



ARCHITECT SPEAK

Icon in architecture

The popular, celebrated architect known for his exquisite designs, **Jimmy Mistry**, principal designer & managing director, Della Group, gives his views on the industry

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EXCERPTS:

How did a passionate biker stumble into the field of art and architecture?

I haven't been through any formal design schooling. I started off doing contracting jobs where I visited architect's offices as a contractor and understood their design. I then did furniture supply jobs; this was followed by me going to Italy and buying furniture pieces, where I understood the differential designs in India and abroad. I then added the other elements around furniture—lights, fixtures, hardware and accessories. When I started designing on my own, I realised that consumers were more comfortable with my designs as compared to what architects were offering them. I've always had a very strong engineering background. Doing larger projects, naturally we started going from exteriors to interiors. We graduated to larger projects where we did design ideation as we were chosen by clients for our design, creative detailing to the projects and our concepts.

What fascinates you about architecture?

The satisfaction of improving an environment and thus improving the experience, is what fascinates me about architecture. Designing is all about creating an element of surprise; form and function are the two sides of the same coin.

How would you describe your style?

I don't know if I have a style—I take a deep dive into a given situation and start looking at clearing the clutter. I also look around for inspiration and view at the assignment broadly. I teach myself things with a certain set of process in mind. After I put all the methods in place, I give a very close look to the designs, integrate them and start the work. You need to have a close interaction with the projects you do; they should grow on you.

As an architect, what are the three things that are mandatory in any project you undertake?

Putting yourself in the occupants shoes, firstly. Whether I am designing a small home or a resort, I need to put myself in the same environment to be able to design it. Secondly, prototyping is a very important exercise that people usu-

ally don't do. An architect needs to have some sort of a madness, wanting to create something new. Thirdly, try and see how your work is going to impact lives. An architect needs to think how s/he can make a better environment for occupancy.

How can nature and architecture co-exist without being opposing?

Architecture and nature must co-exist. One can't live without the other. An entire generation can be defined by the architecture you leave behind. Architecture and history, and architecture and environment are interwoven. Architects can play a very important role in making sure that the damage and harm to the environment is drastically reduced. As an architect, you should try to select materials which available in a common regional area. Sourcing materials from abroad, adding to the cost and carbon footprint is not going to resolve environmental issues.

What does the Mumbai skyline tell you about this modern city?

I think the last couple of generations are to be blamed; it is pathetic. Hardly any developments have been done in the last 30 years that we can be proud of. We have a lot of catching up to do. Our laws and norms need to be changed. People like Hafeez Contractor have been shouting their throat horse for it. I think the rest of the architecture fraternity should join in and come up with norms, which are going to at least make us turn around at the end of our career and say that we have contributed in some way towards the city. In the last 50 years, we have created one more monster over the other. There is nothing for the architecture of the city to be defined by. We are spending a lot of money but the basic design ideation that is being approved is absolutely wrong. The city is getting ruined.

One iconic architect who inspires you.

I like people who are creators, so internationally, I admire Thomas Heatherwick. He's a non-qualified architect but every project and assignment of his has been unique. As far as Indian context is concerned, I admire Hafeez Contractor and Noshir Talati.



Designing is all about creating an element of surprise; form and function are the two sides of the same coin. If you have an idea, and if you are able to execute it well, and in the process, you are able to make a better environment, you have succeeded