

02

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M+

MATERIAL PLUS

from the publishers of

ifj

MATERIAL MAGIC

INSIDE:

M+ INDUSTRIES IN FOCUS : Market Watch : Plywood Hub, Mumbai | Market Speak : Flooring | Association Interview : Wallpaper



It gives us immense pleasure to venture further into the materials sector with this second edition of M+ the complete materials guide to the Indian market and its vagaries. The interesting thing about the Indian market is that despite its clear and well documented vagaries, it is in fact an extremely dynamic and self-regenerating machine.

I am personally enthralled by the adventure; by the stories of the people who make up this industry, by the ways in which they have quite often overcome hardship and impossible conditions to come out on top. And most of all, by the power and capacity of the industry to survive and thrive under conditions of poor government support and weak industry infrastructure, in terms of facilities and structure.

M+ aims to unify the various segments of the vast materials sector. The fact is that despite the clear material differences between stone and wood, the industries themselves function in much the same way and target a common buyer, namely, the builder, the architect, the manufacturer, the specifier and the retailer. We seek to find the commonality between these segments, while celebrating the differences in the products themselves that add such a range of dimension to our interiors and built forms.

We look forward to sharing more and more of the magic of each of these sectors and to providing a unifying platform to all materials; combining beauty of form with knowledge and technical information, in the beautiful pages of M+, the only publication completely focused to the materials sector.

A handwritten signature of Sylvia Khan in black ink.

Sylvia Khan
Editor & Creative Head, Material Plus

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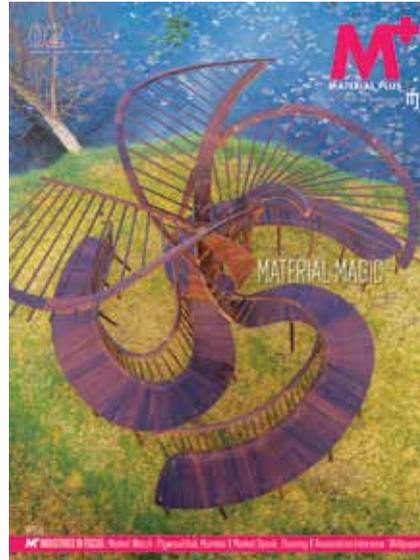


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The Preservation Bench by Houtlander, South Africa

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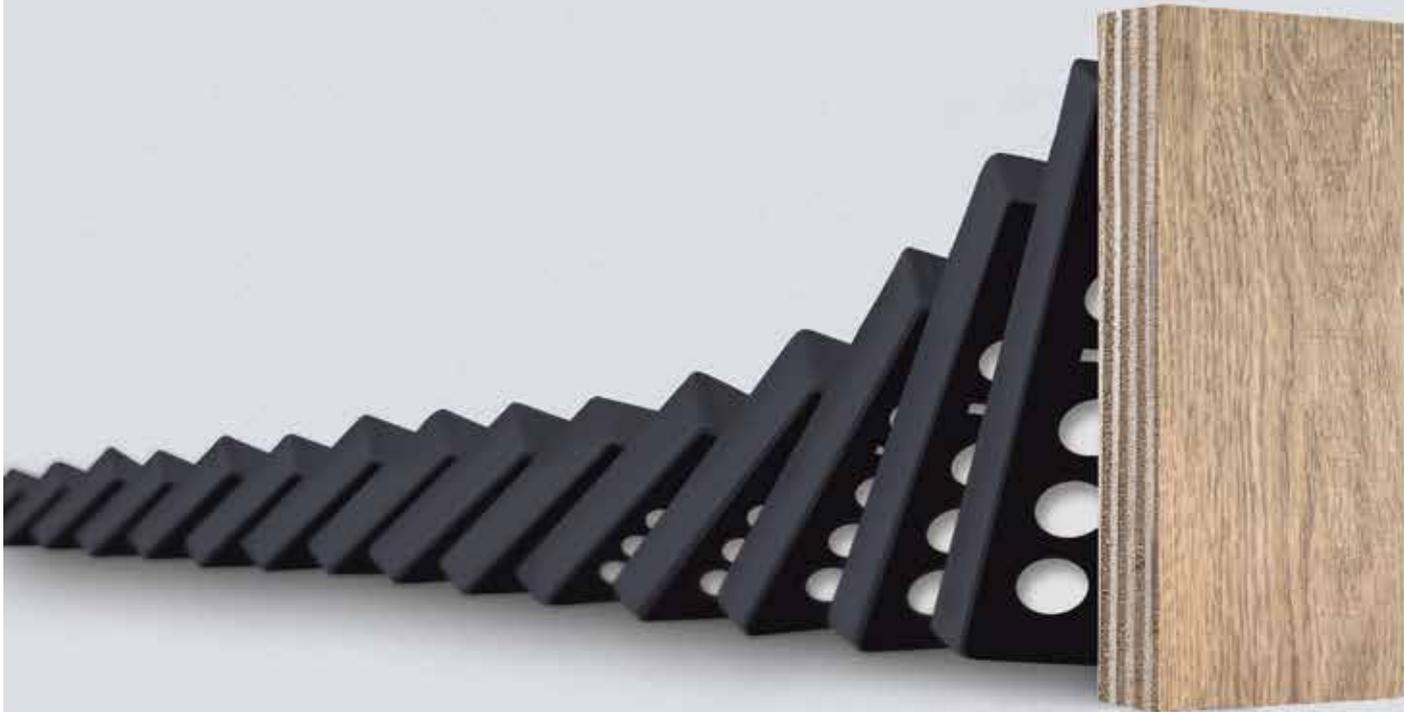
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ROOM FOR GROWTH

India's wallpaper import totalled US\$ 23 million from 2015 to 2018

and this figure is expected to grow at a CAGR of 28.5% from 2018-2024 (Source: Mordor Intelligence). Most of this growth will be fuelled by import. While Indian companies import from Europe, the UK and the USA, China and South Korea remain the favorites for low-cost imports.

Prohibitive costs of manufacturing further limit domestic production. Keval Mehta, CEO, ATCO Interiors Pvt. Ltd, says, "A huge recurring investment is required to set up a manufacturing unit. Eyeing the current wallpaper market scenario, no one is willing to take such a big risk. Therefore, wallpaper is imported from countries all over the world like Germany, Belgium, Italy, China, Korea, Russia etc. India imports wallpaper worth around \$20-25 million annually."



The wallpaper market is fragmented, with a few big companies dominating across price points from luxury to mass market products. Key players in this segment are Marshalls, Excel, Asian Paints, D'Décor, Wall Art, Ultrawalls, ATCO, Bhagwandass BD, Wall King, F&F and Elementto, to name a few. International brands such as Versace Home, Blumarine, Roberto Cavalli, and Porsche Design have also found cachet with interior designers recommending them in high-end projects.

Given the range of end user, the option for growth in the wallpaper industry is tremendous. From residential to commercial, hospitality to corporate office spaces, salons and spas to hospitals, the playing field is vast. Within these, vinyl-based wallpaper currently holds the largest market share. They are affordable, durable,



washable and color-fast which suits the average Indian household well. The world of wallpaper is opening up with products ranging from two-dimensional prints to illusion-creating 3D designs to textured wallpapers that imitate the look and touch of bamboo, wood, bricks, straw, metal, stone or paper.

E-commerce vs offline

Online giants such as Pepperfry, Amazon, Flipkart and Snapdeal have become spaces where customers can browse wallpaper options and buy at their convenience. India's top 10 sellers in this industry have added e-shops to their expansion strategies too. However e-commerce, which has been a boon for most retail industries, may not overrun brick-and-mortar sales for this industry. Instead, online offerings may feature more as a catalogue to whet customer appetite before they head to stores to examine the product itself and its varied textures and finishes such as 3D, embossed or textured.

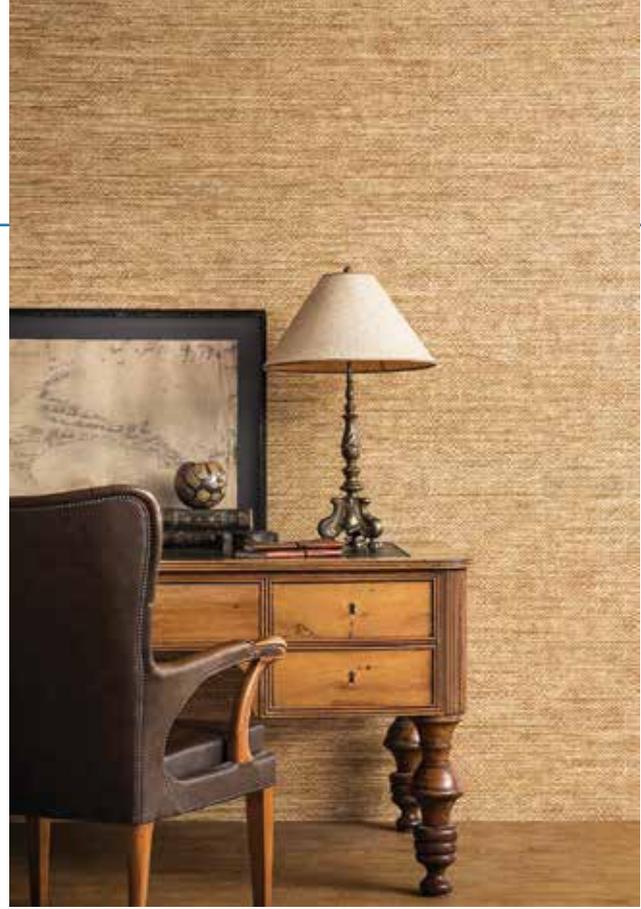


Challenges

In China, 35 per cent of the population uses wallpaper or other forms of wall coverings; in India it is not even one per cent, says Mehta. "Approximately 20,000-30,000 people work in this industry and the employment rate will increase only when demand increases."

For retail consumers, wallpaper application can be a hurdle. The technicians who apply wallpaper sometimes charge unreasonable amounts for service whereas the actual process is quite simple. A basic knowledge of application can empower Indian users to fit wallpaper to their walls themselves; a common practice in the west where wallpaper is sold with glue in supermarkets, in most European countries,.

Mehta says, "After-sales service is a top priority for new-age consumers who look for an assurance of easy maintenance for longer use. Introduction of efficient post-sales services will gain the product more loyal customers."



Domino effect

Traditionally, the real estate sector has driven growth in all allied fields of construction but the instability in the market has led to fluctuating demand for wallpaper. Thus, remodelling projects may drive the wallpaper market for a while, or until real estate returns to some form of steady growth.

There is also a new approach in play. Mehta says, "Our direct consumer is the retail segment which is increasing at 40 to 50 per cent. However, we are now planning to supply directly to construction companies also. Today, many unfurnished ready-to-move-in apartments are painted and a bare minimum interior work is done by the builder before selling it to the buyer. If builders or construction companies start using wallpaper instead of paint, it can bring in the trend of wallpaper in residential and commercial spaces. We are also moving our focus to the hospitality sector. If wallpaper is used in prestigious hotels, people will start associating wallpaper with sophistication; this is the direction we are headed in."





Looking forward

With high design not the prerogative of just the luxury segment, the middle class too is investing in rooms that reflect their aspirations. Wallpaper, along with other newer surface coverings, is moving in to feed this desire. By 2030, nearly 80 per cent of households in India (140 million households) will be middle class and will drive 75 per cent of consumer spending. Simultaneously, another 20 million will move in to a higher socio-economic bracket. They will spend 2-2.5x more on essential categories such as housing. While half the increase in spend will be in buying more, half will be in buying better, in upgrading (Source: "Future of Consumption in Fast Growth Consumer Markets: India", World Economic Forum in collaboration with Bain & Company). Some of this growth will spill over on to fast-moving, aspirational items such as wallpaper making the prospects for this sector, bright.



In this section, M+ speaks to the leaders of industry association to offer a broad perspective of the state of the industry at large.

DEMYSTIFYING WALLPAPER

**An interview with
B. K. Sharma,**
President and Promoter,
All India Wallpaper
Association, &
Founder, Marshalls

AIWA overview

The All India Wallpaper Association (AIWA) is a relative newcomer being formed as recently as 2017. Yet, in these two years, AIWA has 'wallpapered' its cause in the minds of consumers more familiar with other surface coverings. From creating awareness to training semi-skilled laborers in the techniques of wallpaper application to popularizing trends in mass media, AIWA plays an active role in furthering the interests of the industry.

The initial phase saw several challenges. The biggest among these was to debunk the many myths around wallpaper and promote its advantages. B. K. Sharma, President and Promoter, AIWA, says, "Most people perceived wallpaper as a decorative element that could be easily damaged by children. Thus, they suspected its longevity. However, most wallpaper is scratch-resistant; we showed this through multiple demos and quality checks. We have broken through a market in which wall paints were the only preference."

Sharma founded Marshalls Wall Coverings 45 years ago and felt a need to give back to the industry. He says, "We connected with like-minded people to form this association. In today's fast-paced market, problems are evolving on a daily basis. We felt the need to create a statutory body that can approach the government to represent the industry."

The wallpaper industry also generates employment opportunities for a huge number of semi-skilled laborers with minimum education. These people are

provided with extensive training sessions that help them gain expertise in the field and earn enough to afford shelter, food and basic daily needs. Sharma feels that AIWA supports the government's Skill India initiatives in this way.

Market flow

Wallpaper is not manufactured in India, except for digital wallpaper. With the market still at a nascent stage, manufacturers find it unfeasible to invest in the capital needed for production when import is so much more economical. Most of India's wallpaper needs are met by Korea, China, Europe and USA. Wallpaper is believed to have been invented in China 150-200 years ago and the country is now the largest manufacturer and exporter of wallpaper in the world. India, however, because of its free-trade agreement with Korea for certain goods, imports much of its wallpaper from this country.

Digital wallpaper is taking center stage. It is easy to print, has customizable unit sizes and may be printed as per requirement. However, it is also more expensive than standard wall coverings.

Advantages

Unlike paint, wallpaper can be applied without major trauma to residents. Application does not involve pungent odour or excessive dust that might aggravate health issues or trigger allergic reactions. Wallpaper is relatively environmentally-friendly as no chemicals are involved in the application process, which uses an odourless, water-soluble, anti-fungal paste for surface application.



Another benefit is the sheer speed of application. Sharma says, "If the process of painting a wall can be likened to a test match, the wallpaper application process is like a twenty-twenty match. Who has time for long test matches these days?" Increasing disposable income and decreasing personal time allow consumers to spend a little more money to save time to achieve their desired result.

Other benefits of wallpaper include being customizable for the Indian market with typically Indian elements such as decorating the base paper with rich embroidery designs made of kundan, pearls and satin thread and other innovative ideas. Cost too is a positive. Wallpaper can cost as little as INR 25 per sq ft or go up to INR 800 per sq ft and more, opening up the product to the entire consumer segment from budget to high end.

Challenges

Despite these advantages, paints still rule the market. Sharma says, "AIWA will soon conduct concept promotion and public awareness campaigns across various mass media so that wallpaper becomes serious business. We are encouraging our associated members

to participate in various exhibitions and trade fairs to showcase their products." The industry recently received a boost with the drop of GST from a whopping 28 per cent to 18 per cent. Sharma says, "GST shook the market in 2017 and many wallpaper traders had to shut down. Now, wallpaper is becoming popular in the interiors industry and people are using them to integrate personal style and sophistication. However, a rigorous promotion is required to overtake the paints industry and, for that, the availability of substantial funds is a must. The total wallpaper trade itself is 25 per cent of the total promotion budget of any big paint company. So, this is a challenge AIWA is fighting to overcome."

Looking ahead

Sharma says, "As people do not have time, quick and convenient solutions are exactly what they are looking for. All they need is to be made aware of this concept. Wallpapers should replace the idea of paints in eight to 10 years." ✚

The M+ Market Watch section takes an in-depth look at a particular hub of manufacturing or trading, speaking to the members of the market and describing and defining the market in their words. This issue takes us through the bylanes of Mumbai's plywood markets

HARBOR OF MATERIALS

Focus: Ghatkopar, Mumbai

HITESH JASANI
Chairman & Company Founder,
Arihant Enterprise, Ghatkopar

“Our journey started 32 years ago. We were the first to introduce decorative laminates. One sees smaller companies struggling given the current economic scenario but the industry is definitely growing, and this is despite the severe competition.”

ANKIT K SHAH
Partner, Ankit Agency, Ghatkopar

“I began my journey when I partnered with Kirti Shah 10 years ago. Soon enough, I began to enjoy the field and the market went well for the next five to six years. Now, there is tough competition in the wholesale and retail sectors. The major hurdle, though, is lack of awareness regarding quality. We have seven brands under our belt and solely cater to retailers in Mumbai. Focusing on timely delivery, our brand strategy involves thorough market and trend capture, marketing focus, competitive rates, consistency, relationship building and good schemes.”

DHIREN KARIA, DINESH GADA
Directors, Laminex, Ghatkopar

“We were the first in the market to launch PVC Mica seven years ago. We have an assortment of decorative panels. We believe in leadership but one is a leader only when one is followed. A successful brand value is achieved with time and trust. However, the market needs a big player to be better organized and bring awareness among carpenters.”





GIRISH CHHEDA

Owner, Rajgiri Ply-N-Wood, Ghatkopar

We have been distributing decorative laminates for the Mumbai-based brand Advance since 1997. Profit margins are good when there is less competition but we can handle tougher competition too, with hard work. ””

NIKHIL CHHEDA

Owner, Ritesh Ply-N-Laminates, Ghatkopar

I joined my family business which was set up in 1994. I learned about samples, quantity-based schemes, and the rates and services that make a brand. Today, the market has been side-tracked due to the prevalence of readymade furniture which has led to seasonal sales. ””



MAYUR SANGTANI, VIJAY SANGTANI

Partners, Pacific Decor, Ghatkopar

The industry is growing increasingly organized. We need to become more creative in allocating funds to ensure a smooth workflow, given the current scenario of client division and the entry of new players. ””

LALIT AGARWAL

Managing Director,

Green Valley Marketing Pvt. Ltd., Vashi

Plywood is the best thing to have happened to this industry. I have been in this business since 1995 and the market and trade line are suffering due to over-billing and under-billing. After all, this industry is all about volumes. ””



FLOORED BY WOOD



Environmental concerns notwithstanding, wooden flooring (laminated, engineered and solid) has tightened its grip on markets worldwide. The segment is expected to grow to US\$ 92.64 bn by 2020 (source: Report, Grand View Research). A major chunk of this growth will come from developing economies like India.

Some reports put India's share just five years ago at US\$ 113.5 mn and that number has grown exponentially with purchasing power increasing in the residential segment and aesthetics gaining traction in commercial sales too, over the last five years.

Although the construction industry is going through a slowdown, renovation and floor refurbishment are on the rise in all sizes of projects. Retro-fitting allows a high-impact upgrade for homes, offices and all kinds of establishments. In terms of optics, wooden flooring is considered a status symbol. In India, the adoption of any product by the middle classes, is the sign of an idea whose time has come. This could be said to be true for wooden flooring. If not all rooms, most homes will make a start with using wooden flooring to create a single, statement room.

The bulk of the middle class ensures numbers so high that international companies, which were reluctant to enter the Indian market because of high duty and exchange concerns, have swooped in. India is the most coveted market in Asia, second only to China. Tie-ups with Indian companies have ironed out transport and logistical issue-based deterrents.

There is high demand in India in sectors like corporate offices, five-star hotels, restaurants, showrooms, and retail outlets, mainly in metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, and Pune.





Challenges

Raw material costs have had a significant impact on the industry. The price of wood remains volatile while the cost of production has been increasing consistently. Governments across the globe have become strict with laws and regulations against deforestation. Consequently, the high-demand-low supply ratio of raw materials has shrunk manufacturers' profit share.

Only a handful of manufacturers make wooden flooring in India. Most of the market has been cornered by international players from China, Korea, USA and Europe. These companies have custom-made their products to withstand the extremities of India's climatic conditions across the country.



The future is bright

Growing environmental concerns have resulted in in-depth research into the creation of eco-friendly materials with a low carbon footprint.

Newer materials, technology, and specialized machinery have made the outlook for the industry brighter. Additionally, the sheer scale of projects, especially industrial and commercial ones, has increased dramatically.

Constant innovation in the segment is inspiring companies to upgrade their offerings in various segments such as shopping malls, IT parks, airports, metro-rail projects, and SEZs. Industrial townships around the big cities will lift the market too.

With infrastructure spend increasing across segments and nation-building a key driver of economic growth, industries allied to construction look set to benefit over the next decade.



In this segment, M+ lets industry members tell the story of the industry and its growth, through their own stories of growth and success, which much like the industry itself is rooted in struggle and driven by passion.

ASHWANI KAUSHIK PARVEEN KUMAR

Directors,
Shree Ram Steel Industries, Yamunanagar

From pilings and peelings to plywood.

We launched our company in 1997 and started a plywood factory in 2002. Earlier, a lot of Pine was imported from Himachal Pradesh to Yamuna Nagar, followed by Poplar, which developed more slowly. Meanwhile, there was just piling and peeling, from which we manufactured cores, then veneer and finally plywood. This is how we started our plywood business.

Tough beginnings

Yamuna Nagar is the biggest market in Asia and gets customers from all over India. In the plywood industry, especially, one needs to study the market and envision what can be done for the future. The field is challenging, plus there is the struggle one faces when starting something new. Since 2010 though, people are looking to expand their business. In comparison, it was easier, earlier as expansion brings challenges. Take, for example, wood as a raw material. We are planting Poplar and other types of trees to manufacture more wood; we are also researching on new types of wood.

The market

In Yamuna Nagar, we are surrounded by approximately 25 industries; that is how big this industry is. We distribute our products to Gujarat, Vijayawada, Indore, Bhopal, Nakoda, Pune, etc. In the next five years, we want to connect to areas which we haven't reached yet and expand our business there.



DHRUMIL SHAH

Director, Royal Flooring, Mumbai



A different first step

My father was in the furnishing business but I was inclined to do something else in interiors, so I chose wooden flooring. We have engineered wooden flooring, which is specially designed for the Indian climate because if we don't provide an expansion gap to the flooring, it might not last a single season.

Current scenario

Wooden flooring is a fast-growing industry. There are still many customers, architects and interior designers who aren't familiar with the technicalities, the know-how of product installation and its maintenance. Also, Chinese imports at lower prices continue to confuse consumers who also want quality.

Challenges

For any newcomer, brand visibility is a challenge; competing with established players is a challenge too. Five years ago, business was at its peak and many players from the laminate, veneer and ply

segment moved into wooden flooring. Certain government decisions followed that saw the market slow down. Finally, now, the industry has settled. Hopefully, it will regain its peak in the next five years.

The brand and buyers

We import our products and floorings and mainly deal with designers and architects. The film industry is a constant potential market as the need to alter their interiors occurs at a higher frequency, every three to four years. Royal Flooring, as a brand, is associated with other brands from Europe and the North. We have also begun dealing in high-end wallpapers.

Trending

Oak is a trending wood right now, mainly European Oak which allows design and shade experiments. It is the only wood species that does not get affected by any kind of dyeing or designing. In India, though, walnut and Burma teak are always popular.

HEMANTH DAGGUBATI

Head, Strategic Operations,
Cosmo Granites Pvt. Ltd., Chennai

A lasting commitment to stone

Right from when we started, in 1992, our focus has been on natural granite. We were the first to introduce Italian and other imported, natural marble to Tamil Nadu. We then added wooden flooring solutions to our product portfolio. This is the 28th year since our inception and we now have a diverse product range. However, our focus remains natural stone; we are the largest natural stone gallery in Tamil Nadu, and one of the largest retailers for natural stone in the country.

Drive and vision

Our vision has been to become a one-stop shop for natural flooring solutions with a focus on imported marble and granite. We observed a clear gap in the market for natural, aesthetic flooring, and are now known for stocking exclusive and colors and patterns, never seen before, in marble and granite. We aim to be successful through the adoption of technology and are in constant communication with our European counterparts who educate us on the latest practices that assure the best quality output.

Perceptions and challenges

Raising initial awareness for natural marble and promoting it as a world class flooring option

was a challenge due to negative perceptions associated with the maintenance of marble flooring.

Price-quality differences are a strong characteristic of the stone industry, and it is easy to mix up various qualities under the same category. We pride ourselves on having developed an expert skill set that allows us to source the best.

The market

Our target audiences are individual home owners, retail establishments, the hospitality sector, educational institutes, residential developers, commercial and office space developers. We do digital marketing, product-oriented events, specialized one on one meetings and seminars to reach out to them.

We predict growth from the retail and hospitality sectors which are set to boom. We will see innovativeness in terms of the way materials such as natural stone and wood are used. We have noticed newer designers moving away from conventional color palettes and experimenting with bold colors and patterns which require us to source from new quarries. Experimenting with different textured finishes on stone is another trend worth mentioning.



KR SHIVSHANKAR

Managing Director, Inovar Floor, Mumbai



Seeing the big picture, providing solutions

Beautifying people's home and workplaces gives us satisfaction and customers need solutions, not products. India is a big country and the one-size-fits-all strategy doesn't work here; staying relevant is a challenge as color choices and tastes change regionally. The mandate is to find meaningful solutions for our clients, despite the economic situation, which is largely out of our control. With the real estate industry facing a demand crisis and the way products are retailed, customers want to buy direct from manufacturers, to cut off middle men.

The vision

Inovar, as a brand, provides flooring solutions of great value and the highest ethical standards, to customers. If one were to cut out all jargon, the customer should feel happy about his/ her choice.

Appropriate solutions

New technology should eventually help us deliver better service and value to customers. The price/quality equation is a matter of segmenting yourself to stay relevant to your target audience, and you need to be competitive for similar specifications, just as you cannot compare an 800CC car with a 1000CC car !

Industry and initiatives

The size of our industry is close to Rs 600 cr, when you include laminate, wooden flooring, and decking. Our buyers are home owners, developers and hospitality customers. For us, the opportunity to see is the prime focus of promotions. Therefore we are involved in product displays at retail stores, sampling and briefing for specifiers, all of which is backed up by trade fairs and social media.

The market

Being on-trend means upgrading designs, using modern materials, hybrid construction of products and interior finishing products. You need to have fresh offerings every 18-24 months and with people travelling so much, it is important to be as international as possible.

The market is presently slow and will take a year or two to revive. Post that, sales should pick up. It is every human's aspiration to lead a better life and home interiors reflect that goal. Hence, the future will always be bright. However, the way business is done will change, owning vs leasing will be a topic discussed more openly.



NIKITA BANSAL

Director, Basant, Jodhpur



Core competence

We have been exporting for the last 21 years with an expertise in working on solid wood and metal. In fact, we are the biggest factory in India to put together solid wood and metal in a manufacturing setup. We work with Acacia wood, Sheesham wood, and Mango wood; they all are local woods and we export them across the globe.

The foundation

Our company was started in 1998 by Mr. Vinay Jain, with just a handful of employees. Our core ideology is to contemporise Indian craft for global appeal. We also believe in mixing materials; we keep wood as the primary component and mix it with metal, natural fibre and stone or glass to make the product more exciting and one of a kind. This is necessary to create and maintain interest in the market.

We always work on natural material like wood and metal; we don't work on plastics, laminates, etc. We had a concept where we used a very thin layer of concrete on our furniture, and we are recognized for that in the world. We have expanded from furniture to lighting and wall décor, and now we have added wooden flooring to our profile. In India, nobody works on real, solid material like wood the way we do. We have mastered the art of solid engineered wooden flooring, it has no MDF or ply; being solid wood makes it strong enough to last 30 years.

Roadblocks

We had difficulties in convincing people to stop buying from China. Consumers should be able to judge quality and durability and be aware that the kind of quality we get in India is incomparable.

The years ahead

For the domestic market, we would want to be known as a brand for home décor and wooden flooring with real materials. We want people to understand our design language. Customers appreciate good design and quality, and these are the factors that will prevail in the market in the next few years.

Quality, technology and price

Technology wise, we have over a hundred machines in a factory space of four lakh sq ft to work on solid wood and metal. We are not for everybody; we are here for people who understand what solid wood is. We are not in the mass manufacturer market and we do not play the price war. We would like to stick to our price in exchange for best quality and design.

NIPUN PUROHIT

Business Head, HKS Flooring LLP, Mumbai

Legacy beginnings

We are a 185-year-old, Germany-based wood and laminate manufacturer and supplier. We began our India venture in 2011. Over 300,000 colors and design variations make us stand apart in the market with our Mumbai showroom having 600 color samples on display.

Product quality and offerings

We are set apart by product quality and customization, with customization the primary benefit we offer to our customers. Our products come under the A+ category as they are produced in a certain environment which does not contribute to CO2 emissions. With zero manual labor, manufacturing is entirely done by machines run on solar power. Similar to the ISI mark in India, our products have attained an FSI certification as we plant double the number of trees cut by us for production.

Most of the engineered flooring available in the market is produced with Poplar or Pine which is quite soft. Our traditional skirting is 20 mm thick as opposed to 12 mm which is available in the market. Our products are anti-fungal, anti-termite and keep white ants away.

Growth

Initially, we visited architects with our catalogue, showed samples and got feedback and business. Our company has grown from a one-man-army to a team of 20 people. Today, 90 per cent of our business comes through word-of-mouth and goodwill due to our quality products, range of options and customizations. We began as a B2B company but are now reaching out to retail customers as well.

Challenges

The government recently introduced an anti-dumping duty for European manufacturers in our category. We spent an additional cost of approximately US\$ 4.95 per sq ft which made our products more expensive compared to imports from China or Malaysia. However, we managed to grow due to an increasing demand for quality products.

The market

Imports in India are worth approximately US\$ 40 mn a year. An additional 30-33 per cent is charged for custom duty and other import formalities after the products reach the warehouse. Besides Mumbai which is our biggest market, Delhi, Pune, Lucknow and Ahmedabad are also potential markets. We distribute solid wood, laminates and engineered wood to 30 countries worldwide. Internationally, China is the biggest importer of our products. In terms of import capacity, our second largest market is France, then Canada. Now, even the younger generation opts for natural or engineered wood, at least for some part of the house. Recently, 'Vaastu' studies also recommend wood as a material that helps in temperament control when used inside the house.

R&D and innovation

We launch 10 new styles in January every year and focus the rest of the year on customization. This year, we are planning to introduce a product called "Through-And-Through Smoke Surface" where the smoking treatment will be done through all the layers and is not confined only to the upper layer.



PADAM JAIN

Owner, New Pragati Plywood Industries, Yamunanagar

Birthing pains

I started my business from Assam in 1984, the next destination after which was Bombay to start wood trade. The problem I faced was scarcity of material, so it was in 2003 when I founded my own business in Yamuna Nagar. The market in Yamuna Nagar is huge as it is the plywood manufacturing hub of the country. The material reaches here from a radius of 300 km and the price for timber for north India is decided here.

Made in India

We use technologies made in India and we have just one machine that is Chinese. We don't import machines from China or any foreign country. All we really need is machinery that is durable, good quality and that serves for a longer period.

The industry

If our dealer grows, so do we. So, our pricing is attractive enough to enable our dealers to compete with anyone in the market. We are mid-segment players and maintain a good position in the market. We do our best to be organized but the industry is still chaotic. There is a crucial need for the industry to be systematized; only then can it benefit.



Trends

PVCs and MDFs are trending in the market. As the surface of MDF is smooth without splinters, it is easy to paint and cut. It is even more in demand than plywood which has a greater life span than MDF or PVC. It's all about end users and their preference is to seek a material or product which is easy to carry and can easily fit in to their homes.

Strategies for sale

We don't believe in marketing or advertising. So, we do face-to-face promotion which we believe is more impactful. Having said that, we do advertise in magazines so as to adapt and be compatible with the ever-changing media and its readers.

PRATIK SINGHVI

Managing Director, Euro Pratik Sales Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai

Making way for the future

Importer of decorative products, furnishing sheets, wall panels, and products which are not available or made in India, the intent at Euro Pratik is to bring something exclusive to the Indian market. We now import from 15 countries like the US, Europe, Portugal, Romania, Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, China, and Turkey to name a few. We started with a single product in 2003 at a time when there was hardly anyone in the sector. We would travel to various cities to educate consumers about our products. This was a market where veneers and laminates ruled, and no highlighter products existed. A replacement to veneers and laminates, wall panels or paints, decorative segment products are made of acrylic, PVC, polystyrene, and are termite proof, water proof, borer free, with a minimum of eight to 10 years of life.

The journey

I joined my father's veneer business after my MBA. We had a manufacturing factory in Raipur, Chhattisgarh and we had just ventured into the non-generic area of decorative laminates. Initially, people were skeptical of our product and its application. The idea was to create a new market for a completely new product and establish a monopoly, for which I have visited all the A and B cities and done all the leg work. From 2003 to 2009, we were doing just one product, Canfor. Today, we have 35 brands with a portfolio of 3,000 designs in different price brackets and 40 showrooms with our brands, pan-India.

Maintaining the competitive edge

We didn't have any competition till 2014, but now that everyone is getting into it, we maintain our monopoly by launching five to six new products every

year, either new designs of old products or a completely new product.

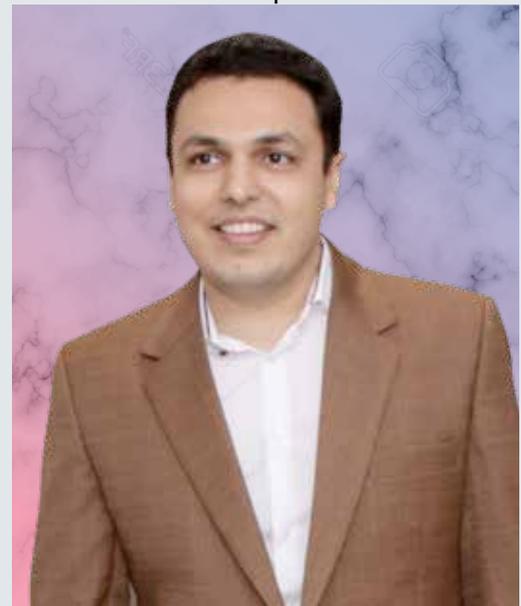
We are passionate about getting something that is new, unique, innovative and challenging. Our parallel emphasis is bringing environment-friendly products for the Indian market.

The advantage for us is our huge range and strong distribution grid in more than 130 cities in India. We know the pulse of the market through networking and experience. We also have a team of eight to 10 directors where at least three are involved in finding and researching new products. In Mumbai, the network is our distributors; in other cities, we supply directly to retail.

Innovation is key

Market growth in our sector was negligible; the growth that began in 2010 continues. While the initial few years were good, now, many small players are exiting because of competition. However, there is still opportunity for the right product and network.

Awareness and investment in R&D should be a company's emphasis. The idea is to get innovative products rather than getting the same product and slashing prices. As there is no industry road map, innovation is the key. The satisfaction in getting new products, being creative and having them accepted in the market is unmatched.



SANJAY BISSA

Key Account Channel and Projects,
Pergo India Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai



Introducing India to laminated floors

Pergo was the first to bring laminated floors into India, 21 years ago, and is now used by everyone. Our company is based in Switzerland while the factory is in Belgium. Nothing is manufactured in India. Our second plant in Malaysia has sections of some products like engineered wood since the niche market for processing is there.

In search of something new

Laminated floors took baby steps in the European market at first and then, eventually, in India too. People were looking for something new within the same price range so that search brought laminated floors here. Both market and customers have matured and consumers have evolved which has made manufacturers innovative.

The middle class is the biggest section and they contribute the most, for any industry.

We are a dealer-distributor network organization and are present PAN India, with a head office in Delhi. We also have service assurance throughout India. The current scenario is that we have 20-25 shades in one range.

A brief history

Anyone who is in laminates has a history of having started with wood. It is said that the cloth and wood industry are segments that no single person can understand entirely. The story around laminated flooring is that leftover pieces of wood were being thrown away when a rag picker picked them up and turned them into flooring.

The product

Ours is a ready-made and ready-to-install product that comes from Belgium, and follows European standards. Laminated flooring has four sections. The base is a melamine paper/polish which acts as a barrier to avoid wood reaction during seasonal changes. The second layer is high-density fiber, HDF, which is sawdust, which is the heart of the floor. The third is the decorative paper, the face of the floor. Then comes the overlay paper, called the wear and tear layer, which is not visible to the naked eye, and takes care of all aberrations, right from pencil heels to bicycles. All these layers are sandwiched together to form a plank with the help of high precision machines. These have interlocking systems so that a whole apartment can be done in one day.

Challenges and acceptance

It has taken a while for the market to accept laminated flooring and people need to be educated about wooden flooring even now. India being a tropical country, acceptance at the technical level was a big challenge. Engineered floors came into picture only because solid wood can't be used with India's climatic conditions, because the rate of expansion and contraction is high. The installation process was a challenge too but all of this is being slowly overcome. The market is now mature, and has accepted laminated flooring. There are other types of flooring as well like PVC, vinyl and SPC (stone plastic composite), etc. but laminated flooring is fast-fixing, easy to dismantle and reuse, easily repaired and falls in the economical segment.

SUMEET KUMBHANI

General Manager,
Polycoat International, Mumbai



An introduction to coating

Our product is a component for the indoor wood coating industry; and we have been in this industry for 14 years. Initially, there was spirit-based polish after which came melamine. Then came Duco Paint, followed by PU polyurethane. PE polyester is trending currently, which we manufacture and sell: PE-based wood coating. Three factors make the product stand out: gloss level, polyester delivers double the effect of polyurethane, and the product life is 20 years compared to five to six of polyurethane. The next and main factor is cost, considering the huge gap between the product life of PU and PE, the cost is not a huge difference.

The beginning

Around 2004, this concept was new, being Italian coatings. Ours is a family business, and as one of our cousins is a chemical engineer and thought of trying this product in India. We imported the entire

machinery from Singapore and have facilities in Ankleshwar.

It took us a few years to perfect the product, after which we initiated supply to the local market in 2006, got the results, and made modifications as per the feedback. There were a lot of factors, right from chemical composition to favorable conditions that had to be modulated. There are many manufacturers for polyester but we are the only Indian manufacturers to achieve a grade that matches the Italian counterpart.

Our approach

Architects and interior designers are our influencers and hence our targets. As of now, we have 400 to 450 dealers across India. We started the process in reverse with our marketing and approached dealers, contractors and then the layman and created a demand where required.

The market

This is a luxury product market and is only for the niche customer. We handle Mumbai and have four distributors across India in Tamil Nadu, Bengaluru, New Delhi, and Karnataka, and other smaller sectors from here. About 80 per cent of our raw material is procured from India, 20 per cent is imported. Our competition is with Italian products; we deliver the same quality at almost half the price.

R&D and innovations

The material cost for the product is low, but the labor cost and the processing time are lengthy. It takes three months to do multiple coats, sanding, buffing, etc, however we are in R&D and are trying to shorten the process. Also, while our product can be used on any possible wooden surface, we are trying new surfaces like wallpaper and PVC pipes too.





THE PRESERVATION BENCH

Houtlander : South Africa

Material : Thermally-modified American red oak

Design firm Houtlander partnered

with the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) to explore thermally-modified American red oak, which was developed to be durable and weather-resistant. Thermal-modification takes a non-durable hardwood and makes it suitable for exterior use and adds dimensional stability through a relatively simple, chemical-free and low environmental impact process of heating the timber to a very high temperature in a vacuum kiln. In American hardwoods, the process works best in ash, red oak, soft maple and tulipwood, making them ideal for decking and cladding applications, as well as for outdoor furniture and shade structures.

Houtlander creatives, Phillip Hollander and Stephen Wilson who worked on the project to create the bench say, "We are a company that strives to be as sustainable as possible- we don't use screws or mechanical fixings in our production - just good traditional joinery. We not only want to design furniture that is useful and lasting, we only work with timber that is honorably sourced."



The Preservation Bench : Houtlander
100% Design South Africa 2019
100% Design Award for Best Furniture Design.



We love the story of how American hardwood is grown - how it is harvested - how the forest re-generates itself - it is a beautiful thing.”

The designers wanted to show a piece that was in some way representative of a tree, while communicating about the material namely American Hardwoods, saying, “Timber is in fact carbon that has been captured out the atmosphere and locked into a functional item for a very long time,” said Stephen Wilson.

Unique properties

According to Houtlander, no other material that furniture is made out of can claim to be carbon negative. They wished to make an outdoor range in TM because of its unique properties and learnt more about the material in terms of load bearing, how it responds to various types of machining, bonding and jointing. They found the material becomes brittle but also dimensionally stable. They overcame the brittleness by cross laminating, which was not possible with the unmodified wood because it would warp and crack due to the difference in rates of

expansion and contraction. Other good properties included: color consistency, weight - the TM process makes the material much lighter; easy machineability and sanding. It is also easy to finish with water based finishes, especially if it's used as an indoor material.

Wilson says that TM oak forces designers who are used to working with solid timbers to change their thinking. “All of your training and experience prepares you to expect the timber to behave in certain ways, that it's going to warp and change shape, that it can't come in contact with moisture. This is why all wooden outdoor furniture has the same loose plank - mechanically fastened construction. With thermally-modified oak, the material does not move or warp. The stability of this material in the presence of moisture - unique to this form of timber - has allowed us to create a form hitherto unimaginable in an outdoor setting,” added Wilson.

The biggest challenge was the extreme brittleness. The designers compared it to like working with charcoal at times - prone to cracking along the grain. Their recommendation was to cross laminate to improve strength. Tensile strength was lowered and so they thickened sections to regain strength. All in all, it took Houtlander three months from concept to completion - the first month was spent on design; the second on engineering/ machine programming; and the third to machine and assemble.

“Not only is the Preservation Bench a masterpiece in timber design and craftsmanship, it also has a minimal environmental footprint. We have calculated that all the red oak used to make the bench would be replaced

through natural regeneration in the U.S. hardwood forest in less than 1 second. Additionally, while in use, it is estimated that the Preservation Bench will keep 635 kg of CO2 equivalent out of the atmosphere,” concluded Roderick Wiles, AHEC Regional Director. +

About American red oak (*Quercus spp.* mainly *Quercus rubra*)

An attractive oak with distinct reddish-pink tones, the wood is similar in appearance to white oak, but with a less pronounced figure due to the smaller rays and a more porous end grain structure. The wood is mostly straight grained with a coarse texture. American red oak is the most abundant species in America's hardwood forests and is used for flooring and a wide variety of furniture and building applications. The wood is hard and heavy, with medium bending strength and stiffness and high crushing strength. It is very good for steam bending.

About AHEC

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) is the leading international trade association for the U.S. hardwood industry and runs programs to in over 50 export markets, by resourcing architects, specifiers, designers and end-users with technical information on the range of species, products and sources of supply. In addition, AHEC also produces a full range of technical publications.

www.americanhardwood.org
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This section looks at materials supplied by industry members. New form is breathed into them through the creativity of architects and designers. Thus empowered, they then populate the interiors of homes, offices, retail spaces, hotels and institutions.

BOMBAY HAIR ART

Rajkot

Sparsh Design Studio, Rajkot

Material : Brick, Wood, Concrete

Design brief and aim: To create a low-maintenance, low-budget and high-impact interior for a hair salon.

How this was accomplished: Fire bricks have been explored in various ways to adhere to the time and budget constraints. The charm of the space lies in the geometry of design; circles and triangles have been used widely in the circular arch, product partitions and light fixtures. These elements create a visual harmony that suited the client's brief.

Visual connectivity, with a clear and classified segregation of spaces, is a plus point. While keeping the public areas open and welcoming, the spa and owner's area are opaque and closed to clients.

Material palette: Wood is used to add warmth and versatility in conjunction with materials like brick and concrete.

The ceiling is a combination of barrel vaults in cement paint along with fire brick cladding. A brick wall guards the south-facing façade to reduce the direct glare of the sun. A perforated, circular screen allows the entry of light and also allows a glimpse of the services within. The flooring is exposed concrete with a distilled use of metal scrap while furniture and partitions have been created with fire blocks, cement board and mild steel. Wall coverings are in fire brick with wooden beading. Industrial and ceramic lights brighten the interiors.

Happily ever after: A monotonous material palette is converted into a unique selling proposition through design.



BRICK GARDEN WITH BRICK HOUSE

Czech Republic

Jan Proksa Architect, Austria

Material : Brick



Design brief and aim: To build a house in a traditional Southern Moravian village that reflects elements of the local style.

How this was accomplished: Villages in the Southern Moravia region of the Czech Republic are known for their urban planning. The streets are lined with L-shaped row houses and each structure has its own backyard. A single multi-generational family home typically consists of three parts: the street-facing house inhabited by parents with their children, a home for the grandparents bordering the courtyard, and the remaining property traditionally used for small-scale farming.

Departing from the traditional construct, the project allows both houses to retain their individual identity. The internal rooms, external kitchen and courtyard together form a fluid and unified living space. This continuity is reinforced by the use of locally-sourced traditional brick for both the tree-lined courtyard and the building's façade. The main room features an open kitchen and a large table abutting a non-framed sliding window with views of the garden.

Material palette: The exposed brick façade, spilling over an exposed brick courtyard defines the boundary of the



backyard garden. The use of exposed brick architecture was a simple, durable, and cost-effective solution.

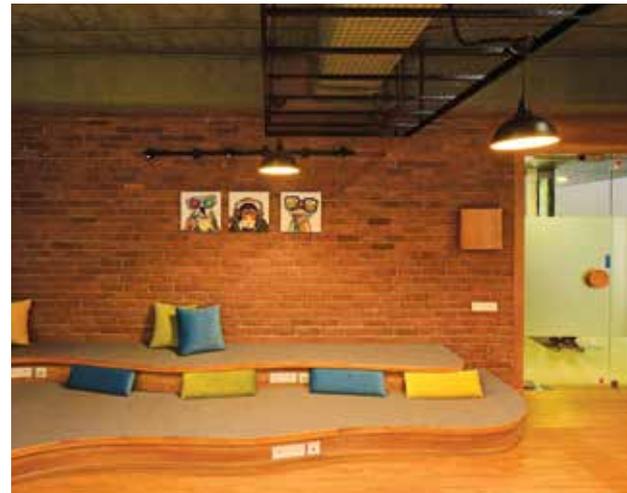
Happily ever after: Built as the extension of an existing third generation family home, the single floor planning of the house is minimal, open, and invites functionality. Thus, a modest yet fully functional living space has been created that reflects and respects its surroundings.

DESIGN N BUY

Ahmedabad

KDA Architects, Ahmedabad

Material : Wood, Metal, Glass



Design brief and aim: To have a unique set up that is spacious, open, flexible, and welcoming and simultaneously modern and easy to maintain.

How this was accomplished: The interior of this office space departs from the conventional experience and attempts to branch into a livelier environment that engages occupants in a vibrant interplay of freshness, zest, light, reflection, texture and graphics. All the spaces have elements of interest that unfold gradually. A wooden pergola structure poses as the first element of interest, screening the office's interiors while offering privacy. The workspace has

a playful character with 120 degree work stations forming a variety of clusters. The character of the office's partitions allows natural light to flow from its only source throughout the entire office.

Material palette: The theme is an honest expression of the materials themselves, such as wood, metal and glass. Exposed surfaces are adopted for a contemporary look.

Happily ever after: An integral part of the design is the transformation of the user's experience, befitting the image of Design N Buy as a forward-thinking company.





EVOLUTION GYM

Bharuch

P&D Associates, Bharuch

Material : Padded Flooring, Wooden Balustrade

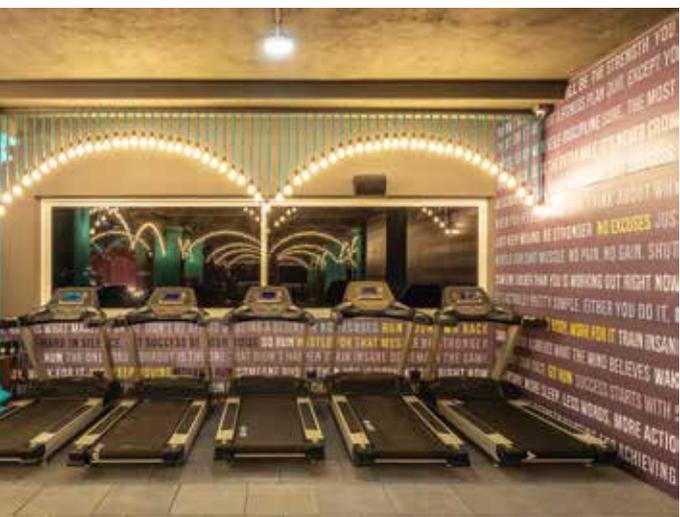


Design brief and aim: To adhere to the principles of art deco and give members a different ambience to workout in, which not only motivates them and helps shed their inhibitions.

How this was accomplished: The USP of this design is the combination of statement pieces with airy lighting and a striking color palette. Filament lights of varying lengths create dramatic arches across thresholds while white panel lights overhead form the mainstay of the functional lighting component.

Material palette: The floor of the gym area comprises an interlocking, padded flooring material which cushions the floor and supports injury-free workout. The reception table top rests on a hand-crafted wooden balustrade with a curtain-like, pink textured wall as backdrop.

Happily ever after: The gym leaves an impact from the moment one enters, from a robust reception space to the semi-rugged floor within.

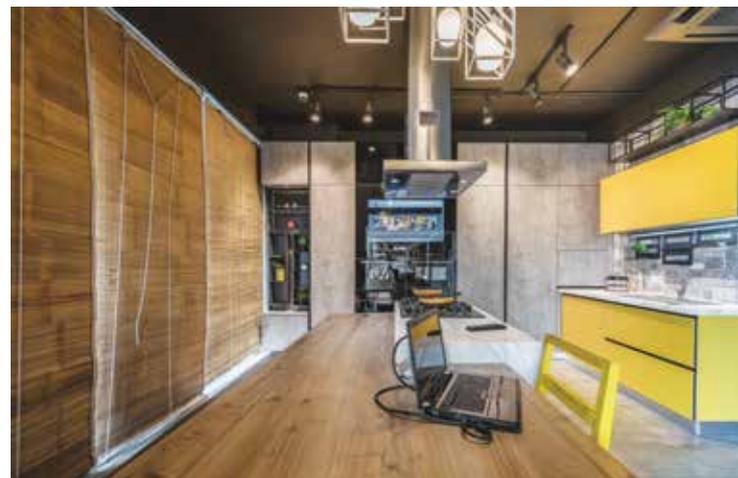


EVOWOOD OFFICE

Ahmedabad

Evowood, New Delhi

Material : Wood



Design brief and aim: To create an office with a transparent look using white ash Evollae sheets.

How this was accomplished: The materials used in the project constitute sheets of white ash Evollae and a yellow, lacquered glass along with wooden chairs in rustic finish and laminated cabinets. Aluminum partition panels divide the glass window on one side to create a transparent open office look. Cabinets are made with Burma Teak Narrow Flute Evollae sheet. The kitchen has a 3.5 mm thick sheet and the counter top is made from quartz stone embedded with kitchen appliances. The wall paneling and ceiling are in pine and CP teak Evollae sheets and the office doors and door frame are also made from the sheets. The flooring and the acrylic sheet ceiling complete the overall look of the space.

Happily ever after: The space is rendered to look professional.

Design brief and aim:

To create a simple and traditional place for a mother and her family in the coastal village of Nam Dinh.

How this was accomplished:

The design combines the concept of Nam Dinh's vernacular countryside housing with in-depth material research in order to amalgamate the comfort of modern living into a coastal village. The house has multiple flexible spaces and a facade that comprises three flexible layers due to the unpredictable coastal climate and large storms of this area.

Material palette:

The outermost layer is made entirely from Bat Trang floral ventilation bricks in order to bring daylight and fresh air into the house. A second layer of plants provides additional privacy while allowing the light cast indoor to change harmoniously with the surrounding environment. The third layer of strong

glass allows the occupant, an aging woman, to close the house up easily in case of storm.

Rustic crafting techniques are also refined with modern technology to present the best of tradition and science. A hand-pressed intaglio method is used to transfer the tactile beauty of the banana leaf onto concrete surfaces, which is an important element of the conceptual design as the house used to sit on a small banana farm.

Green aspects:

Bat Trang floral ventilation bricks are customized and used to trap air in the structure's hollow interior. The empty space in the brick becomes a heat-insulating layer which helps the facade to remain cool even under the direct sun from the west.

Happily ever after:

The history of the family and this house are preserved for future generations through its design vocabulary.

MAISON A

Nam Dinh, Vietnam

Nghia-Architect,
Tran Kim Xuyen Street, Cau Giay
Material : Floral Ventilation Bricks, Glass



INTERIORS OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF QATAR

Doha, Qatar

Koichi Takada Architects, Australia
Exterior architecture : Ar. Jean Nouvel
Material : Wood



Design brief and aim: To create a sense of desertscapes that would exemplify the local experience for visitors and continue the exterior architectural poetry of Ar. Jean Nouvel.

How this was accomplished: From the museum shop to the two cafés, each is carefully curated. Thus, the timber walls of the museum shops are inspired by the Dahl Al Misfir (Cave of Light), an underground sanctuary in Qatar famous for its fibrous gypsum crystals. 40,000 unique wooden pieces were CNC-cut in Italy and assembled in Doha by Italian master carpenter, Claudio Devoto.



Café 875 boasts of seating inspired by Qatari gold jewellery, in particular medallion rings. Visitors may experience Majilis, the traditional seating arrangement from the Qatari Bedouin nomadic lifestyle. Desert Rose Café is a reference to how the naturally-occurring desert rose formation pops out as a jewel from the vast desert. The floor lighting here is inspired by sand dunes.



Material palette: Wood has been used by the architect to portray myriad substances, from the mystical gypsum crystals to the purity of 875 gold.

Happily ever after: The forms and materials, arrived at through many conversations with the local Qatari people, complement and enhance Ar. Jean Nouvel's exterior architecture.



KWALITY RESTAURANT

New Delhi

Chromed Design Studio, New Delhi
Material : Glass, Wooden Veneer, Gypsum

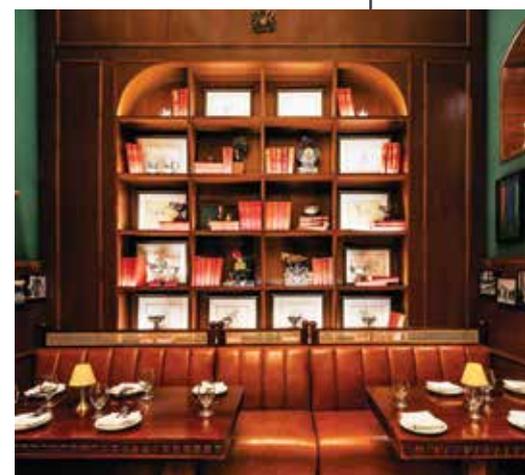


Design brief and aim: To re-invent the entire layout of the restaurant and, at the same time, retain Kwaliti's regal charm.

How this was accomplished: A vintage theme was imparted via muted shades and antique assets. Intrinsic detailing is evident from the pattern of wallpaper, the awnings, the grill patterns and the black and white checkered marble flooring. The layout is brought together and enhanced by the ambient lighting scheme and the choice of color palette that ranges from textured brown veneers to floral walls with a dash of sea green. The structural components posed a challenge due to their natural wear and tear and had to be strengthened with metal girders for the slightest of layout modifications.

Material palette: An external façade of teal and maroon awnings is supplemented with glistening glass frames. Inside, a wooden veneer paneling and a Sabyasachi wallpaper catch attention. Tan shaded seating, checkered flooring and wall décor with defining black frames, all portray the vintage aura of the space. Further on, a baroque grill patterned staircase leads the journey to the mezzanine dining area with an ornate gypsum ceiling and a classic chandelier.

Happily ever after: The restaurant has contemporized its traditional appeal with a touch of the Victorian era to elucidate the charm of bygone days.



PENTHOUSE AT KINGSTON

Gujarat

Sparsh Design Studio, Gujarat
Material : Wood, Metal, Italian Marble

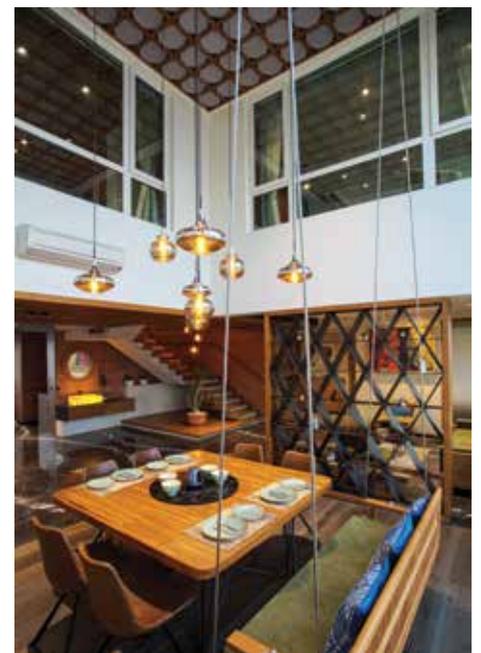
Design brief and aim: To create a functional space that is easy to maintain.

How this was accomplished: The materials, furniture and light are in cohesion with the space. The interiors are in a limited color set, keeping furniture, space and designed spots in mind.

Material palette: Wooden furniture, metal partitions and wooden framing have been used. The walls have cement textures and Italian marble is used for flooring. The treatments done on the wall are with real brick cladding. Customized metal accessories and hanging light fittings enliven the décor.

Green aspects: The spaces are functional and raw materials are presented without additional treatment except what has been done to increase their durability.

Happily ever after: The overall space treatment gives a live, visual appearance.



MEGACOAT

Nasik

Kalayojan Architects, Mumbai

Material : Jaisalmer Stone, Indian Marble, Metal

Design brief and aim: To redesign and recreate the site of two adjoining plots and combine them into a singular office.

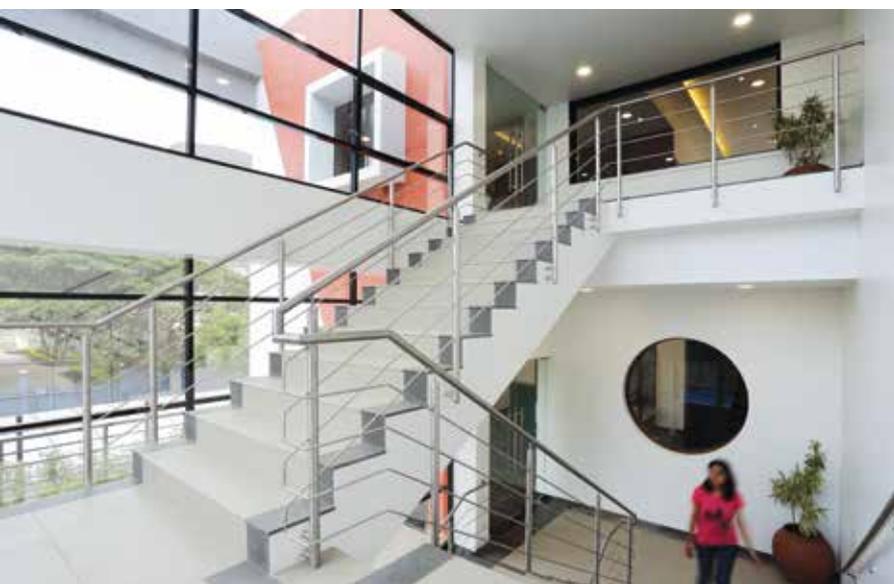
How this was accomplished: The first phase required the existing ground storeyed factory on the first plot to be retained and built over to accommodate the company's headquarters. In the second phase, on the second plot, a 20-year-old building was demolished to accommodate the factory.

The first floor of the new building is strategically linked to the first floor of the old building to ensure ease of communication, save time and optimize effort. Also on the first floor, is the company's USP, a well-equipped laboratory that is transparent so it can be easily seen by visitors.

Green aspects: The entrance is flanked by lush green trees which, instead of being cut down, were accommodated into the construction. Distinct sections of green throughout the building influence productivity. An example of this element of green is in the lobby area on the first floor. Terrace gardens and a small waterfall affronting the central hallway connects all the rooms on the second floor and complement the industrial setting.

Material palette: Chrome plated metal pipes act as sun-cutters. These reflective metal fins on dark grey walls add a contemporary aesthetic. The material palette is restricted to a dark flooring tile with warm tones of wood left in its natural state, natural Jaisalmer stone and plenty of greens. The reception table is custom made in green Indian marble and white engineered stone. A table in teak veneer and brass detailing is highlight of the conference room. The chairman's office has a large teak wood and walnut veneer library shelf unit with a Statuario marble tile cladding at the back.

Happily ever after: The factory work and office operations continued uninterrupted through the process of redesigning and construction.

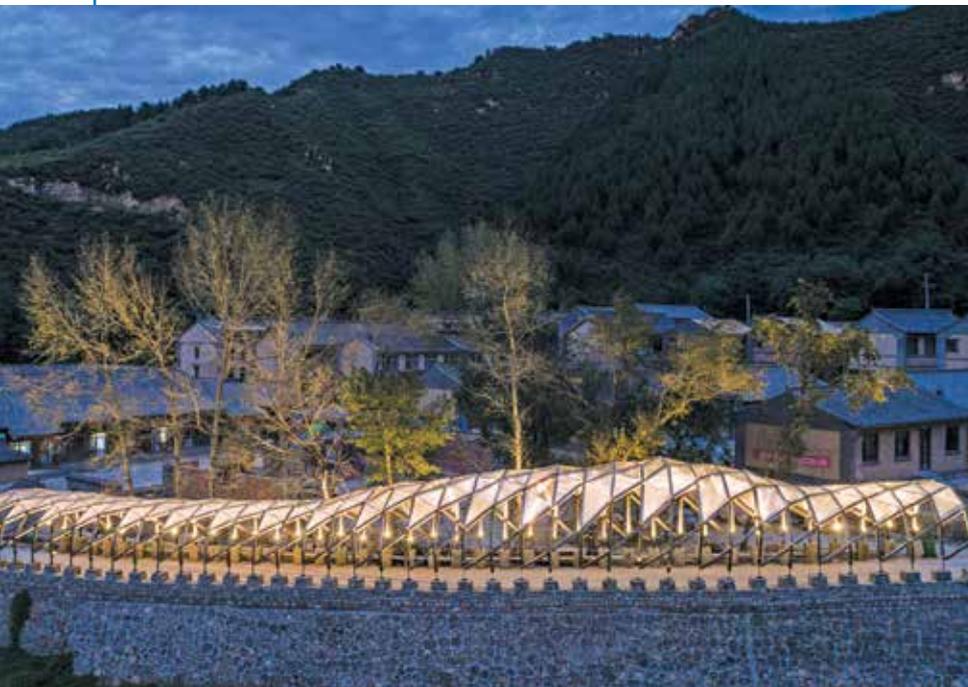


PERGOLA IN LUOTUOWAN VILLAGE

China

LUO Studio, China

Material : Wood, Steel, Concrete



Design brief and aim: To reuse wood waste from the renovation of dilapidated village houses, and build an eco-friendly pergola for a modern village.

How this was accomplished: The mountainous terrain of the village required protection from the slopes and scarps. An original plan recommended a pergola with cement columns built over a long scarp with heavy square steel bars and large timbers as the main construction materials. As the carbon footprint to execute this would have been significant, a more efficient solution was proposed.

During renovation, most of the villagers had chosen cast-in-situ concrete for their refurbished homes instead of traditional roofs, leaving a large number of wooden beams and rafters unused.

These have been redesigned in small units to enable higher usage of wood waste and so that the construction work could be carried out by the villagers themselves. The structural system is composed of wooden rod units which enhances stability. These wooden rods have been reclaimed from houses of varying sizes and are of varying lengths too. None of these have

been cut to adhere to a fixed size and plan. Instead, the variation has been arranged to create a flexible pergola that conforms to the undulating mountains around it.

Green aspects: The material palette conforms to the natural form of the structure's surrounding area and is derived from it.

Material palette: Wood is used to build traditional Chinese houses and concrete for the roofs.

Happily ever after: Replacing a high-cost design with minimum-impact one benefitted both the people and the environment.

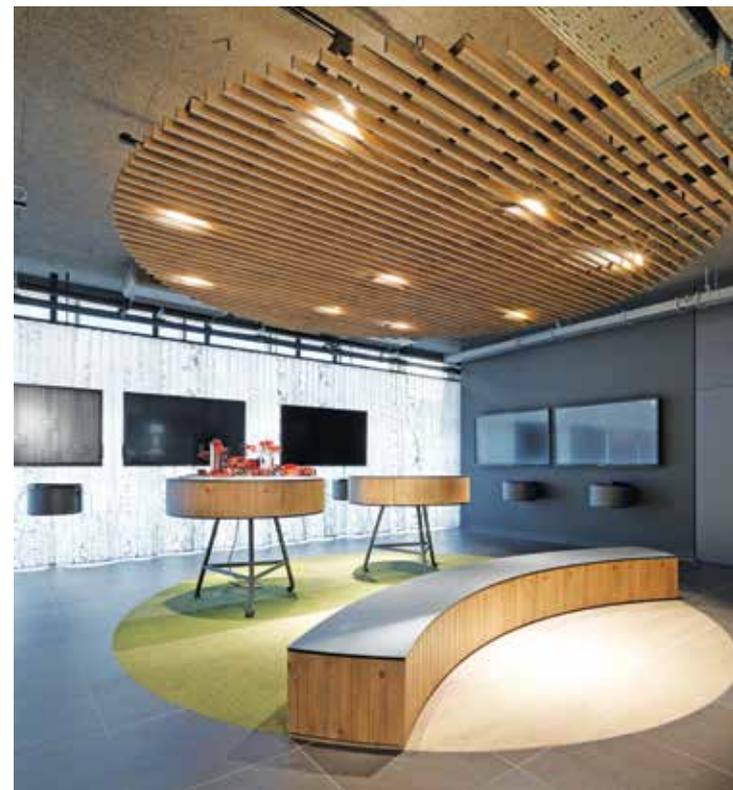


SAP OFFICE

Vienna

Innocad, Vienna

Material : Wood



Design brief and aim: To bring in natural elements for reduction in long hours of screen exposure and monotonous desk time.

How this was accomplished: A 'Central Park' theme is established in the tech firm office, providing a variety of amenities like lounges, kitchen areas, coffee bars, meeting and thinking rooms. Focus rooms are spaced periodically throughout the open workplace which encourages employees to detach from their singular workstations and indulge in conversation. Architectural

elements, lighting, and sound were all considered through a biophilic lens. Ceilings and floors are sound-absorbing to make for a quieter work setting. Light-filled openings and the strategic use of outdoor furniture complete the feeling of being outdoors.

Green aspects: Wood and a multitude of plant species promote a relaxing atmosphere.

Happily ever after: A healthier workplace is set with nature and technology, density and openness, focus and serenity.



ST ANDREWS BEACH HOUSE

Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, Australia

Austin Maynard Architects, Australia

Material : Timber



Design brief and aim: To design a 'bach' (New Zealand word for a modest and basic beach shack built mostly in the mid-century) with found and recycled materials.

How this was accomplished: The two-story circular holiday home takes advantage of the remoteness of the site and its expansiveness. Less than five meters in radius the house stands alone, amongst wild bush land, rugged sand dunes and scrub. The shape grew from a response to 360-degree views and the simplification of interior spaces.

The plan of the house uses rational and precise geometry, as the circle extrudes into a tube. Internal spaces adhere to the rules of form, guiding and arranging segments that divide the interior with a spiral staircase as its central core, providing not

only light and air, but snug spaces as well. The ground floor comprises kitchen, living and dining, with a bathroom and a laundry. The sleeping area is placed upstairs and has one bunk room separated by curtains – informal, flexible and casual.

Material palette: The house displays an innovative use of timber, with chunky details and exposed portal frames. All windows are double-glazed and solar panels with micro-inverters cover the roof.

Green aspects: A large, concrete water tank collects rainwater and is reused in toilets and to water the garden.

Happily ever after: A Euclidean form set amongst rolling coastal terrain provides everything one needs and desires in a beach house.

STUDIO KHAM

Kolkata

Kham Consultants, Kolkata
Material : Concrete, Wood, Glass



Design brief and aim: To retrofit a 1978 Kolkata bungalow into a design studio.

How this was accomplished: A 2,500 sq ft three-story bungalow is designed as a 500 sq ft ground floor consisting of two rooms, office reception and conference area which are separated by salvaged teak wood slats with terracotta-colored logo. An open studio of 583 sq ft is planned on the first floor and aluminum sliders with wood and glass shutters are used in place of the original teak wood windows. The top floor consists of a material library, model making workshops, pantry and adjacent balcony.

Origami-inspired shapes and forms in colors of concrete and wood define the furniture style. The staircase is transformed using new-age materials into

vertical design element linking the three floors; old dilapidated steps are replaced with solid planks of interlocked sal wood.

Material palette: The indoor space has a contemporary concrete-wood-glass palette with highlights of salvaged teak wood and aluminum sliders with wood and glass shutters.

Green aspects: The reception table is designed with scrap lumber wood. Efficient installations are installed with the objectives of energy optimization, flexibility of space planning, use of environment-friendly materials and construction techniques.

Happily ever after: The space, with its feel of an open courtyard, creates an energetic working atmosphere.



SWARNAVILAS

Pune

Richa Garg Associates, Pune

Material : Corian, Wood, Veneer, Glass, Wallpaper



Design brief and aim: To construct a modern and sleek open house without disturbing the view outside.

How this was accomplished: This 2,800 sq ft apartment in a high-rise building offers views of lush green foliage from the eleventh floor, where it is situated, with a 180-degree view. Each room has been given a modern look with a similar material palette which weaves the space together. The living room has been segregated into a formal and informal seating arrangement while the master bedroom has a lush green interior. The children's room is designed using 3D tiles and back-painted glass, and the master bedroom uses criss-cross patterned veneer at the bed back with beautiful grains adding visual texture.

Material palette: This consists of richly textured veneer, wood, Corian (solid surface), 8 x 4 tiles on panels, back-painted glass, wallpapers in nude shades and fabric textures, curtains in earthy tones and thick textures.

Happily ever after: The modern and sleek home has a cozy appeal.



TEMPLE OF CONCIIOUSNESS

Coimbatore

Jeyakumar Associates, Coimbatore

Material : Natural Stone



Design brief and aim: To design a campus space that will spread philosophy while merging with nature.

How this was accomplished: The use of natural gradients of over eight meters between the starting and ending, creates multiple levels for views and provides a natural water stream that flows all along the walkway. Attention has been paid to detailing in joints, stacking patterns, projections and recesses, gaps, edges, surface finishes, combination of materials, slopes and gradients.

Material palette: Natural materials like brick, laterites, granites were used to create

flooring and cladding designs and patterns that suit the overall ambience of the place. Grass is allowed to encroach and creep inside the crevices and gaps to give an age-old feel. Natural materials, earthy shades, rustic finishes, grey granites, red porous laterite blocks, wire cut bricks, rock skins and more were put to enhanced use.

Green aspects: The existing stream was used in the landscape design by rerouting it along the main approach. Existing trees were also included in the project.

Happily ever after: The campus reflects a way of life and gives peace of mind and consciousness to visitors.



THE BRICK HOUSE

Gurugram

Studio KIA, Gurugram

Material : Brick

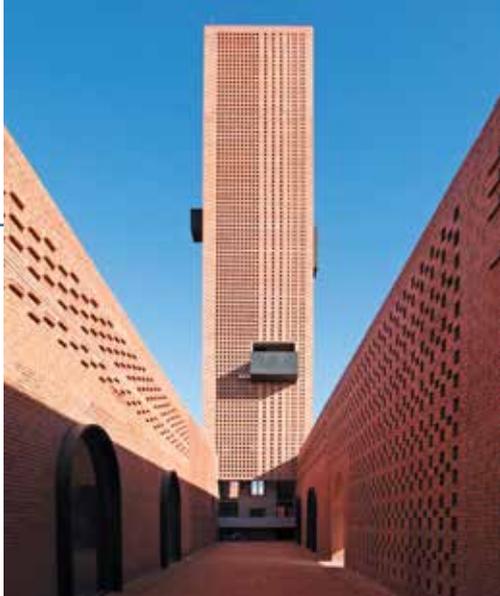
Design brief and aim: To keep the constructed footprint of the house to a minimum in order to accommodate large, landscaped greens.

How this was accomplished: The house consists of an entrance lobby as a transitional foyer. Large living-dining-lounge spaces flow into each other to allow large gatherings to be catered to with ease. The double-height lounge connects the upper and lower levels of the house and also allows ample natural light inside. Six bedrooms have been constituted across different levels of the house for all the family members.

Material palette: The residence sits within manicured greens with natural brick tiles for exteriors. Entering the portals of a wood-slatted gate, one is welcomed by a canopy of sails over the driveway with lush greens all around.

Happily ever after: This home of architect-designer duo Sabeena and Rajiv Khanna is minimalist within, and natural and earthy on the outside.





TOWER OF BRICKS

China

Interval Architects, China

Material : Brick

Design brief and aim: To design a botanic art center on the site of a former brick kiln and to remember the history of the demolished kiln within the form of the new architecture.

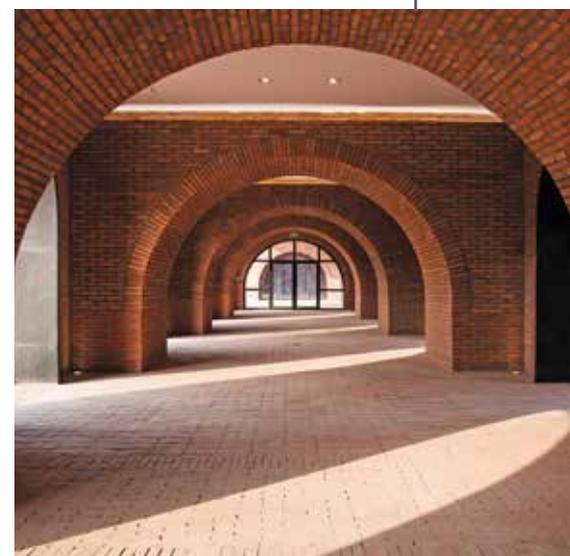
How this was accomplished: Formerly a place where factories nearby drained their sewage water onto, the brick kiln, abandoned due to a national policy that banned the burning of bricks made of clay, was the only building on this wetland. The project began with the new governmental plan to convert the wetland into a botanic park showcasing plants, potteries and floral art.

To break this transformation from introversion to publicness, several courtyards were proposed to break the spatial continuity of the space. These were proposed between restaurants and the kitchen at the northern and southern end of the building to allow better natural light into the dining space.

As opposed to a continuous vault in a Hoffman kiln, the arcade of the botanic art center is composed of a series of vaults that show a visual and experiential progression of spaces in relation to light. The sequential setting of vaults defines separate but interconnected galleries that house exhibitions and records the relationship between space, light, and shadow.

Material palette: Bricks were used as the main materials throughout the architecture and became a medium to recall the lost materiality and texture of the place. Various brick stacking patterns were used on the façade to generate translucency, which breaks the solidity and heaviness of brick wall, allows different light and shadow effects and promotes the sense of publicness. For instance, the facade of the interior courtyards is made more translucent in order to imply the publicness of the space. The observation tower is clad with bricks stacked more porously to allow more light into the tower and weaken the heaviness of the tower.

Happily ever after: The new architecture holds a contemporary position in terms of connectivity of the environment to the user experience. It also connects history to the future. +





Metal wall art: Just for Décor

Luxury metal avant-garde wall art and installations bought to you by Just for Décor, the online store, with White Domus. Bending stereotypical expectations of stainless steel, this scattered wall installation provokes viewers to reimagine the playful personality of bubbles. The bubbles can be customized as per your taste.

Price: Upon request
Website: www.justfordecor.com

THE LATEST PRODUCTS

Teak wall panels: Span Floors

Teak wall panels made with leftovers from teak-producing saw mills, Span Floors attempts to use and reuse waste to create value. Panels are suitable for both indoor and outdoor use. This latest innovation is about zero wastage of natural resources combined with elegance. The entire range can be seen at Span Floors' showroom in New Delhi.

Price: Upon request
Website: www.spanfloors.com



Terrazzo products: CMC

Classic Marble Company (CMC) has introduced its latest Terrazzo products – Deluxe White and Zenith Black from its KalingaStone marble collection. Part of the 'Elite' collection, the distinguishing feature of the products is the mosaic pattern formed by a mix of big and small chips embedded in the marble slabs. The patterns lend the products their exquisite design to create a piece of art in each slab. The two products can be installed in combination for creating impactful spaces in living residences.

Price: Upon request
Website: www.kalingastone.com



Venetian plaster: Super Surfaces

Luxurious, Italian Venetian plaster crafted by Super Surfaces, this product is for interior and exterior use, and also for walls, ceiling and floorings. Venetian plaster is a mix of marble powder, lime plaster and is cement-treated that gained popularity during the 16th century Renaissance period.

Price: Upon request
Website: www.supersurfaces.in



Momenti wallpapers: Ottimo

Created to suit many moods, the wallpapers collection comes in shades ranging from nutty browns, buttery yellows to cool marines. It also embraces monotone shades with elegant damask design, vivid geometric patterns and charming vintage-inspired prints.

Price: Upon request
Website: www.ottimo.in

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Price: Upon request
Website: www.responsiveindustries.com



Partition walls: Sans Souci

These are glass partition walls that segment spaces into smaller, cosier sections and also act as design elements. Every design comes in a variety of effects, each creating a unique look. The collection also comprises frosted dividers with etched and carved designs.

Price: On request
Website: www.ss-gd.com





Italian research facility reopens lab

CATAS inaugurated its new furniture lab at SICAM 2019 this year (at Pordenone, Italy) after being destroyed by fire, in 2016. For over four decades, the Italian testing and research center CATAS has certified the quality of raw materials and finished products in its operating centres in San Giovanni al Natisone (Udine) and Lissone (Monza). A chemical analysis as well as physical and mechanical tests are carried out on raw materials, components and finished products of the wood, furniture and building industry. CATAS conducts more than 40,000 tests annually and has over 50 experts on board. These are wood technicians, chemists, biologists, engineers, mathematicians and physicians.



Indian furniture makers interested in Swedish softwood

The Indian industry is showing strong interest in Swedish pine, particularly for furniture and joinery, (source: Swedish Forest Industries Federation). Sweden's modest exports of sawn wood products to India are growing rapidly. Sweden exported 27,000 cubic metres of sawn softwood worth around SEK 50 million last year.

Sweden is the fifth largest country for softwood exports to India and has seen the greatest increase in export in the recent years. The Swedish sawmill industry sees India as a priority market for the future, and exports to India from Sweden are expected to continue growing.

Innovation: Wood that is stronger than steel

Scientists at University of Maryland, USA have turned the humble wood into a material stronger than steel and able to stop a bullet. This super wood has abilities that surpass those of naturally stronger varieties of wood such as oak and maple. In addition, the result has been achieved with simple and inexpensive processes. Liangbing Hu, a materials scientist at the University of Maryland, has been reported as saying that his treatment of wood can make this material tough, impact-resistant — or even transparent.



India calls for trade permission for sheesham wood products

India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has submitted a proposal to Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) for the delisting of Dalbergia Sissoo from Appendix-II of CITES, which restricts trade of items made of sheesham wood (source: Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts).

The Dalbergia genus species, around 200 in total including sheesham and rosewood, was enlisted in the Appendix-II of the CITES in 2016, subjecting them to trade restrictions to check over-utilisation. India has sought a removal of restrictions on trade of products made of sheesham wood based on a non-detrimental finding (NDF) study carried out by the Botanical Survey of India.



50% Indian workers to require upskilling

India's residential real estate sector is likely to double from the current 1.5 million units in key cities (CREDAI and CBRE report). This projected growth will create a demand for the upskilling of more than half of all Indian workers. India will need to focus on education, skill development, innovation, productivity enhancement and technology adaptation.

The report projects that India will create a US\$ nine trillion economic opportunity by 2030 and the per capita income of its populace could touch US\$ 5,625 for a population of about 1.5 billion. The required annual spending on infrastructure could rise to seven to eight per cent of the GDP. Pertinent to the materials industry, demand for residential and office stock will continue to grow at the back of policy reforms on affordable housing.



Space One Veneer launches leather laminates

Ashok Chedda, Chedda International Pvt. Ltd (Space one Veneers) has launched a new, flexible material especially for the Indian market: leather laminate. Chedda has opened a new store in Jogeshwari, Mumbai (Soul Selects) just to promote this 'made in India' material.

Chhedda saw leather laminates for the first time during a trip to Italy. He saw its many uses across various types of furniture and also as wall coverings. After his return, he started experimenting to create the product for the Indian market. That is how his venture into leather laminates was born.



Greenlam opens new manufacturing facility

Laminates major Greenlam Industries Ltd has expanded its manufacturing capacity with its Nalagarh plant in Himachal Pradesh. Now operational, the facility will add 1.6 million laminate sheets per annum to take Greenlam's total portfolio to 15.62 million laminate sheets per annum.

Saurabh Mittal, Managing Director and CEO, said that the capital cost of the brownfield expansion is Rs 25 crore, and it has the potential to generate additional revenues of Rs 125 crore per annum on full capacity.

Czech forest owners face \$1.7 bn loss

A bark beetle crisis will cost Czech forest owners US\$ 1.7 bn this year. The insect is killing the central European country's most common conifer trees, an industry think-tank said on Monday. While native to conifer forests, bark beetle has benefited from the dry and hot summer that experts associate with climate change, which has weakened the trees' natural defences, and helped spawn an infestation of the insect.

The Czech Republic is one of the worst-affected countries but the spread ravaging soft timber, popular for its quick life cycle and preferred for use in construction, has also hit Germany, Austria, Slovakia, France and other European countries. Central Europe's spruce forests are a key source of income for the timber industry.





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OAK REDEFINED

AHEC, Adam Markowitz and Marcus Piper collaborated on 'Oak REDEFINED', an installation exploring American red oak from multiple perspectives. Both natural and thermally-modified American red oak was selected for the collaboration with designer and architect, Adam Markowitz and top graphic artist, Marcus Piper, who came together to create a space in which to relax, recharge and reconnect with a thoughtfully designed environment. So vast is the U.S. hardwood forest that all of the 2.75 cubic meters of red oak lumber used to create the installation would be replaced through natural regeneration in just 3.15 seconds.



For more information visit www.americanhardwood.org