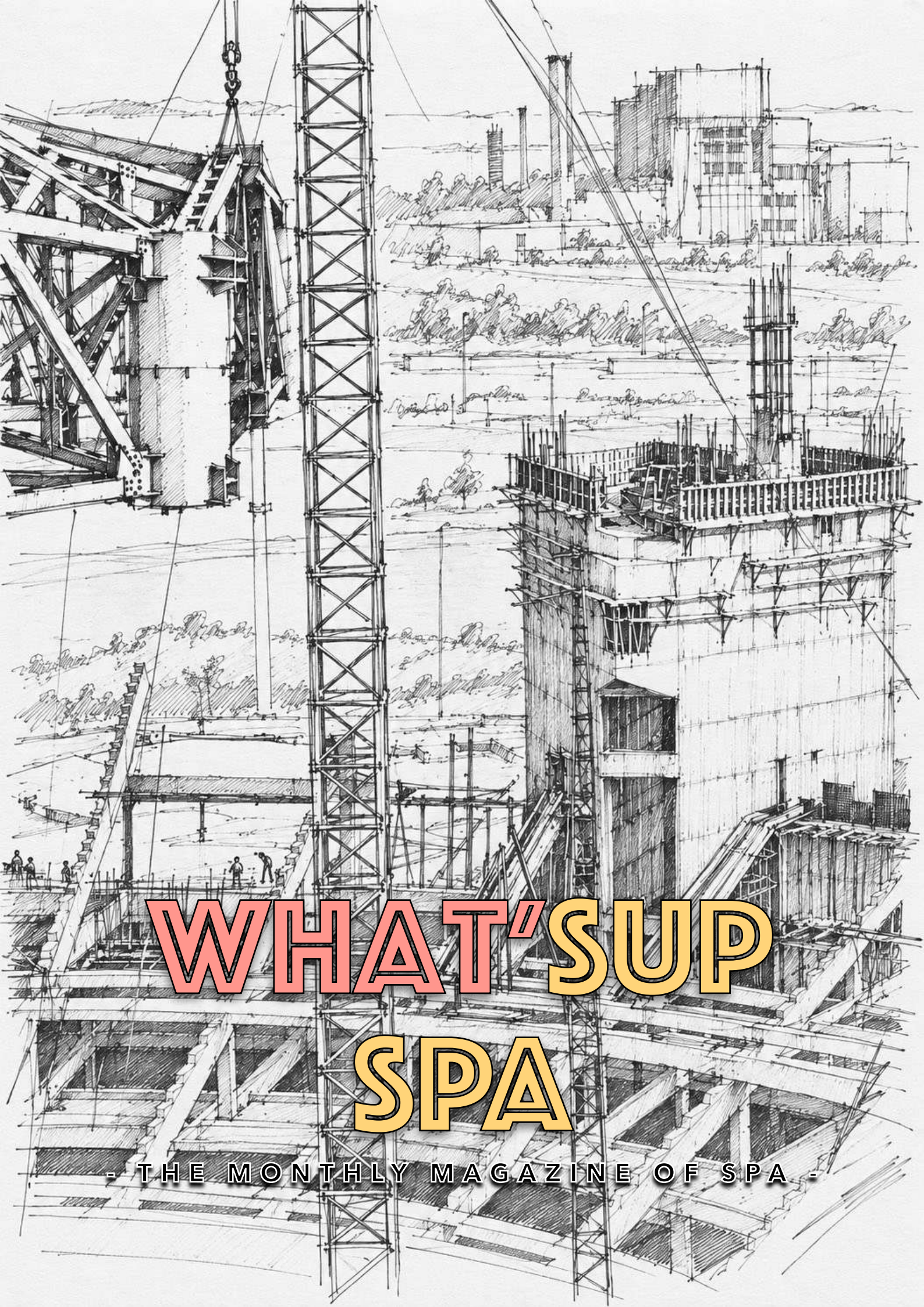




WHAT'S UP SPA

- THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF SPA -

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Editorial Team

Amol Prabhu
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Contributions

Amrita Parkar
Dipesh Dicholkar
Tanvi Badde
Anupriya
Santosh Jadhav
Renu Kulkarni
Surekha Madkaikar
AP Ragesh



Dear all,

Four editions are in, and I find myself intrigued by the response we have received to What'sup SPA than I was in the beginning — not because it has gotten any less meaningful, but because it has become an integrated part of our community so soon.

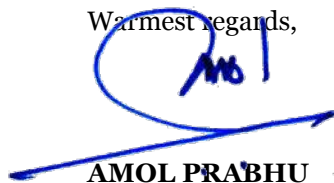
This past month has been a reminder of how much happens inside SPA at any given time. While one team was still unpacking boxes in their new office, another was pouring concrete on hillsides of Northeast, and a third was sitting across the table from a client explaining why a design choice made ten years ago still holds up today. Different cities, different scales, different challenges — but the same instinct running underneath all of it: doing sometimes unglamorous work with a smile, while at other times basking in the glory of praises.

But here's the thing — for every story that makes it into this newsletter, there are five more sitting quietly on someone's desktop. Stories are pouring in from all over, which is a good sign — but we know there's more out there. We encourage all of you to send your bits and pieces to us. You don't need a finished project or a big milestone to have a story worth telling. A tricky site problem your team solved, a client meeting that taught you something, a new face on your floor, even a photo that made your team laugh — that's exactly what this newsletter is for. The best editions of What'sup SPA! won't be the ones we chase down. They'll be the ones that arrive before we ask.

So consider this an open invitation, not a request. Edition 6 starts collecting the moment this one goes out — send us something before we come looking for it.

Here's to Edition 5!

Warmest regards,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amol', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

AMOL PRABHU

Partner

New Address & a new Chapter

by The Editorial Team

September 5th marked a major milestone our Pune studio had been working toward for a long time - **The inauguration of our new office!** It was a celebration of teamwork, craft, and beginnings — and the studio treated it exactly that way. All hands on deck: closing snag lists, packing up the old studio, and settling the new one - one workstation at a time. On the day itself, nothing was left to chance.



An entire two-wheeler's worth of fresh blooms arrived that morning adorning the office, a hand-drawn rangoli greeted guests at the entrance, and every workstation was arranged with the same care the team usually reserves for a house guest. A traditional Kalash Pooja opened the proceedings, followed by our Prabhu Sir cutting the ribbon to the office, followed by a lavish luncheon session attended by all. We spend our days designing environments for other people. This time, for once,

we got a chance to design our home. Here's to a new chapter of collaboration, creativity, and shared milestones in Pune.

Credits: Amrita Parkar

Impromptu Joy

by The Editorial Team

Capturing the quintessential spirit of a wet September afternoon, our Mumbai office swapped their routine tea break with an impromptu, hands-on, street food feast. Everyone took turns customising their spice quotient, while mixing the Sev Pooori and Bhel with banter over who could tolerate the sharpest concoction without batting an eyelid, while embracing the joyful crunch that makes our studio feel like a home.



Most of us spend more time at our offices than in our own homes. What better than to treat your workplace as an extension of our own home? Some might

even consider this as getting paid while sitting at home.

Resolving the form

by The Editorial Team

Behind every serene piece of architecture we design lies a labyrinth of technical rigour, much of which remains unseen to others. Seen in this photograph is our Team Leader, Ar. Akshata Soudagar and her design team, deep-diving into the nitty-gritty of how MEP services could be seamlessly negotiated through rigid structural grids and the bespoke



cantilevered projections of the MMRCL Metro Bhavan in Mumbai while maintaining the design program signed off by the client. It is at this intricate interface between aesthetics, engineering and execution that architecture truly comes together.

Celebrations around Pune

by The Editorial Team

September gave our Pune studio no shortage of reasons to gather around for a celebratory birthday cake. The month opened with the studio pausing the hustle & bustle of deadlines to wish **Deepak Padalkar** a very Happy Birthday. Deepak has been with SPA for over 30 years and is widely recognition for his mild manners, and yet, a solid control on every document that



is generated in the Pune office.

The celebrations continued the office cheering for our new intern **Prachi Deshpande** and our architects, **Ar. Anupriya**, **Ar. Ranveer Pisal** and **Ar. Videsh Gokhale**, whose birthdays saw the workstations around them rallying with cake and cheers.

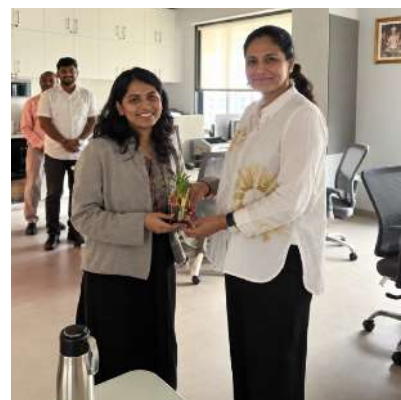
And finally, everyone cherished the birthday of our **Ar. Amrita Parkar** who is the driving force behind our Pune studio. Steering operations with infectious warmth and sharp efficiency, Amrita ensures our culture thrives alongside our deliverables - whether they are construction documents or high-spirited cricket matches, planning team lunches, or ensuring no birthday passes uncelebrated. Happy Birthday everyone!

Our New Stars

by The Editorial Team

Last month, we celebrated a well deserved promotion of **Ar. Aditi Joshi & Ar. Renuka Sampagao** as our newest Level 3 Architects in Pune.

Seen in the photo is Ar. Amrita Parkar felicitating our stars of the day. Aditi, fondly called as the



“Creative Cat” by her peers, is known for her contemplative, yet a no nonsense approach to design, while Aditi, fondly called “The Chatterbox of Vibe”, pairs her rigorous design thinking with a sharp, poetic detailing.



Both, Renuka and Aditi bring razor-sharp precision to their work while managing projects ushering an infectious and a high-decibel enthusiasm to the entire team.

At SPA, we take growth of our employees quote seriously. We grade our technical team into categories, which allows each individual to work within their comfort zone. This enables our teams to perform optimally as per their capability and also to structure their career growth.

Credits: Amrita Parkar

Shaping Sikkim's Sports Village

By The Editorial Team

Achieving another significant milestone, our team **Ar. Santosh Jadhav, Ar. Dipesh Dicholkar, and Ar. Mausum Das**, presented a comprehensive masterplan for **Golden Jubilee Integrated Cultural and Sports Village** to Mr. Vijay Bhushan Pathak (IAS), Chief Administrator-cum-Cabinet Secretary of Sikkim.

Spanning over 70.30 acres of hilly terrain and 15,00,000 sq. ft. of built-up area in Gangtok District, the proposed development brings together an Olympic-compliant football arena, indoor sporting arenas, multi-discipline training grounds, athlete residences, dedicated cultural centre, public auditoriums, and commercial

amenities into a single, cohesive, year-round civic destination. Mr. Pathak commended the team's contextual approach and engineering rigour, offering strategic inputs of his own. The masterplan went on to receive an enthusiastic endorsement from the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim, who was visibly impressed by the design.



With the masterplan approved, the project team promptly moved from boardroom to hillside. An intensive on ground survey followed, evaluating active construction activity on site while assessing the terrain's constructibility in detail. Discussions centred on calibrating space planning against the mountainous topography, resolving outstanding queries, and shaping structural and engineering strategies genuinely responsive to the land, echoing a conversation the team had had months earlier, while designing the Jasral Boxing Academy on a similarly demanding slope. SPA is proud to commence this project as it moves into the design development phase.

Visit Geberit

by The Editorial Team

Usually, an eerie silence falls over a room full of architects the moment they hear the word "siphonic." It is exactly why the SPA teams from Mumbai and Pune Studio travelled to Geberit's Technology Centre in Chakan, Pune, to learn about their state of the art "Pluvia Siphonic Roof drainage systems" at their experience centre in Chakan.



The visit was arranged by our Sr. estimator **AP Raghesh** as a part of the Learning Sessions we arrange for our team. The day combined an expert-led lecture with a walkthrough of full-scale plumbing mock-ups and the manufacturing floor.

The star of the show was a three-storey transparent water tower, built to simulate drainage conditions in real time. The visit closed with a stroll through their experience centre sending everyone home with a healthier respect for what happens above the false ceiling, and a reminder that no roofline survives its first monsoon without someone having thought hard about where the rain water goes.

Credit: AP Raghesh

HBD Akshata

by The Editorial Team

The studio banded together to make **Ar. Akshata Soudagar's** birthday a memorable one by turning the cake cutting into a playful culinary showdown. Catering to all loyalties, the spread featured

two distinct cakes - a decadent chocolate cake for the young and healthy while a vibrant fruit alternative solely for Akshata's



palate.

Between rounds of applause, the celebration continued into late evening with energetic pause to celebrate Akshata's sharp leadership and the vibrant spirit she brings to the design floor.

Celebrations in Mumbai Studio

by The Editorial Team

September gave our Mumbai studio its own reason to gather around a celebratory cake as the team wished our **Tanvi Badde** a very happy birthday.



Tanvi has been with SPA for over seventeen years, a tenure that alone makes her one of the longest-standing members of the SPA family. As the firm's Sr. Accountant, she guards the SPA treasury with two eyes and what we suspect an object shorter than most tongues. This kind of vigilance that has kept our budgets for the better part of two decades.

And yet Tanvi is also the one most likely to be found at the front orchestrating bhel eating contest or organising the studio's Dobble competition, proving that an accountant can supervise both a balance sheet and a plate of Panipuri with equal seriousness.

Double Dobble

by The Editorial Team

This Ganpati festival week, the Revit models, the CAD shortcuts, the redlines, and render queues all took a backseat to razor-sharp reflexes and lightning-fast eyesight of our entire Mumbai office as a four-day Dobble tournament seized the studio.



Organised by the Saint-Gobain team, who invited our crew to build the tallest tower using unconventional puzzle pieces, everyone brought their



signature discipline to the challenge. While the Civil Engineers laid down rock-solid foundations and masterminded load distribution, the HVAC and MEP teams fabricated inventive, out-of-the-box ways to maximise height proving that whether we're designing complex systems or stacking puzzle shapes, we always find a way to reach new heights together!

What began as a harmless round between drawings quickly morphed into a full-blown office obsession.

By mid week, the anticipation was palpable. Workstations buzzed not just with project coordination but with whispered countdowns to post-lunch showdowns and end-of-day

grudge matches. The moment the clock hit the lunch hour — and again the moment the evening wrap-up approached — chairs were pulled in, sleeves rolled up, and a tight huddle formed around the tiny circular tin.

It quickly became apparent that several architects and designers had been running secret solo drills at home, fine-tuning their peripheral vision purely for bragging rights. When the matches began, the studio became an arena of gleeful chaos. Cards were slammed onto the table with the kind of force usually reserved for structural site disputes. Eyesight was loudly questioned, split-second claims were fiercely contested, and every conversational filter dissolved into a crossfire of multilingual studio slang, frantic shouting, and uncontrollable laughter.

Equal parts hilarious and ruthlessly competitive, the post-lunch and end-of-day games became the week's undisputed highlight — proving that while we take our architecture seriously, nothing brings the team together quite like high-volume chaos over a deck of illustrated cards.

Credit: Tanvi Badde

Vashi APMC Market: Geo- politics in RCC:

By The Editorial Team

There are some architectural projects that do not announce themselves through soaring facades or sculpted drama but instead proclaim through a radical reorganisation of daily human life — through an almost invisible act of making commerce legible, humane, and efficient at a scale that had never been attempted before in India.

When CIDCO commissioned Shashi Prabhu & Associates in the 1980s to design the **Agricultural Produce Market Complex** at Vashi, the brief was, on the surface, a logistics solution; however,

what the firm delivered was something far larger: a new architectural language for the Indian wholesale market, one that the country has been borrowing from ever since.

The story of the APMC Market at Vashi does not begin on a drawing board. It begins with a farmer — alone on the roadside, with no information about prices, no alternative buyer, no legal protection, and a perishable harvest that cannot wait. The 1928 Royal Commission on Agriculture had already recommended the regulation of marketing practices and the establishment of organised markets, documenting what farmers knew from bitter experience: that commission agents, moneylenders, and large traders controlled every node of the supply chain, setting prices by consensus and leaving growers with no recourse. Maharashtra enacted the first APMC Act in 1963, with the primary objective

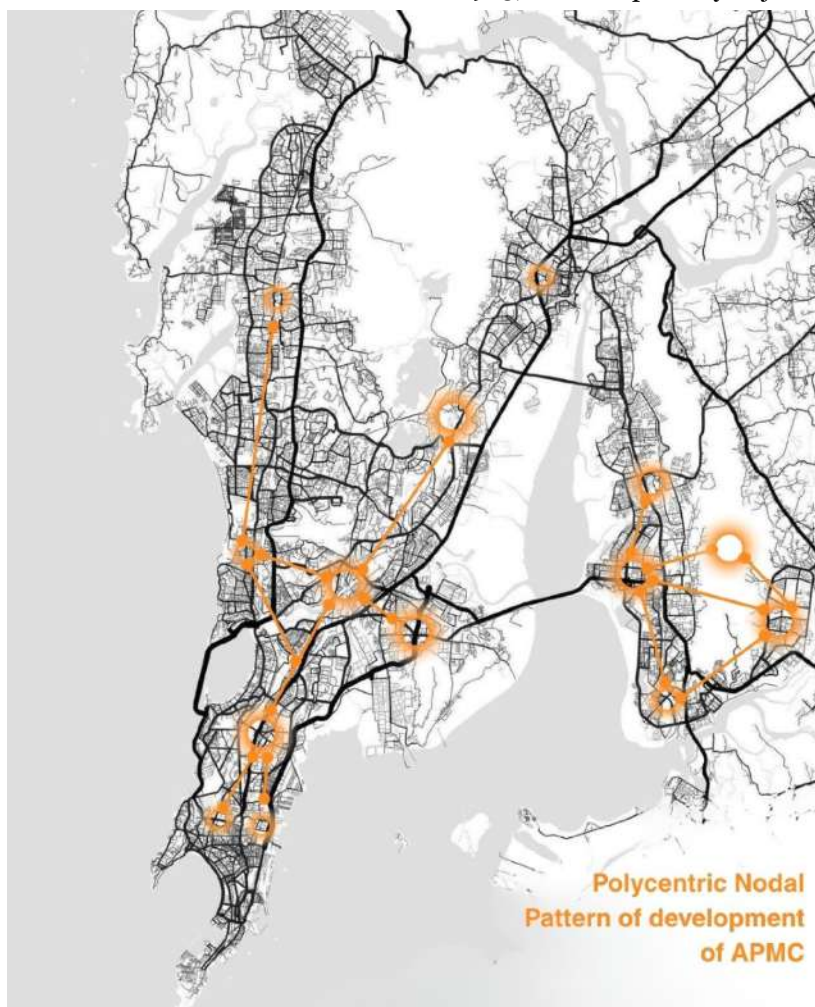
of preventing farmers from being exploited by middlemen and ensuring they received fair prices through open, competitive auction. That reform, however, needed a physical home — and the one it had in South Mumbai had long since become untenable.

For decades, the wholesale trade in agricultural commodities — onions, potatoes, grains, spices, fruits, vegetables — was concentrated in the dense, heaving arteries of South Mumbai. The Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Road, known to Mumbaikars as Duncan Road, was the traditional hub of the onion and potato wholesale trade, so overwhelmed by commerce that loaded trucks queued along its edges for hours, sometimes days. The congestion was not merely inconvenient — it was structurally corrosive, strangling the city's movement and exposing a fundamental contradiction of Mumbai's growth: its commercial vitality was actively making it unliveable.

CIDCO planned the Agricultural Produce Market Complex at Turbhe as a masterplan to decongest Mumbai — a surgical intervention, an acknowledgement that a metropolis cannot function if its supply chain is embedded in its most congested tissue. The ambition was metropolitan in scale. The execution would need to be architectural in precision. That execution fell to Shashi Prabhu & Associates.

The APMC did not emerge in isolation. It was born into one of the most deliberate acts of urban creation in modern Asia. The planning of Navi Mumbai began in 1971 through the minds of many think tanks, to create a Polycentric Nodal Pattern of development, unlike the activity-oriented, centripetal logic that had made old Bombay a logistical challenge.

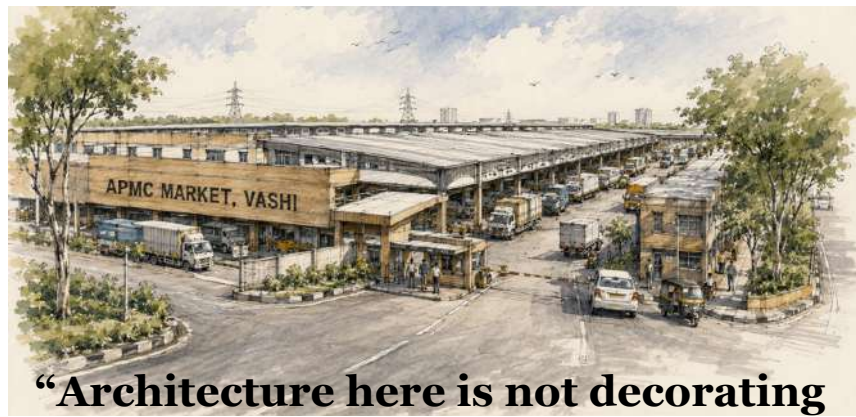
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urban creation in modern Asia. The planning of Navi Mumbai began in 1971 through the minds of many think tanks to create a Polycentric Nodal Pattern of development, unlike the activity-oriented, centripetal logic that had made old Bombay a logistical challenge.

Vashi, as one of the earliest and most strategically located nodes, was the natural candidate to absorb the city's displaced wholesale economy. But the ground itself was far from ready. Development in the 1970s focused on land reclamation from Thane Creek's marshy fringes, where CIDCO employed the Dutch Polder technique — using dikes and pumps to drain and consolidate waterlogged soil — transforming approximately 50 to 60 percent of the area's wetlands into usable urban plots. The firm was therefore not simply designing a market. They were designing on reclaimed land, within a planned city that was itself an act of collective imagination, for a programme that had no real Indian precedent at this scale. The pressure was immense. The opportunity was historic.

The genius of the design lies in an idea that sounds almost too simple to be revolutionary — "Give every transaction its own place, and protect every movement from the elements."



"Architecture here is not decorating commerce. It is disciplining it."

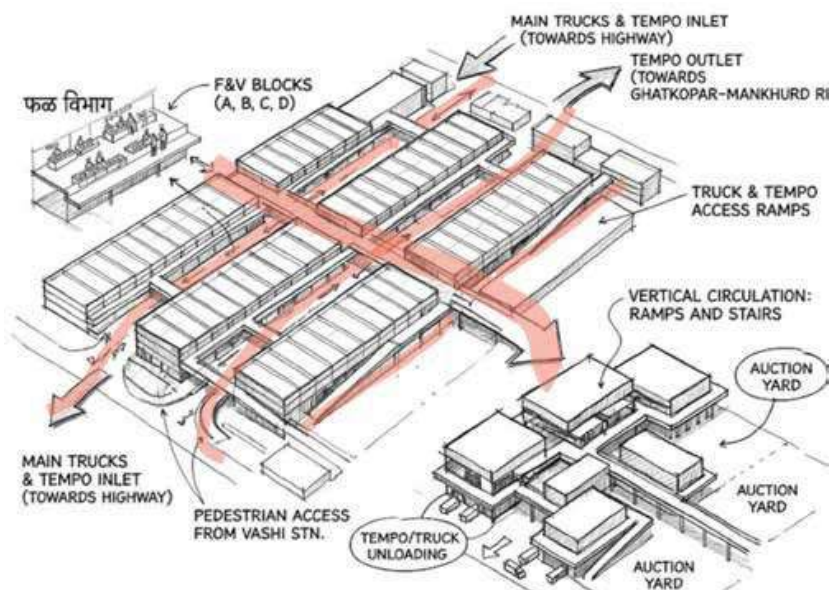
Everything else in the complex flows from this ideology. It was planned to have a shop-cum-godown unit for each trader with loading and unloading space. The passage for buyers with facility to approach all shops in a row of buildings was totally covered. Separate parking bays and movement spaces for large trucks and trailers, a common facility building for each trade and commodity, separate queuing areas of trucks for each market, as well as a separate truck terminus were provided. Unpack that and you find a series of architectural decisions of the first order.

Another brilliance of the design lies in its Modular Grid. These aren't just shops; they are vertical machines. The architecture responds to the physical mechanics of trade. The high-plinth loading bay was

engineered to match truck bed heights, allowing for a seamless, horizontal flow of goods that minimises physical strain and maximises speed.

The covered passageway — a continuous, sheltered arcade running the length of each market row — is perhaps the most quietly brilliant element of the entire complex. In a tropical climate where the monsoon renders outdoor commerce miserable for months at a time, this single decision transforms the market from a fair-weather enterprise into a year-round, weather-resilient institution. It is vernacular wisdom encoded into urban infrastructure: the Indian tradition of the verandah and the covered bazaar, scaled up to metropolitan dimensions. It is also a statement of dignity — the buyer in this market is not someone left to wade through mud and rain, but someone whose journey through the complex has been thought about and designed for.

The Shop with a Godown typology is equally considered. By integrating storage and selling into a single unit, the design eliminates the dead time and pilferage risk that plagued older arrangements where goods moved between dispersed warehouses and scattered selling points. Every trader's unit is a miniature warehouse with a public face — a spatial decision that directly enabled transparent pricing and reduced the scope for malpractices that had long



plagued wholesale agricultural trade in India. Architecture here is not decorating commerce — it is reforming it.

The separation of vehicular and pedestrian movement — truck terminals, dedicated queuing lanes, commodity-specific access routes running independently of buyer pathways — speaks to a design team that had studied the actual anatomy of a working wholesale market and understood that its failure modes were as important to design against as its success conditions. What looks like circulation planning is, in fact, conflict-resolution at architectural scale.

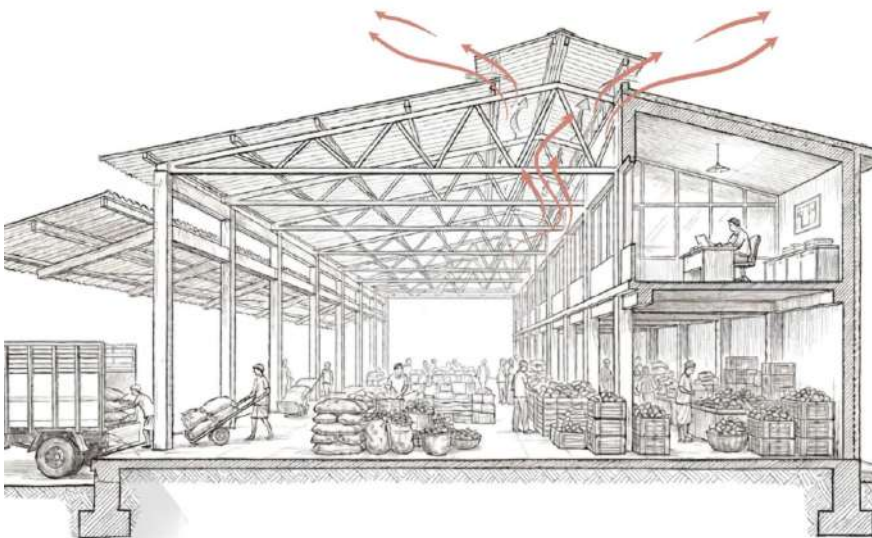
There is a dimension of the design that is invisible to most people who move through the market, yet is working constantly on their behalf. Think about what a wholesale produce market actually is, in thermodynamic terms: thousands of human bodies generating metabolic heat, tons of ripening fruit and vegetables releasing ethylene and respiratory warmth, all of it concentrated under a roof in a tropical city. Without an answer to this problem, the building becomes a slow oven — accelerating exactly the spoilage it was built to prevent.

The firm's answer was to make the building itself the machine. Working in a pre-refrigeration era and designing for an institution that could never



sustain the operating costs of air conditioning at this scale, Shashi Prabhu & Associates deployed high-volume R.C.C. shells with ridge ventilation to create a natural stack effect. By elevating roof heights and deploying north-light trusses, the design ensures that metabolic heat from thousands of workers and the ripening gases from tons of produce are constantly siphoned upward and expelled — not trapped. Hot air rises through the section of the building as naturally as water finds its level, drawn out through the ridge before it can accumulate and damage the produce below.

The result is a market that maintains a micro-climate measurably cooler than the sun-baked asphalt of the surrounding highways — without a single unit of air conditioning. The shelf life of the city's food supply is being quietly extended by the geometry of the roof. This is passive design thinking of the highest order: not comfort as amenity, but thermodynamics as infrastructure — and a piece of wisdom that looks more prescient with every passing decade as the cost of energy rises.



The north-light truss deserves recognition as more than a structural choice. It is a climatic one. By orienting the clerestory glazing to the north, the design admits diffused daylight — sufficient for trading and grading — while excluding the direct solar gain that would undermine everything the stack effect is working to achieve. Light and heat are disaggregated. The building is lit without being heated. The solution sounds simple. The discipline required to hold it across a 182-hectare complex, phased over sixteen years, is anything but.

This architectural intervention extends beyond logistics and into the realm of social engineering through the integration of Mathadi housing colonies. While many industrial hubs push their labour force to the fringes, the design integrated loader colonies directly into the urban fabric of Vashi and Koparkhairane. This walk-to-work model created a permanent blue-collar population that remains resilient even during transport strikes — a city that guaranteed its own food security through a lived-in, integrated labour fabric.

One of the least celebrated but most significant aspects of the design is its capacity for phased growth without loss of coherence. The complex was not built all at once. Construction of the 238-shop-cum-godown onion and potato wholesale market began in February 1980 and was completed in the same year. What followed was a methodical expansion over the next sixteen years — processed agricultural goods, spices, and dry fruits through to 1991; food grains in 1993; the fruit market in February 1996; the vegetable market the following month. Each phase adapted the foundational typology to the specific logistical character of a different commodity class, without fracturing the spatial logic that held the whole together.



This is a masterplanning discipline that is genuinely difficult to achieve. Markets that grow incrementally often dissolve into incoherence — a patchwork of structures that no longer speak to each other. At Vashi, the opposite happened. The complex grew to over 3,700 shop-cum-godown units across five distinct wholesale markets, spread across 182 hectares, handling approximately 4,500 trucks daily at peak operation, and the underlying architectural idea remained legible throughout. That is not an accident. That is the long-game intelligence of a practice that designed not just a building but a system.

The complex was designed and planned for a projected turnover of Rs. 60 billion and the creation of over one lakh jobs. This is not merely a market. It is a piece of economic infrastructure of the same order of significance as a port or an industrial estate — conceived and executed with the tools of urban design and architecture. Shashi Prabhu & Associates were not handed a brief for a monument. They were handed a brief for an economy.

And they answered it with design.

The APMC Market at Vashi may never feature on the covers of architecture journals. It has no signature tower, no photogenic cantilever, no dramatic gesture for the camera. What it has is something rarer and more durable: a coherent idea, executed with discipline, at a scale that changed the daily life of a metropolitan region. It decongested South Mumbai and raised its valuation. It gave Navi Mumbai its economic spine while using the strength of National Highways to transport goods from across the state. It created a model that outlasted its own structural health. And it proved that architecture in the service of commerce and community is not a lesser calling — it is, at its best, the highest form of the discipline.

For Shashi Prabhu & Associates, the APMC is not a chapter in their portfolio. It is a statement of practice — proof that rigorous thinking about the relationship between physical form, human movement, climate, and economic life can produce work

that earns the rarest of architectural compliments: it worked. For a generation. For a city. For a country still learning what its markets could be.

The significance of the work was formally acknowledged at the highest levels. The complex won the Prime Minister's Award for Implemented Urban Design Projects and, after 25 years of continuous use, earned the Best Working Design Award at the hands of the President of India. For a practice rooted in the belief that architecture must serve the life that happens inside and around it, there is no more meaningful form of recognition.

On Ground in Gangtok - listening to the Landscape

By The Editorial Team

Designing for high altitude topography requires architecture and engineering to move in a tango.

Recently, our team of **Ar. Santosh Jadhav** and **Ar. Dipesh Dicholkar** returned from an intense site visit to the hills of Sikkim to make a presentation to the Chief Minister for the **Golden Jubilee Integrated Cultural and Sports Village**, an ambitious development envisioned as a regional anchor for athletic excellence and cultural identity under Gangtok District.



Steep, undulating terrain presents a distinctive set of parameters—where the landscape itself dictates the architectural envelope. Alongside our structural consultants, project management, and on-site construction teams, we spent

the visit reading the ground firsthand. The focus was on translating the site's complex contours, slope conditions, and level shifts into responsive space planning that works with the natural geography rather than fighting it. Technical structural strategies were aligned with ground-reality construction methodologies, establishing clear coordination to tackle queries and set the course for the next phase of execution. It is always rewarding to see multidisciplinary collaboration take shape on the ground, ensuring that as this landmark progresses, it remains deeply rooted, resilient, and true to the Sikkimese context.

Credits: Santosh Jadhav, Dipesh Dicholkar, Mausum Das

Topiwala Market

By The Editorial Team

Commissioned by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), the redevelopment of Topiwala Municipal Market at Pahadi Village, Goregaon West, upgrades a historic neighbourhood exchange into a high capacity, contemporary civic asset.

Demolished in 2018, the original market and its associated theatre required a replacement that could reconcile heavy public footfall, strict sanitary standards, and streamlined back-of-the-house logistics while safeguarding the livelihoods of original stakeholders

Spatial Organization & Everyday Commerce

The complex accommodates 229 vendor stalls spread across the ground and first floors. To balance modernisation with familiarity, the architecture retains the original market's familiar shop module, giving vendors an intuitive operational footprint within an upgraded envelope.



Zoned Commerce: Daily trade is organised by sensory and functional logic. Flower vendors occupy the primary southern entrance, creating a vibrant, aromatic arrival threshold. Fresh vegetables and fruits anchor the active ground level, while dry goods and retail shops are arranged on the first floor.

Vendor-Centric Micro-Design: Each vendor stall functions as a self-contained unit equipped with a dedicated electrical point, task lighting, ceiling fan, and a polished granite otla (counter) tailored for display. Circulation, Access & Segregated Logistics Managing the intense friction between bulk commodity transit and foot traffic forms the core of the market's layout.

Pedestrian Flow & Accessibility:

Visitors enter via three dedicated access points—led by the southern main entrance—and navigate through wide 2.4-metre peripheral corridors designed to prevent bottlenecks. Universal accessibility is integrated across all levels via designated ramps, four primary staircases, two passenger lifts, and dedicated barrier-free restrooms. Intuitive way-finding relies on bilingual signage, directional floor markers, and integrated stall numbering. Back-of-House Logistics: Public circulation is completely decoupled from heavy service operations. Goods arrive via a ramp leading down to a basement load-in/unloading deck and parking facility. Cargo is moved

vertically through independent market service lifts—including a heavy-duty freight lift serving the upper level—preventing stock movement from crossing customer paths.

Material Resilience, Environmental Engineering & Sanitation:

Given the high-wear nature of fresh-produce handling and



frequent water washdowns, materials and services prioritise long-term durability and low lifecycle maintenance:

High-Impact Material Envelope: Floor surfaces feature textured granite for slip resistance and durability under heavy movement, with storage zones utilising hard-wearing Kota stone. Wall surfaces combine polished granite wainscoting up to 1.5 metres—absorbing direct cart and crate impacts with matte ceramic wall tiles above to reduce glare and simplify washing.

Hygiene & Waste Management:

Sanitation infrastructure includes SS-304-grade stainless steel drains with removable grating channels designed for daily hosing down. To address the substantial volume of wet waste generated daily, the facility integrates an on-site organic waste composter into its regular operational flow.

Visual & Thermal Comfort:

The stalls utilize 4000K neutral-white lighting with a 90+ Color Rendering Index (CRI), specifically calibrated to render the vivid natural hues of fresh produce accurately. Tall slab heights and wide openings are supplemented by mechanical exhaust and dedicated

ventilation zones around vegetable vendors to mitigate humidity and organic odours.

Credits: Surekha Madkaikar

Cricket Centre Elevation

By The Editorial Team



Within the Wankhede Stadium's campus the MCA building stood as the least articulated of the three. Garware's recent facade upgrade had already raised the visual bar of the campus;

Wankhede's identity as India's most storied cricket ground needed no introduction. The MCA building, administratively central but architecturally silent, required a facade that could hold its own in this company.

The facade had to announce the build-ing — visible and legible from across the campus and beyond it — while working within real constraints: the existing structural grid, window openings, sightlines, ventilation requirements, and entry/exit points were all fixed. The design had to dramatise what was already there, not fight it.

The composition draws a quiet cue from the classical architectural language found in the surrounding precinct, anchoring the building's new identity in its immediate context even as it asserts itself as a distinct presence within the

MCA-Garware-Wankhede triad.

A glass lift is introduced as a counterpoint to the solidity of the ACP cladding — a moment of lightness and visible movement within an otherwise composed, monumental elevation

Credits: Santosh Jadhav, Renu Kulkarni

Andhra Mahasabha

By The Editorial Team

Located in Mumbai's cultural hub of Dadar, The Bombay Andhra Mahasabha & Gymkhana has served as a vital community anchor since the 1930s. Established to foster socio cultural dialogue, education, and welfare for the Telugu diaspora and the wider city, the institution has long stood as a patron of regional arts, sports, and civic gatherings. The modernisation of its main auditorium revitalises this century old civic legacy with contemporary acoustic and performance infrastructure, serving future generations of performers and audiences.

Conceived by our interior team comprising of **Vaibhav Kadam** and his team, the auditorium integrates functional acoustics and engineering into an elegant, civic scaled interior. The lateral



upholstered in a deep terracotta fabric, delivering targeted acoustic absorption while establishing a rich, warm visual presence.

The angled chevron geometry is calibrated to disperse sound reflections and eliminate flutter echoes while guiding sightlines directly toward the stage.

Concealed warm LED backlighting traces the perimeter of each module, highlighting the wall assembly to create a rhythmic, three-dimensional play of light and shadow across the auditorium envelope.

Grounding the high-volume hall, vertically fluted light-oak timber wainscoting runs along the lower perimeter for acoustic diffusion and impact resistance under heavy circulation. The auditorium floor is fitted with heavy-duty acoustic roll carpet, while the stage is surfaced in natural wood-finish engineered flooring.

The stage walls integrate wood wool acoustic tiles for enhanced stage monitoring and sound containment.

Credits: Vaibhav Kadam

walls define the hall's architectural identity, articulated by faceted chevron modules combining acoustic MDF slat panels and acoustic backing. These panels are



"The line between technological leverage and ethical practice is something we strive to draw a deliberate line, rather than letting convenience draw it for us."

A few years ago, I was invited to speak at a leading university in Ahmedabad, and during the Q&A, a student asked me what I thought would be the greatest challenge facing design firms in the years ahead. I remember answering almost without pausing to think it through — **Artificial Intelligence**. Not because I had some special insight into what it would become, but because it seemed obvious even then that anything capable of that much change would carry an equal amount of risk alongside it. To me, it would be both the biggest impact and the biggest risk our profession would face. I didn't fully know what I meant by that at the time. I think I'm only beginning to now.

In the years since that lecture, we ran a series of internal workshops specifically to understand how AI could be used safely and efficiently within SPA — long before it became the everyday habit it is today. We wanted to be a firm that adopted this deliberately, on our own terms, rather than one that woke up one day to find every desk running a different tool with no shared understanding of what was safe to feed into it and what wasn't. That groundwork is, I think, part of why the transition into where we are now has felt more like a natural evolution than a scramble.

Walk through any of our studios today, and you'll see what I mean. Where people once sat behind screens running the usual design software, you'll now find someone using an AI assistant to summarise a

hundred-page tender document, someone generating a first-pass massing option for a design presentation, and someone using AI to simulate user behaviour patterns to stress-test their architectural planning before it's ever built. It simply happened — the way most real change in a practice happens, quietly and from the bottom up, long before anyone in a leadership role notices and gives it a name.

The rewards are genuinely hard to argue with. Junior architects who once spent a full day preparing area statements now have that time back for actual design thinking. Our estimation teams now run through bills of quantities in a fraction of the time it used to take just a few years ago. RFI responses that once waited on someone's desk for several days are now drafted in minutes, freeing our team to spend their time reviewing and refining rather than starting from a blank page. Even something as simple as generating quick visualisation options for a client conversation — options that would once have taken a render team weeks to produce — can now be sketched out over a lunch break. Speed, at every stage, has changed dramatically. But speed was never our problem. Judgement was what kept us grounded all these years, and that is exactly where I'd urge every one of us to be careful.

And just like everything else in life, every decision comes with its own risks — including AI. Contractual exposure from unknowingly sharing confidential data, project financials falling into the wrong

hands, design outputs generated without real scrutiny — these pose a genuine risk to a studio that has thrived on running an ethical practice while creating iconic public projects. An AI tool has no memory of a site visit. It has never stood in a Sikkim monsoon and understood why a slope needs to be read a certain way, and it certainly doesn't understand the financial damage caused by misreading a unit in a BOQ. It cannot sit across the table from a client and sense, from a pause in their voice, that the real brief is different from the one written down. Every efficiency AI offers us is an efficiency in producing an answer — not in producing the right answer for this site, this client, this constraint. The two are not the same thing, and the gap between them is exactly where good architecture actually lives.

That student's question has stayed with me longer than I expected it to. We are only beginning to figure out where the line sits between the two futures I described that day — and I don't think a single workshop settles it once and for all. But I'd rather we have this conversation deliberately, than let the line get drawn for us by default.

This September marked the 25th anniversary of the World Trade Center bombing in New York City along with the train station beneath the towers.

What replaced one of the busiest train stations in the world is Santiago Calatrava's WTC Transportation Hub, popularly call "**The Oculus**". Many people focus on its \$4 billion cost and a humongous \$250 million fee paid to the design team, but for us, the more interesting story is in how this iconic structure was actually designed and built.

The Relevance

In 2002, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation launched an international design competition to redevelop the sixteen acres devastated by the attacks. Daniel Libeskind's winning proposal, The Memory Foundations, treated the challenge as fundamentally human rather than purely architectural — developed in close conversation with survivors, families, and the public, and built around a single conviction: that the site had to balance remembrance with renewal, rather than choosing between them.

At the heart of Libeskind's plan was a deliberate absence - the centre of the site left unbuilt, a space of light and reflection anchoring the entire composition — with the original footprints of the Twin Towers preserved as what Libeskind calls sacred voids, softened by water incorporated specifically to quiet the sounds of the city around

them. The surrounding towers were pushed to the site's perimeter, their footprints minimised to protect sunlight across the plaza, so that visitors move through the site guided by light rather than by walls.

The plan's most precise emotional gesture is the "wedge of light" on the site's eastern edge — aligned so that every September 11th, sunlight illuminates the memorial plaza between 8:46 a.m. and 10:28 a.m., the exact window in which the towers were struck and fell. It transforms the site into what is, in effect, a working calendar: a civic axis of remembrance that requires nothing from a visitor except being there on the right morning, at the right time, for the light to do the rest.

Libeskind's plan also called for something with more direct engineering weight: the exposure and preservation of the original slurry wall, the massive retaining structure that had held back the Hudson River since the towers were first built. Rather than demolishing it along with everything else, the plan kept it standing and wove it into both the 9/11 Memorial Museum and the PATH station itself — a piece of structural engineering, decades old, deliberately left visible as a symbol of endurance rather than concealed behind a finished wall. It is a rare case of a retaining structure being asked to do emotional work most engineers would never expect their calculations to carry.

The Geometry

Santiago Calatrava, a Spanish Architect, Structural Engineer, a



Fig 1 - Destruction of the World Trade Centre in New York City



Fig 2: View of the Oculus as published by the Architectural Digest.



Fig 3: On September 11th between 8:46am & 10:28am, the Oculus' central skylight opens to reveal two columns of light depicting the fallen towers.

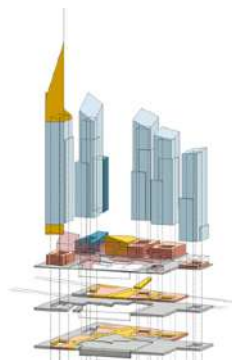


Fig 4 (from left) - Daniel Libeskind explaining the masterplan to NYC Mayor, Michael Bloomberg and NY Governor George Pataki, Renderings and Images of the masterplan of the Complex prepare by the office of Libeskind



Fig 5 - The construction of the Steel ribs of the Oculus

sculptor and a painter, was commissioned to design the Oculus in January 2004. His inspiration for the design came from his vision of a bird being released from the hands of a child, symbolising hope and rebirth after attack. Calatrava designed a steel and glass structure to evoke the image of a freestanding structure at street level rather than folding it into any of surrounding towers, to create an open civic space in a dense commercial precinct.

The building is bound by 114 curved steel ribs under a glass roof, arranged as a large ellipse, with rafters springing from two 350-foot arches flanking the central axis. Between them sits a 330-foot operable skylight, opened without fail every September 11th. The orientation is deliberate: each year on that date, sunlight tracks across the Oculus floor to illuminate two parallel columns of light exactly between referencing the original Twin Towers — a brilliant concept developed by Daniel Libeskind, that won him the

design competition to master plan the campus reconstruction. The scale is worth pausing on. The column-free elliptical hall runs roughly 350 feet (107 m) long and 115 feet (35 m) wide — comparable in ambition to our own Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in Delhi, designed in 1982, which achieved a 150-metre column-free span decades before Calatrava's ellipse opened in New York. The concourse sits 160 feet (49 m) below the skylight's apex, with daylight filtering further still to reach the train platforms 60 feet (18 m) below street level. Calatrava has described light functioning as a structural element here — "columns of light," in his words.

Below grade, the site sits directly above a live New York subway line that was never shut down during construction. Beside it sits the PATH Hall, repeating the Oculus's rib logic at a smaller scale — parallel steel ribs forming a column-free ceiling roughly 55 feet (17 m) up.



Fig 6 - Santiago Calatrava inside The Oculus



Fig 7 - Preliminary inspirational sketch drawn by Santiago Calatrava

The Engineering Underneath the Architecture

Thornton Tomasetti, the project's structural engineer of record, worked with Calatrava's team to deliver this vision without compromising it — centred on the PATH Hall's 200-foot (61 m) column-limited space, and on permanently supporting the live subway line running through the site.

Rather than propping up the subway temporarily, engineers built a permanent underground bridge — a tied arch spanning a wide pedestrian passage — that kept trains running throughout construction while creating a dramatic underground vista for pedestrians afterward. Alongside this, the Hub's extreme-event resistance was folded directly into the base structure itself, using high-fidelity simulation refined over three decades of testing — rather than added as visible reinforcement that would have compromised the exposed, column-free aesthetic.

None of this was resolved by one team alone — connecting the underground concourse to adjoining stations, towers, and connectors required half a dozen design teams converging on a single shared geometry before any one of them could finalise their own.

What This Means for Us

So the real lesson from The Oculus isn't the cost of the project or the fact that it took a decade complete it. It is the nerve to propose a design in the

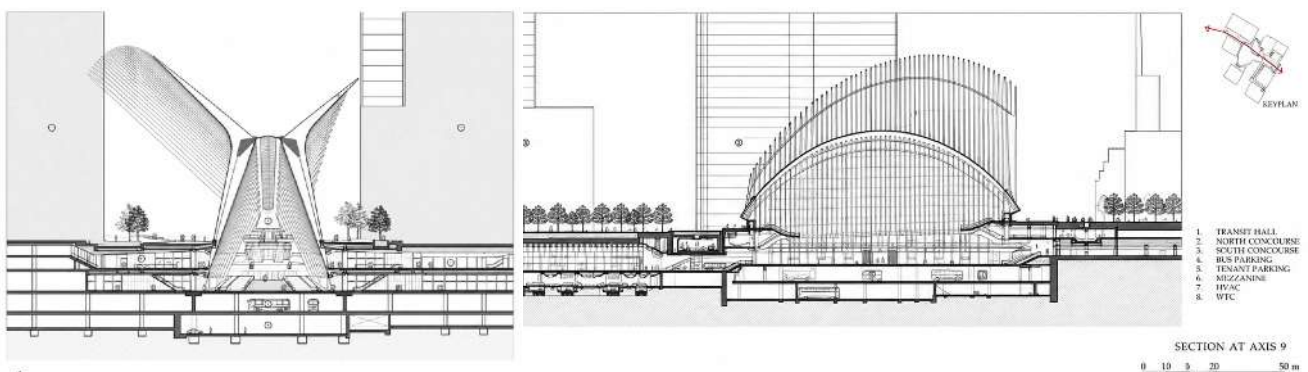
first place and to have a conviction to carry it through. Somewhere in Liebskind's and Calatrava's studio, a design that had never been built at this scale, in this geometry and at this cost, was put in front of the client. That is the part of this story worth carrying back to our own studio.

Every award-winning design, every competition-winning masterplan, every building that ends up being photographed for the next seventy five years, starts the same way — as a sketch on someone's writing pad or an idea that could easily have been talked down to something safer, and wasn't.

SPA have never lacked the technical skills or the risk taking ability - may it be the 150-metre column-free enclosure of Asia's largest indoor stadium in Delhi we designed for the Asian Games in 1982, or Wankhede Stadium we designed and built in just 11 months, we have been solving problems at this scale since 1967. What we owe to ourselves is the same appetite for creating structures that built the Oculus, the same willingness to put forward the design that makes a room go quiet before it makes a client say yes, to chase a competition we might lose because the idea is worth the attempt, and to trust that the engineering will follow if the ambition is real. The safest design in the room rarely wins the competition, and it never becomes the building someone points to twenty-five years later.



Fig 8 - Interior images of the Oculus after its completion



Cross Sections of the Plans prepared by the office of Santiago Calatrava

Welcome to SPA!



We are delighted to welcome **Prajakta Kedar Vartak**, who joins our interior team under the able guidance of Surekha, as its newest member.

An interior designer from the L.S. Raheja School of Architecture, Prajakta comes with 12+ years of experience managing multiscale residential and commercial interior fitouts. She excels in translating design briefs into functional layouts, producing complete GFC packages, managing vendor relationships, and ensuring quality site execution. In her leisure time, Prajakta is an avid artist who enjoys bottle art, mosaic work, painting, reading, and jewelry making. Her deep execution knowledge and creative eye make her an incredible addition to our design team. Welcome to the team, Prajakta!

Birthdays!

We celebrate the birthdays of the people who draw our details, complete our deadlines, and eventually build the buildings that become the iconic structures that get celebrated. Stop by and say hello to these colleagues and make them feel special on their special day!

Swapnil Nikhate

3rd October

Deepali Ramane

5th October

Shailesh Borkar

12th October

Santosh Jadhav

14th October

Vijayalaxmi Gholse

18th October

Akash Karnam

21st October

Tushar Kadam

23rd October

Jidnyasa Girade

28th October

Subramniam Powar

30th October

Vishrut Palkhiwala

31st October

Anniversaries!

At SPA, we have always believed in building lasting relationships—not just with our clients, but with our people too. Here are some of our members who have invested in the long-term vision of our firm, who grow with us, and who make SPA better each year. Their work anniversaries this month are a reminder to us of that shared commitment. The next time you see any of these colleagues, please stop and congratulate them in person. A simple acknowledgement goes a long way, and they deserve every bit of it!

Anupriya

1st October – 1 year
Pratik Chendvankar 11th
October – 5 years
Prathmesh Gaikwad

13th October – 1 year
Parag Kashelkar

14th October – 2 years
Siddhesh Phodkar

19th October – 6 years
Paritosh Goswami

24th October – 1 year

Humour



Errata

1. In the last newsletter, in the article titled "MSRTC Bus Station at Dhule", the project team credit was erroneously reported. The credit belongs to Ar. Amrita Parkar, Aditi Joshi and Renuka Sampago, and not Ar. Aditi Sampagao as originally stated.

2. The article titled "Anandibai Joshi Hospital" to include **Ar. Renu Kulkarni** as one of the team members working on in addition to Santosh Jadhav & Dipesh

The error is regretted

Disclaimer

We've done our best to get every name, number and story in this edition right – but with a studio this large and this busy, we know something might slip through. If you spot anything we've missed, gotten wrong, or not quite done justice to, please write to canvas@spaaec.com or reach out to Team "Canvas" directly. We'll try to make it right in the next edition.

WHAT'SUP SPA

- THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF SPA -