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WHETTING APPETITES

ROUSHAD SHROFF'S WHIMSICAL DESIGN FOR LA FOLIE



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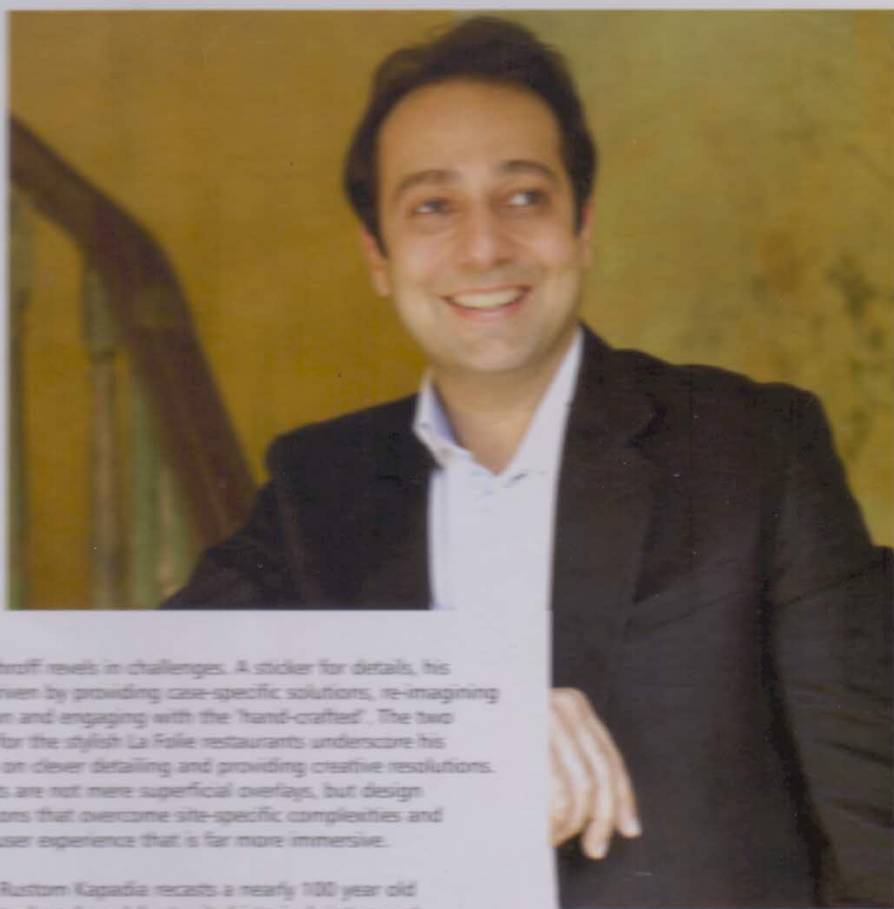


Photo: Cyrus Doshi

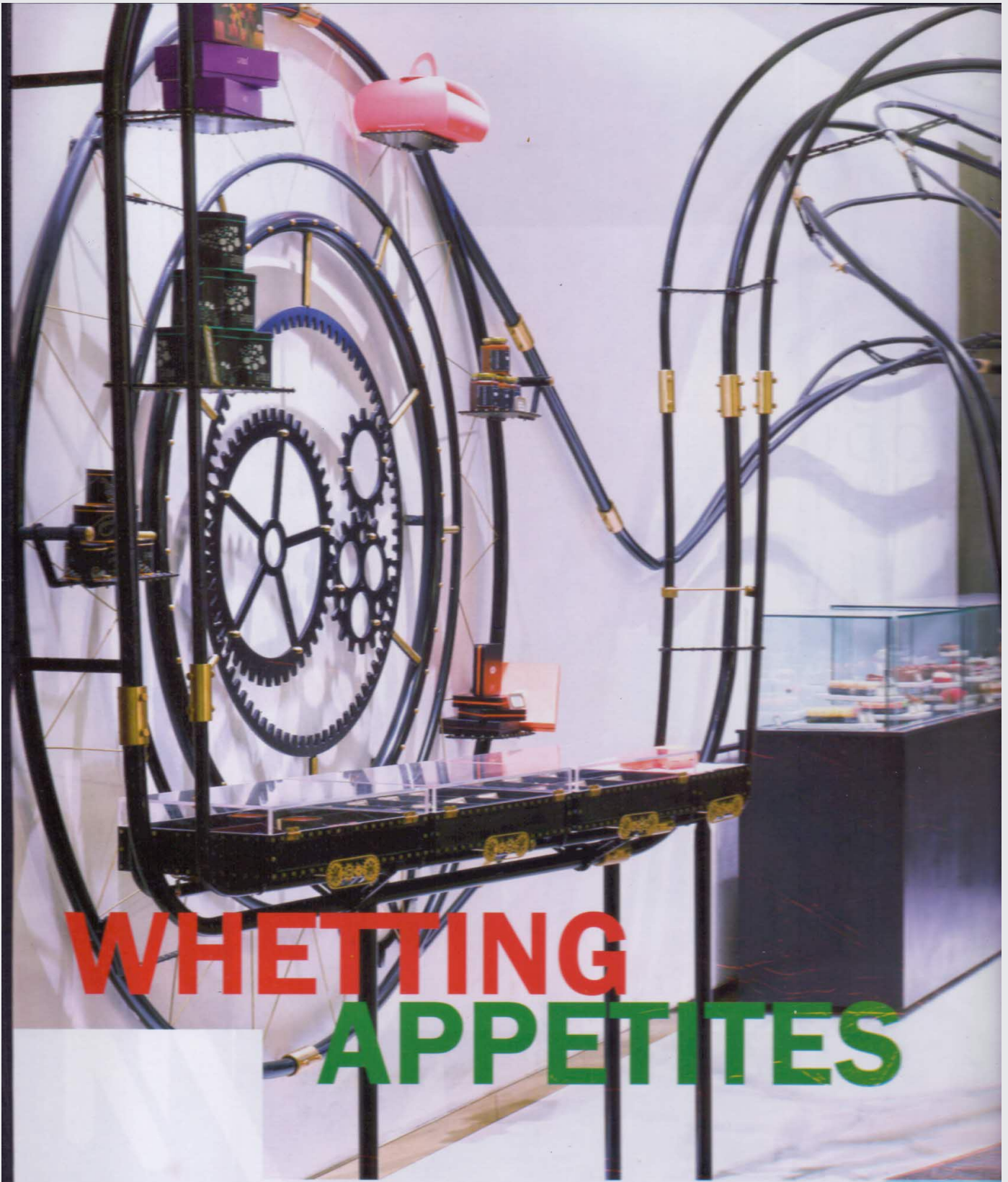
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oshad Shroff revels in challenges. A stickler for details, his work is driven by providing case-specific solutions, re-imagining convention and engaging with the 'hand-crafted'. The two outposts for the stylish La Folie restaurants underscore his emphasis on clever detailing and providing creative resolutions. The results are not mere superficial overlays, but design interventions that overcome site-specific complexities and deliver a user experience that is far more immersive.

Architect Rustom Kapadia recasts a nearly 100 year old apartment where he celebrates its historical heritage yet ensures it stays relevant to modern living needs. The residence is an interesting mélange of heritage patterns, hardwood floors and antique roofs that are made to contrast with clean white walls and contemporary furniture. The design genius of this remodeling is that not only do the individual elements charm you with their unique character, but the details contrast and play-off each other to generate a novel typology that works as a cohesive whole.

Re-thinking the idea of a (generally boring) office cafeteria, architects Sagra Lakhe and Shwetambar Shinde of Sankraman Design Studio infuse one with a social agenda. The young duo work on a plan that encourages fraternizing and relaxation - breaking away from the stereotype of an office cafe being a place where only food is served. Their design scheme creates an environment that is more about community eating and reading, and interestingly it also enables this corporate lunchroom to double up as a place you can bring your work to.

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WHETTING APPETITES



Subtly maximising the appeal to our senses, these two eateries for La Folie in Mumbai designed by Rooshad Shroff are contemporary in their design, with an emphasis on detailing. The complexity of sights and smells support the main star - the food - as they all come together to create a satisfying gastronomic experience.

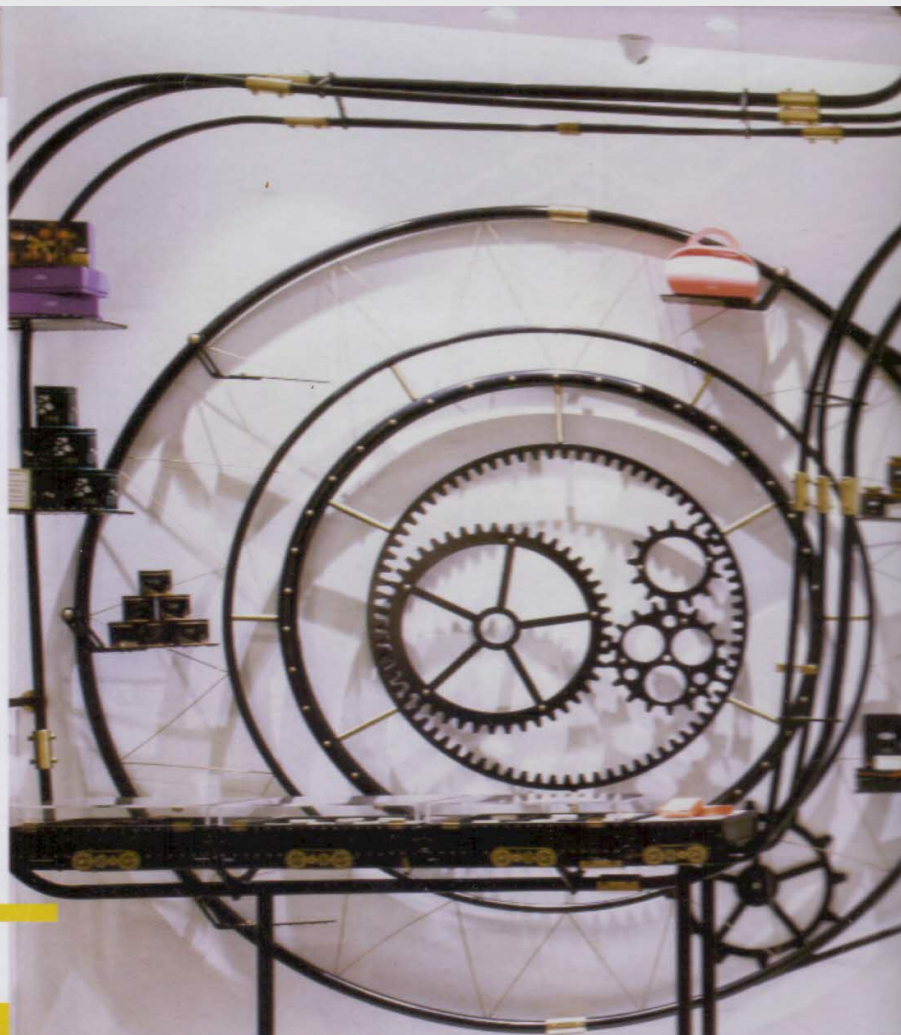
Text By Devyani Jayakar
Photographs By Taras Taraponvalla
(La Folie, Palladium); Pawan Manglani
(La Folie Lab, Bandra)

"This place is so tiny, that we decided to do away with a façade, because it would mean losing two or three inches of precious space," says Rooshad Shroff. Suffused with a playful, whimsical design sensibility, this wedge or pizza-slice-shaped space is all of 200 sq ft. Functioning as a patisserie and a takeaway, it is alike a kiosk. Since it is part of a mall, the intention was to draw passers-by in by the dint of its design.

"But while it's one thing to catch the eye of the casual visitor, it's another thing to fit everything inside," says Rooshad. Visually, the design functions on a macro as well as a micro level. It makes an impact from the outside, but once inside, the detailing takes over. The displays of food, the merchandising and branding, all invite closer inspection.

"We wanted to make the experience of consuming a dessert or a chocolate synonymous with getting transported into a parallel universe reminiscent of Willy Wonka from Roald Dahl's 1964 children's novel 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'."

The aim is to create a sense of nostalgia, away from reality, into a playful world. The physical manifestation of this idea is a Ferris wheel and a roller coaster with a clock and gears, synonymous with time.



There are different areas of display, with the wheel being used for a chocolate bar and the detailed carts of the roller coaster being used for truffles, chocolates and other sinful desserts. "We customised every screw and gear, getting pieces laser cut to our specifications, to achieve the level of detailing which we desired," says Rooshad.



"The micro-detailing has a jewel-like quality. The marble podium on brass stands for the display looks like it has been created for jewellery."

So while the idea of the roller coaster operates at the macro level, the Ferris wheel has been used to reference a clock, rolling through time. The main seating is at the bar. Apart from the store, Rooshad has also designed the graphics and tin boxes which are part of the new packaging.

"The menu, tissues, name tags for display, aprons...everything that the customer comes into contact with, although it may belong to different fields of design, has been created by us. We've worked like a branding agency for this project," says Rooshad.

"The chef, Sanjana Patel, delights in introducing the most intricate detailing in the icing, marbling and layering of the pastries...they're like a work of art. We wanted the design of the store and the furniture to reflect the same attention to detail," adds Rooshad.



Concrete tiles in grey, black and white are laid on the floor in a herringbone pattern, with different concentrations of colour subtly demarcating the spaces within the walls. From dark in the customer area, they progress to a lighter tone in the service area and climb up one wall. The chalkboard is used to disseminate information and often displays the recipe of the month, in addition to being used for doodling.

But there is another little-explored factor at play here. "We've experimented with someone who makes perfumes, to create a smell which makes people hungrier. It triggers emotions by gently nudging the mind," says Rooshad.

To this end, there is a large 7 ft x 2.5 ft diffuser suspended from the ceiling. "Connected to the air-conditioner, it gently wafts a fragrance which manipulates perceptions through smell," says Rooshad, of this unusual avenue of design.





The aesthetic apart from successfully achieving a balancing act by being clinical and appropriately living up to the 'Lab' in the name of the restaurant, is also welcoming at the same time, as every restaurant should necessarily be. "Every space which we design is bespoke, created with elements which are unique to that space," says Rooshaf. "This is where my strength lies."

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