

# Architects Of Their Own Dreams

Within their profession or outside, the thirst for fulfilment of unique aspirations drives many professionals beyond their expected and familiar calling.

**T**he common perception that architects design buildings and interior designers just create good looking interiors started being challenged many decades back, especially with development of technology, new avenues of growth and social evolution. A shift in generational aspirations at the end of the last century and post that further accelerated the venturing out of those with architectural qualifications into newer pastures.

The blending of creativity and expertise in craft has proved to be interchangeable in many ways. The phenomenon of Satish Gujral – the artist who delved into architecture, laid bare the fact of art and architecture being such a closely linked field. Similarly, in the UK, Thomas Heatherwick could well be the ‘renegade’ architect since he also has his grounding in art. His frustration, according to him, at encountering "sliced-up ghettos of thought" of art, architecture and a wide range of other related fields has made him consider all design in three dimensions, not as multi-disciplinary, but as a single discipline.

No wonder the purists are disturbed at some level or the other with such audacity.

Fortunately, today's times are well suited to disruptive creativity. While these two might be ‘outsiders’ in a way, the numbers of ‘insiders’ who shifted to the outside or on the edges of their technical calling is legion. More qualified architects have ventured into fields beyond their profession and have created an impression, blazed a new trail as well.

The digital revolution in the last few decades has helped architects to expand their creativity, talent and expertise beyond mainstream architecture.

The convergence of technologies has inspired and assisted them with career options and freedoms not encountered by previous generations.

## Going beyond frozen education

A certain extent of stultified education could be responsible for pushing creative set from reaching out to fresh shores. Many architecture students realize that architecture is in fact not for them as they graduate but the ecosystem of architecture still remains their favourite place. For them, design and art might be

the logical options. Their education as an architect in fact proves to be a significant advantage in alternate professions as an artist or designer. In fact the profession of graphic designer and the architect come as close as siblings.

Architectural education barely ever includes any business management training and the newbie professional learns it on the way but what college teaches and help build is a high level of visual literacy which extends into photography and visual communication.

As designers, architects have a great requirement to be effective communicators. How they talk about and inform about their projects becomes a great pivot on which their progress hinges. This talent of the gift of the gab, coupled with good language skills is a sure fire plank for careers in journalism. The numbers of qualified architects who are totally into media is something few know about.

At our editorial office at Architecture Update, we had and have our own set of bright eyed architecture students and professionals who excel at writing on the subject and have taken up the journalistic profession like fish to water!

Industrial design is also close to the mother subject of architecture. Furniture design is the first cousin of the subject which architects love to adopt. Zaha Hadid Architects are also dabbling in the field, thereby underlining that furniture design may appear different but remains a natural, though tangential interest of an architecture professional.

The numbers of architects who were gaming fans as students have used their talent and training to good use by turning into creators of those games. Big companies that churn out exciting action games have scores of architecture students building urban landscapes, buildings and 3D versions of all that in the virtual world.

## Diverse fields of expertise and talent

While moving to fields related to design might be a natural consequence, architects have inhabited still more distant realms and with such success! Politics, for one.

Israel's current Prime Minister holds two degrees from MIT, one in architecture and another in management. Not that it

is new thing. It was a practicing architect who turned into one of the founding fathers of USA and authored the 'Declaration of Independence'.

There have been several architects or architectural enthusiasts who have been fine poets. From Michelangelo from centuries ago to Thomas Hardy in the 19th century, they were all architects who made their mark in different fields. While Michelangelo needs no introduction for his sheer diversity of talent, Hardy won numerous awards from the Royal Institute of British Architects and even played a major role in the design of London's historic St. Pancras Station. However he is better known for his novels and poetry. In fact, many architects have also found ways to blend their passion into their practice, thereby creating a new category of those who moulded their passion into their profession to celebrate both!

## The Indian scene

The end of the last century and the surge of opportunities for alternate expression in India has spawned a new breed of creative people from the architecture field who selected diverse fields to give vent to their talent.

Remo Fernandez, who revolutionised the Indian music scene and single-handedly introduced modern sensitivity to popular music in the country studied architecture but is better known for his passion of music.

## Best of both worlds

While Remo's Goan roots were helpful in grooming his pop music

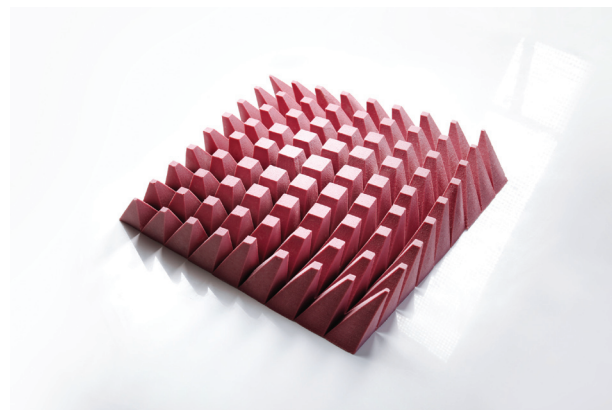
talent, for Akila Venkataramani who pursued architecture from Bhausaheb Hiray College in Mumbai it was photography that caught her attention. Today she delves in art and culture photography and exclusive wedding photography as a profession and has made such a success of it yet she simultaneously pursues her architectural interests and focuses on mud architecture!

Brajesh Saijal, Director and principal architect, DAC, evolved his decade long architecture practice and a few years back, stepped into the realm of urban design and started designing public projects. However, his passion for travel inspired him to create World Architecture Tours, an exclusive travel enterprise providing architecturally curated tours to over 40 destinations globally. An exception to those who moved away from architecture totally, Brajesh has blended both interest and profession seamlessly. However not many have fared that way.

Riteish Deshmukh might not have become such a great star on the celluloid firmament but as graduate in Architecture from an institute of architecture and environmental studies at Mumbai he did give up his assignment with an architecture firm abroad to indulge his passion.

Purists can arch their eyebrows but architects with a flair and passion for the different will definitely pursue their dreams through thick and thin. Holding a Bachelor's degree in architecture from IIT Roorkee, take the case of Vaibhav Sethia. Yet to step into his 30s, he is one of India's well known stand-up comedians who always has an interesting tale to tell and make the world smile.

*The rebel, as it goes, will always have the laugh.*





# Hand-in-hand with Architecture

Architecture, the mother of all arts, is a platform for expression for many. Honing their creative streaks and struggling through the long and strenuous course of studies, architects choose this path to establish themselves as designers. Very few amongst them follow their passion further and venture into its allied fields and carve their own career paths. Sharing the stories of their journeys to success, **Bhumi Gupta** and **Ambarin Chougale** offer a sneak-peak into their out-of-the-box minds.

## Ar. Adil Writer,

Ceramic Artist at Mandala Pottery

### TURNING POINT

I don't recall there being any particular moment when I decided to stop doing architecture and work as full-time clay artist; one never leaves architecture after all the years of studying and working in the field. This was not a conscious decision for me, I think the medium chose me. It wasn't very much of a diversion; I was earlier making buildings with clay bricks, now I am making sculptures with clay; just toned the scale down a bit.

### TRANSITION

It has been extremely smooth. More than just my changing from architecture to ceramic sculpture, it was the fact that almost 20 years ago, I had moved from Bombay to Auroville that challenged me, from the big urban megapolis to a small village of the future.

### PEERS/FAMILY SUPPORT

I come from a Parsi family with extremely supportive parents who were of course at one time, flabbergasted when they realised that I was slowly moving from architecture to ceramics, from Bombay to Auroville. But not at any point was change ever questioned. Family and peer support are very important in one's life. My newfound Pondicherry and Auroville friends became my "also" family and there's been no looking back.

### CHALLENGES

Living life in Auroville after an urban lifestyle in Bombay was more of a challenge than a future in ceramics. However, to my advantage was the fact that I have a legion of friends and family in the architectural field who are interested in my work and from whom I get several commissions for murals and installations. It also helps that I have seen life from the other side as an architect and interior designer, so I know what it takes for a complicated installation on site to be made easy for the architect and client. The practicality of installation is always at the back of my mind when I am planning something which is very site-specific. In the same way, I also like to work with artists from other media; it takes me out of my cocoon, opens up fresh thoughts and a new aesthetic emerges.



### FINANCES

Living in a rural area has its advantages. Life is more affordable and value for money is higher than the big bucks one needs to spend in a big city. Having said that, Mandala Pottery in the last two decades has grown from a small production pottery unit into one of the more recognised studios in south India. We make quality hand-made, client-specific functional tableware as well as architectural installations and murals for the local and international market. 80% of my work here is the functional-ware; the rest that I make, my sculptural work, is what takes me across the world for residencies, conferences and related invites. There is always an element of surprise in people when I say that I have a fully functioning ceramic studio and I also have time to do my sculptural work and my large format clay & acrylic paintings.

### FUTURE PLANS- ULTIMATE GOAL

I do not plan for the future because everything I do is extremely spontaneous; every invite I accept is at the spur of the moment. Running a ceramic studio needs constant monitoring and at this point in time, I am running Mandala almost singlehandedly. A few of my partners have left the studio and Auroville for various reasons. Just as well, because it is also a good time for me to enjoy the heat and dust of our Indian summer and make fresh new series titled 'Sweet Dreams'.

### A COUNSEL

I have no right to counsel! I have broken umpteen number of rules and live to tell; I would say that it is important to live the cliché and follow your heart; because the journey has to be enjoyed, not that dodgy destination. The Universe will eventually take you there anyways.

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



SWEET DREAMS series,  
sodafired porcelain & stoneware  
11 inches height



## Ar. Anupriya Sahu,

Entrepreneur & Furniture Designer,  
Founder of Alankaram

manufactured in our unit. My mother has also used her creative skills in painting to add a totally new dimension to hand made furniture. My sister has been the greatest admirer of my work and has been amongst the first to like every post on the social media.

### CHALLENGES

Being a novice in the field of manufacturing, we had to learn a lot of new things. Doing humongous amount of paper work for governmental approvals, several unsuccessful attempts for fund raising, taking hundreds of interviews for manpower, training and attempting to retain the skilled as well as semi-skilled staff, making samples after samples for the initial first few furniture till one gets the right proportions and ergonomics, etc. have been part of the journey over last 40 odd months.

Like any business, it takes time and effort to create your own space, but a dedicated and hardworking team has ensured that we are doing well so far and will keep touching new milestones.

### FINANCES

Probably most difficult part in the journey has been finances. Without any support from banking system and governmental bodies, we struggled a lot in our initial days. There were times when we borrowed money every single month from friends and relatives to ensure that we pay salaries on time. Passion, perseverance, belief, gratitude and family support has helped us to turn the business profitable within 2 years of starting.

### FUTURE PLANS- ULTIMATE GOAL

We aspire to be one of the highlighted names in global furniture industry with a contemporary touch in solid-wood furniture. Eventually, we are planning to be a full-fledged Interior decor brand with complimenting collections in soft furnishings and accessories.

### A COUNSEL

My word of advice to the readers would be to believe in yourself and your vision. Being an entrepreneur in current scenario might be mind boggling at times but the faith in your goals will make the journey memorable.

[www.alankaram.in](http://www.alankaram.in)



### TURNING POINT

During my studies in undergraduate days, in second year, we had a project to design a piece of furniture from corrugated sheets, I designed a chair. In spite of made of corrugated sheets the chair was durable and was in use at my home for several years. I think that may have been the first instance to invoke interest in furniture designing. During the course of further studies including during masters, I always had interest in detailing the design.

After completing studies, while working on an interior project, I again got the opportunity to design furniture. Lack of skilled carpenters with experience to work on wood, led me to idea of starting our own production unit.

### TRANSITION

Architecture is about interior and exterior whereas furniture design is niche and specialised part of interior architecture. Though the scale is different, the principles of design in architecture or furniture design are very similar. As an architect, one can understand space designing better and helps to design better furniture.

As an architect, it was easy to setup the first factory in 2015, as one understands site planning, building design, etc. Now when we are starting our larger factory, measuring about 2 lakh square feet, my education in B. Arch and M. Arch, helped me to plan and setup the factory without requiring any help from outside.

### PEERS/FAMILY SUPPORT

I started this business with my husband four years ago and it was a well thought decision. My husband not only opened his pockets in setting the factory, but also has helped me taking informed decisions in every process from selecting the land, buying the machines, purchasing raw material and many a times in designing the furniture pieces.

My father and brother are both civil engineers and they have helped in construction of the two factories. Their understanding of basics of design and construction has helped in training the carpenters and other staff in the factory and improving quality standards in furniture

# Ar. Apurva Bose Dutta,

Author & Architectural Journalist

## TURNING POINT

I can recall a couple of important occasions, rather than one. The first would be when I took up the elective of architectural journalism in my final year of B. Arch at the Chandigarh College of Architecture; it seemed to be an ideal integration of my academic study with 'writing'—a childhood hobby, and a treasured mode of expression. The second was when immediately after my graduation, I got a call from Architecture+Design magazine, to join their core editorial team. This came at a time when architectural journalism had no visibility in India and there were zero prospects. Finally, I can say that the formative years with the magazine gave me a glimpse of what was in store for me; it excited me.

It was the right mix of interest, passion and the realisation of the relevance of architectural writing to architecture that made me pursue the field with gusto, and not look back.

## TRANSITION

In my mind, the transition was only that whatever knowledge and experience I had gained during my academic years, it was being put into words, rather into designs; notwithstanding the fact that the words were indicative of design only.

What was challenging was doing it way back in 2005 in a society that was not accepting of alternative careers and had probably not witnessed in India an architect who had taken up architectural journalism as a full-time profession right after graduation.

The transition was one of the best decisions that I made. Not only I ended up pursuing a career that I wanted, and which involved knowledge of a number of fields, but my journey fortunately also acted as an example for the numerous students and architects who discovered that there was a subject they could pursue that combined skills of architecture and writing.

## PEERS/FAMILY SUPPORT

The architectural industry, especially, when I talk about architects and designers from the senior generation, has always been very supportive because they know the difference critical and analytical thinking and writing can make to the profession. We have been witnessed to it globally for many years. In fact, there are scores of architects who would want to see architectural writing become mainstream.

When it comes to family, there is always an emotional and protective feeling that comes in; of course, my family was very worried and rather clueless (as I was) about what I was going in for. But I think it was only for the initial months, which also flew by because I think they saw through my belief and passion. After which, there was only complete support in what I was going for, confidence in my abilities, and numerous suggestions on how I could further explore the field.

## CHALLENGES

Creating a new career path where there has been no concrete history can be daunting. Right from the opportunities, scope, training in



the subject and exploring the path to create avenues—these were all question marks in the beginning for me, which I had to somehow find or create answers for. While one could term these as challenges, but I think the learning and experience that one gets while trying to create a new journey, is unmatched.

Apart from the above 'challenges', I had to be prepared to answer about the relevance of architectural writing to architecture, and why I considered it significant enough to pursue it. That's not a challenge if someone believes in a subject, is passionate about it and willing to exemplify the patience, perseverance and courage that is needed.

Even today, I keep on exploring new avenues, and I am thrilled to see the endless opportunities that architectural journalism can offer.

## FINANCES

Journalism, in any field, has never been a very high-paying job, especially in the initial years of one's profession. However, once you are at a stage where you have been able to achieve 'something', you should be able to make things work for you. Having said that, I must add that it's very important for every industry working with architectural writers to acknowledge the niche skills of the two professions of architecture and writing that we come up with. Even when it comes to book publishing, it is so unfortunate that even though being an author derives fame and recognition from the book, but there is no financial gain.

An architectural writer should be able to communicate about architecture through multimedia and diverse modes of communication. This further opens a lot of avenues for them and puts them in a place where they are able to manage their finances much more effectively.

## FUTURE PLANS- ULTIMATE GOAL

The first 10–12 years of my career were extremely focussed on bringing architecture, design and professionals connected to it to the forefront, whether in India or globally. My book, 'Architectural Voices

of India' was also a step to create a discourse in the field. Alongside, I have always very actively been promoting the subject of architectural writing in India on various academic and professional platforms.

Over the past 2-3 years, keeping in mind the regular feedback that I get from students and professionals about the lack of 'proper' training in architectural writing, I have been conducting workshops to train them.

The future plans would be to not only continue communicating and discussing architecture and design across the world but also contribute towards making the subject a mainstream profession in India. Of course, the support of the Council of Architecture (COA), the fraternity and architectural institutions are essential to make things materialise.

#### A COUNSEL

I think it's essential that the architecture, design and building

industries come forward to recognise niche skills in architecture and related fields on a larger scale. This will only enhance what these alternative skills can contribute to the profession.

Apart from which, COA, architectural institutions, architecture and design publications and other related organisations should try and promote these relevant skills and subjects by supporting their proper training, providing a platform for the implementation of these skills, and rewarding and thus acknowledging the vitality of these skills.

Architecture and design are fields that have no boundaries, and they spill over our daily lives. It's important to respect these fields and not only recognise all kinds of skills other than designing that can help in their growth and development, but also develop the courage to pursue them.

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

## Ar. Archana Periera,

Illustration Artist, Founder of Ink Trails

#### TURNING POINT

It was after my Masters in Architecture, where one of my electives was Drawing as Research and I found it really interesting and started sketching out places I travelled to, its heritage, architecture and culture. I first displayed my work at a few art shows and also online and the response was extremely encouraging and that just made me sketch more.

And after which I was chosen for the Young talent Program organised by Alliance Francaise, Bangalore and I had a week-long solo exhibition for the first time. This was when I decided to focus on illustrating cities and architecture as a career.

#### TRANSITION

The transition has been quite smooth and happened in a year's time as I was initially doing both art and architecture and I slowly moved on to art as I started getting more projects in this field. Although I really love space planning and architecture, I find what I'm doing right now very satisfying.

#### PEERS/FAMILY SUPPORT

I've been very fortunate to have very supportive family and friends all through this transition and they continue to support as I work on developing Ink Trails as an illustration brand.

#### CHALLENGES

Juggling between actually making time for art and managing the business is a challenge at times. It is challenging but exciting at the same time.

#### FINANCES

Along with doing art, it's very important to focus on the business aspect of it as well and it has been good so far for Ink Trails. I believe it's very important to reach out to the right people and also establish yourself on various platforms.

#### FUTURE PLANS- ULTIMATE GOAL



To grow Ink Trails as an Illustration Travel Brand bringing together art and architecture, creating awareness about the heritage and **history** of different places and its architecture.

#### A COUNSEL

It's never too late to follow what you're really passionate about. Keep working hard, learn more, practice and find a way to be fiscally responsible while following your passion.

[www.inktrails.in](http://www.inktrails.in)





## Ar. Dinara Kasko,

Pastry artist from Ukraine

my main job and it brings me money, and I do my best to keep developing this business.

### FUTURE PLANS- ULTIMATE GOAL

After the delivery of my second child, I'm planning to spend some time with my family and then start working again – we will start working on creating video classes, new moulds and recipes, and I will start teaching again.

### A COUNSEL

I think that the most important thing is to feel comfortable – to work as much as you can and as much as you want. But if you want to reach high results in any field, you need to study a lot and work a lot. If you don't need it, simply try to find that balance that is good for you.

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

### TURNING POINT

It was not just one day when I switched from one field to another one. Everything was happening gradually. When working as a visualiser, I practised baking at home. Sometime later, I realised that making pastries was far more interesting for me than what I was doing at that moment. So after my daughter was born, I was not back to my previous job but started devoting all my time to making pastry.

### TRANSITION

Everything was happening gradually over time. The transition was smooth.

### PEERS/FAMILY SUPPORT

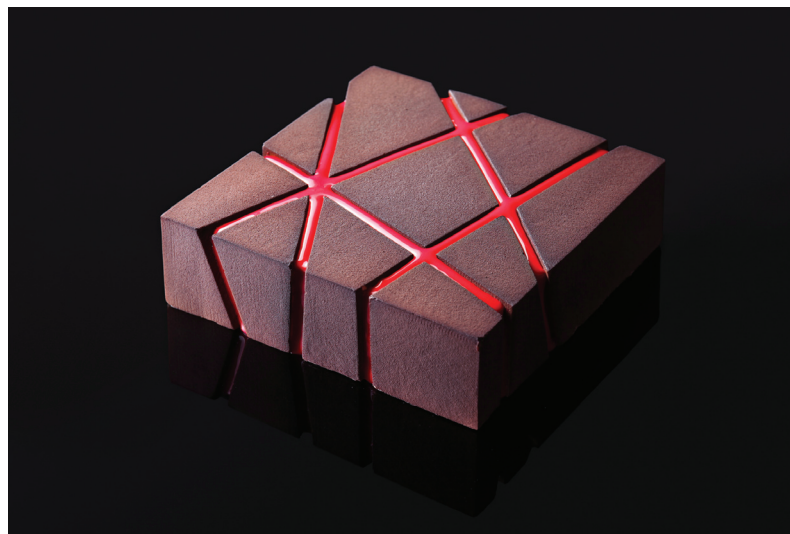
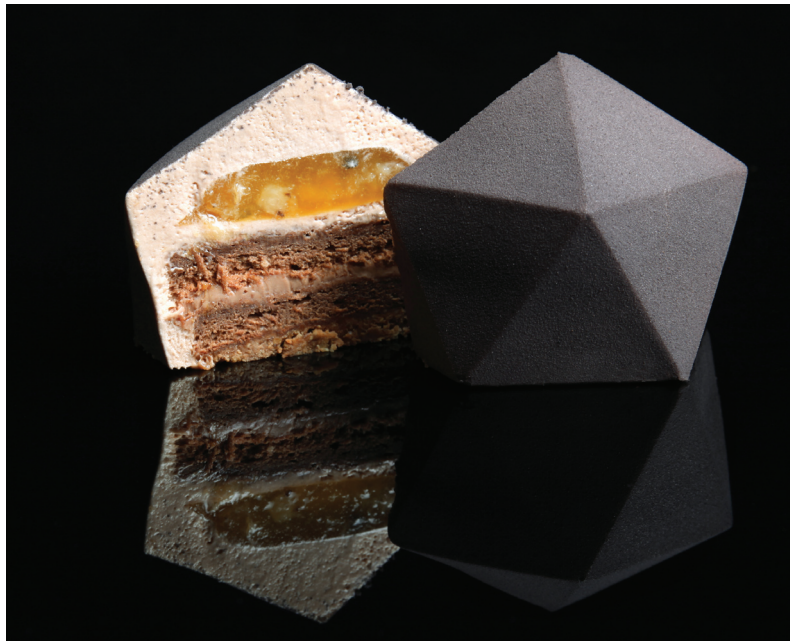
First, baking was my hobby, and nobody paid a lot of attention to that. But when baking became my main job, actually, everybody in my family was supportive, however, my parents still hoped that I would continue to work in architecture as I have a degree in this field. But I made my choice – even if you have a degree in a particular field, it doesn't mean that you need to work in it all your life – you can start doing what you like as interests might change throughout your life.

### CHALLENGES

Throughout my journey, there were a lot of challenges. First, it was learning recipes, taking classes, practising everything etc. Then there were some questions regarding taking pictures and making videos. When I started teaching myself, I had faced new challenges as I had to travel abroad to conduct classes (that means that I had to spend a lot of time without my family); it's also hard physical work. When I opened my studio, I got some additional tasks – I have to organise everything, teach my team, and do everything I can to get good results.

### FINANCES

I invested a lot in studying, and I didn't think about returning this money as baking was just my hobby at that time. Now it has become



## Ar. Kunal Bhatia,

### Architectural Photographer

#### TURNING POINT

I studied architecture in Kamla Raheja following my passion which was developed since childhood as I was fascinated by buildings. I enjoyed my period of education and my college opened me up to diverse fields and not restricted to one. I discovered my interest in writing during my first year summer internship where we were asked to work in allied fields and not architecture. I was working in an editorial team during my intern and that developed my skills further. My passion for photography increased during the last years of my study course when I would shoot during college trips in different parts of the country. I did not own a camera back then. I used to shoot using my friend's camera. I realised my strong passion for photography while travelling around Europe in 2009, in the last year of my study, when I went to Switzerland for around 6-7 months for an exchange program. After my graduation, I was working with a design firm full time for two years. Upon realisation that my interest lied more into shooting architecture and interiors, I started taking up smaller projects, learning along building my portfolio. I shifted from full time to part time with architecture in the next year and gradually moved to full-time photography. That's how the initial journey has been. Moving in and out, I've been doing full-time photography since 2014.

#### TRANSITION

The transition was smooth due to my architectural background. It both has similar elements involved; design, projects, materials, architects. Because of my dedicated focus to architecture and interior design photography, apart from my personal work of travel photography, I am still surrounded by architects and designers. One advantage of being an architectural photographer is that I get to see more design projects than I would have seen as an architect. There is a lot of exposure. It is a transition from one creative field to another. Also, most clients I work with understand that a photographer is also a creative professional. You cannot treat a photographer as a vendor. A photographer, like any other creative person, should be given the



freedom to express to achieve better results. Being an architect, you have your own preferences too.

#### PEERS/FAMILY SUPPORT

My parents were never happy with my decision of pursuing architecture in the first place. Like all other parents, they wanted me to become an engineer or a doctor. But they accepted it once my course started. After disclosing my plans of switching to photography, they were surprised but they had observed me enjoying it over a period of time. It was not an overnight decision so they made peace with it eventually. They still question me about my decision of not designing anymore to which I say that the option is always open. Once an architect is always an architect you can always go back.

#### CHALLENGES

I never studied photography formally. Other than a photography elective in college, which was also very helpful, I did not take any coaching. When I ventured into the field, it was all digital. I had to teach myself completely. There are plenty of resources available online but one should have the patience and dedication to do that and understand that there will be mistakes from which you'll learn. According to me, this was one challenge. The other part of the challenge is how to run a photography business. To sustain in the long run with your passion one needs to know how to charge a client, how to break it under heads, the importance of contracts with every project, licensing, copyrights, credits, to validate the work. Resources are largely available online. You just need to have the patience and perseverance to learn. Photography is unlike architecture. The technical and functioning part cannot be learnt with online resources. The entry barrier in photography is much lower. If you have the eye, you can pick up the technical knowledge online and business can be learnt through experience in addition to the tips and tricks through internet resources.

#### FINANCES

Finances, initially, is a struggle since you are not very well known so you cannot charge much. I would advise that one should not do much work for free. A little work done to develop the portfolio and get the experience is understood but charge nominal. Once your portfolio has a decent amount of work, you need to learn how much to charge. Understand the fundamentals; adjust your fees according to clients and projects but charge. Over the years of experience, one learns how much they should charge vis-à-vis the time required to work.

#### FUTURE PLANS- ULTIMATE GOAL

As long as photography keeps me interested I will continue doing it. Photography is a physically taxing component. There is a lot of energy required on site so things done now will be different at the age of 50. There are options for expansion and hiring assistants and



Picture Courtesy : Keta Shah



technicians, which is necessary, but it is the photographer's eye that people want on site. Photography cannot be discussed in the office and executed by juniors on site. The individual's presence is mandatory. I am ambivalent about how long I will continue photography but as long as I am interested and people are giving me jobs I'll be doing it. If I

ever feel that there is a drag and can't make sense of what I'm doing, I'll stop

The primary goal of any shoot will be to showcase the project in its true form. For instance, if I am visiting a project for the first time, I may not be able to comprehend the idea of the designer behind certain aspects. It is necessary that someone from the designer's team is present to fill in the gap that the photographer may miss. We try to convey the concept of the project within the images. As a photographer, I bring my own perspective to the site and capture it but keeping the intent of the designer in mind. Often the client's preference overrides the designer's idea so during our shoot we try to minimise the client interferences and bring the focus to the original concept of the project. The ultimate goal of photography is not mere documentation but to communicate the designer's vision. We aim to translate that vision into the end product.

### A COUNSEL

I would advise the students to finish the course first. Explore the myriad of options available along with study. Follow your passion but take care of the financial constraints too. To survive in any creative field, one should think about sustenance in the long run. One can explore their passion and interest along with architecture practice simultaneously. If the interest is substantial throughout, they can proceed with the new options keeping in mind the financial stability in tandem. For every creative field, there are two vital things required; the potential to do it and to understand the business point of it. Always plan it out carefully.

## Ar. Nikhil Kovale, Production Designer

### TURNING POINT

I always wanted to be an architect. Because of the culture of the institute, I was studying in and my family being great Bollywood buffs, I was interested in films from the beginning. Because of studying architecture, I started noticing the kind of houses made in films. During one of the events in college, Mahesh Bhatt was called to give a lecture on architecture and cinema and spoke about how the former is important for the latter. That is when I realised for the first time that there is a possibility of combining the two fields.

### TRANSITION

It seemed like a huge jump at that time but now when I retrospect, it was not. After the lecture by Mahesh Bhatt, I started thinking about the movies. Later, in my third year of architecture, I came across an advertisement asking for sketching artist to make drawings for the sets of a movie that was being remade. Though it was a bad experience, it made me think of the profession of art direction. I still wasn't sure of this field of work and hence started working with an architect after my graduation for my professional training. This job had me visit civil engineers frequently, which in turn made me realise how unsuitable I was for sitting and discussing money-making.

I was suggested to look up a senior architect Ved Segan, he used to make



sets for Jennifer Kapoor at that time. He suggested me to quit Architecture and continue making sets. Not long after that, with help from my seniors, I met a production designer named Samir Chanda. After working with him for a song, I came across Bijon Das Gupta, he in an interview was talking about architects in film production. He pushed me towards working for an exhibition design in Lucknow, something that was new for me. Eventually, I approached a company in Mumbai called showbiz, they had many architects on their payroll. Through them, I was introduced to Priya Suhas and started working as assistant art director for her. By working with her

for more than four years, I understood the industry well and finally started working independently.

### PEERS/FAMILY SUPPORT

It was a surprise in the first place for all as architecture as a field of work was something very new to my family and on top of that, further choosing to work in films was a shock.

Fortunately, my family has never questioned my decisions, be it professionally or personally. In the beginning, they were concerned about me earning out of something I knew nothing of. My father had given my two years' time to figure out things in the field and finalise my career path. In those two years, I did not make much money but I got started working on a big budget film, things were good. With time I started earning enough to sustain my own living and it was a proud feeling for my parents to see my name on the big screen.

### CHALLENGES

This industry is seen to be as glamorous, but from the inside, it's purely hard work and passion that gets a great outcome. One issue is, as architects we come from a white collared profession and the film industry is not. It takes time for the work to speak for itself and gain a certain stature in the crowd. Art direction is not just about creating sets, it's about creating ambiances.

The frustration of not getting the kind of work that I want to do **has** been a major struggle in my career life. Crisis of not getting good people to work for me is another hassle that I've faced. If your kitchen is working, your heart is working. The world wants to work with the people who are doing well, rather, unfortunately.

In production design, realism requires research whereas designing about fantasy becomes difficult as its pure imagination. The research and study help me to grow as an individual but architecture helps the production design of the film in totality. But, when it comes to cinema, you have to have certain cinematic liberties that have to be taken into consideration for the audience to feel happy when they're watching something on the screen. Sometimes, we need to keep the logic aside and use magic with that logic to make the frame look beautiful. The audience doesn't want to come and watch something that is very real but not entertaining, which poses a challenge for the architect in me.

### FINANCES

I don't think I am financially sound yet. I am fortunate that I didn't have to bear the burden to support my parents financially, also, having another earning member in the family helps, my wife in my case. I have the liberty to still struggle in the industry.

Once I got independent, the reality struck, I realised that if the film is not good, despite your work being great, you won't get recognition. It took me around ten years of me being independent for me to be known in the industry. Once I was done with the Marathi movie Ventilator, I started getting good work in the Hindi cinema as well like, Naam Shabana, Mulk, Article 15, etc., which have duly filled my pockets.

### FUTURE PLANS- ULTIMATE GOAL

I've had assistants who are uneducated and have now reached a certain level because of my trust in them. I am trying to change the fact of saluting the rising sun and appreciate the ones who need appreciation in true sense. I make sure to adapt and bring changes in my work according to the changing times. If I don't move ahead with time, I may have to retire in the next five years.

I don't have any ultimate goal per se, the idea is to keep on doing good work, continue doing the kind of films I'm doing right now, **have good** people around me and try to step into bigger projects. I would like to do a fantasy film if an opportunity presents itself, something that will expose me to the scares of my life considering the background that I come from and the work that I've done. If given a chance, I would like to do a project overseas too.

### A COUNSEL

A lot of architects need to understand cinema, it is bound to help them in their work too. There is a life beyond buildings. If designers try to understand that, good architecture will happen. If I get a chance, I would like to educate designers about the art direction industry and talk to them about the dramatics behind the design.

Design students, particularly in architecture, need to see a lot of films, listen to music and be updated with news of different languages and places, it helps in gaining exposure and expressing through design. Architectural appreciation needs to be sound in our society. You see cinema, you see the world.

[www.imdb.com/name/nm2045516/](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2045516/) ▲



Picture of the set from the movie Article 15

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