

# Old Techniques, New Twist

India's traditional artistry continues to inspire creative personalities and Kunal Kyhaan Seolekar is no exception. The talented architect and interior designer was named EDDDA 2019 'Designer of the Year' and 2017 'Young Talent Award', and we caught up with him to find out how he manages to balance the old with the new.

With a singular vision to bring contemporary Indian design sensibilities to the rest of the world, Kunal's curation of everyday objects are worked on using traditional artisanal practices combined with modern advancements to enhance the user's experience. "I have travelled extensively throughout India in search of materials and artisans. I work closely with local master craftsmen to handcraft products and designs. Since the beginning, my focus has been on luxury and my portfolio has grown over the years to include residential, hospitality and commercial projects. We have designed resorts, private homes and villas as well as boutique retail concepts. Including The O Hotels in Goa and Pune, The O Residences in Pune and Chalets, Oxford Golf & Country Club in Pune, and more."

Spending his formative years in an international school in Kodalkanal, nature and the outdoors played an important part of his upbringing and much of his work is inspired by it. As did his interior designer mother and creatively inclined grandmother. "I have been artistic from childhood and enrolled in the Parsons School of Design, New York, where I studied architecture. This opened up the world of space, scale and sustainability." On returning to Pune in 2012, Kunal launched his studio HAUS, a multi-disciplinary design practice where he works closely with a team of thinkers, designers, architects and creators. In 2017, he launched a contemporary lifestyle brand, KOY, through which he presents a collection of everyday objects that are simplistic in their form yet distinctive in style through its materiality and unique philosophy.

**Giving vernacular Indian artisanship a modern new vocabulary, architect and interior designer Kunal Kyhaan Seolekar is changing the design world, one project at a time**

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

Kunal Kyhaan Seolekar



India, he designs a collection to introduce to the world the rich heritage of the country, inspired by a unique perspective of Indian mythology. "During last year's Milan Design Week at Paleorro Uno, I showcased a special preview of 'Yentir'. A mini-series of home decor products that brought the power of ancient Indian forms through their handcrafted qualities in multi-hued marbles handpainted from across the country. The most Instagrammed piece from the collection was the Pebble Pout that was designed as a stack of pebbles hand-carved from blocks of marbles, balanced above each other to create a totemic tower. Each marble block is sourced from a different quarry together to represent the offering of the ancient rituals—milk, vermillion, flowers, yellow and green grass and sun-dried rice.

Common practices in our country are exotic experiences for the outside world. I wish to bridge the gap and reveal the mystical power."

The KOY Store was his natural progression from an architect to an interior and furniture designer. "My love of creation and appreciation of our local resources lead me to channelise my creativity towards an initiative that enables me to extend my skills to bespoke products. The collection is almost entirely handcrafted in-house, with materials sourced from across the country," he explains.

As for the future, Kunal is collaborating with Italian brands to develop glassware, furniture, wallpaper and architectural finishes. Besides, he is also working on a ready-to-wear fashion label, KOYTOY, a young, inclusive homegrown brand that includes clothing, jewellery and wellness products. "he concludes.