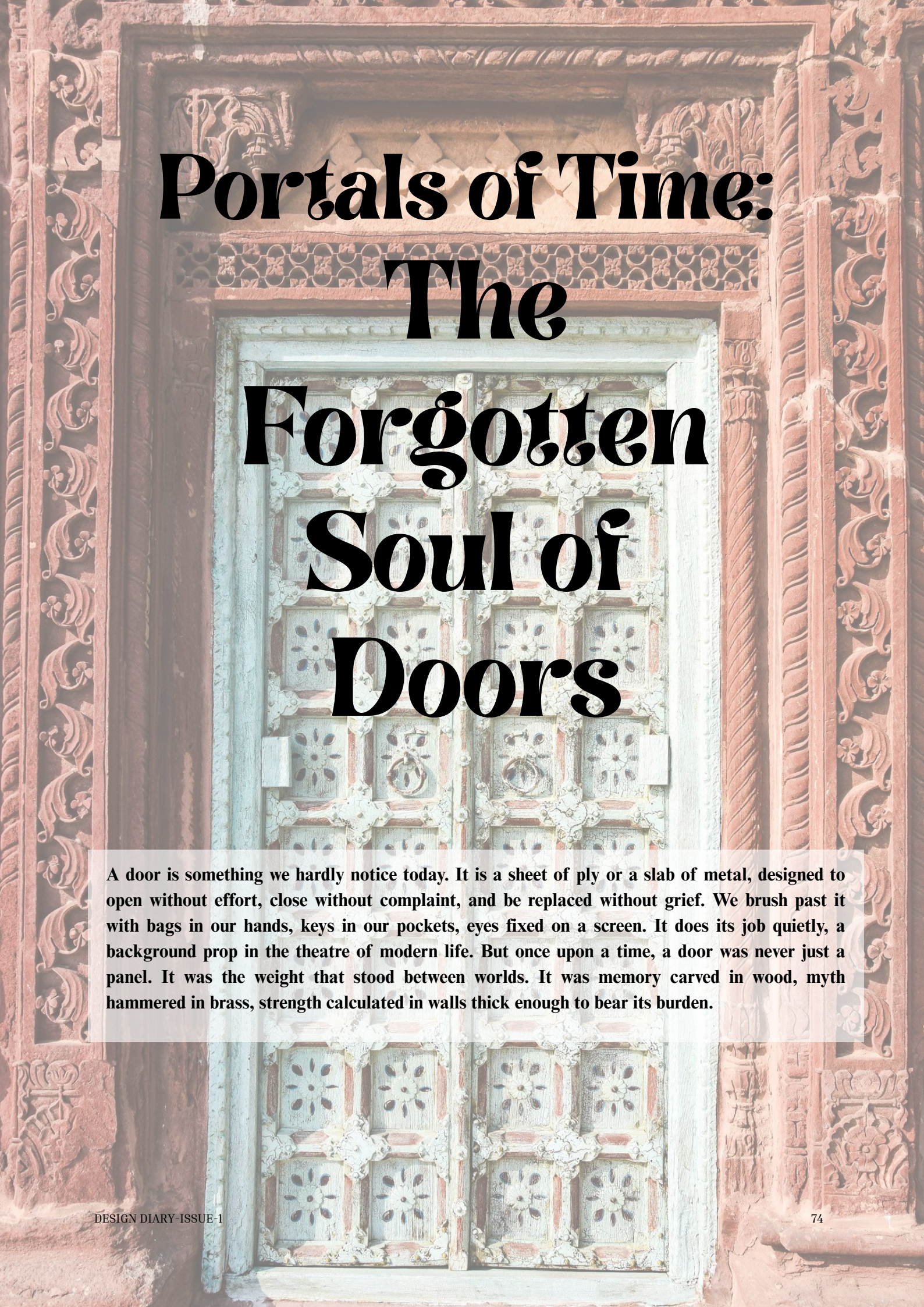
What are your main markets? Are there differences in how your designs are received in Europe, Asia, and North America?

In addition to Italy, which accounts for about 30% of turnover, the remaining 70% comes mainly from European markets: Germany—the first country to appreciate my creations—France, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Outside Europe, Asia is the most significant area, particularly China, Hong Kong, and India. Some markets prefer specific collections or finishes, but overall, the spread of our best sellers is quite consistent.



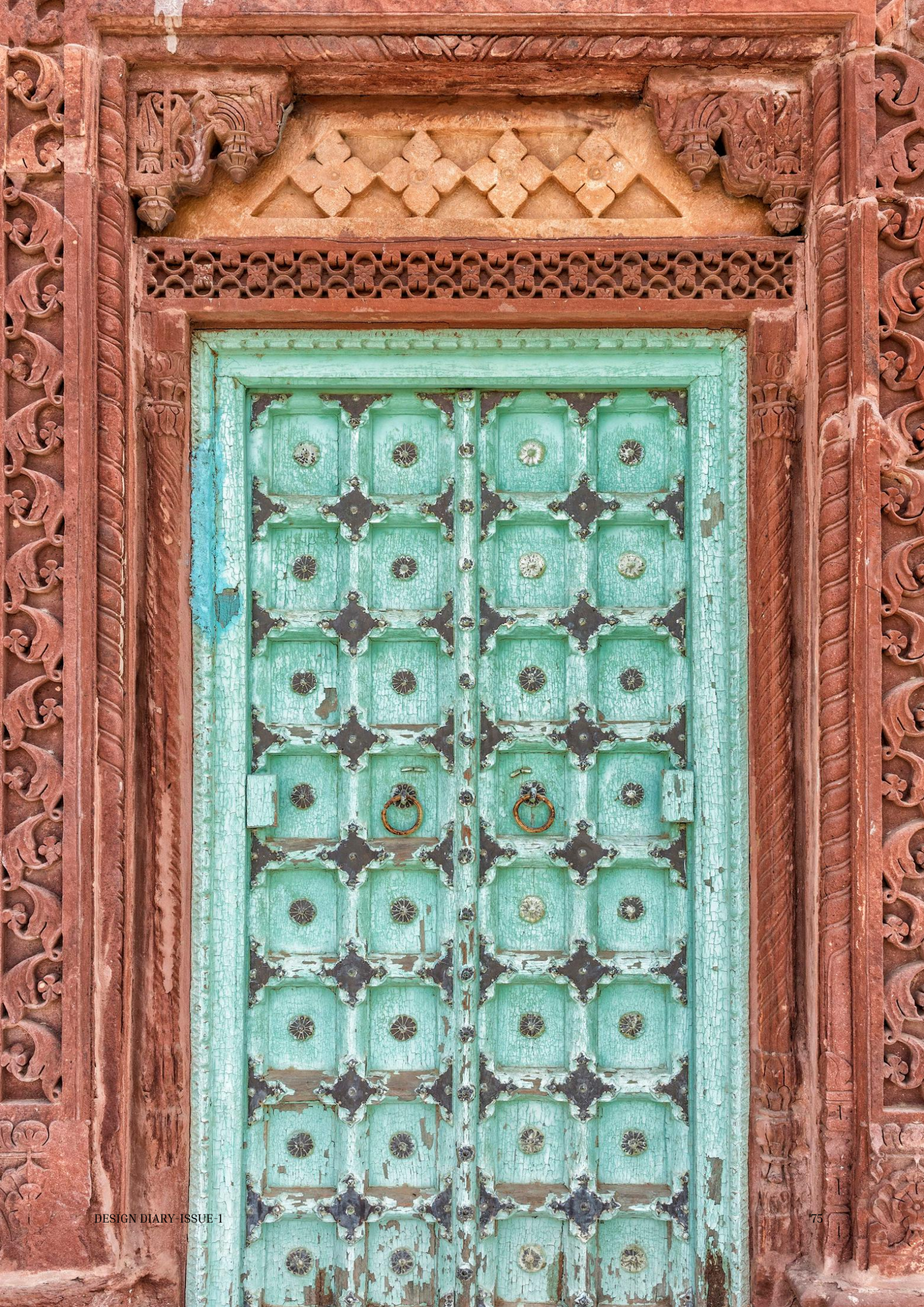
What are you currently exploring in the studio? Any new directions, materials, or inspirations?

Currently, we are exploring various ideas without a specific direction. This year (2025), in April, we presented our latest collection (Pòta!) at the EuroLuce international fair in Milan, and now we are working on our next lamps. At this initial stage, we are evaluating various possibilities, studying different materials, and assessing potential solutions. If we consider our different collections, we may say that our lamps were born from a new light source such as LEDs (Atman, Light-Stick, Lederam, Petites Bijoux, Pòta!), or from the interaction between light and a new material (Stchu-Moon, Fil de Fer, PostKrisi, Luci d'Oro, etc.), or by applying innovative and patented systems of electrical energy distribution (Enso, Pòta!, etc.). Therefore, we will evaluate our new projects in relation to these three main areas: light source, materials, and electrical distribution system.



Portals of Time: The Forgotten Soul of Doors

A door is something we hardly notice today. It is a sheet of ply or a slab of metal, designed to open without effort, close without complaint, and be replaced without grief. We brush past it with bags in our hands, keys in our pockets, eyes fixed on a screen. It does its job quietly, a background prop in the theatre of modern life. But once upon a time, a door was never just a panel. It was the weight that stood between worlds. It was memory carved in wood, myth hammered in brass, strength calculated in walls thick enough to bear its burden.



Step into an old palace in Rajasthan or a temple in South India, and you will understand what has been lost. The moment you face one of those ancient doors, you feel resistance. It does not swing at the push of a finger. It groans, it leans on its hinges, it makes you acknowledge its presence. The wood is dark and polished with centuries of oil, the metal studs shine where countless palms have pressed against them. It stands taller and heavier than you expect, like a sentinel who has seen it all, the festivals, the coronations, the wars, the life and the death. Such a door is not an object; it is a character, and it has a personality of its own.

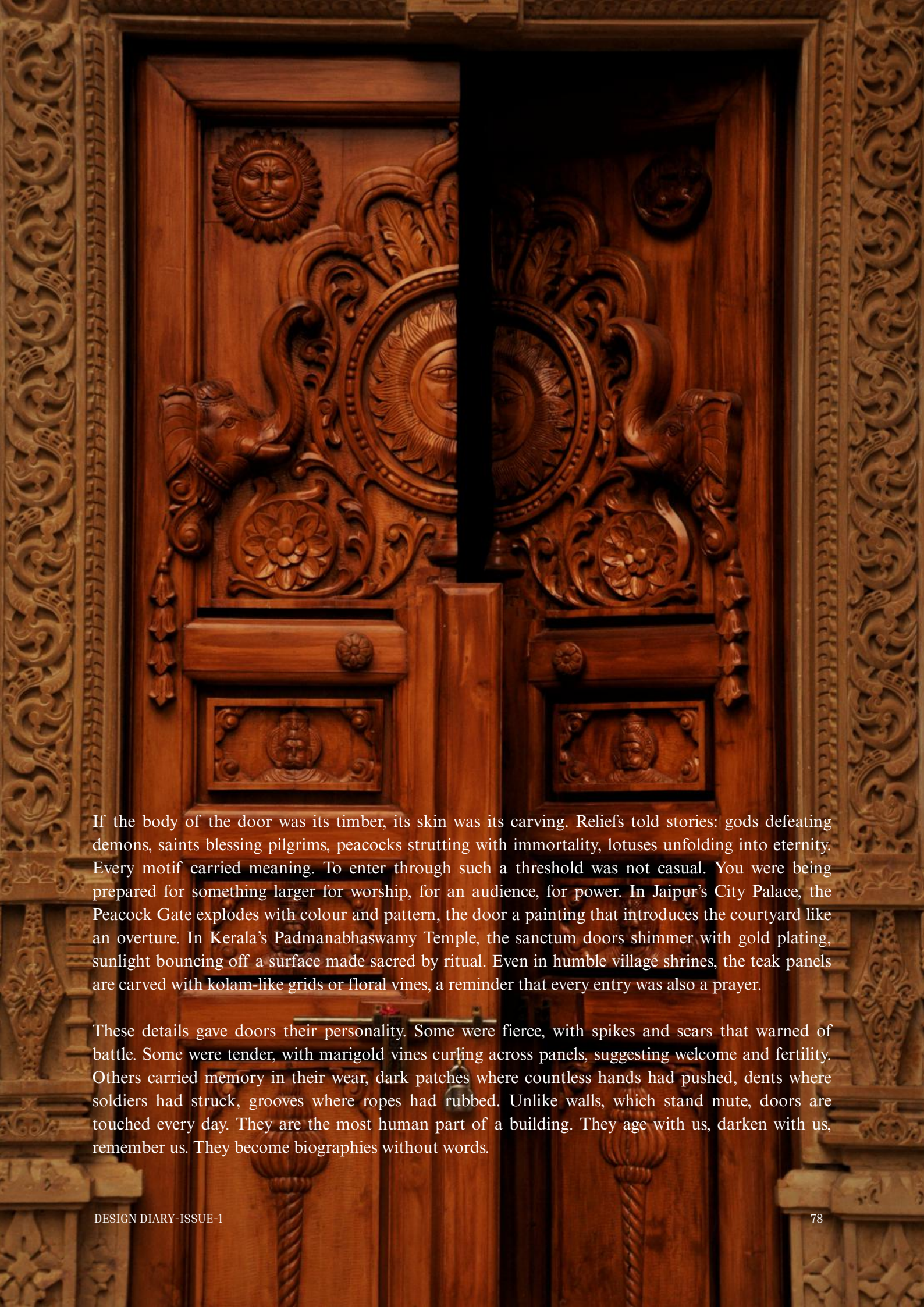
The survival of these portals is no miracle; it is craft and knowledge. Ancient carpenters were guardians of science in their own right. They knew that teak from Malabar would outlive generations because it carried natural oils in its veins. They knew that rosewood was so dense and heavy it behaved like stone, resisting warping and splitting even in the heaviest of rains. In Kerala, rosewood doors still gleam with a reddish-black sheen, their carvings as crisp as when the chisel first kissed them. In the sanctums of Tamil temples, sandalwood was used not for strength but for soul, its fragrance turning every opening into ritual, its softness allowing for fine, devotional carving. In the north, walnut doors carried delicate vines and arabesques across their surfaces, curling into patterns that seem to breathe centuries later. These were not random choices; they were deliberate, born from a respect for material and a sense of permanence that is alien to us today.

And then there was weight.

The gates of Mehrangarh in Jodhpur weigh hundreds of kilos, their brass bosses designed to turn back the charge of elephants. To carry such mass, the fort walls were built more than a metre thick, anchoring the door like a limb of the fortress itself. In Madurai's Meenakshi Temple, the great sanctum doors are plated with brass, each plate embossed with yantras and divine motifs, their surfaces gleaming with oil and touch. The weight was not symbolic; it was real, and it demanded architecture that could hold it firmly, where every opening was an act and every closing a statement.







If the body of the door was its timber, its skin was its carving. Reliefs told stories: gods defeating demons, saints blessing pilgrims, peacocks strutting with immortality, lotuses unfolding into eternity. Every motif carried meaning. To enter through such a threshold was not casual. You were being prepared for something larger for worship, for an audience, for power. In Jaipur's City Palace, the Peacock Gate explodes with colour and pattern, the door a painting that introduces the courtyard like an overture. In Kerala's Padmanabhaswamy Temple, the sanctum doors shimmer with gold plating, sunlight bouncing off a surface made sacred by ritual. Even in humble village shrines, the teak panels are carved with kolam-like grids or floral vines, a reminder that every entry was also a prayer.

These details gave doors their personality. Some were fierce, with spikes and scars that warned of battle. Some were tender, with marigold vines curling across panels, suggesting welcome and fertility. Others carried memory in their wear, dark patches where countless hands had pushed, dents where soldiers had struck, grooves where ropes had rubbed. Unlike walls, which stand mute, doors are touched every day. They are the most human part of a building. They age with us, darken with us, remember us. They become biographies without words.

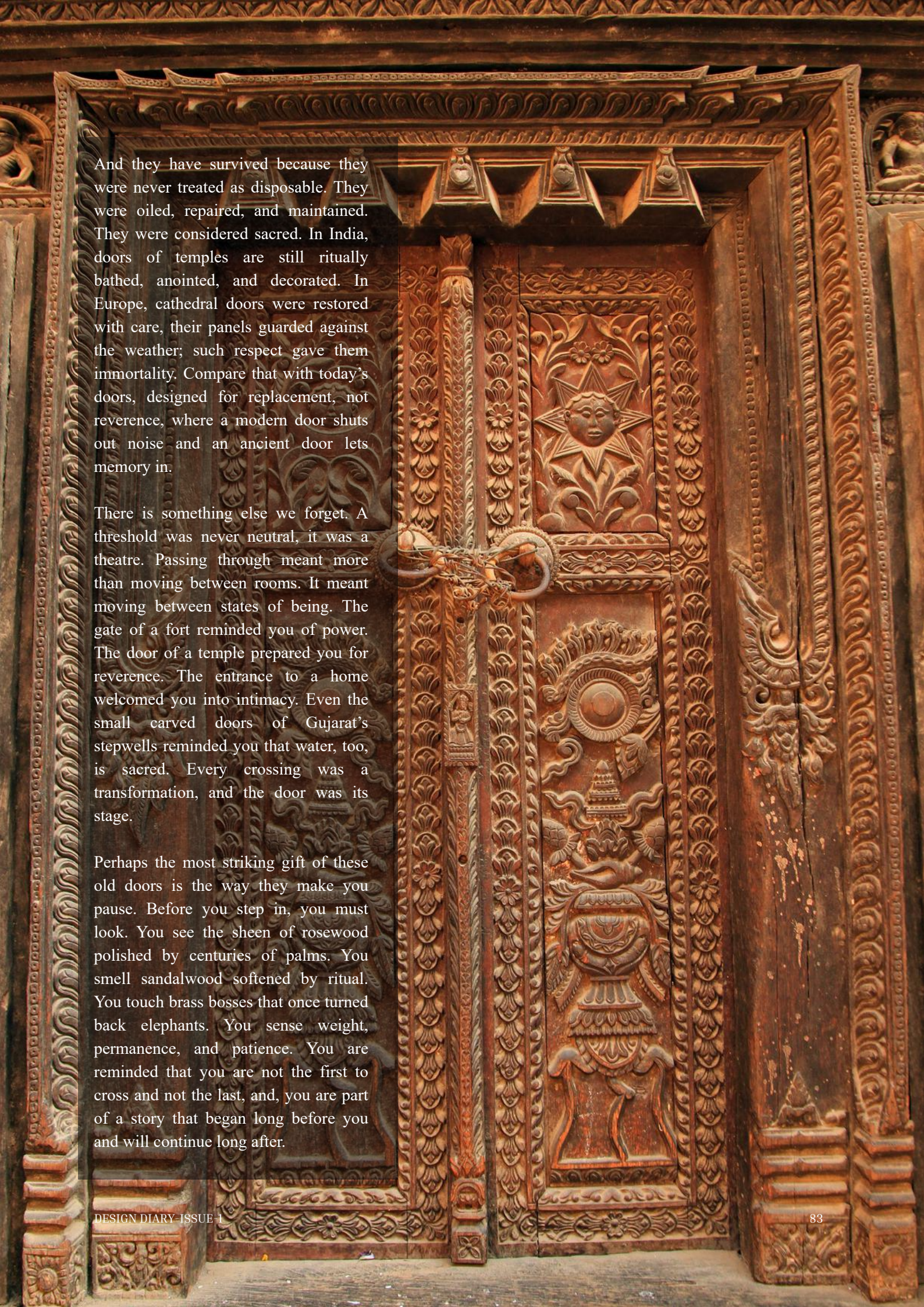


Beyond India, the story continues. In Florence, Lorenzo Ghiberti spent twenty-seven years casting the bronze panels of the Baptistry doors, later called the “Gates of Paradise.” Biblical scenes rise from them in such depth that they seem to open into other worlds. In Poland’s Gniezno Cathedral, twelfth-century bronze doors tell the life of St. Adalbert in thirty relief panels, figures still alive in gesture after eight centuries. In Armenia, walnut monastery doors from the thirteenth century look woven rather than carved, so intricate are their patterns. In Nepal’s Bhaktapur, Newar craftsmen turned sal wood into lace, their doorways alive with vines and guardians that seem ready to step forward. Everywhere, across cultures, doors were given reverence because they were the one part of a building that everyone touched, every day.





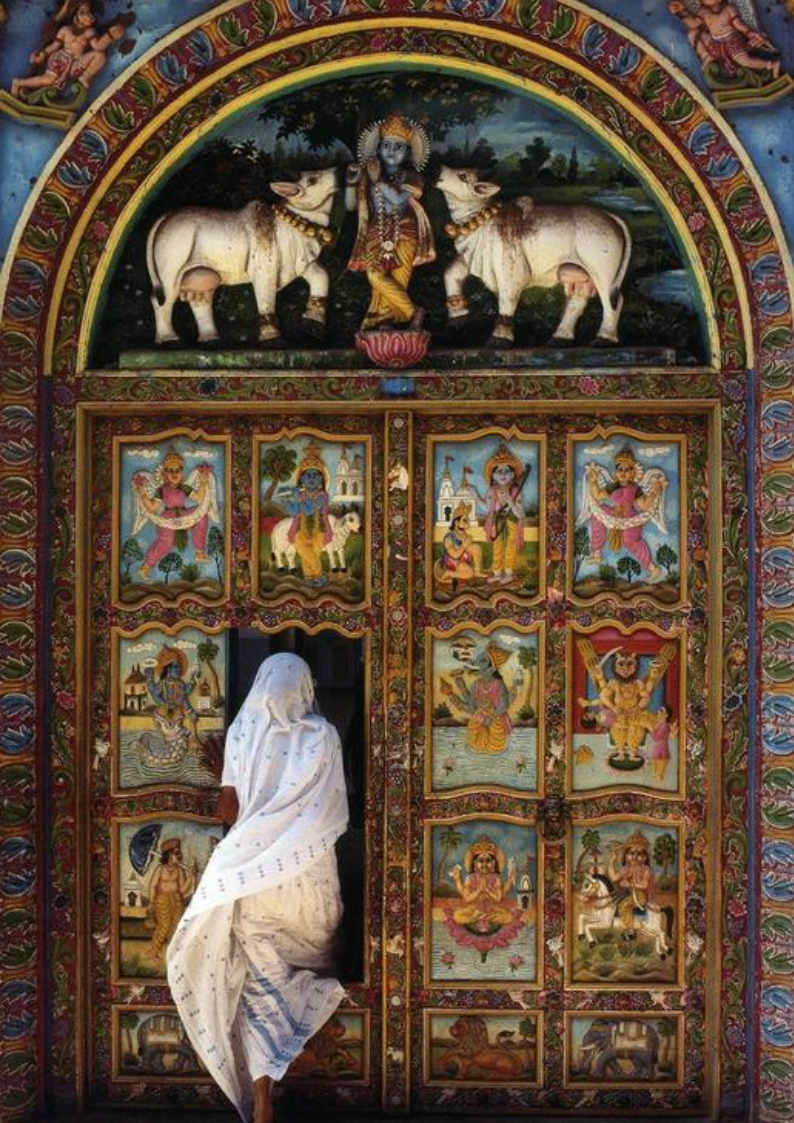


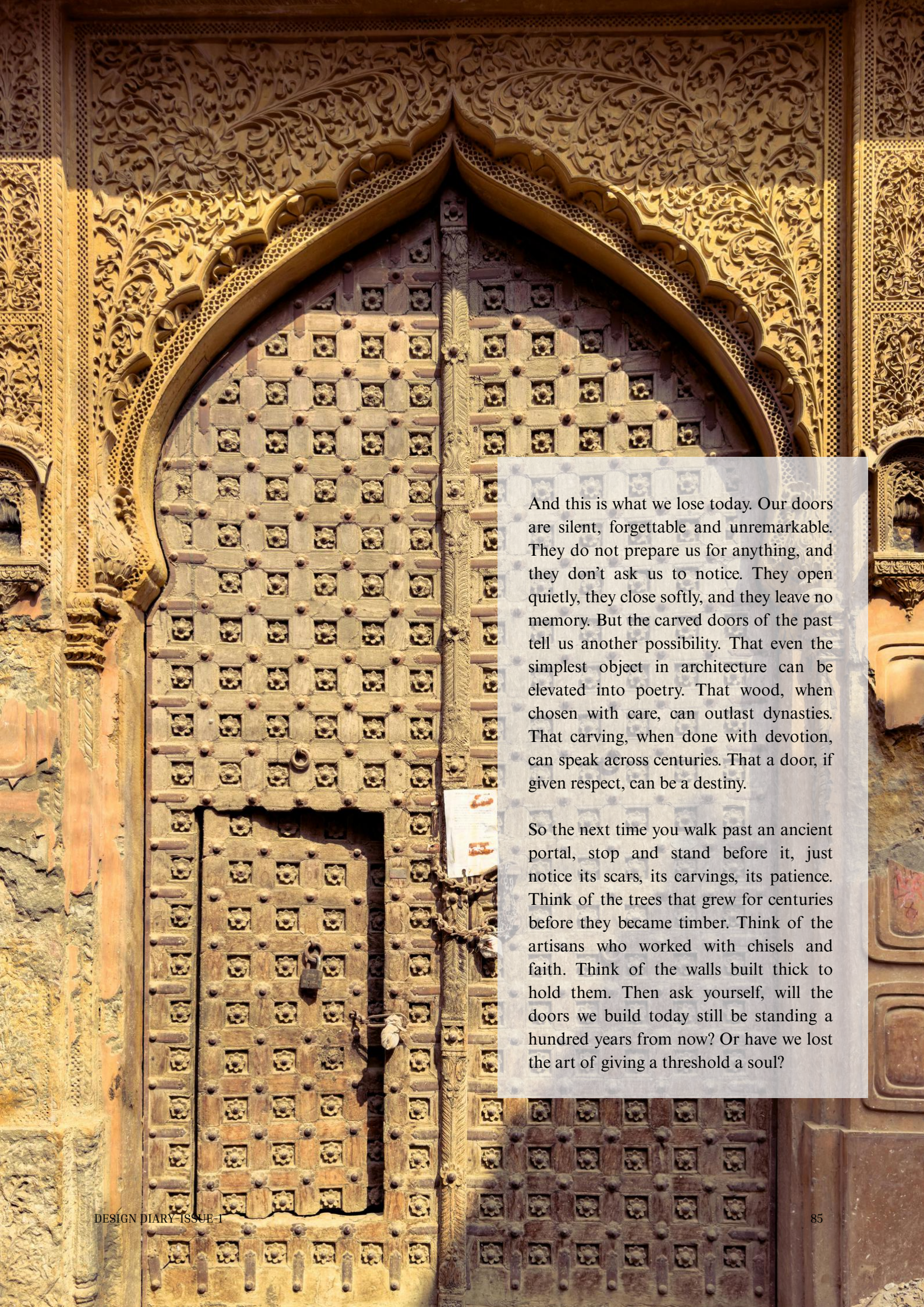


And they have survived because they were never treated as disposable. They were oiled, repaired, and maintained. They were considered sacred. In India, doors of temples are still ritually bathed, anointed, and decorated. In Europe, cathedral doors were restored with care, their panels guarded against the weather; such respect gave them immortality. Compare that with today's doors, designed for replacement, not reverence, where a modern door shuts out noise and an ancient door lets memory in.

There is something else we forget. A threshold was never neutral, it was a theatre. Passing through meant more than moving between rooms. It meant moving between states of being. The gate of a fort reminded you of power. The door of a temple prepared you for reverence. The entrance to a home welcomed you into intimacy. Even the small carved doors of Gujarat's stepwells reminded you that water, too, is sacred. Every crossing was a transformation, and the door was its stage.

Perhaps the most striking gift of these old doors is the way they make you pause. Before you step in, you must look. You see the sheen of rosewood polished by centuries of palms. You smell sandalwood softened by ritual. You touch brass bosses that once turned back elephants. You sense weight, permanence, and patience. You are reminded that you are not the first to cross and not the last, and, you are part of a story that began long before you and will continue long after.





And this is what we lose today. Our doors are silent, forgettable and unremarkable. They do not prepare us for anything, and they don't ask us to notice. They open quietly, they close softly, and they leave no memory. But the carved doors of the past tell us another possibility. That even the simplest object in architecture can be elevated into poetry. That wood, when chosen with care, can outlast dynasties. That carving, when done with devotion, can speak across centuries. That a door, if given respect, can be a destiny.

So the next time you walk past an ancient portal, stop and stand before it, just notice its scars, its carvings, its patience. Think of the trees that grew for centuries before they became timber. Think of the artisans who worked with chisels and faith. Think of the walls built thick to hold them. Then ask yourself, will the doors we build today still be standing a hundred years from now? Or have we lost the art of giving a threshold a soul?

DESIGN DIARY

NEXT ISSUE



If the first issue was about doors that spoke of time, temples that carried centuries of silence, and designers who turned light into poetry, the next promises to go even deeper.

We turn our gaze to windows and jalis — not just openings, but frames of life itself. From latticed stone screens that cooled Mughal courtyards to hand-carved wooden windows that turned into canvases, this feature will reveal how light and air become art when filtered through design.

We also revisit temples, living testaments of craft and devotion to explore their architecture beyond stone and scale, into rhythm, geometry, and the stories hidden in carvings.

For the lovers of form, we bring you a study of the most iconic chairs in design history, pieces that have shaped the way the world sits and thinks. Alongside, we open conversations with product designers who are reshaping contemporary aesthetics, and brand profiles that remind us why vision matters as much as craft.

Every page is a thread in the larger tapestry of design ancient yet evolving, rooted yet restless.

Stay tuned. Design Diary International is only just beginning.

A large, ornate crystal chandelier hangs from the ceiling of a grand, vaulted hall. The chandelier is made of brass and crystal, with many lit candles. The background shows the intricate architectural details of the hall, including arched ceilings and columns. The lighting is warm and golden, creating a luxurious atmosphere.

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