



Manik Rastogi: Defining Indian contemporary architecture



Passive cooling in a series of courtyards at The British School



Surat Diamond Bourse, the world's largest single office building



Built to navigate large numbers of people quickly

Morphogenesis

Among the country's most lauded firms, Morphogenesis was founded in the 1990s with an eye "towards expanding the boundaries of architecture and environmental design with sustainability at its core", and to take advantage of the country's economic liberalisation. Founding partner Manik Rastogi wanted to "define Indian contemporary architecture" and use it as a tool for innovation. The British School in New Delhi, with its traditional passive cooling and *dhajjas* (projected overhangs and verandas), and the forthcoming 62ha Surat Diamond Bourse in Gujarat, are just two examples of how it might. The world's largest office building, the Bourse is designed to consolidate India's diamond industry and intended to provide a regional economic boost. "Given the scale of the development, the primary challenge was to enable easy navigation for large volumes of people within the trading-time constraints," says Rastogi of the Bourse, which has been designed with vertical nodes less than one minute apart (on foot) that will enable 65,000 people to get to work in less than seven minutes from any entry point.

As the world urbanises, the kind of place-making Morphogenesis and its peers are already realising will become not only the norm but also a necessity.

But as India's myriad influences demonstrate, the country doesn't exist in a vacuum and, as is the case in many locations, homegrown designers are constantly adapting Western technological innovations to India's five climate zones and varying urban densities. "Indian cities have completely transformed in the last decade," argues Rastogi. As a result, many studios are not only multi-disciplinary, they move between smart-city, skyscraper and backwater design with ease. Morphogenesis maintains offices in Mumbai, Bengaluru and New Delhi, and has designed pilgrimage facilities at an altitude of nearly 3,900 metres. "In a way, there is no limit to what India has to offer to the world because of its sheer size, location and diversity. Our vision is to do work that has SOUL; to create not just buildings, but habitats, that are Sustainable, Optimised, Unique and Liveable." morphogenesis.org

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Studio Lagom

Studio Lagom is, arguably, among the emerging crop of talent that pivots on aesthetics. Principal architect Hardik Shah's work is sensual, and the studio's interiors are intensely tactile: smooth woods, rough natural stone, woven fabrics in bright, inviting colours. "We believe in architecture that gives importance to the beauty of each material, by creating the right balance between less and more. We believe in creating form that not only follows function, but creates spaces for lifestyles and cultures," states Shah. The H-Cube House in Surat marries sustainability with history in a contemporary scheme most definitely meant for living. A great deal of the work currently coming out of India is gaining traction for its visual as well as design solution creativity. Adaptive shapes and re-imagined materials underpin functions that works for some of the most complex spaces in the world.

Indian design can also contribute to the rising global ride of shifting lifestyles: more nature, authenticity and community. For Shah, architecture, lifestyle and culture are interconnected, and India's communal heritage is ideal for contemporary living. "Interactive spaces are always a demand and ingredient of Indian architecture in different forms and scales like veranda, courtyards, *dhajji* (squares), or common amenities in today's urban complexes. And it makes our spaces very lively. We talk more of spaces before form. [Indian creatives] are well-suited to provide for different cultures, climate and materials and interpret them in a contemporary format very well."

studiolagom.in



Hardik Shah: Tactile interiors and textures



ABOVE & BELOW think of its cafe and restaurant: Courtyards are an important element in Indian architecture



An urban penthouse apartment with a courtyard and a water feature near the living room