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India

A Penchant for Sustainable Design

At Morphogenesis, architecture (and design) is not just a profession; it is a way of life.





Sustainable design might be a buzzword today, but for Morphogenesis, it has been engrained in their DNA since the very beginning of 1996, to be exact. In the early 90s, at the cusp of globalization and a liberalized economy, Mani and Sonali Rastogi gave birth to Morphogenesis, an architecture firm that has gone on to change the landscape of design and urban planning in India. When it was time for them to pick a design philosophy for their architectural practice, they immediately knew that they felt strongly about sustainability in every facet – environmental, social, cultural, and financial. Today the firm specializes in master planning, architecture, interior design, and landscape design across nine practice areas with offices in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, and Bengaluru. Over the years, Morphogenesis has engaged with the incredible diversity of people, culture, wealth, and the climate in different regions of India, resulting in an ongoing dialogue and investigation into sustainability through passive design, resource optimization and contextual identity.

PREVIOUS PAGE Sonali & Mani Rastogi by Suryan & Dang
 ABOVE Pearl Academy: The Pearl Academy, Jaipur is a radical fusion of traditional and contemporary architecture. The institute creates interactive spaces for a creative student body to work in multifunctional zones that blend the indoors with the outdoors seamlessly. By Andre Faramoni

Having worked across various climates and terrains, the design delivered has always been inspired by the arts & crafts traditions of the region. A valuable learning from the wisdom of the past has been that traditional architecture has always been built sustainably due to a dearth of resources or climatic conditions. Cutting-edge technology and growing awareness of sustainable solutions are giving rise to several structural shifts in architecture. Today architecture, design and urbanism need to be in step with the fleeting trends and rapid evolution. It is this bridge between tradition and modernity where the work of the practice is positioned. Thus, they consider their work 'the Indian Perspective, in the Global Context'. They have brought this mantra to life with the numerous commercial, residential, and corporate projects they have been associated with, including Surat Diamond Bourse, The British School, New Delhi, and Trump Towers, Gurugram, among others.

Morphogenesis has consistently engaged with the cities they work in, beyond the realm of architectural practice. The firm's advocacy work on the nullahs of Delhi -





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- has resulted in policy change. Individual contributions, such as helping to evolve India's indigenous green rating system GRIHA and panel membership with the Delhi Urban Arts Commission to work on modernizing Delhi's bylaws, creating an art master plan, and other rejuvenation interventions, are an expression of their commitment to cultural and environmental sustainability. With this in mind, they founded Manthan, a creative platform for the cross-pollination of ideas between various design disciplines to enable an emergent potential for art and craft that will provide creative solutions in both the design and social realms.

At Morphogenesis, design solutions have an emergent quality due to the approach of looking at various questions through the lens of sustainability. Today, the global real estate

ABOVE Surat Diamond Bourse, the world's largest single office building with a built-up area of 633,341 sqm by Morphogenesis

sector contributes to over 40% of carbon emissions, caused by the development process and building operations. Thus, builders, architects, urban planners and other stakeholders of the industry have a responsibility to adopt sustainable solutions and innovative business approaches that will begin to reverse this damage. Morphogenesis has always been true to their mission of inducing sustainable solutions in their process without compromising on client needs. They deploy passive strategies by responding to the local climate and ecology and are mindful that projects remain economically viable and globally pertinent. They have successfully created exemplars that consume 70 percent less energy than established green rating benchmarks without incurring additional cost. This has resulted in the formulation of Morphogenesis' copyrighted design process-



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Sustainable: Net zero energy, water, and waste to landfill

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Morphogenesis celebrates its diversity and thrives on its high level of cultural breadth to provide that all roundedness and innovation which is a signature of the firm's work. India is an incredibly diverse country, and the firm strives to build on this diversity. Morphogenesis collaborates with universities across the country to attract talent from varied backgrounds, honing a creative studio always infused with fresh thought. Along with diversity, gender balance in Morphogenesis is exemplary. The firm cultivates a culture that harnesses talent and provides growth opportunities to all, without bias - from

ABOVE The Lodi Community Project for Ford's Essentials. "A Prototype for Decentralised Industrialisation & Off-grid HR Architecture." Image Credit: Naughts and Crosses LLP
LEFT Zydas, Ahmedabad. The Kiosk wall offers protection from the harsh temperatures of the highway. Image Credit: Naughts and Crosses LLP
RIGHT Zydas, Landscaped courts for social engagement. Image Credit: Naughts and Crosses LLP

working proactively toward challenging stereotypes and reducing gender bias, ensuring safety of female architects working out of hours, to flexibility in working arrangements for new mothers, all unique in the context of architecture practice in India. Also, the gender pay parity gap has been, and is, non-existent at Morphogenesis.

The commitment required is paramount as there is a tremendous responsibility to oneself, the environment and the community at large. It is perhaps this progressive practice philosophy with respect to knowledge, growth, enablement and opportunity, which has made Morphogenesis a workplace of choice. Sonali's and Mani's strong leadership and efforts to develop this culture has played a key role in building Morphogenesis into an institution with a shared vision and ethos. ■

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