



Beautiful art need not just be for the rich, but can be found in a public garden, or a common marketplace. It rubs away the rough edges of our daily existence and makes us more caring and mindful of what is worthwhile around us. Built spaces and thoughtful landscaping are never just for our comfort, but to make the world a place where each person, living creature and beautiful object finds its rightful space.

JAYA JAITLY

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ar. khozema chitalwala: DESIGNERS GROUP



luxury does not come with a price tag, says ar. khozema chitalwala who believes that simplicity and sustainability can be luxurious too

“I am an incidental architect,”

says Ar. Khozema Chitalwala, founder and Principal Architect, Designers Group. Ar. Chitalwala wanted to be a doctor and had even sat for the MBBS entrance exams. As he awaited the results, a chance encounter with some architect friends changed the course of his life. “I felt an affinity towards architecture after talking to some friends and decided to pursue that instead. I am glad I chose architecture as a profession.”

Ar. Chitalwala worked through the five-year duration of his academic course. “I did an internship with Ar. Tofique Talib, who taught me to hold a pencil, to roll it on the board, to use a slider, a set square and a T-square,” he says. Under his university professor Ar. Suniel Saderkar, Ar. Chitalwala learned about interiors and working in Ar. Rusi Khambatta’s town-planning firm initiated his understanding of large-scale projects. Ar. Chitalwala says, “Fortunately, at that time, Ar. Rusi Khambatta and Ar. Raja Aederi shared common space for their studio. Ar. Raja Aederi was into some hospitality projects at that time and it is from there that I acquired an interest in hospitality design.”

After attaining his architecture degree, Ar. Chitalwala joined Ar. Deepak Mehta who had just begun his own practice after working under Ar. Hafeez Contractor. “I worked there for nearly two years and gained a lot of professional experience as I got to manage most of the office work solely due to Deepak’s involvement in the other branch.” After this, Ar. Chitalwala began his own practice in 1988. He says, “The initial years were challenging as I was not keen on outlining small bedrooms, living rooms and apartments; so a couple of projects did not materialize. I persisted on various interior design projects and manifested a strong base of craftsmanship. This led to an extensive and diversified work experience.”

While Ar. Chitalwala went on to design numerous multi-storey retail outlets across brands, his

interest in hospitality remained. “I kept pitching for numerous hotel projects,” he remembers, adding, “My first break in hospitality was in 1999 with the help of Mr. Sampath Kumar, a marine chief engineer who can be considered both my godfather and mentor.” They had worked together on a project in Wakad where Ar. Chitalwala spoke of his dream of designing a hotel. “I got to work with Hirsch Bedner who has always been an inspiration and started my career in hospitality with The Taj Mahal hotel.”

Designers Group gained street cred with The Taj project. “We were assigned multiple projects which included Jiva Spa, guest rooms for President Hotel which, quite unlike Taj, required a business look. Around 2002-3, I designed guest room mock-ups for a famous show called “The Host.” Through the show, Ar. Chitalwala met Chander Baljee, the MD of Royal Orchid Hotels who had liked Ar. Chitalwala’s work on the show. That led to projects beyond the world of The Taj. “I worked for the Fariyas Group of Hotels, a local brand, which made me realize that all categories of hotels, whether three-star or five-star could be designed in a balanced way using ‘simplicity’. ‘Simplicity is key’ has been my mantra since,” he emphasizes.

This mantra was also incorporated into Land’s End Hotel which was refurbished into a Taj

Property. “For this project, I got to work with Lim Hong Lian from LTW Designworks, Singapore, and we amalgamated luxury and minimalism together.” Ar. Chitalwala talks about how the hospitality sector has evolved, organically, over the past two decades. “The purpose of hospitality is no more to cater to tourism or business; rather, it inculcates leisure. As people have become well-travelled, they look to set benchmarks wherever they go. From plain rudimentary structures, architecture has grown into sumptuous envelopes. Designers today incorporate a replication of palatial architecture, contemporary minimalistic architecture style while also considering the fusion of both modern and vernacular styles. The overall hospitality design philosophy today is flourishing while encompassing international trends.”

Ar. Chitalwala has always kept an eye on sustainable luxury. He clarifies, “Sustainability is supposed to be an essential part of all the typologies, irrespective of how luxurious it may or may not be. Sustainability is as important for a budget hotel as for a luxury one. Every product we create will cause carbon footprint and it is our responsibility to balance out the same. Every individual has their own definition of luxury. For some, luxury may be defined as simplicity and for others, it could be an extravagance. It is no more defined by how much investment is done on a project but rather depends on the target audience the brand is aiming at.”



Hotel Devi Ratn

Location:
Jaipur, Rajasthan

Concept:
To blend the narrative of heritage-rich Jaipur with a modern design vision.

Design elements:

- Entrance porch accentuated by elements including an operational auto-rickshaw and a royal chariot.
- Lobby features contemporary furniture made by local craftsmen.
- Flooring of the original lobby, in red chevron pattern, is retained.
- Both internal and external sphere of the architectural envelope are in red GFRC.

- Vibrant décor, furniture configurations, lighting elements and customized soft furnishings with peacocks and butterflies from the Bharatpur sanctuary occur as a theme in the waiting area and the community seating.
- Ceiling chandeliers break the volume of the tunnel-like interiors imparting a palatial feel.
- A showpiece channelling a bowing horse commemorates Maharaja Jai Singh, the Hindu Rajput Ruler.
- All-day dining called Vyom has a variety of seating spaces with a clear view of Aravalli Hills.
- The wall of Vyom’s buffet area has henna art-themed tiles.





Pride Plaza

Location:
Nagpur

Concept:
To convert an old, rundown building in the heart of Nagpur into a premium hotel capable of competing with the booming hospitality scenario of the region.

Design elements:

- Building layout decluttered and space opened up to offer an ambience that allows a substantial amount of daylight.
- Inside, an extensive central atrium encompasses the reception, doubling as a focal point for the hotel.
- Back of house (BOH) areas retained from an older design layout and refurbished to fit the existing brief.
- New café and office areas introduced onto the floor.
- Existing bar refurbished and designed to be conveniently switched into a lounge space when needed.
- Existing acoustics overhauled including an anti-vibration treatment allowing frequencies to be reduced, restricting sound leaks onto the upper levels.



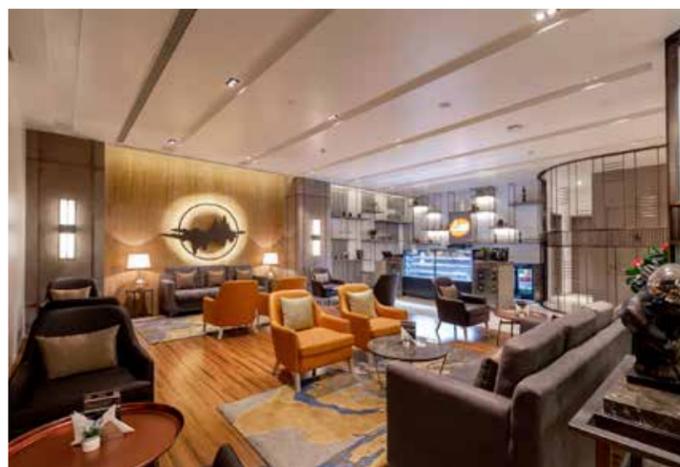
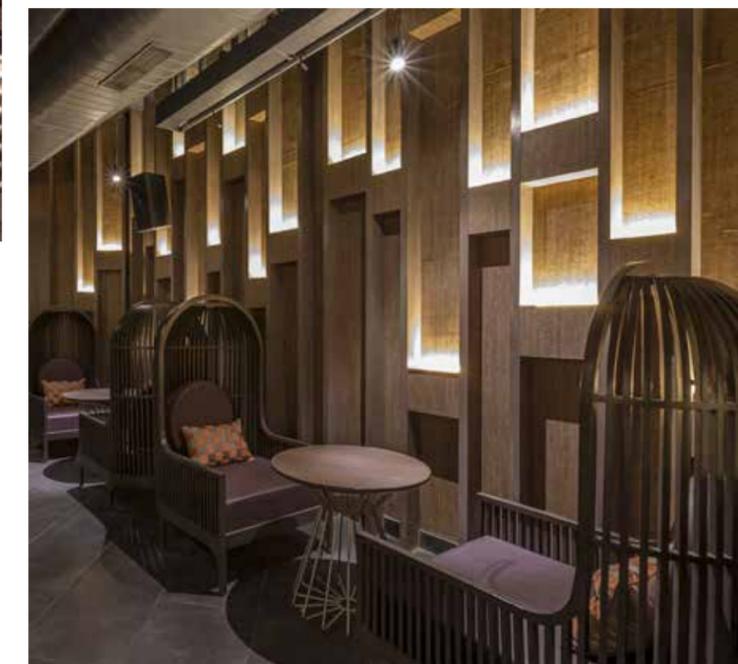
Royal Homtel Suites

Location:
Mumbai

Concept:
An existing residential building to be refurbished and converted into a hotel.

Design elements:

- Interiors infused with Bombay's local essence in the form of Bollywood caricatures, movie posters, famous news articles and similar graphics.
- Artworks and accessories assimilate the major lifelines of the commercial capital, i.e., Mumbai local trains and taxis.
- Complete composition drafted in black and white with added splashes of color.
- Substantial area allocated for public spaces, banquets, and cafeteria.
- Cafeteria also serves as a get-together venue for local residents.
- Interior architecture completely overlays the fact that the original site was a residence.



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Radisson Blu

Location:
Alibaug

Concept:
A renovation hospitality project that blends the serenity and greenery of Alibaug into the design of the property through earthy tones and an airy layout.

Design elements:

- Wood laminates create a warm and cosy ambience while keeping maintenance costs low.
- Lobby transformed by a subtle assortment of colors with blue, symbolising the coastal waters, as the primary shade.
- Dialogue created between the interiors and exteriors through water bodies.
- Sustainable indigenous design language integrated using Indian stone, recycled wood, and cement fibre boards.
- Open and spacious layout of the project ensures abundant natural light and ventilation. ifj

