

INTERIORS INTERIORS

CELEBRATING Iconic Designs

GUEST EDITOR:
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ENGAGING SPACES

Ar. Mujib Ahmed and Ar. Lalita Tharani have carved a name for themselves in the creative sphere, with their innovative and out of the box designs.



PORTFOLIO

Ar. Mujib Ahmed & Ar. Lalita Tharani



Collaborative Architecture is an international award-winning firm having three design studios in Mumbai, Beijing and Calicut. Headed by architect-couple **Lalita Tharani** and **Mujib Ahmed**, the studio has been in the forefront of Asian Avant Grade designers. Recently, Collaborative Architecture has teamed with internationally-acclaimed design firm J. Mayer. H headed by Jürgen Mayer H to expand and explore design research and cutting-edge innovation for projects in India, China and Middle-East Region. Architecture at Collaborative goes beyond the generally prevailing notions of functional contingencies and simplistic approach of problem solving.

The practice is driven by innovation and ceaseless pursuit of quality in design to create projects, which are highly sensitive, poetic, and contemporary. Every project is an exploration, going beyond the functional brief, creating a symbiosis of people, places, culture, climate, economy and collaborative efforts of related disciplines. The firm has won 36 coveted awards since its inception, 14 of them are coveted international awards.

Society Interiors speaks to the dynamic duo and finds out more about their awe-inspiring projects, design philosophy and architectural journey.

What inspired you both to take up architecture?

For me it is my desire to be in a field where I could find a balance with my creative urge and rationalizing mind. Architecture just fitted the bill. While Mujib, opted it thinking it would be a very easy, laid back course at the University, so he could spend his time in the soccer field. Practicing perfect corner kicks!

Tell our readers about your works in the architecture and interior design segment?

We work in a various segments covering almost all segments of built environment. What interests us is an opportunity to make a program transcendental, however basic the program might be. And most importantly, we understand, the only thing that matters in our projects are the people—the people who are going to use the space, the people who incubated the projects as patrons, and the people who are affected or influenced directly or indirectly by the intervention. Human factor is very conclusive in our design process and the way we position our practice.

How has your journey been in the field of architecture?

We could use any extravagant hyperboles here, but one thing really stands out, what the profession really gave us. It is the empathy and the power to connect with people with diametrically opposite view points, and team up with them to create something fascinating for both of us. In short it made us better humans.

You have travelled extensively and met various architecture and design genius, what are the recent design developments or trends that have impressed you?

The studio take sustenance from a wider canvas, they are rarely from architecture, but from a far wider canvas. One of the recent structures that moved both of us was, Wang Shu's China, at Hangzhou. It is not a hi-tech architecture, but a poetry in spaces, combined with dramatic use of textural qualities and natural light.

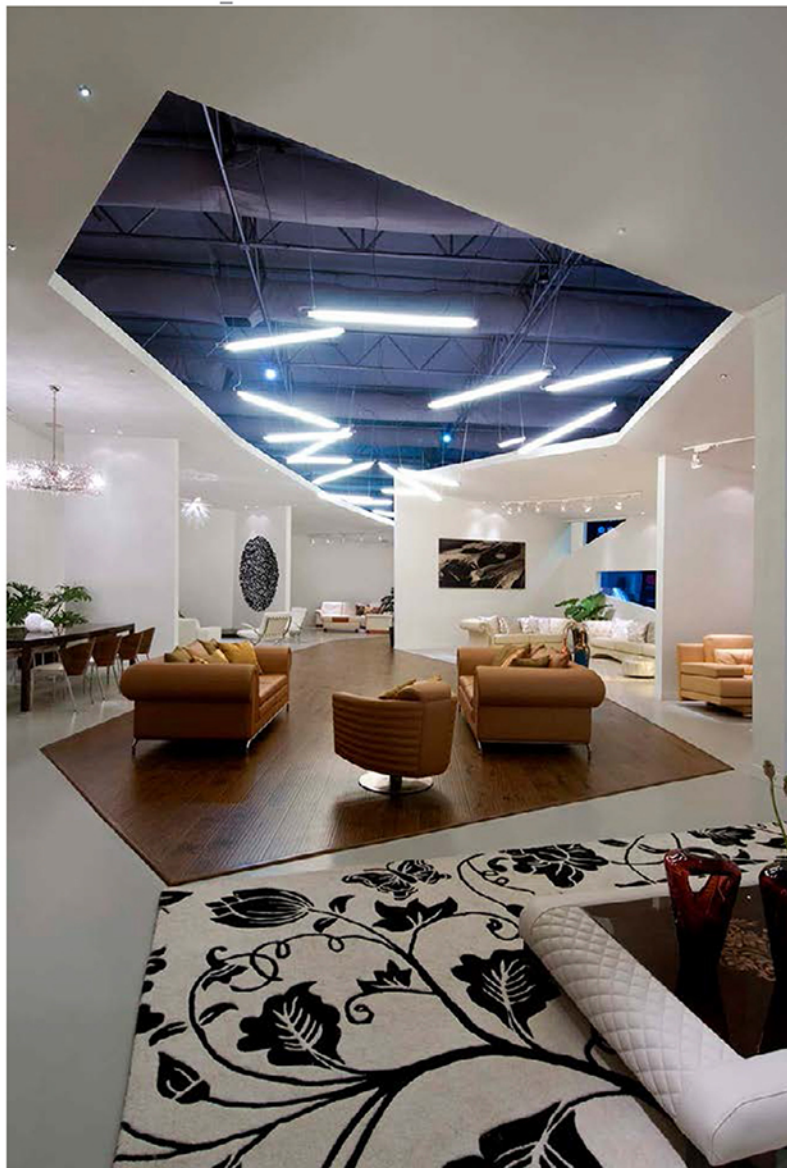
Our collaborating partner Juergen Mayer's Metropol Parasol is another structure, which is daring in its innovation, and re-affirming the vitality of good architecture as what it did to the urban fabric and the city of Seville.

Where do you see architectural design heading in the future?

It is heading for highly personalized and customizable environs assisted by digital tools and production.

What is your design motto?

Our motto is innovation and design for the future.

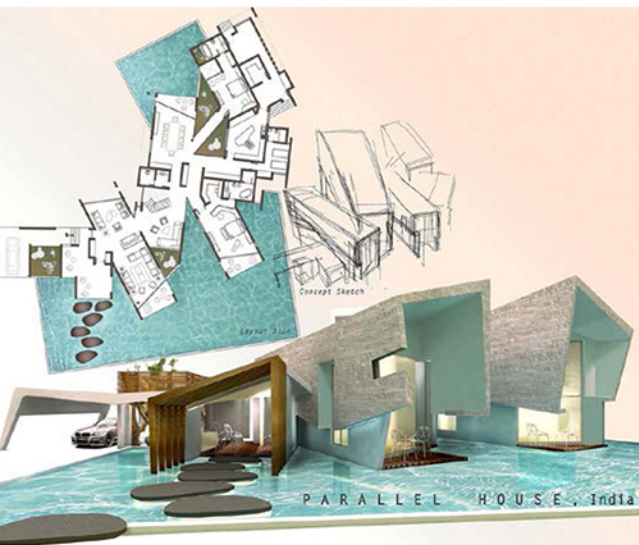


We take one project from each segment from the diverse portfolio that showcases their creative and practical approach to design.

House Of Cantilevers

The House of Cantilevers overlooking a scenic valley has been designed with three levels to decrease the foot-print on the land. Located on a countered site, the curved form of the plan, passive shading devices, semi-enclosed courts, projecting and recessed volumes takes care of the sun-path and ensures optimal comfort levels in the interior spaces. All the primary public spaces are located at the mid-entry level. Most of the bedrooms are on the first level, while the services and ancillary spaces are located at the basement level. All the bedrooms are cantilevered to take full advantage of the view. Hence the name House of Cantilevers. The project is transcendental and innovative, not just because of the structural dexterity of the project, but it has been built for a very traditional Muslim family in Kerala, who had very rigid spatial boundaries inside the house. The design could merge the program for traditional hierarchy of spaces, with open plan that respects those boundaries. It is a convergence of futuristic outlook of a family with their futuristic spatial aspirations, which culminates into an innovative design.





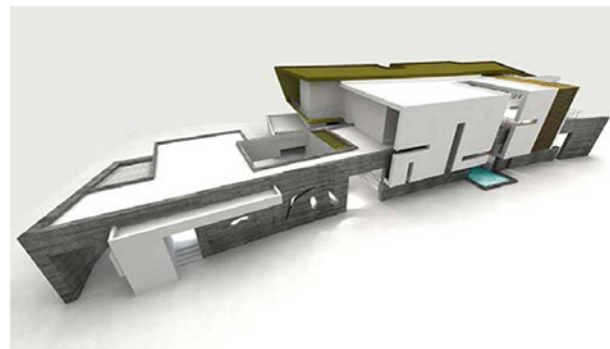
Parallel House

The villa is for a highly sophisticated business couple based in North Kerala, who wanted some amount of spatial hierarchy between public and private spaces with fair visual control between them, yet not resulting in a spatially disconnected house. The site is part of a larger compound of their ancestral home, tucked in to the farthest corner, with the old house covering most of the frontage of the new house. The design identifies this disadvantageous site condition and opts for a zig zag spatial layout, making it an interesting assemblage of volumes dispersed in the landscape. The large reflecting pool serves the dual purpose of being a landscape element as well as a climatic control strategy. The house is out-of-the-box, innovative and sophisticated. But at the same time it responds to the climate, the tropics of Kerala.



Linked House

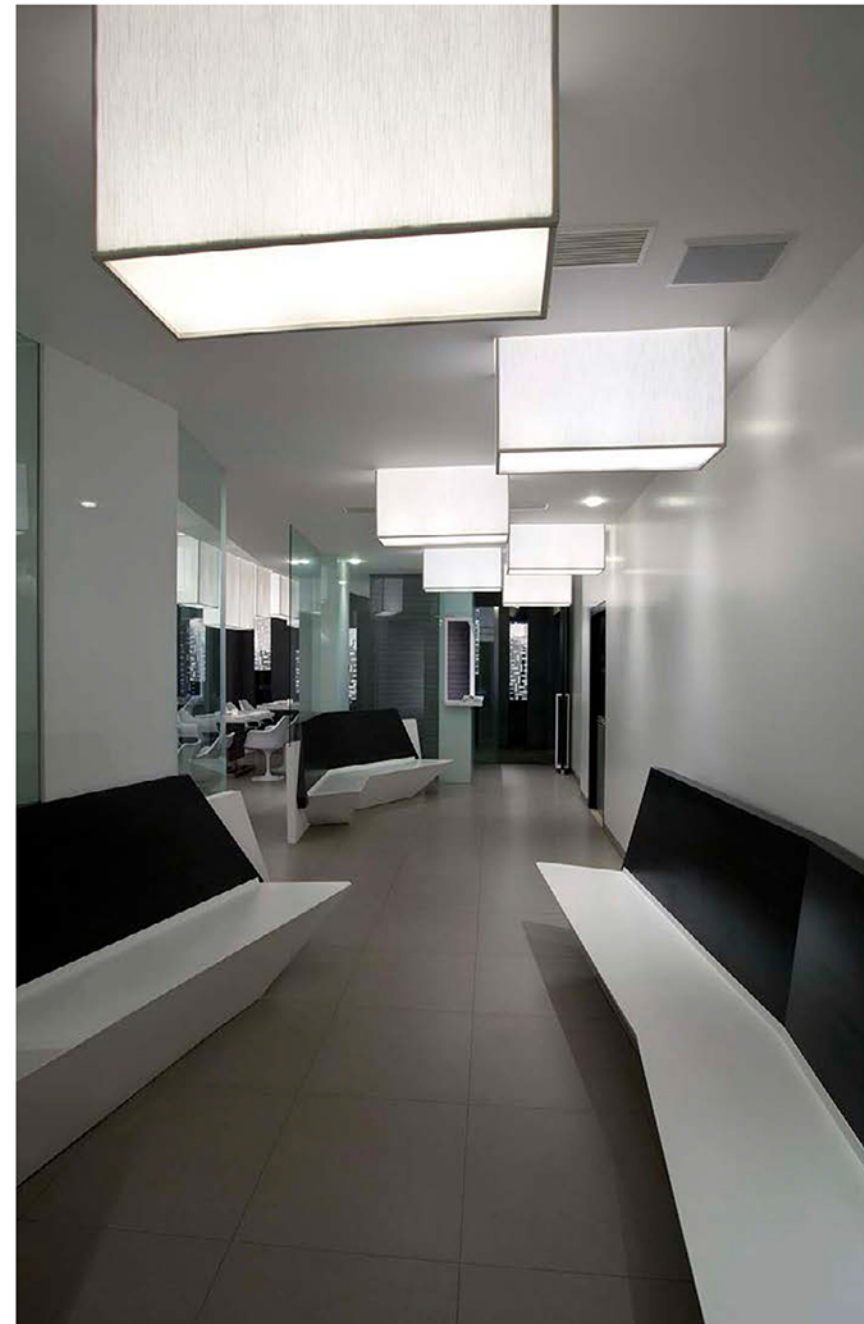
This project is designed for a young doctor couple. The brief was to accommodate a clinic along with the house in a rather unusually shallow site, with broad frontage. The existing well at site, which has been retained, became the deciding factor for spatial orientation, with clinic located on the left side of the plot with the living quarter on the right side; hence the name Linked House. The house has been designed as a strip cutting across the site, with the landscape inserted at various points along the length in the form of reflecting pools and patios. The proximity to the street, owing to the shallow site, resulted in introverted spaces, with a sweeping solid wall on the façade defining the form of the house.



Inverted Topography-Mezban

Inverted Topography is the second project in the 'Topography' series, where they have used light as the most important spatial element in the project. Light becomes the Raison d'etre, to define the space and the light sources becomes the tectonic elements in the space. "This restaurant called for an international appeal, as it is a multi-cuisine restaurant, serving international fares. The client wanted a very flexible layout, with an increased seating efficiency. In fact, we cut down on the overall seating capacity, but increased the efficiency up to 80 per cent by eliminating 6 and 8 seating tables in favour of 4 and 2

which could be grouped together for a larger gathering, says Mujib." Lalita continues, "White comes naturally to us at Collaborative! But it was a calculated risk we took at Mezban. It paid off, as the customers loved it. This project won us, 5 coveted international awards along with all major National Awards totaling 11, along with becoming one of the most internationally published projects by an Indian Architect."



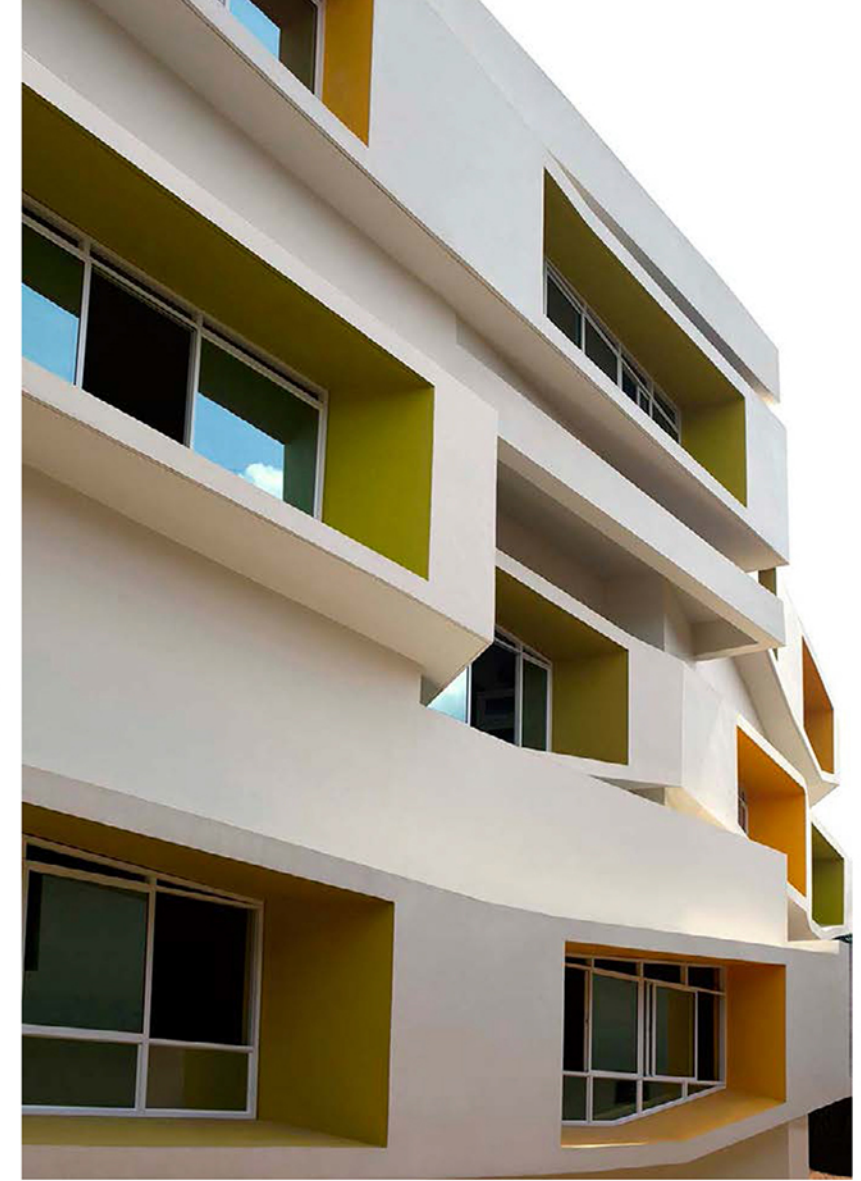
Apartment By The Bay

The brief given here was to create a very sophisticated and serene space, which could have multiple spatial characters depending on the activity the family indulges in; the living-cum-dining should double-up as a personal relaxation zone and as a lounge space. Being young adults, the clients had a very active social life and the space had to accommodate these differing requirements of being an intimate personal space at one end of the spectrum to a sophisticated entertaining space at the other end. The apartment has a breathtaking view of the bay on all sides from the uppermost levels of a SOBO high-rise. The design takes full advantage of this spectacular ambience making the living-cum-dining a space to relax, rejoice and rejuvenate. Part of the design intent was to transform a long drab passageway leading from the entry to various spaces, into a spatial connector than a passageway and integrate it to the over-all design intent, by architectonic overlay of planes, materials and geometry. The three bedrooms of the apartment were designed to reflect the persona of the three individuals and their differing habits of spatial usage.



Stacked Tectonics

The project is part of JDT Islam campus, an orphanage situated in a quaint village in north Kerala. Collaborative Architecture was invited to design a prototype school for primary grade, which could be assessed for its performance and physical setting on the campus. The site was identified as a linear left over track between a girl's school and an existing old school building in the 20 acre site. The sandwiching of the building in the narrow plot between two buildings posed the challenge of getting enough natural light throughout the class hours into the classrooms. The existing buildings also created a wind barrier. The firm designed the project as a catalyst to trigger quality interventions on the campus. The project is designed as porous and inviting assemblage of classrooms and spaces rather than monolithic functional blocks to encourage interactive spaces for the primary school children and keep their intrigue factor intact for a longer span of time. The building is designed to create a multitude of sensorial and formal attributes. Like a Lego, it changes form in dramatic ways as one encounters it from different locations. Huge windows allow streaming daylight into classrooms, saving substantial dependency on artificial lighting- uniquely designed; these give distinct character to each classroom. The project has been transformative for the JDT management to relook at the way educational spaces are designed.



Wedge-1

Wedge- is an architectonic exploration by the firm in creating projects, which are highly-refined in architectural morphology, and yet fulfilling the programmatic agenda of the brief. The architectural intent was to dissect the simple 'shoe box' and manipulate the architectonic character of the box in the most economical way. The project had a very stringent budget limit and delivery schedule. The name Wedge comes from the character of the spaces within the dissected box, which are largely trapezoidal.



The two-dimensional cut-outs on the skin, transform the project from a simple container of products to an architectural ensemble of multiple meanings and unparallel perceptual values. Wedge is painted white, including the exhibit floor to heighten the perception of encounter with the products. The central gathering space has a series of light 'vectors' (1200 mm long T5 lamps), which forms an enclosing canopy and fuse the space to complete the box.

Through the firm's diverse and superior body of work, the firm has been able to make a name in the field of architecture and design.

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