



DESIGN DELIBERATIONS

THE IGEN 2020 DESIGN FORUM WAS A VIRTUAL AFFAIR PACKED WITH INSIGHTFUL PRESENTATIONS, ENGAGING PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND A SPECIAL FELICITATION OF OUR DESERVING IGENS FOR 2020

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO



Bringing together some of the best creative minds in the industry

Keynote Speaker

Tom Polucci
Global Director - Interiors,
HOK New York

Profit By Design

Shawn Basler
Co-CEO & Executive
Director, Perkins Eastman

Rahul Kumar
Principal Architect, RKA

Yatin Pandya
Principal Architect,
F.O.O.T.P.R.I.N.T.S Earth

Velprakash K
Executive Director,
Jones Lang LaSalle

Akshat Bhatt
Principal Architect,
Architecture Discipline

Rahul Chopra
CEO (B&P)
Everest Industries Ltd

Breakthrough Innovations: Advances in Design, Construction & Project Management

Nilabh Nagar
Senior Associate Architect,
Hafeez Contractor

Abhishek Malhotra
Technical Director - Design
Planning & Economics, AECOM

Vivek Gupta
Principal Architect, AVA
Architects

Akshay Lakhnampal
CEO - India, Space Matrix

Gurjot Bhatia
MD, Project Management,
CBRE India, Middle East
and North Africa

Sonali Bhagwati
President, DPA

The Architecture of Resilience: How design & technology can act as tools to weather against disruption

Sanjay Gulati
MD, Gensler India

Prem Chandavarkar
Managing Partner, CnT
Associates

Husna Rahaman
Principal Architect, Fulcrum
Studio

Ashish Puri
Director, Interior Design Services,
Colliers International India

On December 19, 2020, Architects and Interiors India hosted the day-long iGen 2020 Design Forum. The event might have taken place in a virtual avatar, yet it was hugely successful, packed with a mix of insightful presentations and engaging panel discussions by some of the best design minds from India and abroad. The event also saw the felicitation of our iGens for the year – representing India’s top 50 emerging architects and interior designers. In addition, the winner of the iGen 2020 People’s Choice Award was also announced.

SETTING THE STAGE

The event began with an opening address by Bibhor Srivastava, group publishing director, ITP Media (India), who welcomed the participants to the summit and thanked the event partners – Blue Star, Everest Industries and Orientbell Tiles. He set the tone for the day, saying, “This day-long session has a battery of prolific speakers, who will not just

speak of design but how trends will play out in 2021 as well as how the world deals with COVID-19.”

In his welcome address, Amar Narayan, deputy GM, Sales & Marketing (VRF & Chillers), Commercial Air-conditioning Division, Blue Star, offered an insight into the brand, stating, “Blue Star is India’s leading air-conditioning and commercial refrigeration company and has recently completed 75 years. The company’s products are path breaking and include central air-conditioning products like centrifugal chillers, screw chillers, process chillers, configured series of screw chillers and scroll chillers. Commercial air-conditioning systems have a complete range of energy-efficient packaged air conditioners and ducted split air conditioners. This is also the first company to have a 100% inverter-based VRF system.”

He added that to fight the pandemic, ducted units with special filters and systems with UVGI and fresh air connections have also been introduced. The company also has water purifiers, air purifiers, air coolers, commercial refrigeration products and cold storage options in its product portfolio.

1. Bibhor Srivastava, group publishing director, ITP Media (India), gave the opening address.

2. Amar Narayan, deputy GM, Sales & Marketing (VRF & Chillers), Commercial Air-conditioning Division, Blue Star, offered an overview of the company during his welcome address.

3. The event had a stellar speaker line-up.



GLOBAL VIEW

The keynote address of the session was delivered by Tom Polucci, global director - Interiors, HOK New York. With over 23 years of experience at HOK, he spoke at length about how his organisation operates their practice, to deliver exceptional design solutions that meet clients' return on investment.

He underlined the fact that projects are moving at break-neck speed and clients' needs evolve through the design process. "And it is important that we get ahead of a client to anticipate what they require from design; and it's not easy, but it's exhilarating. We are working with concept boards to gather ideas and design concepts in a singular cloud-based application and invite the clients into this virtual space where we can collectively add comments, bring additional inventory, or statistical information to bear on an idea. Most important, it's a space where a designer can have real time markup a drawing, draw a sketch with the client and get to a decision faster than the typical process of working in the studio and then more formally presenting those ideas for feedback." Also, this ties in perfectly with today's increased remote working scenarios.

Of course, as many stakeholders are involved in the project process, it is important to focus on what the stakeholders are looking for. "It is critical to get to a point that we have a common understanding. And it also creates an opportu-

nity for alignment of the programme and vision for project amongst the various stakeholders. Today, we are designing more health centres into projects that support the well-being of our clients."

The ability to co-ordinate in three dimensions, all aspects of the built environment, makes for a more efficient process with less waste of materials and better design solutions. "Technology is so important that we have a team dedicated to the custom development of tools, or they work closely with software developers to enhance products on the market. This translates for our ability to hone a practice to be thoughtful in our design and documentation. We need to help ensure that these spaces are meeting their needs and can change over time and adapt to the future that starts with the design itself. It is flexible, adaptable and to be used in new ways that we can't predict," he concluded.



4. Tom Polucci, global director - Interiors, HOK New York, gave an insightful keynote address.

5. The Shiseido NYC project by HOK.

6. HOK's design for Group M in NYC.



REIMAGINING ARCHITECTURE

Videos by Blue Star, Everest Industries and Orientbell Tiles followed the keynote address.

Soon after, Indrajeet Saoji, director, ITP Media (India), invited Rahul Chopra, CEO (B&P), Everest Industries, to give a presentation on their solutions. Chopra emphasised that, "Contemporary contexts need contemporary solutions for which we need to reimagine materials. As a new world building product that addresses the concerns of the modern architect, Everest Boards Reimagine is the new theme and concept being introduced by us. By using Everest boards and panels, you can reimagine aesthetics. You could get the luxury of wood, without cutting down trees with Artewood; you can get the sophistication of stone, without quarrying, without stone; you can get the flexibility of finishes, whether it is digital printing, staining wallpaper paint, tiling marble; you can have any kind of finish that you require on every fiber cement board. You get reimagined functionality. You can build lighter with approximately 25% lower rate. You can build four times faster and with superior attributes."

Chopra also pointed out that these products are weather-resistant, termite-proof, fire-resistant, moisture-resistant and impact-resistant, and ensure easy workability. Besides, they are all green-certified, allowing you to build diverse solutions, sustainably.

PROFIT BY DESIGN

The first panel discussion tackled an important subject - Profit by Design. After all, architecture and design are influenced by various factors like return on investment, sustainability and more. Velprakash K, executive director, Jones Lang LaSalle, who moderated the session, said, "Corporates would like to get the maximum benefit from these spaces and different stakeholders need to work to achieve this."

Regarding this, Shawn Basler, Co-CEO & executive director, Perkins Eastman, explained, "We do many things in the design process to understand client needs and we engage early on to ensure that economics are integrated."

Building design is also influenced by the regional topog-



raphies of the cities. Rahul Kumar, principal architect, RKA, said, "We do a lot of research on the places we are building to establish the expertise required. We change our approach based on the place we are building as well as the needs of the client. Sub-contractors vary in each city and, hence, research is a must."

Rahul Chopra agreed with this view, saying, "Terrain, wind pressure zones, seismic zones and availability of raw materials are factors that will help you build economically. Environmental concerns...are gaining more prominence and there is a need to reimagine design and environment. Times are changing and modern solutions and technology will be required."

Working with unstructured clients, needs more engagement too. Akshat Bhatt, principal architect, Architecture

7. The first panel discussion tackled the important subject of 'Profit by Design'.

8. Indrajeet Saoji, director, ITP Media (India), invited Rahul Chopra, CEO (B&P), Everest Industries, to give a presentation on their solutions.

9. The user interface for the virtual event.

- 10. Much like an on-ground event, there were stalls present — like this one by Blue Star.
- 11. The Orientbell Tiles stall.
- 12. Everest Industries also had a stall.
- 13. The first panel discussion highlighted that BIM implementation is certainly a game changer and technology is playing a big part in construction.



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Discipline, said, "Execution, monitoring and interfacing is aided with technology, and India has come a long way on that front."

Technology is being adopted in the design process as well and is disrupting the industry in different ways. Basler explained, "There is the data analytical part that helps design smarter buildings, and also the design and execution integration, which gives executable and buildable shapes."

Using Building Information Modelling (BIM) is a great way to harness technology, but architects are now relying on larger teams to be able to assimilate data through special agencies. Yatin Pandya, principal architect, F.O.O.T.P.R.I.N.T.S Earth, opined, "Design is the true DNA and technology gets factored in. Diagnosis is the true key not just in the medical world but also in architecture as it is important to understand the build context to impact profitability. Today, there are multidisciplinary teams that come together to create a building and, hence, while I do not give a lot of importance to the tools, the human factor cannot be undermined. You need to be appropriate to the context and the structural and aesthetic criteria needs to be critically evaluated, whether it is through a CAD model or a physical model."

BIM implementation is certainly a game changer and technology is playing a big part in construction. Chopra said, "We do end-to-end design of a pre-engineered building... and technology and software play an important role from the start to the end. We are now very dependent on technology and this helps in data analytics and brings in efficiency in design."

Basler added, "The biggest shift in technology is how the BIM model is at the centre and everything ties in to manage the workflow." Getting the real benefit from BIM is a key factor as well and there is a need to ensure that it reaches all stakeholders. Kumar confessed that the benefit and usage of BIM is still seeing slow adoption.

Also, co-ordination is a key factor that needs to be considered. Bhatt said, "Architecture needs to not just perform but also emotive. Technology helps with legwork...." Stakeholders need to understand the project ethos and be on the same page, and, therefore, firms are taking steps to communicate this in the beginning. "Periodic discussion is a must so



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that we can tweak as per the construction schedule," said Pandya.

The session concluded with a discussion on whether architects revisit their buildings post the handover, with most architects saying that this was a must as renovations and changes are part of the lifecycle of the building.

IN WITH THE NEW

The next panel discussion was regarding Breakthrough Innovations: Advances in Design, Construction & Project Management, and the question raised was whether architects and people in project management are doing enough. Vivek Gupta, principal architect, AVA Architects, who moderated the session, said, "The idea of breakthrough technology is driven by the people who are involved." While there is a lot that needs to be done, there is some thought that needs to be applied.

Gurjot Bhatia, MD, Project Management, CBRE India, Middle East and North Africa, stated, "From a project management perspective, there has been a lot of work on planning and co-ordination aspects, which is required in India with a plethora of stakeholders involved. This is the fundamental thing that needs to be done and I believe there is a fair amount of focus on the design aspect in the backdrop of

COVID-19. Now, building design is more complex than ever before and has necessitated technology in built design."

The construction chain has a whole process and economics of construction is an important aspect too. Abhishek Malhotra, technical director - Design Planning & Economics, AECOM, said, "Delivery, quality and budget are priorities, but innovation and technology are somehow not always spoken about. It is time that delivery is linked to innovation and technology, and we must move away from a boxed approach and have one platform for all."

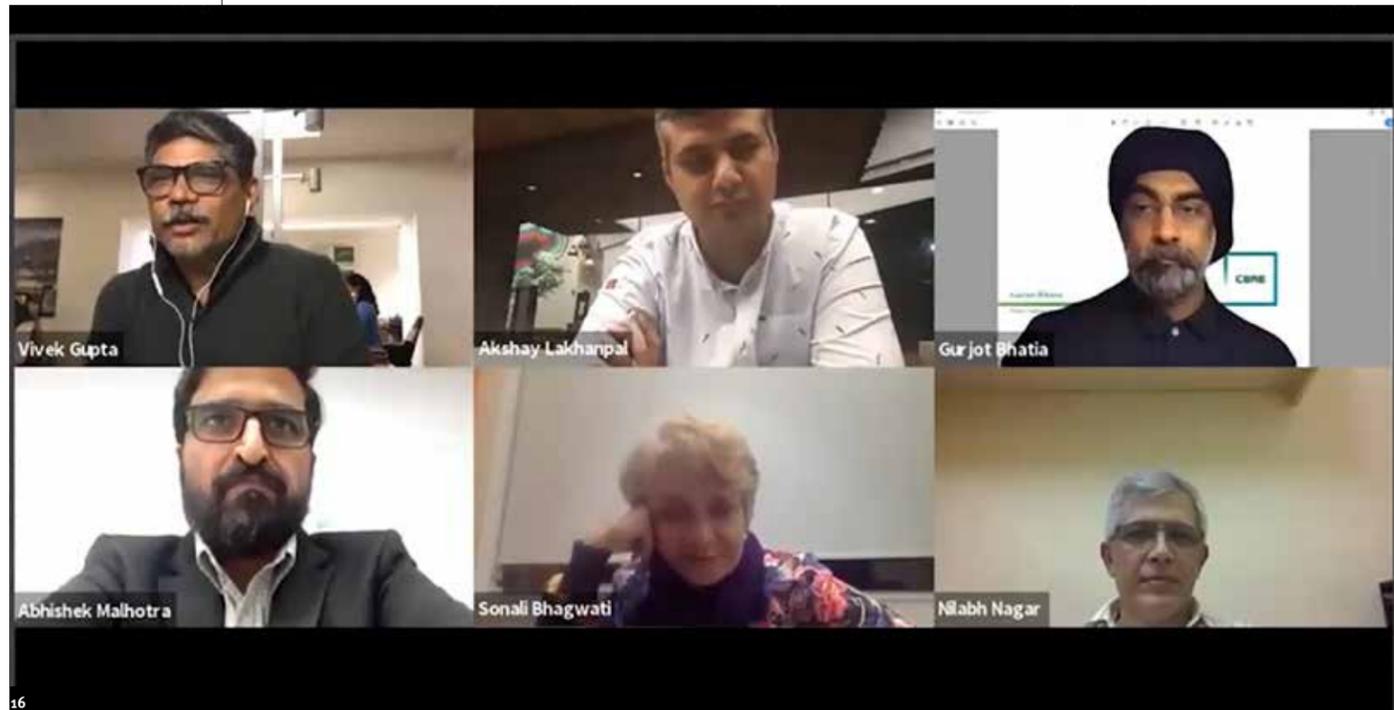
Architects must be solution providers rather than problem solvers, and built construction materials have seen no breakthrough. Nilabh Nagar, senior associate, Architect Hafeez Contractor, said, "While there is no change in the materials, innovation is being seen in the way the material is used. Concrete is concrete but when used in a shell structure, there is an innovation. Materials like wood and composite materials like composite stone, high pressure laminates, bamboo, breathable skins and even steel, are also being used to speed up construction and delivery time. Carbon fiber in construction is being used as well." Construction uses natural materials heavily and sustainability issues remain. Hence, a recycled material with the same strength as concrete is the need of the day.



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14. The second panel discussion was regarding Breakthrough Innovations: Advances in Design, Construction & Project Management.

15. It was noted that construction uses natural materials heavily and sustainability issues remain.



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Akshay Lakhnarpal, CEO - India, Space Matrix, said, "No disruptive technology has come into the domain of our work, but technology has been incremental in the domain of our business as it is more of a disjointed part of our delivery structure. Technology can be used to see the impact of our business on the client, especially like visualisation tools that can help the end clients."

The building industry, in the post-COVID-19 world, may need to move to start building in factories and assemble at site. Bhatia agreed: "This is the place we need to get to; the silver lining from the pandemic is that it has pushed us to think as we paused building activities. However, there is a cost aspect to anything new and someone will need to bear the same. Technology is easily adapted when it fixes a tactical issue."

Shortage of skilled people is also triggering the use of technology. Construction debris itself can be used to experiment with new build materials. Nagar opined, "Much research is happening in academia, but coming into the industry, we put this on the back burner. However, even building better and faster with existing materials is innova-

tion by itself."

A short supply chain that does not involve logistics is something that can impact the environment too. Malhotra averred, "How economical is recycling is a question to be answered. India may not be practicing 3D now, but it will certainly be the buzzword, going forward. Even prefab and precast technology is ensuring stricter quality control and reducing time. Innovation and knowledge in terms of skill set must go together."

While the industry is under pressure in the current scenario, material cost may be reduced in the short term. Sonali Bhagwati, principal architect, DPA, said, "In interiors, new age materials can be used as exposure is limited, while in architecture it is important to understand anything new in terms of use as well as what value it can add. Cost is a big reason why new materials may not find favour." The need to evaluate the impact of building on the planet is a must to maintain the ecosystem and its integrity.

FOCUS ON FLEXIBILITY

The third panel discussion concentrated on Architecture of Resilience: How design & technology can act as tools to weather against disruption. With the ongoing pandemic, the design landscape has changed with cross pollination of workspaces and home spaces seeing a leap in 2020. Ashish Puri, director, Interior Design Services, Colliers International India, who moderated the session, said, "Disruptions due to the pandemic started in March. Resilience was already in play and most businesses had started functioning from home using technology. The biggest learning is resilience and resilience of architecture is something that has always been part of the practice of architecture."

In this respect, the role of design technology integration was spoken about. Prem Chandavarkar, managing partner, CnT Architects, explained, "Resilience and sustainability are intertwined. The fundamentals of architecture must look at how we facilitate a meaningful experience for the inhabitants. The pandemic has impacted urban planning,

16. The third panel discussion concentrated on Architecture of Resilience: How design & technology can act as tools to weather against disruption.

17. Hybrid workspaces are here to stay, observed the panellists.

and workplace design will change forever as work from anywhere has taken root. It changes talent acquisition and now the workplace needs to look at how an entrepreneurial style pervades the space."

Of course, various asset classes are changing with hotels becoming quarantine centres and homes becoming offices. Sanjay Gulati, MD, Gensler India, opined, "Everything is moving to mixed uses. Larger developments across the globe are now looking at mixed use developments that have residential, commercial and amenities. Master planning is going to be key when we respond to this disruption. Reducing the time to reach office is key. Offices may also become fluid, going forward."

Hybrid workspaces are here to stay. Satellite offices may come up within the city as well. Data will also be used to create efficient working systems. Husna Rahaman, principal architect, Fulcrum Studio, said, "A human connection is most important, and technology cannot replace that. It is important to understand how the human being experiences the space and it is important to see that without only thinking of technology. How do you differentiate between a design on the computer and one who draws it using his hand? The basic understanding of architecture changes when you do things physically; creates a consciousness that is not available through technology."

Speaking on leveraging technology, Gulati added, "Technology can help not waste materials, especially in massive structures. Additionally, there will be a big shift where there will be more open spaces, investments in filters in air-conditioning and collaborative tools to enhance human experience will become important."

BIM has been an extensively used technology with building design. Chandavarkar opined, "It is important to merge technology with human acumen to create design that is fundamental and meaningful. Being in tune with the core of our experience is a must and, when we talk of sustainability, it is important not to lose sight of the sustainability of the human soul and the environment." The discussion underlined the fact that while data helps in taking better decisions, it is important to ensure that the personal connect is not lost.

TILE TALES

Speaking of the part technology plays in making decisions,

Manish Verma, VP - Enterprises & Exports, Orientbell Tiles, said in his presentation that the best way to decide the kind of tiles you need is to Google what you need, visit the Orientbell Tiles website and scan their e-catalogue. The customer can also see if the stock is readily available or not. "TriaLook is a tool that we have on our website that gives you an idea of how the tile will look in the client's space. Prices are also marked, and the calculator will tell you both the total price and quantity of tiles required. The client can also upload an Auto CAD drawing on the TruLook section for our experts to create a 3D rendition within 48 hours," he said. Stocks can be checked by city as well and their SameLook and QuickLook technologies also help ease the tile selection process.



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18. A view of the exhibition hall.

19. Manish Verma, VP - Enterprises & Exports, Orientbell Tiles, spoke about technology's role in tile selection during his presentation.

20. The meeting room proved to be a useful tool for interaction between attendees.



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REWARDING TALENT

A fitting finale to the event was the felicitation of the iGens – India’s top 50 emerging architects and designers for 2020, as chosen by Mitalee Kurdekar, editor, Architect & Interiors India, in conjunction with the editorial board at ITP, earlier this year. The perfect culmination to a day of learning, the celebration was a much-needed one given the year we’ve all had. And quite appropriately, as we look to a better future for all of mankind, we celebrated the vanguards of that future, at least as far as architecture and design are concerned.

In fact, from being driven by their passion for design to driving the design dialogue in the country, these talented young individuals – all below the age of 40 – have indeed come a long way – and that journey deserves to be celebrated. And so, as we have been doing every year since 2012, this year too we dedicated a special issue to these up-and-coming faces – those we recognise as worthy of the title of iGen. Moreover, in our ninth year, we paid tribute to the nine tenets that we believe define good designers – idealism, intelligence, individuality, integrity, ingenuity, information, inspiration, intuition and innovation.

At the same time, it has been 11 years since the magazine came into being, and design has truly evolved over that period. Our anniversary issue – which came out in April 2020 – was, therefore, an apt opportunity to identify the various interpretations of architecture and design that have been re-

alised across the length and breadth of India in recent times. And each of our iGens showcase these myriad versions through their work, which was highlighted in the issue.

Of course, identifying this incredible lot while we were cooped up in our Mumbai offices – and later home-quarantined as was the case, was an impossible task. Therefore, we decided to shake things up a bit this time around, and invited nominations instead. The result was an overwhelming response from cities and towns alike, and it did make our job difficult. But, after screening the nominations that came in, we can say with conviction that these are truly the best of the best – and we are indeed honoured to be welcoming them to the iGen family.

On their part, our iGens acknowledged the recognition and told us what the iGen title means to them through videos played during the felicitation ceremony. The event was anchored by Rashmi Naicker, deputy editor, Commercial Design, who introduced each iGen, before their acceptance speech was played out.

But we didn’t want to stop the celebrations there. After all, it was time to infuse some cheer in these gloomy times. So we had asked our readers to vote for their favourite from our list of 50, and we had a fabulous response with about 16,000 votes being cast for the iGen 2020 People’s Choice Award. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who voted. The readers gave their verdict and we got to crown the first-ever iGen People’s Choice Award winner. Winning by a whopping



margin of 1,014 votes, the undisputed victor was Mahir Aalam, partner architect, Attiks Architecture, from Kondotty, Kerala. In a heartfelt speech, Aalam thanked his team and his family and said that this award would inspire him further.

Many congratulations to the 50 young architects and designers that make up our iGen 2020. We can hardly wait to uncover more talent with iGen 2021.



22-23. Each iGen was given a chance to deliver an individual message.

24. Mahir Aalam, partner architect, Attiks Architecture, was picked by readers as the first-ever iGen People’s Choice Award winner.

25-28. Our iGens acknowledged the recognition and shared what the iGen title means to them.

A closing address by ITP Media Group concluded the day-long event, but not without leaving us with hope for more good design and discussions about it in the very near future. ■