

Furniture

DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

March-April 2024 • ₹ 110/-



TOP
DESIGNS
FROM MILAN
DESIGN
WEEK

CRAFTING TIMELESSNESS: By Pinakin Patel

Insights from the maestro on merging tradition with the contemporary, self-awareness, and navigating the design world amidst globalization

VIJAI SUBRAMANIAM
ROYAL OAK

From humble beginnings
to furniture empire

MOHIT SINGLA, TPCI

First Furniture cluster
of India & global connects

PARMINDER PAL SINGH
LOCO DESIGN

Taking Indian crafts to global
luxury market

Other
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Ron Arad, Ron Arad Studio

Tim Larson, UNISPACE

Shezaan Bhojani, DesignCafe

Rijul Hora, Lock & Décor Home

Varun Ahuja, Living Art Interiors

Niveditha Reddy, Rise Group

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THE FUTURE OF FURNITURE BUSINESS IN INDIA THROUGH SOME REMARKABLE STORIES



The Indian furniture industry stands at the brink of a remarkable transformation. With dedicated effort and strategic initiatives, it could emerge as a vibrant sector for Indian manufacturers. The potential for growth is immense, and recent conversations with key industry figures highlight the exciting prospects ahead.

FDT explores the inspiring journey of **Mr. Vijai Subramanian**, Founder of Royal Oak, from his humble beginnings to his current success in an exclusive conversation with **Mr. Pragat Divedi** Founder of India Furniture Conclave and Ply Reporter.

Mr. Mohit Singla, Chairman Trade Promotion Council of India discusses the future of furniture business in India emphasizing the creation of furniture clusters and international collaborations.

This issue also shines a spotlight on one of India's top and finest furniture designers, **Mr. Pinakin Patel**, a pioneer renowned for his exquisite design sensibilities. FDT also met the dynamic young entrepreneur **Mr. Shezan Bhojani** of Design Cafe, a startup making waves in the furniture world.

How is Made-in-India luxury furniture perceived by the world?

You will find the answer to this and more in my interaction with **Mr. Parminder Pal Singh** of LOCO Design.

Our coverage extends to Bengaluru's elite importers of high-end furniture—**RISE Group** and **Living Arts**—each with a unique story. Furthermore, we feature the passionate owner of **Lock & Deco Home in Hyderabad**, highlighting the consistent effort and dedication that drives success in this industry

Be part of the landmark events in Furniture & Architecture!

Block your dates for the **India Furniture Conclave from August 22-25, 2024** at Yashobhoomi, IICC Delhi. Check out the list of distinguished architects & designers who will be judging **THE WADE ASIA Archidesign Competition 2024**, to be concurrently held with India Furniture Conclave and MATECIA Exhibition.

Keep reading Furniture Design & Technology magazine!

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www.furnituredesignindia.com

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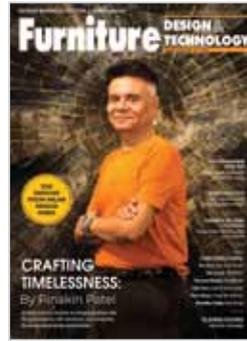
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Editorial: 03 | Content: 04-05

07-22: MILAN DESIGN WEEK

23-25: RON ARAD: BALANCING CREATIVITY & COMMERCE IN DESIGN

In Milan, Verticaa Divedi interviews **Ron Arad**, renowned for his pioneering designs in furniture, architecture, and art installations.

28-32: WADE ASIA JURY 2024

Unveiling the list of industry stalwarts at 2024 WADE ASIA Architecture Event.

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Insights from design maestro **Pinakin Patel** on blending tradition with contemporary design, self-awareness, and navigating the globalized design world.

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Chairman of Trade Promotion Council of India, **Mohit Singla** discusses strategic alliances and clusters to boost India's furniture manufacturing industry.

Royaloak Founder **Vijai Subramaniam** discusses company growth, challenges and India's furniture retail future.

51-55: DEEP DIVE

An exclusive interaction with **Shezaan Bhojani**, Co-Founder, DesignCafe.

56-59: FDT SPOTLIGHT

Explore how **Living Art** Interiors has emerged as a beacon of opulence and innovation in the city.

RISE GROUP's **Niveditha Reddy's** journey from architecture to importing high-end Italian furniture to India.

60-66: FDT INTERVIEW

Tim Larson, MD and Chief Creative Officer at UNISPACE Asia, on ergonomic office design trends.

LOCO Design's **Pal Singh** discusses overcoming challenges, craftsmanship, and fostering collective spirit with Verticaa Divedi.

68-69: FDT CONVERSATIONS

Verticaa Divedi explores Rijul Hora's journey from finance to luxury interior design, culminating in the inception of Lock and Deco Home (LDH) in Hyderabad.

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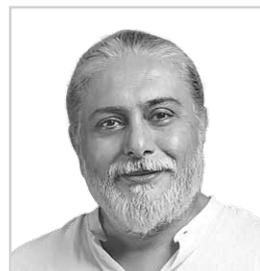
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BENTLEY HOME CRAFTS AUTOMOTIVE ELEGANCE FOR HOME



The 2024 Bentley Home Atelier Collection embodies the essence of the British automotive brand, focusing on material authenticity and form.

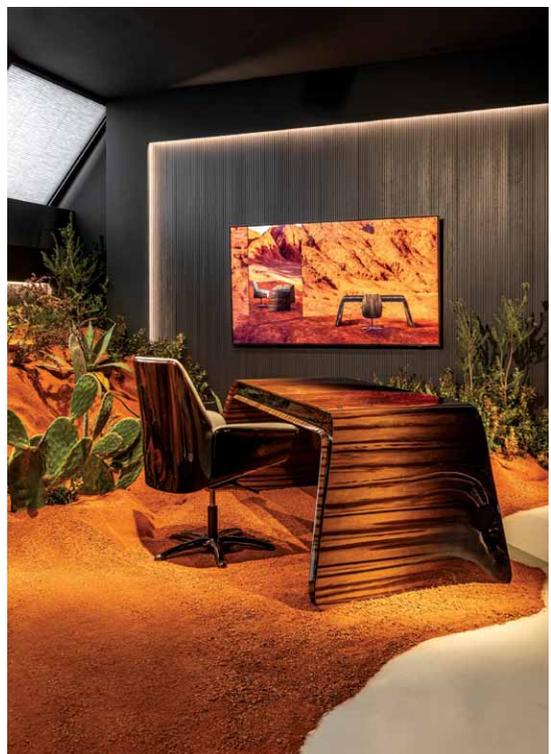
Francesco Forcellini's **WILTON desk** introduces Bentley Home to home office furniture with its clean lines, dynamic curves, and dual-shell profile that reveals drawers, creating a light, slender base with fluid degrade finishing.

Forcellini's **BOLLINGTON office armchair** mirrors the desk's sleek design, featuring a minimalist backrest and expanding seat. Federico Peri's **LOFTUS sofa** integrates sculptural lines and floating cushions with side tables, inspired by automotive aesthetics.

Designed by Carlo Colombo in collaboration with Bentley, the **CHILTON armchair and chair** showcase sinuous curves and veneer accents, embodying automotive dynamism.

Colombo's **LANGPORT bed** offers an iconic interpretation with customizable veneered panels in black lacquer or leather, and a Striped Diamond pattern headboard with integrated reading lights.

www.bentleymedia.com



MOROSO RENEWS ITS COLLABORATION WITH DIESEL LIVING



The Red Takeover and Silver Dome exhibit showcased new collections resulting from their partnership. This vibrant exhibit showcased immersive spaces like the Red Takeover room, adorned with Diesel Red lacquered Melt ceramic tiles and crimson carpeting. New lighting designs by Diesel Living with Lodes, included the Modular, Cross and Megaphone lamps. Among the new products are the D-uffle sofa and the Puff-D armchair, inspired by Diesel's relaxed and unconventional aesthetic.

www.moroso.it



ZAHA HADID ARCHITECTS' OUTDOOR COLLECTION CELEBRATES MEDITERRANEAN LIVING

TOPOS, an outdoor furniture collection by Zaha Hadid Architects for iSiMAR, embodies Mediterranean living, inspired by gatherings with loved ones by the sea, poolside or under pine trees. Crafted from durable, 100 per cent recycled galvanized steel and polyester powder-coated frames, the TOPOS Chair and TOPOS sun lounger ensures longevity and sustainability. It features durable, weather-resistant pieces suitable for indoor, outdoor and contract use. Choose from 32 metal finishes for the frame and 30 upholstery options in various colours and textures, all compliant with regulations for exterior and intensive use. The fabrics are high-coat weight acrylic, meeting standards for contract use indoors and outdoors.

www.zaha-hadid.com





PERSONALIZED FURNISHINGS FOR LARGE SPACES BY FLOU

Flou's 2024 collection meets the demand for furnishings suitable for large spaces, offering original designs to personalize any environment. Collection includes the Yuna double bed with its spacious headboard and the expandable Fiocco modular seating for relaxation. In the sleeping area, the AtelierM bed showcases Flou's sartorial influence, reflecting designer Gino Moschetti's fashion background. Fabric research for indoor and outdoor use is paired with exploration of materials like metal, widely used in accessories and enhanced with premium finishes. Additionally, Natevo presents the versatile Atollo series of tables and coffee tables with integrated rechargeable lighting.

www.flou.it





NEUTRA REDEFINES OUTDOOR LIVING WITH MARIO BELLINI

Neutra marked its entry into the outdoor furniture realm with La Grande Muraglia Outdoor, designed by Mario Bellini. This new era combines the allure of natural stone with sculptural design. The collection, developed under Migliore+Servetto's creative direction, embodies Italian design culture, offering timeless aesthetics and durability. Featuring a Silver travertine structure, the outdoor sofa and seating collection reimagines Bellini's 1981 concept. The collection includes a three-seater sofa, two-seater sofa, armchair and chaise longue. Upholstery options, including water-repellent polyurethane and recyclable polyester, come in Zaffiro, Matcha, Corallo, Terracotta and Tabacco variants.

www.neutradesign.it





GERVASONI'S LOUNGE ARMCHAIR INSPIRED BY ASIAN NOMADIC CULTURE

Cristina Celestino expanded the Plumeau collection with a new upholstered proposal: a lounge armchair echoing the stylistic features of the collection's bed. The collection's essence lies in soft, sinuous forms reminiscent of textiles. Inspired by Asian nomadic culture, the armchair offers a contemporary take on comfort. Its upholstered and removable surface suggests movement, lightness and impermanence. The seat is framed by a fabric drape, accentuating its profile with subtle curvatures. The shell's simplicity elegantly complements the quilted fabric upholstery, creating a visually pleasing contrast.

www.gervasoni1882.com

DELOS BY NEUTRA X DRAW STUDIO



The DELOS collection comes from the idea of crafting a versatile series of coffee tables, each distinct in shape and size, designed to be paired. Inspiration came from ancient maritime maps with multiple converging lines crossing the seas and lands to help navigators' measurements. In the same way the collection's surfaces are adorned with intersecting lines that divide them into sections, reminiscent of origami creases or the geometric motifs found in abstract art.

The designers describe DELOS "as a collection marked by precision and order, punctuated by bold features that disrupt the harmony, like streaks of light piercing the darkness." The collection is available in square (100×100 cm and 150×150 cm), rectangular (150×100 cm), and round (diameter 75 cm) versions, showcased during the exhibition in various finishes – leather with polished brass, mixed Cipollino marble with polished brass, lava stone with polished steel, and Verde Antigua marble with polished steel. versatility.

www.neutradesign.it





SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE KITCHEN BY ARAN CUCINE

CUCINAnD'O, a collaboration between Chef Davide Oldani and Attila Veress, has joined ARAN Cucine's catalog. The elm wood snack, reminiscent of Oldani's restaurant D'O, features a lower space for personal items, fostering social interaction by providing a place for electronic devices. This design promotes meaningful connections and shared culinary experiences. CUCINAnD'O focuses on social sustainability, creating spaces for human connection. It integrates modern features like an induction system and retractable shelves for safety and convenience. The kitchen's design features matte lacquered modules and durable finishes.

www.arancucine.it



SHADOW BENCH BY KREOO

The Shadow bench blends sharp, linear profiles with soft, radiating forms. Two marble slabs, one for the base and one for the seat, feature sharp edges and subtle details facing each other. Soft-edged partitions connect them, seemingly sculpted from the marble block. Suitable for indoor and outdoor use, Shadow comes in Travertino Paglierino, Silver Travertine, Calacatta Carrara, Calacatta Viola and Bianco Carrara.

www.kreoo.com



MONOLITHIC MARBLE ARMCHAIR BY KREOO

Sterling by Christophe Pillet is a monolithic armchair crafted entirely from marble. Its main shell consists of two round portions carved from a single block of natural stone, extending to form the base and seatback. Despite its thinness, the structure is sturdy, with the seat appearing to float between the two rounded sections.

www.kreoo.com



A FUSION OF NATURE AND DESIGN BY PININFARINA



Oksys designed by Marco Becucci marked Pininfarina's debut in collectible design, unveiled during Milan Design Week at Rossana Orlandi Gallery. Crafted from a single aluminium casting in Pininfarina's Cambiano workshops, it juxtaposes two textures and shapes. The upper part boasts sleek, fluid lines reminiscent of car design, while the lower part evokes the ruggedness of a natural rock. Despite their contrast, they merge harmoniously, creating a dynamic balance. The chaise longue is both static and dynamic, solid yet seemingly unstable, drawing in and repelling simultaneously.

Designed by: Marco Becucci | www.pininfarina.it

ARAN CUCINE'S CULINARY JOURNEY THROUGH LIGHT AND DESIGN

Through collaboration with Marco Piva, Luce transcends being just another kitchen; it's an architectural and design odyssey. Piva's hallmark, light, takes center stage. ARAN Cucine's attention to detail is evident in materials and craftsmanship, like the illuminated wall wine cellar and the glass island unit. Recessed LED lights add dynamism, adaptable via remote control. It creates a unique culinary and social experience, captivating users and onlookers alike.

www.arancucine.it



Marco Piva

MID-CENTURY MARVELS BY LUX XU

The Talie Single Sofa, upholstered in Monet Pearl fabric, boasts a voluptuous profile for both comfort and style. Its slightly curved backrest adds to its aesthetic appeal, while the golden metallic support gives a nod to mid-century modern design.

The Talie Dining Chair, inspired by Art Deco and mid-century styles, features an arched backrest and brass build reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture.

Talie Round Sofa brings mid-century modern style to life with rounded corners, soft edges and brass accents. Upholstered in Monet Pearl fabric, it features a built-in side table and charging system with one wireless charger and two USB ports.

www.luxxu.net





A MODERN HOMEWARE COLLECTION BY VERSACE HOME

Medusa '95 is a modern reinterpretation of Versace's iconic Medusa motif from the 1995 Spring-Summer collection. The collection includes various homeware items. The Medusa '95 Conversation Sofa, reminiscent of a large bed, features leather trim, reclining chenille cushions with Versace's Barocco motif, and comes in indoor and outdoor versions. The Medusa '95 Sectional Sofa is generously sized with random placement of cushions. The Medusa '95 Rounded Chair swivels for flexibility. The Medusa '95 Big Armchair blends sofa and armchair features. The Medusa '95 Bed has padded panels and steel profiles in chrome or gold finish. The Ottoman Medusa '95 has a geometric shape. Also, limited-edition Medusa '95 Coffee Tables feature mirrored surfaces and metal profiles.

www.versace.com/in



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WWW.LEMAMOBILI.COM

ARES ▶

This striking sofa, characterized by its unusual style, boasts a majestic appearance with its high backrest that curves around the seat to form the armrest. Designed by Roberto Lazzeroni Ares is available in various sizes and modular configurations, Ares stands out for its unique craftsmanship, particularly in the base design. Resting on a refined base in thermotreated oak stained ash wood, Ares combines rigid elements and large padded cushions, seamlessly blending comfort and functionality.

◀ **JIKU**

Jiku, designed by Federica Biasi, is a modern table blending Eastern inspirations with Nordic aesthetics. Available in various sizes and shapes, it offers versatility in furnishing different spaces. The thermotreated oak legs, with a slight curve, add personality. A delicate metallic insert enhances the aesthetics, creating visual contrast.

OMEGA ▶

Omega is a lounge armchair that blends history and modernity and is designed by Federica Biasi. Inspired by the 1950s, it combines vintage charm with contemporary design. The slightly padded moulded shell, covered in leather or vegan leather, offers comfort and elegance. Supported by a metal structure, it features a wooden element for backrest support, accentuated by visible seams.



AUGUST ▶

August, designed by Roberto Lazzeroni, pays homage to the complex simplicity of trestle tables, once solid work tools now iconic design pieces. The top, in various sizes and materials like marble and wood, is lightened by its thinness. The supporting trestles, connected by a bronzed patinated tensioner, and the curved wooden crosspiece reflect the table's aesthetic. Legs, available in glossy lacquered or thermotreated oak stained ash, offer further customization. Glossy and matte elements create unique combinations, adapting the table to different contexts.



◀ **BLANCA**

Roberto Lazzeroni's Blanca armchair offers a harmonious blend of comfort and solidity. Upholstered in fabric or leather, it reinterprets the traditional bucket seat with contemporary aesthetics. The classic enveloping structure is visually lightened by a void in the backrest, enhancing movability. Blanca's sides, serving as armrests, enclose the seat in an embrace, maintaining comfort.

ORIN ▶

Roberto Lazzeroni's Orion tables blend practicality with aesthetics, featuring coffee tables in various shapes and sizes. Their tops are adorned with a graphic metal detail in bronze or matte lacquered finish, combining functionality with simplicity. The unique design includes a circumference on the top, perfect for displaying decorative objects or accessories. Distinctive elements of Orion are its modernist plastic forms and significant leg structure, adding a captivating touch to any space.



LORENZA BOZZOLI'S INSPIRED DESIGNS BY GHIDINI1961

www.ghidini1961.com



◀ TRIA TABLE

Inspired by the smoothness of river stones, the Tria Table features an irregularly shaped top, crafted from exquisite Portuguese pink marble that is known for its delicate veins-like motifs.

TRIA COFFEE TABLE ▶

The Tria series also includes coffee tables with triangular tops, available in three sizes and heights for versatile arrangements.

These tables offer numerous compositional possibilities and can be paired with a variety of marble options for a customized look.



A Sculptural Armchair by Moroso X Ron Arad

Moroso and Ron Arad reinvented the lounge armchair with OnePage, inspired by a moving sheet of paper. This sculptural chair marked a new chapter in their partnership, pushing boundaries in manufacturing, aesthetics and materials. Designed as a single polyurethane sheet, it serves as both load-bearing structure and flexible padding. Despite its lack of traditional cushions, OnePage provides comfort through ergonomic research. Its unique production process eliminates the need for padding, while its fabric or leather covering enhances its tactile and visual appeal. Suitable for residential and contract markets, it features a five-point-star swivel base in die-cast aluminium and optional tilting mechanism, extending the sheet concept to the footrest.

Design by: Ron Arad

www.moroso.it





Moroso Celebrates Ron Arad's Legacy at Rossana Orlandi Gallery

The Moroso Gallery of Wonders pays homage to its long-standing collaboration with Ron Arad at the Rossana Orlandi Gallery. Five special versions of Arad's One Page armchair are showcased, along with reimagined iconic pieces. Among them are the Big Easy Made in Africa, Modou collection, M'Afrique Collection and Soft Marble, a plush version of Arad's original marble design.

www.moroso.it



RON ARAD: BALANCING CREATIVITY & COMMERCE IN DESIGN

Verticaa Dvivedi caught up with renowned Israeli industrial designer, artist, and architect Ron Arad known for his innovative and avant-garde designs in furniture, architecture, and art installations for a quick chat in Milan.

What was the creative inspiration behind the Holon Museum which you designed?

When I designed the Holon Design Museum, I wanted it to be a landmark that people could enjoy and admire for its scale. But I also wanted it to be functional and ideal for exhibitions. So, I created a museum without a single column inside. The entire structure avoids columns, and its unique look is given by the envelope that is also the supporting structure. When I sat down to draw it, my goal was to make the best museum I could, understanding and working within the limitations. I know many architects use constraints as a starting point, but I prefer to avoid them initially and focus on my creative vision.

Turns out Bookworm Bookshelf is still one of the iconic products people associate Designer Ron Arad with, what do you have to say?

I designed the Bookworm for myself, for my home. Like many of my designs, I started by creating something for myself, without having to convince or discuss it with anyone. Kartell picked it up and it became their best-selling piece and my best-selling design of all time.

Had I as a designer followed the usual route of presenting the design to them in the first place, owing to numerous protocols in place, I feel it wouldn't have been selected. Now they extrude and produce over a thousand kilometers of bookworm per year, longer than the length of Italy!

For Moroso, what have you designed, and what can we see here as your furniture pieces?

Well, I've been designing for Moroso for a long time. Today, you're seeing this piece, called "One Page." Sometimes, you have an idea and then look for the technology and materials to bring it to life. In this case, Moroso approached me because they wanted to utilize a new technology that creates a mold with a hard shell on one side and a soft interior on the other, which is what we have in this chair. It's a pleasure to sit, swivel, and rock in, and you can easily look and connect with the person sitting across from you.

What advice do you have for aspiring designers on balancing creativity and commercial success?

The message I want to convey is to do what you believe in and what fuels your

curiosity and creativity. Hopefully, the rest of the world will also see the value in it. So, be yourself and create your own kind of ideas, not because someone told you to, but because it's genuinely who you are. When you design something, it's not just about creating functional art; it's also about the business of design. Business is a necessary evil. It's what allows me to continue doing what I love and have been doing for so long. As the saying goes, "Money is very jealous. If you ignore it, it will follow you." When you work for industrial production, the cost of production, quantity, and economic constraints are important considerations a designer should not lose sight of. In my role as a designer, I have always tried to balance the commercial aspects with my creative vision.

What is your message for FDT Magazine?

Judging by your magazine, you seem to have achieved that balance as well. It's a great publication. Thank you so much for your time, it was nice meeting you!



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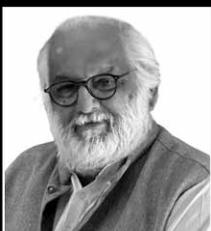
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SHANKAR JAIN**
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AR EUGENE PANDALA CENTRE
FOR SUSTAINABLE BUILT &
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT (CSBNE)
KERALA



AR MONICA KHANNA
MONICA KHANNA
DESIGNS
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LUCENT WORLDWIDE,
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AR JAGJEET SINGH TUTEJA
JAGJEET SINGH TUTEJA
DESIGN STUDIO, **INDORE**



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ARCHITECTONIC SERVICES
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MR YASHWANT PITKAR
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ARCHITECTURE
MUMBAI



MR SUDHIR SOUNDALGEKAR
NURTURE IDEAZ
MUMBAI



MR RAJEEV KUMAR
SHOPPROS
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AR JASLEEN WARAICH
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GRIHA COUNCIL
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MR JAYAKUMAR J
CAT
TRIVANDRUM

WADE
ArchiDesign

NATIONAL COMPETITION

#WOMENINDESIGN

LUXURY FURNITURE PRODUCER COMMUNE OPENS ITS FLAGSHIP STORE IN MUMBAI



Mills, Lower Parel, offers a visual feast where design comes alive. The carefully curated collections showcased in diverse room setups invite customers to envision the seamless integration of furniture into their living spaces. With collections tailored for apartment living, Commune offers smart solutions with distinctive designs, ensuring functionality, aesthetic appeal and quality materials at an affordable price point. Commune's dedication to sustainability and ethical sourcing shines through its collaboration with skilled artisans and the use of environmentally friendly materials.

Commune, a luxury furniture brand based in Singapore and a subsidiary of Koda, Southeast Asia's leading furniture producer with over 50

years of experience, recently announced the grand opening of its flagship store in Mumbai. Spanning over 7,000sqft, this immersive store, nestled in Raghuvanshi

DURIAN FURNITURE UNVEILS NEW SHOWROOM IN GUWAHATI



Image credit: Durian Furniture (for representational purpose only)

Durian Furniture recently marked a significant milestone with the inauguration of its newest showroom in Guwahati, Assam. Situated in the heart of Lachitnagar, this expansive 21,525sqft space

showcases an exquisite collection of home and office furniture. Known for its premium materials, timeless designs and exceptional craftsmanship, Durian Furniture has established itself as a leader in the furniture industry. In celebration of

this occasion, Durian Furniture is offering exclusive inaugural discounts on select home and office furniture pieces, providing customers with the opportunity to acquire enduring, high-quality furniture at exceptional prices.

ROYALOAK EXPANDS NATIONWIDE PRESENCE WITH ITS 167TH OUTLET

Royaloak is strengthening its footprint in Tamil Nadu with the opening of a new store in Tiruvallur, thus marking its impressive 167th store nationwide. Spanning 12,000 sqft, the store offers an extensive range of furniture for every part of the home, catering to living rooms, bedrooms, dining areas and more. With the opening of its new store, Royaloak will be expanding its presence in Tamil Nadu to 11 stores and will offer Tiruvallur residents to explore a diverse selection of stylish and functional furnishings, including sofas, beds, dining tables, chairs, recliners, mattresses, interior decor items and office and outdoor furniture. The store also showcases a curated



Image credit: Royaloak (for representational purpose only)

Country Collection, featuring unique furniture selections from countries like the United States, Italy, Turkey, Malaysia and India. Through its standalone stores, Royaloak reportedly aims to enhance

home aesthetics with modern, luxurious and budget-friendly furniture offerings, serving a customer base exceeding 5 million individuals across metro cities and Tier-II and Tier-III cities nationwide.

WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS LAUNCHES INDIA'S LARGEST MILLERKNOLL SHOWROOM IN BENGALURU

Workplace Solutions, a leading commercial furniture dealership company, recently unveiled the nation's largest showroom for the renowned American furniture brand MillerKnoll in Bengaluru. Spanning an impressive 12,000sqft across five levels, the showroom is strategically located on Ulsoor Road in Halasuru, Bengaluru. The showroom reportedly marks the fifth franchise outlet for MillerKnoll, adding to its existing presence in Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad. As per reports, these recent launches are just the beginning, with ambitious plans to further expand their presence in the Indian market.



Image credit: MillerKnoll (image for representational purpose only)



Pinakin Patel
Founder, Pinakin Studio

FURNITURE
DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

FDT | COVER STORY

CRAFTING TIMELESSNESS:

By Pinakin Patel

Insights from the maestro on merging tradition with the contemporary, self-awareness, and navigating the design world amidst globalization

FDT IN AN INTERVIEW, YOU HAVE SAID YOU ARE NOT AT ALL NOSTALGIC OR ROMANTIC, AND YOU LIVE IN THE MOMENT. DOES THIS STATEMENT ALSO SERVE AS A DESIGN STRATEGY FOR CREATING TIMELESS PIECES?

Design assignments allowed me to straddle different cycle of designs right from art deco to minimalism. Even today depending on the engagement the assignment offers, I do a thorough research to arrive at the desired results. Once the job is done and I have internalized the process myself, it stays on as a distinct memory to be retrieved anytime in life. **In the present, as a designer, I have moved on to other spaces where my talent and skill sets can create some magic. Strange as it may sound, even at 70 this thought process has kept me relevant to the times.**

FDT TO INCORPORATE THE 'SPUR OF THE MOMENT' PHILOSOPHY, WHAT CONSIDERATIONS MUST BE KEPT IN MIND?

As far as creating is concerned, its best left to god and women, as designers our best option is to invent; like know the dots and reinterpret them. We connect them differently each time to produce unique patterns. In today's era of information explosion, designers face the challenge of navigating a vast array of material choices while staying mindful of economic constraints. Keeping abreast of the latest trends in finishes and their associated costs is paramount, as it enables designers to optimize their designs within the framework of economy of scale. Gone are the days of excessiveness, where budgets

excesses did not matter. Instead, a lean and budgeted approach is required, necessitating cost-effective solutions in every aspect of design.

FDT HAVING SAID THAT EVERY OBJECT HAS A STORY TO TELL, AND STORIES HAVE A TIMELINE OVERLAP. SO WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON THIS?

Every object does have a story to tell, it all about how much importance you attach to the story and remain attached to it. **In design a functional need is primal; it is driven by a thought process and logic. So that itself is a part of the story. In my work these are important elements as they shape the final expression of the form. I must add that these elements are a complex**



Ribbed Sofa



A project executed by Pinakin Patel in Pune



Pinakin Studio, Alibaugh, Maharashtra



Taper Profile Chair



Pinakin Patel at the Lakme Fashion Show

result of different factors, so the story is not that simple. Having said that, the beauty of this process is each form of expression attracts its own audience. As a result, overtime, people become connected to you through your unique expression and the way you articulate your work.

FDT WHEN YOU CHOSE THE PATH OF DESIGN, WOULD YOU SAY IT CONSUMED YOU OR ENTICE YOU?

It enticed me, it never consumed me, and I wouldn't allow anything to consume me. Design enticed me, intrigued me, it interested me and hence I went close to it. I spent time understanding it, researching it, respecting it very much. It's turned out to be a beautiful journey, where each step was guided by a series of emotions leading me to new insights and creative possibilities.

FDT YOU HAD MR. DASHRATH PATEL AS A MENTOR IN YOUR DESIGN JOURNEY, HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOUNG DESIGNERS TO FIND A MENTOR?

It's crucial and only the fortunate ones find mentors. A good mentor can serve as the perfect bridge between education and real-world experience



Pinakin Patel with his mentor Dashrath Patel

“Luxury is beyond functional or technical descriptions. It awakens your sense of wonder, taking you into spaces you haven't experienced before.”

FDT DID YOU FIND SUPPORT IN YOUR FAMILY WHEN YOU TOOK THAT CALL THAT I WANT TO BE A DESIGNER?

Yes, I was amongst those lucky ones who found support, back in the late 70s career options were limited. There was commerce, science and arts, however architecture and interior design courses, practitioners were few and far between. So there was no successful benchmark or role model to emulate. To even express it to your own self was a task, then to be able to explain it to your family and colleagues is even more difficult, but there was no resistance from anywhere. And that's

where I consider it like a blessing. However I must add that even though the technical knowledge I gained as a chemistry graduate was wasted in the process, the education was not, it led me to become a designer something which I truly love doing.

FDT AFTER GETTING MARRIED TO DESIGN, WHEN DID THE FIRST MOMENT OF JOY AND GRATIFICATION COME THROUGH?

Back in those days, there were very few patrons of design or clients for design or buyers for design. So you had to create your own market by educating them side by side as to what you were doing, involving them in the process of growing with them. **So the first affirmation was, when my store became a curiosity place. People of all age groups, and all backgrounds would come and say 'Kuch toh Hai', there is something interesting about this place.** They were also far richer in time, so they had enough time to discuss what I was doing, find out about it. **The clients' and viewers' response to the objects I designed was very encouraging to**

me. Each one of them responded in **their own way, their responses actually shaped the rest of my career.** So from then onwards, I've only been responding to people's reactions.

FDT FROM THE PRO SOCIALIST ERA TO THE GLOBALIZED ERA, WHEN IT COMES TO LUXURY, WHAT DIFFERENCES HAVE YOU NOTED?

Luxury is beyond functional or technical descriptions. It awakens your sense of wonder, taking you into spaces you haven't experienced before. You find yourself saying, 'Oh, wow, what is this?' intrigued by its allure. It is an aesthetic evolution and awareness of things concerning good taste, earlier it was treated as second nature now post globalization a lot of sensationalism is attached to it. Earlier even Maharajas knew how to buy jewels and build palaces; likewise religious leaders knew how to design churches and temples. There were the chief patrons who created the right eco-system for designers to channelize their creative energies and allowed them to flourish.

Prior to globalization Indian designers

had a chance to develop their own aesthetic. We were colonized numerous times; therefore Indian design as such did not have a window for self expression until we were independent. The results were remarkable too **but with the onset of globalization this freedom of expression has been lost.** With globalization every week you have newer goods arriving from overseas with varied pricing. Though it made Indian designers astute in terms of creativity, the patrons of Indian creativity turned into consumers and luxury became a brand.

FDT DESIGN IS EXPECTED TO BE EITHER INCLUSIVE OR EXCLUSIVE, AS A DESIGNER, HOW DO YOU ADDRESS IT?

Inclusive and exclusive are not as different as the language makes it out to be; even the so called exclusive pieces are ultimately labeled exclusive more by the viewer. As a designer when we design solo or in a team, the term 'exclusive' does not invade our consciousness, else the design becomes contrived. **Simple things make design inclusive; it entails inclusivity by involving your team, clients, and vendors, treating them respectfully, and taking the time to explain your perspective to clients.** The more this happens even without any conscious effort, the end result starts developing its own exclusivity.

FDT YOU ONCE SAID DESIGNERS SHOULD COME TOGETHER AND FIND RESOLUTION, WHAT EXACTLY DID YOU MEAN BY THAT?

From a broader perspective, **what I'm getting at is not about coming together to design,** but rather to share experiences. Often, we work in isolated pockets. Yet, there's a common feeling – like when a client doesn't listen or delays payments. **If designers had regular interactions, they could share experiences and help each other grow.**



Bolster Profile Chair

“ At the surface the terms traditional and contemporary seem to be contrasting words, but they are sort of dependent on each other. ”



Ribbed Sofa

FDT IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO MENTION PINAKIN AND NOT MENTION ALIBAUGH, WHAT IS IT ABOUT ALIBAUGH THAT FASCINATED YOU?

A city, in general, becomes so obsessed with its own existence that most people are running around helter-skelter. I mean **you could drive past Juhu or Worli in Bombay (now Mumbai) and not even bother to admire the sunset or the beach.** The frame of mind in the city isolates you, making you think more about existential issues rather than ideological ones. For a creative individual, the development of ideology holds significant importance compared to existential matters. This environment was what I sought, and I couldn't find it anywhere else in the city besides Alibaugh. Alibaugh is not merely a beach; it encompasses paddy fields, rice cultivation, mango orchards, and waadis, offering abundant greenery inland. **The peaceful isolation from urban chaos in Alibaugh allowed me to focus on life's nuances, delve into philosophy, indulge**

“

As long as a person remains aware of his/her potential and sees it as a privilege to be born as a human being; I think that awareness will play an important role for him/her.

”

in music, and refine other aspects that would ultimately enrich my creativity.

FDT YOU ALSO VENTURED INTO FASHION DESIGN, HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

When I turned 60, I found a very big job and a very satisfying set of clients to work with in Calcutta, the Emami group. It was headed by Mr. RS Agarwal, who is a patron of the arts in his own way. He brought out so many brilliant aspects of my own potential that it led me to contemplate retirement from routine work. I had reached a zenith; how many times could I repeat myself? Although content, I began to consider reinvention. Reflecting on my work in architecture and interiors, I realized I hadn't explored the time factor. Projects often spanned years, with interactions extending over long periods. I thought, 'Let me find something which works more on the 'spur of the moment'—more like a fleeting thought. You do it today, and it sells tomorrow, and it's out of vogue

in the next season, so you reinvent.' That's the time I got interested in fashion.

FDT GIVEN A CHANCE WOULD YOU STILL LIKE TO JUGGLE BETWEEN INTERIORS, ARCHITECTURE AND FURNITURE DESIGN?

I've retired from commissioned work. So I stopped taking architectural and interior assignments, I'm only focusing now on furniture design. I find it much easier to focus on producing these pieces and putting them up in the store. Rather than working on long drawn engagements with people. Furniture design, that way is halfway between interiors and fashion in its speed. So that suits me more. And yes, that is my current go to.

Slit Profile Chair



FDT BEING A SELF TAUGHT DESIGNER YOURSELF WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO WISH TO FOLLOW THAT PATH?

Well, I think self-learning is going to remain more of a personal quest, a search for growth at the back of your mind, rather than a physical need. Now there are enough universities, both national and international, along with online courses and skill development classes. There is so much now being offered that one will not have to garner knowledge in isolation. Having said that, **self-teaching or self-awareness is very important for a creative person, only when that person is aware of how much he knows and what else he wants to know, can he figure out how and where to learn it. So, that self-search has to continue to grow; it can't stop.**

FDT HOW DOES THIS SELF AWARENESS ALSO IMPACT THE OTHER FACULTIES OF ONE'S LIFE?

The only thing that differentiates us from other species on this planet is the subtle intellect that we have, which manifests itself as awareness, but it's actually the ability to make finer judgments than mere existence. It's not that there is no intelligence

in those species. Animals and birds are sometimes found to be more intelligent than human beings; they can fly across from Siberia to India without a GPS. We need to realize our potential as human beings and acknowledge that we are blessed with the ability to evolve into something totally different.

A lion's cub, once it's born, has no other choice but to grow up to be a lion, whereas I could start off in chemistry and venture into architecture, design, philosophy, music, and so many other hobbies. As long as a person remains aware of his/her potential and sees it as a privilege to be born as a human being; I think that awareness will play an important role for him/her. It will keep offering him opportunities at a very basic level to remain relevant and at an evolved level to climb up the evolutionary ladder.

FDT AS INDIAN DESIGN TRENDS GLOBALIZE, HOW DO YOU MERGE TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY ELEMENTS AS A DESIGNER?

At the surface the terms traditional and contemporary seem to be contrasting words, but they are sort of dependent on each other. Even though linguistically they are antonyms you can't have one without the other. If we take a good look at our past, like a traditional painting of a god was very descriptive. Likewise, Indian culture also



Gel Chaise Lounge

“

I've retired from commissioned work. So I stopped taking architectural and interior assignments, I'm only focusing now on furniture design.

”

made way for yantras or tantric art, where everything was also expressed through subtle symbolism. So **it's not like abstraction or contemporary forms did not exist in India**; they always existed. It's just that we kind of prefer to associate with a particular genre. **If one is deeply immersed in one's own culture, I don't see that as a significant contradiction.**

FDT WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE FOR YOUNG DESIGNERS WHO ARE STARTING THEIR JOURNEY?

For young people, I would advise keeping your options wide open during your formative years. Don't rush to establish your career, individuality, or self-expression. Instead, keep an open mind and leave room for growth. When entering a new market, identify the people you admire or want to follow. Don't rely solely on Instagram for daily inspiration; even magazines can provide trends. Delve deeper into the people who inspire you and your work. Read more about them, learn about their background, and if possible, seek a short-term internship or job with them before venturing out on your own. Today, **with the explosion of digital media, so much is conveniently available**



Taper Sofa



Deco Bed

to us. If you use digital tools like Pinterest or Instagram compulsively, you can't escape them. **While they are helpful in forming popular opinions, they can become limiting if you only use these sources for inspiration.**

If you just compile images and ideas from these sources, your work will be popular because buyers and market forces are looking at similar images and trends. They will connect well with your brand, thinking you know the latest trends. However, if this

becomes a habit, it can limit your creativity. Slowly, your freedom to create will take a backseat, and you may become too comfortable with these options.

The idea is to watch out for that and keep adding your individuality into your work in the right proportion, so that your conscious contributions become your brand name and speak for themselves. **Basically, your branding should not invade your creativity.**

TRADE PROMOTION COUNCIL OF INDIA

REVOLUTIONIZING INDIA'S FURNITURE SECTOR

In a conversation with Verticaa Dvivedi, Editor-in-Chief, FURNITURE DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY (FDT), Mohit Singla, Chairman, Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) speaks on how strategic alliances with major industry players and the establishment of innovative clusters are poised to elevate India's furniture manufacturing landscape, boosting exports and fostering economic growth.



FDT I'D LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT THE TRADE PROMOTION COUNCIL OF INDIA'S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WORLD FURNITURE CONFEDERATION. HOW DO YOU THINK THIS IS GOING TO TRANSFORM INDIA'S ORGANIZED MANUFACTURING SECTOR IN FURNITURE?

In 2019, TPCI, during one of its committee meetings, realized, based on a report on export competitiveness, that China exports almost \$100 billion worth of furniture, making it the second largest exported commodity from China. In contrast, India was exporting only

around \$800 million, which is just 0.7% or 0.8% of this total value. Considering India's skilled manpower in the furniture sector, we saw potential for significant growth.

We reached out to the Embassy of India in Beijing and lobbied to get India a membership in the World Furniture Confederation, headquartered in China. This was a significant achievement, but work stalled due to COVID-19 in 2020, 2021, and 2022. However, in 2023, during the Annual General Meeting of the World Furniture Confederation in Guangdong, China, we signed a MoU with the Chinese National Furniture Association to set up a furniture

cluster in India. This was the start of our journey, and we now have multiple MOUs with various countries, showcasing India's potential and buying power. This effort aims to bring the Indian furniture sector into a more organized economy.

FDT WHERE CAN WE EXPECT TO SEE THE CLUSTERS?

The concept of clusters is relatively new in India. As announced by the Prime Minister in 2022, furniture is one of the 12 champion sectors. Initially, we are focusing on Northern India, specifically Rajasthan or Punjab, due to their good connectivity with airports. This will allow designers and direct customers to visit

the clusters easily, spend time, and see the factories and retail atmosphere.

FDT RECENTLY, YOU SIGNED A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH FEDERLEGNOARREDO ITALY. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THAT MOU AND ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT ON THE INDIAN FURNITURE SECTOR?

Our first MOU was with the China National Furniture Association, the largest furniture association globally, with 56 clusters. Following this, we signed MOUs with Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Cambodia, covering major Asian furniture manufacturing countries. We were focusing on the European Furniture Industry Consortium as well; Italy became the first European country we signed an MOU with, it will soon be followed by Germany and Poland. The aim is to garner support from all furniture manufacturing countries, educate them about business potential in India, and create a collaborative economy. By bringing their expertise, skills, and design methodologies to India, we hope to create a vibrant economy and help the Indian furniture sector thrive.

FDT THE FURNITURE EXPORT MARKET IS DOMINATED BY A FEW COUNTRIES. WHAT IS THE COUNCIL DOING TO ENSURE THAT INDIA GAINS A SIGNIFICANT SHARE?

Currently, China exports around \$100 billion worth of furniture, with \$50 billion bought by the US. Interestingly, Vietnam, which started its furniture manufacturing sector just ten years ago, now exports over \$9 billion worth of furniture. Vietnam's success is attributed to creating efficient clusters that manufacture cost-effective furniture tailored for specific markets. They got a significant share of the US market from China; the duty structure too helped them. India too with its numerous free trade agreements has



From L-R : Claudio Feltrin, President, FederlegnoArredo; Hon'ble CGI Milan Ms T. Ajungla Jamir; Mohit Singla, Chairman, TPCI; Edi Snaidero, President of European Furniture Industry Confederation and Italian Kitchen Furniture Association

the potential to emerge as an export hub for the furniture sector. Thanks to our skilled manpower and competitive ecosystem for fabrics and materials, we can become a formidable player in the global export market. Our strategy involves developing clusters to replicate this success and substantially enhance India's furniture exports.

“ India too with its numerous free trade agreements has the potential to emerge as an export hub for the furniture sector. Thanks to our skilled manpower and competitive ecosystem for fabrics and materials, we can become a formidable player in the global export market. ”

FDT WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE PLI SCHEME IN THE FURNITURE SEGMENT?

The PLI scheme for the furniture sector was considered alongside the announcement that furniture would be a champion sector. While Indian furniture exports haven't grown significantly, a PLI scheme could boost exports. It's crucial for the furniture industry to unite, set targets, and lobby for the PLI scheme. TPCI is ready to assist and advocate for this initiative to the government.

FDT WHAT MESSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GIVE TO FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS, EXPORTERS, AND DESIGNERS IN INDIA?

I want to convey that the furniture industry in India is a sunshine sector with huge global demand and high profitability. We must unite, formalize an organized economy, and create a competitive edge for Indian products in the global market. By focusing on good design, quality, and competitiveness, the furniture sector can become a significant contributor to India's GDP. It's time for the industry to come together and seize this opportunity.

ROYALOAK: FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO FURNITURE EMPIRE

THE INSPIRING JOURNEY OF VIJAI SUBRAMANIAM

In a heartfelt interview with Pragat Dvivedi, Co-Founder of Furniture Design & Technology (FDT), Vijai Subramaniam, the Founder and Chairman of Royaloak, discusses his personal journey, the growth of his company, new strategies, overcoming challenges, and the future of furniture retail in India.



FDT HOW DID IT ALL HAPPEN, COMING FROM A REMOTE VILLAGE IN TAMIL NADU AND ENTERING THE FURNITURE BUSINESS?

My brother, Mr. Mathan Subramaniam, and I started the business together. We began with various ventures, from selling tea powder to candle stands. My uncle had even suggested going to Singapore, however that plan fell through and I was left with no money I couldn't go back to my native village in Munnar, so I decided to take a bus and ended up in Cuddalore.

After moving to Cuddalore, I started selling Standard Chartered credit cards. In my first month, I sold 100 credit cards, while my colleagues were selling only 30. My success led to jealousy and an attack from my colleagues, forcing me to leave that job.

One Sunday evening, while walking around, I saw a fair at a government exhibition in Cuddalore. The colorful lights and the crowd attracted me. There was one empty stall among the others filled with vendors selling various goods. I inquired about the

empty stall and was told it was expensive, costing 28,000 rupees for the two-month exhibition, which is why no one had taken it. I decided to take the chance and paid 2,000 rupees for the stall. I didn't know what to sell, so I pledged my scooter for 7,000 rupees and got another 5,000 rupees from two friends who joined me in this venture. I went to Chennai, bought plastic bottles and utensils, and set up the stall. However a big company outcompeted us, so we switched to selling candle stands, which proved successful.

FDT HOW DID YOU TRANSITION TO SELLING TV STANDS?

One day, I noticed a stall selling TV stands at an exhibition. They had only seven TV stands, but they sold well. I observed their business model: taking orders and delivering later. Inspired, we started selling TV stands at the next exhibition. Selling higher-value items like TV stands proved much more profitable, significantly increasing our revenue and margins. We focused on selling TV stands across South India, visiting cities like Bangalore, Chennai, and Thiruvananthapuram for exhibitions. This continued for four to five years.

By the time I turned 27, I decided it was time to settle down and get married. We planned to settle in Cuddalore but faced setbacks, including failed investments. Eventually, we were attracted to Bangalore as a base. In 1998, we moved our operations to Bangalore, buying goods from Chennai and bringing them to exhibitions. One significant exhibition was at RBANMS Grounds in Bangalore, which went well. I then looked for a permanent place to set up shop.

FDT HOW DID YOU MANAGE TO SECURE A PERMANENT LOCATION FOR YOUR BUSINESS, AND HOW DID IT IMPACT YOUR PERSONAL LIFE?

Someone mentioned Safina Plaza, the only mall in Bangalore at that time, and I decided to take a risk by renting a 200-square-foot space for 1,000 rupees a day, even though it was a significant amount back then. Initially, the first three days were slow, and I was worried as I had no customers, losing 1,000 rupees each day while handling everything myself. By the fourth day, I decided to vacate on Sunday. However, sales picked up dramatically, with two TV stands sold on Friday, five on Saturday, and seven more by Sunday



“ I decided to keep only one store and close the other three. It was a tough decision, but I had to do it. I informed all our employees, who numbered over 100 at that time, to start looking for other jobs as we were shutting down all but one store. ”

morning. This turnaround convinced me to extend my stay, and I eventually established a permanent presence at Safina Plaza. Business improved, I settled in Bangalore, and my brother joined me to focus on the store. On the personal front, despite this business success, my

future father-in-law initially rejected me as a potential match for his daughter because he perceived my business as not financially stable enough, unaware of our growing success and other assets like our car and the construction of our house in one of the best localities in Bangalore.

FDT THAT MUST HAVE BEEN TOUGH...

It was. After my marriage proposal was rejected again, we realized we needed to open a permanent store. Our first store was an 800-square-foot space on Kammanhalli Main Road, where we started selling furniture, a natural progression from TV Stands. The store did well, breaking even within the first month. After opening the store, I received a marriage proposal, and I am currently married to Mrs. Maheshwari Vijai. Following this success, we opened another store on CMH Road and started importing Chinese furniture, which was popular and sold well.



We managed the imports by stationing a person in Chennai. However, due to irregular imports, I decided to personally visit China and import furniture myself. However due to a lack of warehouse space, we had to adapt by starting a distribution business, and by 2006-2007, we became importers and wholesalers, with wholesale making up 80% of our sales.

FDT HOW DID THE BRAND "ROYALOK" COME ABOUT, AND HOW WAS THE JOURNEY THEREIN?

Initially we wanted the brand name to be Oak and Oak, but we encountered a hurdle since someone had already registered a similar name. After discussions, we settled for "Royalok" in 2010. From 2010 to 2016, Royalok focused on conventional business practices, striving to establish profitability through product sales across its four stores. However, in 2016, the company confronted severe challenges including import restrictions, duty structure changes, and significant price increases in the furniture industry. Realizing the situation wasn't viable; I considered closing down the business. I decided to keep only one store and close the other three. It was a tough decision, but I had to do it. I informed all our employees, who numbered over 100 at that time, to start looking for other jobs as we were shutting down all but one store.

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In 2019, we opened stores in Kukatpally in Hyderabad, Vellore, and Chennai. By the end of 2019, we had opened another 20 stores. Altogether, we had 55 stores and became South India's number one furniture company.
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FDT HOW DID YOUR EMPLOYEES REACT?

All the employees refused to accept the decision. They expressed their happiness working with us. I understood that life wasn't just about personal wealth and comfort; it was also about serving others. I called my brother, my wife, and my sister-in-law and together, we decided to expand the company boldly and restructured as a private limited entity. By the end of 2017, we opened 10 more stores, becoming the top furniture brand in Bangalore. In 2018, we opened another 20 stores, bringing our total to 30. We had created

a team structure with 20 departments, including acquisition, finance, sales, and marketing. Each department was given the responsibility for managing different aspects of the business.

In 2019, I called all my employees back and asked, "Okay, we reached the target of becoming Bangalore's number one." Then all of them said, "Sir, don't worry. We have increased our strength by 25%. This year, we want to be South India's number one." It's a big aim, goal. I said, "Okay, we'll do it." In 2019, we opened stores in Kukatpally in Hyderabad, Vellore, and Chennai. By the end of 2019, we had opened another 20 stores. Altogether, we had 55 stores and became South India's number one furniture company.

FDT BUT THEN COVID STRUCK...

When COVID -19 struck, it was a time of deep uncertainty and fear. Initially, my team was hesitant and fearful about the future. They questioned the feasibility of selling furniture during a global pandemic and lockdowns. Despite their doubts, I encouraged them to stay positive, emphasizing daily meditation and yoga to maintain resilience. Transitioning to online platforms like Google Meet and Zoom was met with resistance; many of my team members were reluctant to engage fully,



“
 Royaloak has grown significantly, with investments exceeding 900 crore INR and a robust infrastructure including a 35-acre warehouse and over 200 stores, half of which are company-owned.
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their spirits weighed down by the grim news on TV. Yet, I remained steadfast, promising to find a way to pay salaries despite the challenges.

We launched our business online. Slowly, revenue started trickling in, and we became one of the few in our industry able to sustain payroll throughout the COVID crisis. The initial success online boosted morale and ignited a wave of enthusiasm within the team. They began suggesting new ideas and improvements, even proposing to expand our workforce.

Our journey through COVID was more than just survival; it was a testament to our resilience and determination to thrive against all odds.

FDT HOW DID YOU MANAGE YOUR GROWTH WITHOUT EXTERNAL FUNDING? WHY DID YOU NOT RAISE FUNDS LIKE OTHER FURNITURE STARTUPS?

No, we haven't raised any funds so far. I firmly believe that a business can thrive without external funding if your vision and execution are clear. This philosophy has been the cornerstone of our journey, and I'm even writing a book titled "No Money, No Problem: Any Business Can Do It" based on this belief. Our company is solely



owned by me, my wife, my brother, and my sister-in-law, we are the core partners. Following COVID-19, we expanded rapidly, hiring significantly more employees and leveraging virtual meetings to secure 70 properties. After the lockdowns eased, we swiftly opened over 50 additional stores, surpassing 100 stores nationwide by 2021, establishing ourselves as India's leading furniture brand.

COVID-19 was a pivotal moment for us, it presented challenges for many businesses, but we saw it as an opportunity. With a positive mindset and unwavering dedication, our team worked tirelessly, adapting to virtual operations and driving our growth.

Currently, we are expanding aggressively

across India, including regions like Dimapur, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Delhi, Ahmedabad, and Nagara, operating through a successful franchise model. Our franchise partners have seen exceptional returns, often achieving ROI within six months—a testament to their satisfaction and our robust business model.

FDT WHAT WAS YOUR APPROACH TOWARDS COMPETITION?

I don't believe in competition. The word "competition" itself is wrong in my dictionary. This universe is so big; it has everything. Even if another 10 companies come, they can survive. There is no need to compete with anyone. When you



focus on your business, your style, the kind of customers you require, and the service you give, you can survive. We don't believe in competition. We don't discuss competition with our staff. I just give them a direction, a goal.

FDT WHEN YOU OPEN A NEW STORE, HOW DO YOU ENSURE IT STARTS SELLING IMMEDIATELY, AND HOW DO YOU MANAGE FURNITURE SELECTION

Opening a new store is always a daunting task, but we have a determined strategy to ensure it becomes profitable right from the outset. It's fundamental to our business plan - to break even in the first month, covering all costs like rent and operations. Our success lies in offering furniture that is both distinctive and affordable, catering primarily to the middle and lower-middle-income segments. Despite her background in selling silk saris, my wife's natural eye for design plays a crucial role in shaping the ambiance of our stores, creating spaces that customers find welcoming and appealing.

Our journey spans cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, each with its own unique customer expectations. In Delhi, customers are drawn to large,



statement-making pieces, while in Mumbai, practicality and compact designs are favored. Bangaloreans seek furniture that integrates seamlessly with their lifestyle and living spaces. Understanding these local preferences and meeting diverse needs has been instrumental in our success and expansion.

FDT ISN'T IT CHALLENGING TO MAINTAIN SUCH A WIDE RANGE OF FURNITURE ON A NATIONAL SCALE, ESPECIALLY WITH THE NEED FOR EXTENSIVE STOCKING?

Our journey in South India was truly groundbreaking, we pioneered large stores spanning 15,000 to 20,000 square feet, showcasing an extensive array of products

like 200 sofas, 100 beds, and 100 dining sets, a first in our region. To support this, we established a massive 35-acre warehouse with approximately 7 lakh square feet of space, serving as the heart of our operations where we meticulously manage our inventory and logistics.

Initially, I traveled solo abroad to handpick furniture, driven by a deep commitment to offering the best to our customers. As our business grew, we formed a dedicated team of buyers. They now lead in selecting and negotiating based on market insights and customer feedback. This evolution has empowered us to stay agile and competitive in sourcing premium products that resonate with our clientele. Over the years, we've seen a remarkable increase

in average customer spending—from 10,000 to 12,000 rupees in 2010 to 45,000 to 50,000 rupees by 2020. This growth reflects not only evolving consumer preferences but also our unwavering dedication to exceeding expectations in a dynamic market. We're driven by a passion to provide exceptional furniture solutions that enhance homes across India.

FDT DO YOU BELIEVE THAT INDIA CAN MANUFACTURE THE SAME QUALITY FURNITURE AS IMPORTS?

Yes, India certainly has the capability. Currently, 20% of our business's contribution comes from furniture manufactured in India through our network of 40 partner factories. They produce furniture for us, which we also export to foreign markets.

As part of our strategy moving forward, we are embracing the "Make in India" initiative by collaborating with our vendors from Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam, who are establishing manufacturing operations in India. This shift reduces our dependence on imports and strengthens our commitment to local production.

In the furniture business, products are not perishable, providing flexibility. If a design doesn't sell well in one region, we redistribute it to others, adjusting prices as needed. Likewise we continually keep introducing new designs. This approach leverages the scale and resilience of the global furniture retail industry, which ranks second after real estate in retail importance. While there are challenges in scaling up furniture retail in India, such as high investment costs and lower returns compared to other retail sectors, we focus on balancing affordability with profitability. Our pricing strategy aims to meet customer needs while ensuring sustainable business growth.

My personal journey in the furniture industry has evolved beyond profit alone. It's about fulfilling a greater purpose, as I realized after challenges in 2016 reshaped my perspective and company goals over three years of reflection.



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Addressing the diversity across India's 26 states, each akin to its own country in terms of cultural nuances and consumer preferences, remains crucial, we adapt our offerings accordingly, ensuring relevance and appeal across regions.
”

FDT WHEN DID YOU START MEDITATION, AND HOW HAS IT INFLUENCED YOUR BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY?

I began practicing meditation in 2000 at the age of 20. It was during this time that I formulated my company's foundational goal - to create expansive growth opportunities for employees and partners by enhancing customer lifestyles to international standards at unbeatable

prices. This vision resonates deeply with me and guides our singular focus on the furniture sector.

Since then, Royaloak has grown significantly, with investments exceeding 900 crore INR and a robust infrastructure including a 35-acre warehouse and over 200 stores, half of which are company-owned. Our unique franchise model minimizes stockholding for partners and leverages our centralized inventory; it ensures high profitability and success for franchisees.

While our sofas range from 22,000 INR for a 3+2+1-seater set to 2 lakh INR, our stores cater to both individual customers and those accompanied by interior designers. This approach ensures a seamless shopping experience tailored to diverse preferences. Addressing the diversity across India's 26 states, each akin to its own country in terms of cultural nuances and consumer preferences, remains crucial, we adapt our offerings accordingly, ensuring relevance and appeal across regions.

To aspiring franchise partners in the furniture industry, my advice is simple: Focus on space, not just money. You can build a substantial business without

heavy initial capital investment. With our support in furniture, interior setup, and comprehensive guidance, you can establish and grow a successful venture, potentially achieving significant scale and profitability within a short span.

FDT WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM FRANCHISE PARTNERS, AND HOW DOES YOUR UNIQUE BUSINESS MODEL ENSURE THEIR SUCCESS?

Our franchise model revolves around empowering partners to run their stores autonomously while we provide products, displays, and interior design support. The key expectation is their daily presence and active involvement in store operations, ensuring a hands-on approach to management. Even without initial space, we facilitate setup options.

We offer a distinctive one-year guarantee wherein any losses incurred is covered by the company, emphasizing that profits belong entirely to the franchisee. This model not only mitigates risks but also incentivizes entrepreneurial spirit and dedication.

In the competitive retail landscape, understanding and adapting to evolving customer preferences is paramount. We attribute our rapid growth to continuous customer feedback integration. This approach enables us to swiftly adjust our product



offerings in terms of style, size, color, and more to meet market demands effectively.

Moreover, affordability is core to our strategy. We strive to provide unbeatable prices while elevating customer lifestyles to international standards - a philosophy rooted in honesty and integrity.

As Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar wisely stated, success in business hinges on offering products of the same quality and price you would desire for yourself. This principle guides our commitment to delivering exceptional value and ensuring enduring customer satisfaction.

FDT WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON THE CASH-BURNING MODEL? STARTUPS RAISE FUNDS, BURN THROUGH CASH, THEN AIM FOR PROFITABILITY. IS IT ACHIEVABLE, A DREAM, OR PRACTICAL?

I'm skeptical. Many startups pursue this model, but I'm not convinced of its merits. Despite ample funding offers, I'm not

interested. Success requires dedication, honesty, and integrity - no shortcuts. Only through unwavering commitment and honesty can true success be achieved.

FDT WHY DO YOU THINK ONLY 2% SUCCEED WHILE 98% FAIL IN BUSINESS?

The key aspect lies in setting right priorities. Many people chase money as their sole objective, but that's not a sustainable path to success. Money should be a byproduct of a clear, honest vision that benefits society. Setting and diligently pursuing meaningful goals, rather than focusing solely on financial gain, is crucial. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our approach prioritized our vision over immediate profits. While other industries contracted, we expanded operations, hiring more staff and securing new properties. This success underscores the importance of staying true to our vision.

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DEEP DIVE

UNLOCKING AFFORDABLE LUXURY: THE DESIGNCAFE STORY

An exclusive interaction with Mr Shezaan Bhojani, Co-Founder, DesignCafe



MR SHEZAAN BHOJANI & MS GITA RAMANAN
Co-Founders, DesignCafe, Bengaluru

Founded in 2016 by Mr. Shezaan Bhojani and Mrs. Gita Ramanan, **DesignCafe** has become a trailblazer in redefining luxury for the middle-class populace. With a journey that began in 2006, Mr. Bhojani's early experiences paved the way for the company's evolution into a tech-driven solution provider, addressing the unmet needs of the Indian market. Through 15 Experience Centers nationwide, **DesignCafe** has cemented its reputation for 100% personalized Interiors and premium materials, setting new standards in customer satisfaction.

In this exclusive interaction with **Mr Pragat Dvivedi, Editor, FURNITURE DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY (FDT)**, Mr Shezaan Bhojani spoke about **DesignCafe's** unconventional growth stories and their commitment to excellence in interior design.

FDT WHEN DID YOU START YOUR CAREER?

Shezaan Bhojani - I started my career precisely in 2006. However, as far back as 2002, I was already working in furniture sales while still in college. I spent four years there, learning how to sell to customers and understanding what was missing in the furniture market. When my co-founder Gita and I graduated in 2006, I couldn't afford to take a job, so we started our own firm after winning a competition.

Initially, we focused on interiors and later expanded to hotels and restaurants across India. Meanwhile, Gita also went to ISB for further studies thanks to Goldman Sachs' 10,000 Women Ambassadors Programme, and I pursued my MBA at Columbia University. In 2014 or 2015, we noticed a change in the market. We realized that middle-class Indians didn't have access to good designs for their homes. They had to rely on the unorganized sector, which lacked professionalism. We saw an opportunity to improve the customer experience by offering affordable, high-quality design services.

FDT TELL US ABOUT HOW DESIGNCAFE WORKS?

Shezaan Bhojani - DesignCafe offers a range of interior design services for homes. We use technology to streamline the design process and provide affordable pricing without compromising on quality. Our goal is to make good design accessible to everyone, regardless of their budget. We also collaborate with designers and architects to bring innovative ideas to life.

FDT THERE IS A CHALLENGE OF AFFORDABILITY IN THE INDIAN MARKET. CAN YOU ELABORATE ON HOW YOU ADDRESSED THIS ISSUE WITH DESIGNCAFE?

Shezaan Bhojani - When we started DesignCafe as interior designers, I felt that people weren't willing to pay enough for good design. However, when I considered the broader Indian market, it became clear that most people just couldn't afford to pay premium prices. We identified this as a larger market opportunity and decided to create a standardized, tech-driven platform to make design more accessible. We believe that by combining services and leveraging technology, we could reduce costs for customers without compromising on quality. We saw the industry reaching a tipping point, and we wanted to be part of that change. Hence, we founded DesignCafe with the vision of offering affordable design solutions to everyone.

FDT CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE EARLY DAYS OF DESIGNCAFE? HOW DID YOU INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY INTO YOUR BUSINESS MODEL?

Shezaan Bhojani - In the early days, we didn't have a physical store. We operated primarily online from our office. We used technology to streamline the design process, making it easier for customers to visualize spaces and for designers to collaborate effectively. For example, in 2016, we developed a machine-driven engine for designing kitchens, which was quite innovative at the time. Initially, some customers were hesitant to use technology, so we found other ways to leverage tech to improve efficiency and the overall customer experience. We didn't have our own factory at the beginning, so we sourced from modular factories to fulfill orders. It was a learning process, but we were fortunate to receive angel funding early on, which helped us scale up and refine our business model.



MR SHEZAAAN BHOJANI IN CONVERSATION WITH MR PRAGAT DIVEDI

Editor, Furniture Design & Technology (FDT) Magazine

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WHEN WE STARTED DESIGNCAFE AS INTERIOR DESIGNERS, I FELT THAT PEOPLE WEREN'T WILLING TO PAY ENOUGH FOR GOOD DESIGN. HOWEVER, WHEN I CONSIDERED THE BROADER INDIAN MARKET, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT MOST PEOPLE JUST COULDN'T AFFORD TO PAY PREMIUM PRICES.

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FDT CAN YOU SHARE ABOUT THAT PIVOTAL MOMENT WHEN YOU OPENED YOUR FIRST PHYSICAL STORE?

Shezaan Bhojani - Opening our first store in 2017 was definitely a significant milestone for us. We recognized the importance of having a strong team in place, especially at the store level. So, I reached out to Ganesh, an experienced contractor, and asked him to join us as the store manager. Despite initial hesitations, he came on board and has

been an integral part of our team ever since, now serving as the Assistant Vice President for Backend Operations.

As for when I felt DesignCafe was stable, well, that's a tough question. In the startup world, stability is always relative. Personally, I believe that maintaining a certain level of discomfort or fear of failure is essential for driving progress. Even after achieving milestones like opening our second store, I still don't consider us completely stable.

However, the opening of our second store, particularly at such an iconic location in Bangalore, was indeed a proud moment. The building, formerly a British Library, holds historical significance. Convincing the property owners to rent the space was a challenge. But when we finally opened, it felt like a significant achievement. The design elements of the store have an evergreen quality, with some updates here and there, but overall, it's been a symbol of our journey since 2016.

FDT HOW MANY STORES DO YOU HAVE NOW PAN-INDIA?

Shezaan Bhojani - We currently have 15 DesignCafe Experience Centers across India. Additionally, we have two company-owned and operated Qarpentri stores and nine shop-in-shop Qarpentri stores.

FDT HOW MANY FACTORIES DO YOU OPERATE?

Shezaan Bhojani - We have two factories, both located in Bangalore. They are adjacent to each other, enabling streamlined operations.

FDT COULD YOU EXPLAIN YOUR TURNKEY APPROACH?

Shezaan Bhojani - We take a raw flat provided by the builder and transform it into a fully finished living space.

FDT DO YOU WORK DIRECTLY WITH BUILDERS OR ONLY WITH END CONSUMERS?

Shezaan Bhojani - We primarily engage with end consumers. While a few builders include kitchens in their homes and collaborate with us, the majority of our projects come directly from consumers.

FDT WHAT'S THE AVERAGE TICKET SIZE FOR YOUR PROJECTS?

Shezaan Bhojani - We operate two brands. Under DesignCafe, the average order value is around 9 to 10 lakh Rupees for a 2 to 3 BHK. Our more affordable

brand, Qarpentri, offers kitchens starting from 65,000 Rupees, including taxes, and a complete 2 BHK package for approximately 2 lakh Rupees, including taxes.

FDT WHAT DOES YOUR 2 BHK PACKAGE INCLUDE?

Shezaan Bhojani - It includes two wardrobes, a loft, a TV unit, a bathroom vanity, and a kitchen, all manufactured in-house at our factories and shipped to the site

FDT WHAT MATERIALS DO YOU USE FOR YOUR PRODUCTS?

Shezaan Bhojani - For DesignCafe, we use plywood for the carcass and high-density high-moisture resistance (HDHMR) for shutters. We believe plywood is more suitable for Indian conditions, and HDHMR offers a smoother finish compared to plywood.

FDT HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE 93% ON TIME DELIVERY RATE?

Shezaan Bhojani - Our ability to maintain a high on-time delivery rate is attributed to our integration of technology and our own manufacturing facilities. With control over the entire process

from design to delivery, we ensure efficient production schedules and minimize delays.

FDT YOU MENTIONED HAVING A VERY HIGH NET PROMOTER SCORE (NPS). HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THIS?

Shezaan Bhojani - Our NPS is indeed very high. In fact, for Qarpentri, it stands at an impressive 81%, which is even higher than Apple's NPS. Even for DesignCafe, with an NPS of 55%, it reflects a significant improvement from previous years, indicating that our efforts to enhance customer satisfaction are paying off.

The NPS is a metric used globally by brands to measure customer satisfaction and loyalty. We achieved this by consistently delivering exceptional quality and service.

The NPS is based on a single question asked to customers: "How likely are you to recommend either Apple or DesignCafe to your friends and family on a scale of 1 to 10?" Customers who rate us 9 or 10 out of 10 are considered promoters, while those who rate us lower are detractors. Our focus on meeting and exceeding customer expectations has led to such remarkable scores.



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WE USED TECHNOLOGY TO STREAMLINE THE DESIGN PROCESS, MAKING IT EASIER FOR CUSTOMERS TO VISUALIZE SPACES AND FOR DESIGNERS TO COLLABORATE EFFECTIVELY.

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FDT WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DESIGNCAFE AND QARPENTRI?

Shezaan Bhojani - Qarpentri is our more affordable brand, offering kitchens starting at just 65,000 INR. It's designed for people with rental flats or those buying their first homes who might otherwise consider options like IKEA. Unlike IKEA's readymade solutions, Qarpentri offers made-to-measure products with a 5-year warranty.

DesignCafe, on the other hand, offers a premium experience with 10 to 20-year warranties, greater customization, personalization, and a wider range of color options. It caters to customers looking for more complex and bespoke solutions. Additionally, both brands offer services such as false ceilings, painting, basic electrical, and plumbing work. However, modular furniture accounts for 90% of our business, while services constitute the remaining 10%

FDT GIVEN THE CURRENT FURNITURE BUYING TRENDS IN INDIA, DO YOU THINK CONSUMERS PRIORITIZE BRANDED FURNITURE?

Shezaan Bhojani - Indian consumers are indeed value-conscious first and foremost. While they may not prioritize brands

initially, they recognize and appreciate value when a brand consistently delivers it. Brands may be slightly more expensive, but consumers are willing to invest if they see long-term value. It's a gradual process of building trust and demonstrating value.

FDT IN THE REALM OF INTERIOR DESIGN, DO YOU BELIEVE ECOMMERCE IS THE WAY FORWARD?

Shezaan Bhojani - While eCommerce certainly has its place, especially in reaching a broader audience, to truly penetrate the heart of the market, engaging with the next set of adopters through conventional models remains essential. In some cities, we've observed that customers prioritize brand awareness over online presence.

Approximately 80% of our business comes through organic search or performance marketing, highlighting the importance of online visibility. However, relying solely on designers wouldn't suffice. While design is crucial, customers evaluate various factors, including product quality and price. Visiting our store allows them to

experience firsthand the range and quality of our products, alongside interacting with our well-trained designers, which often seals the deal.

FDT COULD YOU ELABORATE ON THE ROLE OF DESIGNERS IN THE PURCHASING PROCESS?

Shezaan Bhojani - Designers play a vital role as they guide customers through various parameters, conceptualize designs, and facilitate decision-making. We ensure our designers undergo comprehensive training before interacting with customers, lasting two to three weeks. This training equips them to understand Indian culture, handle contractors, and grasp design concepts effectively. While customers may explore options elsewhere, our standardized approach minimizes errors and offers a curated selection of colors and materials researched by our R&D team.

FDT WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU SEEK IN FRANCHISE PARTNERS?

Shezaan Bhojani - Interestingly, most of our franchise partners have a background in design or related fields. They recognize the shift towards organized solutions and perceive the benefits of joining DesignCafe. We prefer franchisees with industry



knowledge, as they understand the nuances of the business. Whether they're designers or retail owners, their understanding of the subject matter is crucial for success. Currently, around 30-40% of our outlets are company-owned, with the rest being franchises. Moving forward, we aim for a predominantly franchise-owned model to facilitate scalability. For a DesignCafe outlet, the minimum space requirement is around 2,500 square feet in metros and 1,500 to 2,000 square feet in non-metros. The average investment ranges from 35 lakhs in non-metros to 50-60 lakhs in metros. However, for the Qarpentri brand, we offer a franchise-owned, franchise-operated model with a lower investment of around 10 lakhs. We provide the necessary technology, software, and support, allowing franchisees to focus on customer engagement.

FDT HOW DO YOU ENSURE TRANSPARENCY IN PRICING AND AVOID UNEXPECTED COST FLUCTUATIONS?

Shezaan Bhojani - Our software simplifies the process by offering instant 3D designs and built-in pricing engines. Customers receive accurate quotes on the spot, and the price remains unchanged once they finalize their orders. This eliminates

“ WE CURRENTLY HAVE 15 DESIGNCAFE EXPERIENCE CENTERS ACROSS INDIA. ADDITIONALLY, WE HAVE TWO COMPANY-OWNED AND OPERATED QARPENTRI STORES AND NINE SHOP-IN-SHOP QARPENTRI STORES. ”

uncertainties and ensures a transparent transaction process.

FDT IN WHICH CITIES ARE YOUR STORES CURRENTLY LOCATED, AND WHICH ONE PERFORMS THE BEST?

Shezaan Bhojani - We are present in all major cities except NCR. While each store has its strengths, I'm particularly proud of our oldest store in Bangalore. Our Kolkata store, despite being recently opened, is also performing exceptionally well. Overall, we're grateful for the success we've achieved across these cities.

FDT WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR INDIVIDUALS INTERESTED IN ENTERING THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY?

Shezaan Bhojani - While there is certainly demand in the market, aspiring entrepreneurs should proceed with caution. It's crucial to assess whether there's enough value proposition and a clear path to success. To excel in this competitive industry, one must identify their unique selling points and have a compelling reason to stand out among competitors.

FDT HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF INTERIOR DESIGN IN INDIA?

Shezaan Bhojani - I am optimistic about the future. As incomes rise and people become more design-conscious, there is a growing demand for interior design services. We're also witnessing advancements in technology that are making design more accessible and affordable. I believe that DesignCafe will continue to play a significant role in shaping the future of interior design in India.



LIVING THE ART OF SERVING LUXURY

Recently, **Furniture Design Technology Magazine (FDT)** interviewed **Mr. Varun Ahuja, Sales Director of Living Art Interiors**. Under his guidance, the company has established a new standard for luxury in Bangalore. With a focus on inspiring and educating clients, Living Art Interiors has become a trusted name in high-end home interiors, offering exquisite kitchen, wardrobe and furniture solutions. This feature explores how Living Art Interiors has emerged as a beacon of opulence and innovation in the city.

A DECADE OF EXCELLENCE

Living Art Interiors has come a long way since its inception a decade ago. Incorporated by Mr. Nimesh Jithendra Premdoss, the company began its journey at a prime location in Indira Nagar and recently moved to a bigger showroom space at Infantry Road catering to a larger architect and homeowner customer base. "Living Art Interiors, now a decade old, started with our first showroom in Indiranagar and moved here shortly before COVID hit," says Varun Ahuja, the visionary behind Living Art Interiors.

EXPANDING THE PORTFOLIO

Recognizing the evolving needs of Indian homeowners, Living Art Interiors has diversified its offerings into three main categories: kitchens, wardrobes

and furniture. "A few years ago, we realized that the kitchen is no longer just a closed room. It has become an extension of the dining or living space where people entertain their guests," explains Varun. The company represents Siematic for kitchens, a German brand known for impeccable modular designs, Porro for wardrobes, an Italian brand that emphasizes luxury and functionality. Furniture, described by Varun as "the heart of the house," forms the third pillar of their portfolio. Living Art Interiors represents renowned brands like Flexform, Poltrona Frau, Cecotti, Living Divani, Thonet, Visionnaire and others. "The importance of good furniture is rapidly gaining traction in India," he adds. About Indian furniture making progress, Varun Ahuja acknowledges the

strides made by Indian manufacturers but notes that they still have a way to go to match the quality of established international brands. "While the Indian manufacturing sector has improved significantly compared to five to eight years ago, I believe India still needs a few more years to match the standards of imported furniture. The quality of materials used, detailing and ergonomics is where we still strive to perfect," he explains. Highlighting the longstanding heritage of brands like Porro, which has been manufacturing for over a century, Varun believes it will take another decade or more for Indian brands to reach similar standards. "Of course, I would love to promote Indian products, if they reach this level, but I think we're still 10-15 years away," he concludes.

INSPIRING AND EDUCATING CLIENTS

Living Art Interiors aims to inspire and educate clients through its meticulously designed showroom. "Our goal is to inspire clients that a home can be as luxurious as this," says Varun. The showroom features four kitchens and seven wardrobes on display, allowing clients to visualize the potential of their own homes. One of the standout designs includes SieMatic's SLX collection, which gives a floating effect to the kitchen island with stunning light running through it. In wardrobes, Porro's all-glass design serves as both a functional storage solution and a stylish room partition.

A PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCE

Varun emphasizes the importance of personalized service at Living Art Interiors. "Every client or potential customer who walks into the showroom is treated as a guest, not a customer," he explains. The team undergoes rigorous training to ensure they are knowledgeable and capable of providing exceptional service. Varun himself makes it a point to greet every customer, adding a personal touch to the experience.

ADAPTING TO CHANGING PREFERENCES

The preferences of Indian consumers have evolved over the years. "Five to seven years ago, it was all about flaunting. People liked fancy stuff in their homes. Now, they are shifting towards more practical and inconspicuous designs," notes Varun. This shift is evident in the demand for practical kitchen designs over sensor-based automation.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Varun acknowledges the significant gap that existed in the Indian market for high-quality home products. "Thirty years ago, there were not many good products available to complete a home," he observes. The establishment of showrooms



like Living Art Interiors has filled this gap, exposing clients to world class products and inspiring them to invest in luxury.

"A client who would spend 2 lakh rupees on a sofa is now also spending 20 lakh rupees on a sofa," Varun says, highlighting the shift in consumer spending habits. This change underscores the growing appreciation for quality and luxury among Indian homeowners.

THE FUTURE OF LIVING ART INTERIORS

As the company continues to grow, Varun remains committed to offering the finest luxury home solutions. The company's blend of innovative design, exceptional service, and high-end products ensures that it remains at the forefront of Bangalore's luxury market. "We look forward to seeing Living Art Interiors

grow and continue to inspire homeowners to create luxurious and comfortable living spaces," Varun concludes.

BRANDS @ LIVING ART INTERIORS

Kitchens: SieMatic

Wardrobes: Porro

Furniture:

Flexform

Poltrona Frau

Leolux

Pode

De Castelli

Riva 1920

Living Divani

Thonet

Visionaire

Longhi

Kartell

Novamobili

FROM ARCHITECTURE TO TOP LUXURY FURNITURE RETAILER:

NIVEDITHA REDDY'S JOURNEY WITH RISE GROUP

In the bustling city of Bangalore, a story of passion, innovation, and luxury unfolds through the journey of Niveditha Reddy. **Furniture Design & Technology Magazine (FDT)** met the architect-turned-retail entrepreneur who founded

Rise Group. This feature delves into how she transformed her architectural expertise into a thriving business, bringing high-end Italian furniture and kitchen brands to India. Through Rise Group, she has not only enriched the Indian market with exquisite



NIVEDITHA REDDY
Founder, RISE GROUP

Italian designs but has also set a benchmark in the luxury furniture and kitchen sector, promising a future where beauty and functionality coexist seamlessly.



THE GENESIS OF RISE GROUP

Niveditha Reddy began her career in architecture, a field that naturally fed her appreciation for design and aesthetics. With an eye for beauty and a desire to introduce unique products to the Indian market, she ventured into the retail sector, establishing Rise Group a decade ago. The

company's inception was driven by her passion for innovative and sustainable design, starting with the luxury kitchen brand **Valcucine**. "I always wanted to bring something unique to the market in India," Niveditha recounts. Her quest for innovation led her to Valcucine, a brand renowned for its high sustainability and

cutting-edge design. Recognizing a gap in the Indian market for such products, she introduced Valcucine to Karnataka, setting the stage for Rise Group's expansion.

EXPANDING HORIZONS

Following the success with Valcucine, Niveditha's exposure to other Italian brands grew. She discovered exceptional products like **Rimadesio**, known for its solid build and unique designs. Her strategy was clear: to curate and introduce the best of what Italy had to offer, filling the void she identified in India's luxury market.

"As an architect, I knew these things were missing in our market," she explains. Over the years, Rise Group has evolved to encompass a range of high-end Italian brands. This organic growth has solidified the company's reputation as a premier destination for luxury furniture and kitchen solutions.



WHICH BRANDS ARE AVAILABLE AND LOCATION

Valcucine, Rimadesio, Henge, Paola Lenti, Toscoquattro, Arrital, Altamarea, Fiam, MDF Italia, Zanotta, Sangiacomo, Triade, Magis, Gaggenau, Miele, Sub-Zero and Wolf, Siemens, Bora and Asko.

All the brands are available in the Bengaluru Experience Centre

THE BANGALORE MARKET

Bangalore, with its growing affluence and demand for luxury products, has been fertile ground for Rise Group. Niveditha notes that the city's appetite for high-end furnishings has been strong for decades, and it continues to grow as more affluent and discerning consumers seek unique, high-quality products. "Luxury furniture has always had a demand in Bangalore," she states. The city's dynamic growth and the influx of wealthy individuals ensure that the market for luxury goods remains robust. Despite the challenges, Niveditha believes that Bangalore will continue to be a significant market for Rise Group.

THE BUSINESS MODEL

In the luxury retail sector, foot traffic is not the primary driver of sales. Instead, it is about creating strong networks with architects, interior designers, and influencers who can vouch for the products. "Footfall showroom visits never happen without an appointment," Niveditha explains. The success of Rise Group hinges on these relationships, where word-of-mouth and professional recommendations play crucial roles.

CREATING THE PERFECT AMBIANCE

Niveditha emphasizes the importance of showroom presentation. Luxury products require a display that matches their



exclusivity and elegance. "When you put fewer products on display in a more beautiful way, with the right kind of lighting and complements, it creates the perfect ambiance," she advises. This meticulous attention to detail ensures that clients have a memorable experience, reinforcing the brand's luxury image.

THE EXPERIENCE CENTER

Rise Group operates a singular, extensive experience center in Bangalore, encompassing 7,500 square feet over three floors. Each floor is dedicated to different product categories: the first floor showcases kitchens, the second features wardrobes, doors, and furniture, and the third houses administrative offices along with additional displays. This layout allows clients to immerse themselves fully in the offerings, guided by expert advice tailored to their specific needs.

LOOKING AHEAD

As Niveditha continues to lead Rise Group, her vision remains focused on bringing the best of Italian design to India while adapting to the evolving market needs. Her journey from architecture to retail exemplifies how passion, coupled with a keen understanding of market demands, can create a successful business that stands the test of time. "We're bringing in expertise from our partner companies, learning from them, and using that knowledge to create designs for our clients," she says. This approach ensures that Rise Group stays at the forefront of luxury design, offering products that are not only beautiful but also innovative and sustainable.

ENHANCING OFFICE PRODUCTIVITY WITH ERGONOMIC WORKSTATIONS

Tim Larson, Managing Director and Chief Creative Officer, Asia, UNISPACE discusses ergonomic essentials, design trends, and employee-centric approaches for modern offices.



FDT WHAT ESSENTIAL FEATURES SHOULD WORKSTATION FURNITURE POSSESS TO ENHANCE WELL-BEING AND PRODUCTIVITY?

The furniture market has adapted well to these needs. Ergonomics play a significant role, with the prevalence of height-adjustable desks to combat prolonged sitting. There's a variety of work environments now, including comfortable seating and lounge-type furniture, offering employees flexibility in their workspace. COVID - 19 has highlighted the importance of comfort and hospitality experiences, influencing workplace design to include relaxation areas and spaces for employee connection.

FDT MOVING ON TO DESIGN TRENDS, PARTICULARLY IN CEO CABINS, WHAT'S UNISPACE'S APPROACH TO DESIGNING SUCH CRITICAL SPACES?

Designing spaces for senior executives in this region has evolved with changing demographics. With an increasing number of startup CEOs, there's a shift in expectations regarding office. While there's still an expectation for senior executives to have well-appointed offices, there's also a desire

for parity between employees and executives. Flexible workspace trends have influenced this, leading to fewer traditional offices and more multi-functional spaces for senior executives. For instance, offices may double as conference rooms, promoting flexibility in space utilization. The emphasis now is on maximizing space utility while maintaining a balance between executive and employee spaces. Similarly, customer-facing spaces are also evolving, with a growing recognition of the value of employee experience alongside customer experience.

FDT CAN YOU ELABORATE ON THE EVOLVING DESIGN TRENDS IN WORKSPACES?

Certainly, traditional security measures like turnstiles are being replaced by camera and sensor systems, promoting flexibility and free movement within spaces. The emphasis is on creating multi-functional areas to accommodate various functions like collaboration, ideation, and meetings. This necessitates access to a broad floor plate, as singular spaces can't cater to all needs. Additionally, there's a growing trend of all-hands meetings



NielsenIQ, Pune, India



Withum's office in Bengaluru, India

and immersive spaces, facilitated by advanced audiovisual technology. Technology not only supports flexibility but also enhances security and access control, with innovations like facial recognition systems replacing traditional card-based systems. Moreover, technology enables the creation of versatile spaces that serve multiple purposes, eliminating the need for singular-use spaces.

FDT WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU MAKE TO EXISTING WORKSPACES IN INDIA?

I'd advocate for a shift towards more employee-centric space design. Many workplaces prioritize density over employee experience, neglecting factors like sustainability and employee well-being. Embracing an employee-centric approach across all sectors is crucial.

FDT NAVIGATING INCLUSIVITY AND EXCLUSIVITY IN WORKSPACE DESIGN CAN BE CHALLENGING. HOW DOES UNISPACE ACHIEVE THIS BALANCE?

Achieving a balance between inclusivity and exclusivity involves ensuring accessibility while maintaining aspirational quality. While exclusivity

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 Many workplaces prioritize density over employee experience, neglecting factors like sustainability and employee well-being.
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denotes attention to detail and quality, inclusivity ensures everyone feels a sense of belonging. In regions like Asia, where hierarchical structures exist, we observe a shift towards a more balanced approach, where executives' spaces are democratized, promoting inclusivity.

FDT HOW DOES UNISPACE TAILOR ITS GLOBAL EXPERTISE TO MEET THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF THE INDIAN MARKET?

All our employees in India are locals, ensuring an understanding of

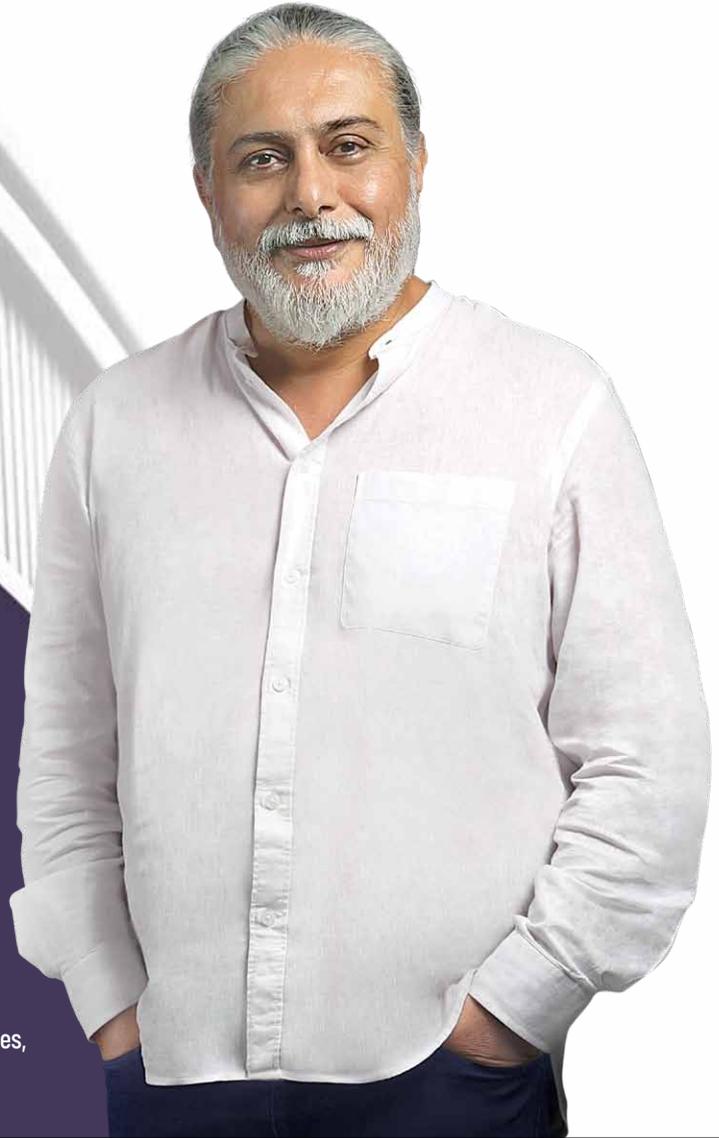
local culture and needs. While incorporating global trends, we filter them through the lens of what's best for Indian employees, ensuring alignment with local preferences and culture.

FDT DATA-DRIVEN ANALYSIS AND HUMAN EXPERIENCE ARE CRUCIAL IN DESIGNING DYNAMIC WORKSPACES. HOW DO YOU BALANCE THESE ASPECTS?

We can use data analytics to both support the human experience and maximize space effectiveness. Feedback from employees is an essential tool in making design decisions. Human factors, like wellness, well-being, a sense of belonging and community building can sometimes be missed if you are looking for data about space utilization and performance metrics. Our approach is to combine both data-driven analysis with insights from human-centric experiences to create dynamic workspaces that meet the practical business needs and also enhance employee well-being and performance.

TAKING INDIAN DESIGN & CRAFTSMANSHIP TO GLOBAL LUXURY MARKET

In a conversation with Verticaa Dvivedi, Editor-in-Chief, Furniture Design & Technology (FDT), Parminder Pal Singh, Co-Founder, LOCO Design, shares insights into overcoming challenges, nurturing craftsmanship, and fostering a collective spirit.



FDT HOW DID YOU START YOUR JOURNEY IN THE LUXURY SURFACES BUSINESS, WHICH I BELIEVE SPANS OVER 27-28 YEARS?

Yes, close to three decades. I graduated from NIFT in 1997 from the accessory design department, which is more like a product design department. Soon after, I formed my company and never worked for any other. I felt I could contribute more independently. I worked on amazing projects for the Ministry of Textiles and various exporters. During my time in the export industry, I realized there was a significant gap between design and craft, and I wanted to make a difference for the craftsmen and their craftsmanship.

FDT THAT'S FASCINATING. COULD YOU ELABORATE ON HOW YOU TRANSITIONED INTO THE CRAFT SEGMENT AND THE INCEPTION OF SURFACES?

Our country is known for brilliant crafts, but around that time, the crafts and craftsmen were undervalued with very little design intervention. The focus was on making things cheaper, which harmed the craftsman and the craftsmanship. This drove me to enter the craft segment. Surfaces came about as part of our business plan around 2011-12. We worked with various materials and craftsmen and decided to create something that speaks of fine craftsmanship. That's how Pintark came about.

FDT WHAT KIND OF CRAFTS AND MATERIALS DO YOU WORK WITH?

We work with traditional materials like wood and leather, as well as contemporary materials like carbon fiber and technical fabrics suitable for various purposes. It's a blend of different materials coming together.

FDT YOU HAVE THREE PRIMARY BRANDS: MADHEKE, PINTARK, AND TAAMAA. HOW DO THESE BRANDS DIFFER?

Pintark is an architectural solutions brand offering surfaces for walls, ceilings, and cabinets. We visualize them like wood veneers and create

graphic installations and custom work. Madheke is a luxury furniture, accessories and accents brand. We're about to launch it formally. We have been promoting it internationally and it is doing fairly well. The idea is to also showcase fine craftsmanship and international-standard design. Taamaa caters to younger apartment living, providing fine design at affordable prices by creating designs which can be produced efficiently without compromising quality.

FDT YOU SEEM TO BE A CONSTANT CREATOR. DO YOU HAVE ANY NEW PLANS?

Yes, we are working on a brand called Caur. It's driven by my passion for jewelry, which was my graduation project. We aim to utilize factory waste to create beautiful products, starting with jewelry. We began with metals and are now we are moving on to leather and wood. The idea is to show the potential of using waste creatively and connect with others who might want to do the same.

FDT WHAT KIND OF LEARNINGS YOU'VE HAD OVER THE LAST THREE DECADES FROM THE GLOBAL MARKET? WHAT KIND OF DEMAND IS THERE IN TERMS OF LUXURY FURNITURE?

When we started, we acted as a bridge between international clients and the Indian export industry, trying to align global design expectations with local production. There was a huge gap in design interpretation, which prompted us to step in. Over the years, we realized it wasn't just about design intervention but also about improving product realization. The demand from the West for cheaper, faster production had severely impacted Indian craftsmanship.

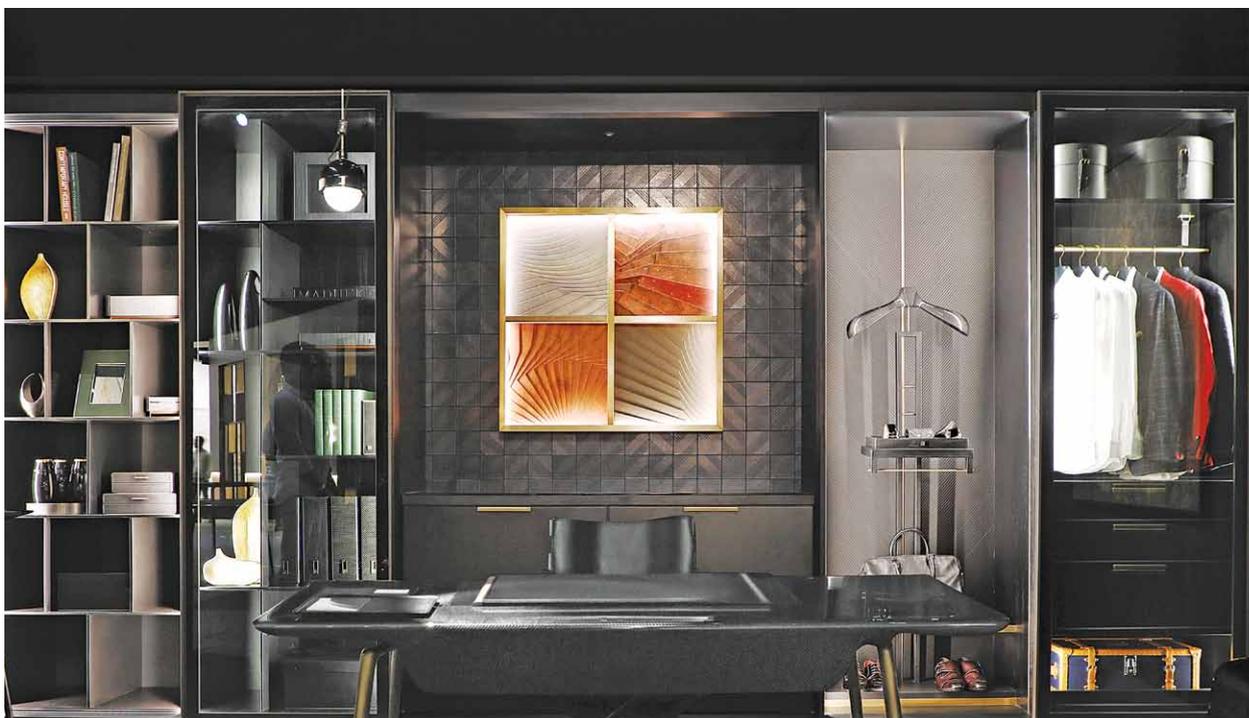


WE NEED TO ESTABLISH OUR IDENTITIES THROUGH OUR BRANDS, SHOWCASING INDIAN CRAFTSMANSHIP WITH A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE. IT'S ABOUT STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE, AVOIDING THE IMPOSITION OF 'INDIAN-NESS' ON THE WORLD OR 'WESTERN-NESS' ON OURSELVES.



FDT WHEN YOU REALIZED THERE IS LOW APPRECIATION FOR MADE-IN-INDIA PRODUCTS, HOW DID YOU ADDRESS THE GAP?

We took it upon ourselves to celebrate Indian craftsmanship. Around 2011, we started Loco, but even before that, we worked with top global brands. We realized there was a low appreciation for 'Made in India' products and craftsmanship. We had to constantly upgrade expectations on both ends, challenging clients to raise their standards and pushing craftsmen to meet these demands. Over time, we've built a reputation for fine craftsmanship. Today, many companies we work with appreciate and value our work, and we often start from concept to realization, which was unheard of before.



FDT THAT'S IMPRESSIVE. SO, THE PERSPECTIVE IS CHANGING?

Yes, it is. There's a growing acceptance and appreciation for Indian designs. We hope more young designers will step in, showing that it's possible to not only create but also design high-caliber products. Over the years, people inside and outside India lost confidence in Indian craftsmanship. We can't blame the West entirely, as that's what they've seen. It's crucial to educate both sides about what's possible and constantly prove it. Waiting for demand to create products puts us behind. At LOCO, we focus on innovation in materials, techniques, products, and usability.

FDT SPEAKING OF THE DOMESTIC MARKET, MANY CLIENTS STILL LOOK TO ITALY AND OTHER PLACES FOR LUXURY FURNITURE. DO YOU SEE A SHIFT IN THIS TREND?

P: There's a significant opportunity in India. Many Indian clients are convinced about the quality of Indian-made products. However, in terms of design, there's still a

tendency to look westward. Historically, India was a design leader, but now the situation is reversed. It's time to change that, though it won't happen overnight. We must believe that we can be as good, if not better, than the West. The current global supply chain disruptions offer a perfect opportunity.

We should aim to be more than a production hub. We need to establish our identities through our brands, showcasing Indian craftsmanship with a global perspective. It's about striking the right balance, avoiding the imposition of 'Indian-ness' on the world or 'Western-ness' on ourselves. We are at a juncture where we can make a difference, and I hope more people seize this opportunity.

FDT DO YOU THINK CRAFT AND TECHNOLOGY CAN GO TOGETHER TO CREATE A MORE POWERFUL VERSION OF WHAT WE CAN DELIVER?

Absolutely. It's a necessity. There's a common belief that mechanizing processes might detract from the craftsmanship, but as long as we use

these tools to aid the craftsmanship, there's no reason not to. For scaling up, especially with global aspirations, it's impractical to train everyone in a particular craft manually. We need to aid their work with better tools. For example, cutting wood isn't skill-intensive, but carving wood is. By mechanizing the less skillful processes, we can scale up production without losing the essence of craftsmanship. At Loco, that's one of our main goals: ensuring craftsmanship takes precedence. In our brand, Madheke, the craftsmanship is often superior to many global brands.

FDT WHAT KIND OF INFRASTRUCTURE BACKUP DO YOU HAVE?

We are a young company, having first showcased ourselves in 2013-14. In a short period, we've grown to about 60-70 people in our studio and around 1500-1600 in our factory, which spans three and a half lakh square feet and houses some of the best machines from around the world. Many of our team members have been with us from the beginning, showcasing our collective effort to create something fantastic.



Verticaa Dvivedi, Editor-in-Chief, Furniture Design & Technology (FDT),
with Parminder Pal Singh, Co-Founder, LOCO Design



FDT GIVEN YOUR STRONG INTENT TO MAKE A MARK FOR INDIAN CRAFTSMEN, HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF PROGRESSING TOWARDS THAT GOAL?

Loco started partly in response to how global brands were treating Indian craftsmanship. In the luxury market, it was rare to see a 'Made in India' label. The textile industry has done a great job of keeping traditions alive, but it's very rare in the craft and furniture segments. In 2011, a major brand bluntly told me they didn't want a 'Made in India' label because it wasn't perceived as luxury. From that moment, we were determined to etch 'Made in India' on every product under our brand. It's taken patience and conviction,

but now we're globally accepted. Some of the best platforms in the UK want to sell our products. MOMA New York and MOMA Hong Kong picked up Taamaa, which was our ultimate target, affirming that we're doing something right.

FDT IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE SUCCESSFULLY CHANGING PERCEPTIONS.

Yes, indeed. People from around the world now see us not just as an option but as a vital part of their design process. When architects from London, UAE, or New York visit us, they leave refreshed and inspired, knowing they can add more value to their projects. That's the biggest compliment we could receive.

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WE REALIZED THERE WAS A LOW APPRECIATION FOR 'MADE IN INDIA' PRODUCTS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP. WE HAD TO CONSTANTLY UPGRADE EXPECTATIONS ON BOTH ENDS, CHALLENGING CLIENTS TO RAISE THEIR STANDARDS AND PUSHING CRAFTSMEN TO MEET THESE DEMANDS.

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FDT WHEN DOES REAL COLLABORATION BEGIN IN THE DESIGN PROCESS?

Real collaboration begins when it goes beyond quality - it's also about design intent and how we can contribute to their design process. For instance, Pintark is now part of the toolbox for many international designers. They may create a product or a surface with it, using it partially or on a large scale, so it's happening.

FDT THE BUSINESS OF DESIGN IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER BUSINESSES, ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE CONSTANT CHANGES IN THE MARKET AND WORKING ON BOTH NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVELS. WITH CLOSE TO THREE DECADES OF EXPERIENCE, YOU MUST HAVE LEARNED MANY LESSONS. CAN YOU SHARE SOME?

One of the biggest lessons I learned early on, probably in the institute, is the difference between art and design. One

needs to decide which one to practice, although there are gray areas and crossovers. In design, you must have a different mindset. Initially, I wanted to be an artist, but the challenges in design are brilliant. You need to be a student of science, materials, mathematics, physics, and psychology. Simply being good at drawing or using software isn't enough. You need to understand economics. The parameters you set when designing a product must be clear. I'm grateful to those who made this clear to me early on.

FDT THAT'S VERY INSIGHTFUL. MANY PEOPLE ARE STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHETHER THEY BELONG TO ART OR DESIGN.

True, it's a transition everyone must learn and find their ground. If your calling is in a crossover, that's great, and there's an audience for it. But you need to find the right audience and stay true to your subject. Wavering between being an artist and a functional artist or a pure product designer creates problems. When designing, you must know which segment it belongs to and be specific about why you're creating it. Don't expect everyone to appreciate it; it needs to resonate with the right audience.

FDT IT'S TRULY INSPIRING HOW YOU'VE TURNED A SETBACK INTO A TESTAMENT OF RESILIENCE. CAN YOU SHARE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED FROM THE FIRE INCIDENT IN 2022?

It was indeed a challenging time, but the biggest takeaway was the strength of our relationships, especially with our team. Financial losses can fluctuate, but the dedication and character of our team were truly remarkable. My brother, who has been a pillar of support throughout my life, showed immense courage and respect in handling the situation. Our team's willingness to confront the fire head-on, risking their safety for our shared vision, filled me with immense



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IN A SHORT PERIOD, WE'VE GROWN TO ABOUT 60-70 PEOPLE IN OUR STUDIO AND AROUND 1500-1600 IN OUR FACTORY, WHICH SPANS THREE AND A HALF LAKH SQUARE FEET.

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pride. Despite losing nearly everything, we decided to mourn for only two days and returned stronger, surpassing our targets for the year. It was a collective spirit that drove us forward.

FDT YOUR JOURNEY REFLECTS INCREDIBLE LEADERSHIP AND VISION. DO YOU HAVE ANY MESSAGES OR ADVICE FOR PUBLICATIONS FURNITURE DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY (FDT) MAGAZINE?

I think you guys are doing a great job. From what I've learned about you, it's truly tremendous. I believe it's essential for someone to stand up and voice the possibilities, and media plays a crucial role in ensuring that what is happening around us is conveyed to the right audience, the right people, and in the right way. As much as we can try, unless there is someone taking our voice further, we might grow, but not at the pace we deserve. I really feel that Furniture Design & Technology (FDT) can help us achieve this, as these efforts need to be done collectively, as a united force.

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LUXURY INTERIORS: LOCK & DÉCOR HOME (LDH) HYDERABAD

Rijul Hora's unexpected shift from finance to luxury interior design led to the creation of Lock and Deco Home (LDH), a thriving enterprise in Hyderabad. In this quick chat, Verticaa Dvivedi, Editor, Furniture Design & Technology (FDT) explores Rijul's passion-driven journey and the unique offerings that make LDH a standout in the luxury market.



THE LDH STORY

Rijul Hora's journey into the world of luxury interiors began serendipitously. Originally a finance major, he discovered a keen interest in interior design while working on his own home in 2016-2017. This passion project ignited a new career path, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, he decided to turn this newfound interest into a formal business, thus founding LDH.

"It started when I was making my own house and just felt this keen sense

of passion towards it," Rijul recalls. Despite his lack of initial experience, his enthusiasm and dedication led him to learn the ropes of the industry, transforming his hobby into a full-fledged enterprise.

LDH's roots lie in the Hora family's long-standing involvement in the lock and hardware industry. Leveraging this background, Rijul began by customizing architectural hardware, which soon expanded into creating bespoke table

bases and other furniture items. This innovative approach caught the attention of architects, leading to a steady flow of custom design projects.

"We started off by customizing handles and then moved on to table bases. The work was good, and people loved it," Rijul explains. This positive reception encouraged him to expand further, culminating in the establishment of a comprehensive luxury interior solutions provider.

THE LDH EXPERIENCE CENTER

Today, LDH operates from an expansive 20,000 square foot space in Hyderabad. The ground floor features displays of premium Italian brands, while the first floor is designed as a two-bedroom apartment showcasing bespoke furniture. This setup allows clients to experience the products in a real-life context, enhancing their appreciation of the quality and craftsmanship.

CURATING LUXURY BRANDS

LDH represents a curated selection of top-notch Italian brands. One notable favorite is Henge, renowned for its work with semi-precious stones and metal. "The look and feel of the brand is phenomenal," says Rijul. Another prominent brand is Paola Lenti, a leader in outdoor furniture offering extensive customization options. In addition to these, LDH collaborates with numerous other brands, ensuring a diverse range of high-quality products for their discerning clientele.

THE HYDERABAD MARKET

Hyderabad's luxury market has seen significant growth, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. "COVID was a game changer; everyone realized the value of a good house," Rijul notes. The demand for luxury interiors has surged, with many clients investing in second homes and farmhouses, driven by a newfound appreciation for quality and luxury.

The city's robust infrastructure and booming real estate market further contribute to this trend, making Hyderabad a fertile ground for luxury businesses like LDH.

COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS

One of LDH's notable collaborations is with **Nuance Studio**, a brand specializing in luxury concrete.



All the products are available in the LDH Store situated in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad



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Today, LDH operates from an expansive 20,000 square foot space in Hyderabad. The ground floor features displays of premium Italian brands, while the first floor is designed as a two-bedroom apartment showcasing bespoke furniture.
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This partnership, which began unexpectedly, has flourished, reflecting the growing demand for minimalist and luxurious concrete designs. "The demand for luxury concrete is just growing on an everyday basis," Rijul shares.

As LDH continues to grow, Rijul Hora remains committed to delivering exceptional luxury interior solutions. His journey from finance to luxury interiors exemplifies how passion, coupled with a willingness to learn and innovate, can lead to remarkable success.

"We look forward to seeing LDH grow and continue to set benchmarks in the luxury market," he concludes.

BEHIND THE SLIDING DOORS

A LOOK AT TYPES, MATERIALS,
HARDWARE, AND TECHNOLOGY



Sliding doors have become crucial in modern interior design, offering both functional and aesthetic benefits. The hardware supporting these doors is imperative for their performance and durability. This article examines the different types of sliding doors, the various materials used, and the hardware and technology involved in their construction. By exploring these aspects, we aim to offer a thorough understanding of why sliding doors are becoming increasingly popular in contemporary homes and commercial settings, with expert insights.

SLIDING DOORS

Sliding doors significantly enhance the style quotient of your home. They offer a sleek, modern look that fits well with contemporary and minimalist styles and are easy to operate, with or without handles. Sliding doors are versatile and can be used for patios, closets, and room dividers.

INNOVATIONS IN SLIDING DOOR TECHNOLOGY: INSIGHTS FROM INDUSTRY EXPERTS

Sushmit Sarkar, Senior Product Manager - Furniture Fittings and Sliding Solutions at Hafele India Private Limited, highlights the key



Photo Credit: LTDF



AR NATASHA N KOCHHAR
Associate Partner and
Principal Architect at LTDF
Architecture + Interior Design.

Sliding doors, especially those in glass, enhance the flow of natural light and contribute to an airy ambience. Effective in living and dining areas, they provide a seamless transition between spaces.

TYPE OF SLIDING DOOR	HARDWARE	MATERIALS	FEATURES	TECHNOLOGY
<p>Invisible Sliding Doors: Also known as concealed sliding doors and flush-to-wall sliding doors, they blend with the surrounding wall, disappearing completely when not in use, creating a sense of more space.</p>	Tracks and rollers concealed within walls or ceilings	Glass, Aluminum, Wood, Steel, Composite materials	Ideal for dressers and home offices, blends with surroundings or disappears into paneling pockets	Magnetic Levitation Technology (Maglev), Integrated sensors and controls
<p>Frameless Sliding Doors: Offer a modern and minimalist aesthetic by removing the need for visible frames around the glass, providing a clean and spacious appearance.</p>	Specific hinges and fittings to fasten the door straight to the door frame or wall	Transparent materials like glass or acrylic	Less dust gathers in hard-to-reach places	Glass edge bonding technology, Monorail systems
<p>Pocket Sliding Doors: Slide away into a hidden cavity in the wall, referred to as a 'pocket', requiring a wall wide enough to accommodate the pocket and enough space on one side of the door frame to fit the door when fully opened.</p>	Metal track set into the wall, hooks and brackets	Wooden, Metallic, or Transparent	Offers privacy and sound insulation	Soft Close System, Telescoping Mechanisms
<p>Bifold Sliding Doors: Characterized by their ability to fold in half when opened, connecting indoor and outdoor spaces seamlessly, and providing unobstructed access to patios, gardens, or balconies.</p>	Hinge and track systems at the top or bottom of the door frame	Wood, Aluminum	Allow ample sunlight and promote airflow	Bottom Rolling systems, Thermal Break Technology

components of hardware used for various types of sliding and folding doors, including rollers and hangers for smooth sliding, hinges and pivot sets for folding and pivoting, handles and locks for operation and security, weatherstripping and seals for insulation, panel materials such as glass, and frame and mounting hardware for stability. He also mentions specific products like Häfele's Smuso Soft Close Mechanism for rollers and hangers, Häfele's Kubica Concealed Hinges for concealed hinges, and Häfele's flush handles for pocket doors. Sarkar notes that these components may vary based on the specific design and type of sliding or folding door system being used.

"Concealed sliding doors offer an uncluttered appearance and are ideal for dressers and home offices," says **Ar. Natasha Kochhar, Associate Partner and Principal Architect at LTDF Architecture + Interior Design.** She emphasizes their benefits for Vastu compliance, noting, "These doors make Vastu compliance easier as the door swing (which needs to be clockwise as per Vastu) is not a concern when sliding!" Kochhar explains, "These doors blend with the surroundings or disappear into panelling pockets and help maintain an open plan." Discussing advancements in



Photo Credit: Design21

sliding door technology, **Mukesh Bhatia, Director at SSB Architects,** notes, "Smart automation systems are making their way into sliding doors." He highlights various features, stating, "Motion sensors, remote controls, or smartphone apps offer the ultimate accessibility and control over the space." Bhatia adds, "Security features like biometric locks and RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology provide enhanced security and peace of mind." Additionally, he mentions, "Anti-slam mechanisms and soft-close technology are being implemented in sliding doors, helping prevent doors from slamming shut, reducing noise and increasing safety, particularly in homes with children or elderly individuals."



AR. NIKITA BAJAJ PATHAK
 Founder and Principal
 Architect at Design21

Various factors should be considered while designing with sliding doors for functionality and comfort. For accessibility, we ensure smooth and wide openings for easy access to wheelchairs. Further, the tracks should be flushed with the floor to prevent tripping hazards and allow for a seamless transition between spaces. For soundproofing, we use high-quality, acoustic-rated sliding doors that can significantly reduce noise transmission. These doors often feature thicker glass or specialised acoustic panels designed to block sound.

Avanish Singh Visen, Director & CEO of DCJ GROUP (Encraft), sheds light on the popularity of specific types of sliding doors in India, stating, "Patio doors are highly popular in urban homes with balconies, allowing residents to blend indoor and outdoor living spaces seamlessly." He further elaborates, "Bypass doors are commonly used in residential settings for closets and wardrobes due to their space-saving design." Visen also notes the rising trend,

Photo Credit: Alsorg



mentioning, "Sliding French doors are increasingly popular for their elegant look, fitting well in modern and contemporary homes." Additionally, he mentions, "Center openable sliding doors and lift-and-slide doors are also popular choices."

Detailing the preferred options provided by DCJ GROUP, Avanish Singh Visen mentions, "Our preferred options include patio doors, which feature high-grade uPVC & aluminium frames and tempered glass for durability and safety, available in multiple finishes to match any interior decor." He continues, "We provide lift-and-slide doors, which are premium options for large openings, offering unobstructed views and seamless operation, engineered for thermal efficiency and security." Visen concludes, "All our products are designed in accordance with [IS 17953 & EN12608] in uPVC System & EN12020 in Aluminium systems."



Photo Credit: Encraft sliding door hardware



THE BEST HARDWARE FOR YOUR SLIDING DOOR APPLICATION

Avanish Singh Visen, Director & CEO of DCJ GROUP (Encraft), underscores the importance of quality in sliding door hardware, citing ENCRRAFT's commitment to rigorous testing and meeting industry standards. Their products undergo Life Cycle Tests per BS EN 1191 and corrosion resistance tests per BS EN 1670, ensuring longevity and durability.

MATERIALS TRENDING IN SLIDING DOORS

Mukesh Bhatia, Director at SSB Architects, notes the popularity of stainless steel and aluminum for their durability and modern aesthetic. **Ritu Gupta, Co-Founder and Interior Designer of Pramod Group** highlights vinyl, fiberglass, and aluminium for their distinct

advantages in sliding door construction. Ar. Natasha Kochhar emphasizes sustainable materials like recycled aluminium and low-emissivity (Low-E) glass for energy efficiency and environmental benefits. Sushmit Sarkar, Senior Product Manager at Häfele India Private Limited, discusses the customization options and improved dampers in Häfele's sliding systems. **Sajal Lamba, Director at Alsorg & Co-founder at Wriver**, observes the trend towards metal and glass sliding doors in India for their modern appearance and durability.



Photo Credit: Ritu Gupta, Pramod Group

ARE SLIDING DOORS BETTER THAN TRADITIONAL DOORS?

Supporters of sliding doors emphasize their space-saving features and modern aesthetic. Ritu Gupta and Sajal Lamba highlight their ability to optimize usable space and create larger entrances, ideal for contemporary luxury homes. However, Avansh Singh Visen cautions against disregarding traditional doors, noting their excellence in sound insulation and security. While sliding doors excel in functionality and design adaptability, traditional doors offer privacy and classic charm.

Despite the benefits of sliding doors, they require regular maintenance, may not open as wide, and can be expensive.



RITU GUPTA
Co-Founder and Interior Designer of Pramod Group

Sliding doors offer advantages over traditional doors in space efficiency and aesthetic appeal.

Their horizontal movement saves space and eliminates the need for swing clearance, making small areas feel more open and allowing flexible furniture arrangements.

Additionally, sliding doors enhance a room's visual appeal with their modern, sleek design, ideal for contemporary and minimalist homes.

Advanced sliding systems like Häfele's Slido F-Line42 50B and 50C address issues like door misalignment. The choice between sliding and traditional doors depends on individual needs and style preferences.

Client feedback on sliding doors is highly positive, with users appreciating the modern look, space-saving benefits, and ease of use. Sliding doors offer various styles and innovations like magnetic levitation and integrated sensors, enhancing energy efficiency, security, and customization. However, maintenance and access limitations underscore the importance of careful planning and quality hardware selection. Despite these considerations, sliding doors remain popular and valuable in modern living spaces.

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