

MY SPACE · SAKET SETHI

ROOSHAD SHROFF UNCOVERED

BARCELONA : A DESIGN DESTINATION

HOME REVIEW

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MATHAROO ASSOCIATES'
NET HOUSE

LOTUS DESIGN IS
A GLASSPERT



**BACK TO
SCHOOL**

APURVA AMIN REINVENTS A SCHOOL



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chool is boring! School kills creativity! School takes the fun out of learning!" These are common rants that often echo through our hallowed corridors of learning. Architect Apurva Amin takes a shot at rescuing this discernment with the design of Nirma Vidyalaya.

From a jigsaw puzzle facade that greets you at the entrance, to suspended bridges that take you to class - this school in Ahmedabad weaves engaging and playful elements into its unique design vocabulary. Apurva introduces courtyard classrooms, mosaics, dollops of natural light and ventilation, coupled with a consummate blend of colour, texture and material to make this school environment stimulating and a whole lot of fun!

Gurjit Singh Matharoo's creations are bold, experimental ideas that test convention. His 'Net House', inspired by the commonly used Machhadani (a netted canopy placed over a well) is his imaginative answer to design a home situated in the wilderness. The single rectilinear volume of this gateway is created using a composite space frame structure. A clever system of sliding mosquito nets, roll up blinds and folding glass panels modulate the inside ambience to suit your mood or the weather.

Keeping with our theme of innovative thinking, we feature the Glasspert store designed by Lotus Design Studio. The design firm seeks to redefine shopping for glass - the result is a contemporary gallery full of possibilities where light streams, bounces and gallivants around, making your visit here a truly 'glass' experience.

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Having worked with the studios of Zaha Hadid and Rem Koolhaas abroad, the young Rooshad Shroff is now keen to make his mark in India. With his new handcrafted furniture collection just out he is certainly someone to look out for! Turn to page 50 to know more...



ROOSHAD SHROFF

UNCOVERED

As I enter Rooshad Shroff's South Mumbai office, I sense a different kind of energy. Thinking out of the box is not new for him. In fact, I suspect that it has become his way of life.

Young Shroff's background makes architecture and design a way of living. Rooshad studied architecture at the Cornell and Harvard Universities in the United States. He also worked in the Office for Metropolitan Architecture in New York (the design firm founded by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas) and was part of a team that designed the Charles and Willey theatre in order to make it a modern flexible place, challenging notions of a traditional set up. Rooshad then went on to work in London, and was a part of a few interesting projects there as well.

He belongs to a family of architects - his father, brother and sister-in-law are all architects and his mother is an interior designer. "It helps to be able to discuss work at home. Moreover, it is also helpful to have the right kind of background in place," he says.

THE FURNITURE LINE

After about 10 years of studying and working on foreign shores he is back home and has started his own studio. Naturally, I first want to know what motivated this step. "India is a great place to work in now, it is an architect's playfield. There is a growing appreciation for design. Moreover, I always wanted to start something of my own and it made absolute sense doing that here!" he says.

As we discuss his work, I begin to appreciate the variety of projects he juggles in. Besides architectural projects, his studio is also involved in fashion (he did a fashion show at Cornell where the creations borrowed heavily from architecture), publishing (he is currently putting together a book on the embroidery designs of Maximiliano Modesto) and graphic design (he has worked on brand identity for clients like veteran designer Krishna Mehta).

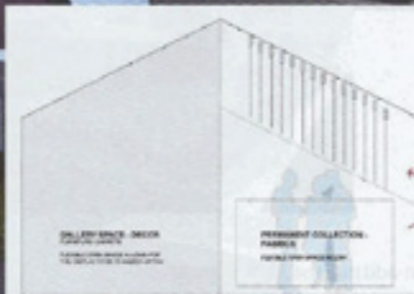
L'ATELIER

His work naturally shows a confluence of all things creative. We narrow down on three projects to discuss more in detail.

For Rooshad it began with two pieces commissioned by Maximiliano Modesto. One had embroidery on wood and the other had Braille inlaid in wood. This started his love affair with furniture. Gladly, the affair continues and has led Rooshad to bring out his own furniture line. It has also steered him towards the allure of the handcrafted.

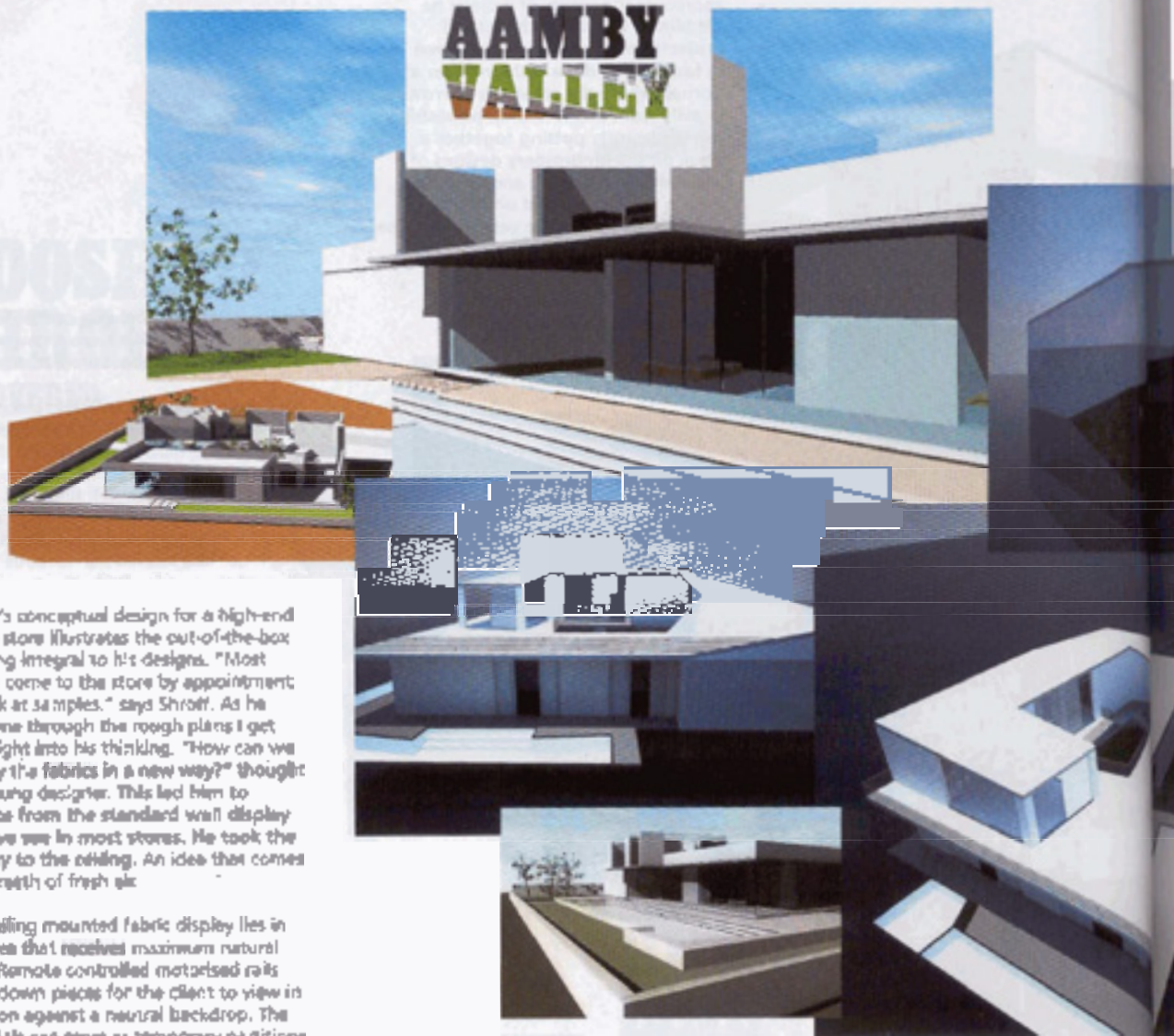
"I realised that with an overexposure to technology we are losing authorship of the pieces that we make. This drew me towards traditional handmade pieces rooted in the handcraft tradition. These showcase an inherent set of skills. I work with the artisans closely and this pushes the boundaries of what they are capable of doing," he remarks.

Currently, Shroff retails through Le Mill in Mumbai and also undertakes customised orders. I want to know more about the role of furniture design in his creative life. "It is on a more intimate scale and also quicker to realise! For me, it is a playground to test ideas and techniques," he says.



By Dhanishta Shah

AAMBY VALLEY



ROOM
SEEN
FROM
OUTSIDE

Shroff's conceptual design for a high-end textile store illustrates the out-of-the-box thinking integral to his designs. "Most clients come to the store by appointment to look at samples," says Shroff. As he takes me through the rough plans I get an insight into his thinking. "How can we display the fabrics in a new way?" thought the young designer. This led him to deviate from the standard wall display that we see in most stores. He took the display to the ceiling. An idea that comes as a breath of fresh air.

The ceiling mounted fabric display lies in the area that receives maximum natural light. Remote controlled motorised rails bring down pieces for the client to view in isolation against a neutral backdrop. The materials can serve as temporary partitions when required, and that apart, fabrics at varying heights also give a remarkable look to the ceiling.

The design adds to the exclusivity of the client experience. It also frees up floor space which can be used for displaying furniture and for various on-site events.

Shroff's design for a villa in the Aamby Valley City seeks to look beyond the traditional courtyard typology. "I toyed with the idea of playing with heights in order to do justice to the dramatic view outside," he says. This led to a plan where the house and garden seamlessly flow together: to eventually wind up in a spiral.

My favourite element in this design is the wide staircase where there is enough space to admire artwork or read books whilst enjoying the scenic views. Fluidity between the different areas of the villa characterise the design. The dining space opens into a terrace that doubles up as a roof. Sliding panels open the house to the garden and pool which wraps around the house.

The outdoors and indoors stay one or segregated as desired thanks to the see-through panels that offer different levels of privacy.

It has not been long since Rooshad started off in Mumbai, but his platter is full with an enviable variety of creatively stimulating projects. As our rendezvous comes to a close, I ask him about his dream design project. "A contemporary art museum in India," he quips. Just his cup of tea, I would think!

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