

INTERIORS

SOHO HOUSE,
A UNIQUE CREATIVE
VENTURE IN MUMBAI

**A PEEK AT LALITA THARANI AND
MUJIB AHMED'S ADMIRABLE PROJECTS**

PLUS

- Skidmore Owings and Merrill & GPL Design Studio
- Ponni Oscar
- Ritu Goregaoker
- Shabnam Alam



TREND SETTING DESIGNS

**LALITA THARANI
AND MUJIB AHMED'S**
ADMIRABLE
APPROACH AND
DEDICATION HAVE
RESULTED IN A
SERIES OF STRIKING
STRUCTURES WITH
A NEW DESIGN
VOCABULARY.

Text: Swati Balgi
Photographs: Courtesy the firm

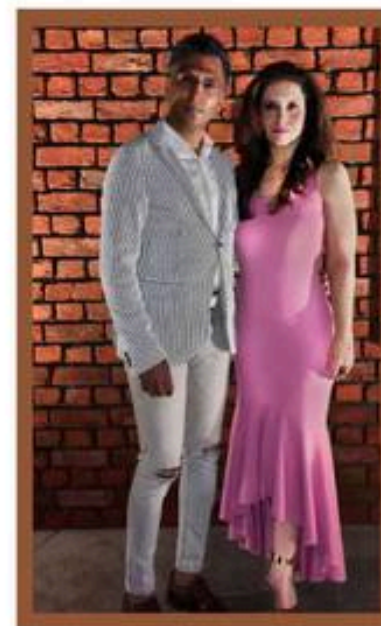


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ean before flexible and open offices, customized furniture systems, sustainable design and recycling, and human-centered design became common practices in the design industry, the enterprising

husband-and-wife design team of **Lalita Tharani** and **Mujib Ahmed** were doing it. After starting Collaborative Architecture, the couple has worked on some trendsetting designs. Throughout their careers, Lalita and Mujib have been active and constant innovators, looking well beyond the bounds of their profession to seek the ideas and technologies that will shape the future. This way of working represents the duo's DNA, a special chemistry of creative pragmatism and invention that they have shared and refined, since they first met and started working together. This legacy—and the way they continue to advance it—is one of the primary reasons they have been winning awards and acclaim from the fraternity.



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. They have won many international awards like OFFICE NEXT 2016-Winner, IES Merit Award 2015, IDA 2015, Architecture Israel - Project of the Year 2012 - Winner & Runner up, SEED Award 2012, SBID (Society of British Interior Designers) 2012 - Finalist, Restaurant & Bar Design Awards 2012 - Finalist, FX Award 2011 – Finalist, to name a few.

The studio was selected as a finalist in the Indian National War Museum, New Delhi - a two stage international competition by the Govt. of India in 2016. In 2017, Collaborative Architecture, along with the firm's collaborating partner, J.Mayer.H, Berlin, also got selected as the finalists in BCDA Iconic Tower, Manila, Philippines. Collaborative was also shortlisted in a 2-stage international competition for Israeli Lounge at Kennedy Centre, Washington DC in 2018. Society Interiors showcases few selective projects from their vast portfolio.

BCDA ICONIC TOWER, MANILA, PHILIPPINES (FINALIST- 2-STAGE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION WITH J.MAYER.H & PARTNERS, BERLIN)

In this 2-stage international competition for a mixed-use office tower, the architect-couple collaborated with international firm J.Mayer.H. The entry was selected as one of the 5 finalists from more than 100 invited entries from across the globe. The BCDA Iconic Tower, the new landmark, sits in an urban park that surrounds the building. Cascadia Tower is a three-dimensional structure with various programmatic intersections.



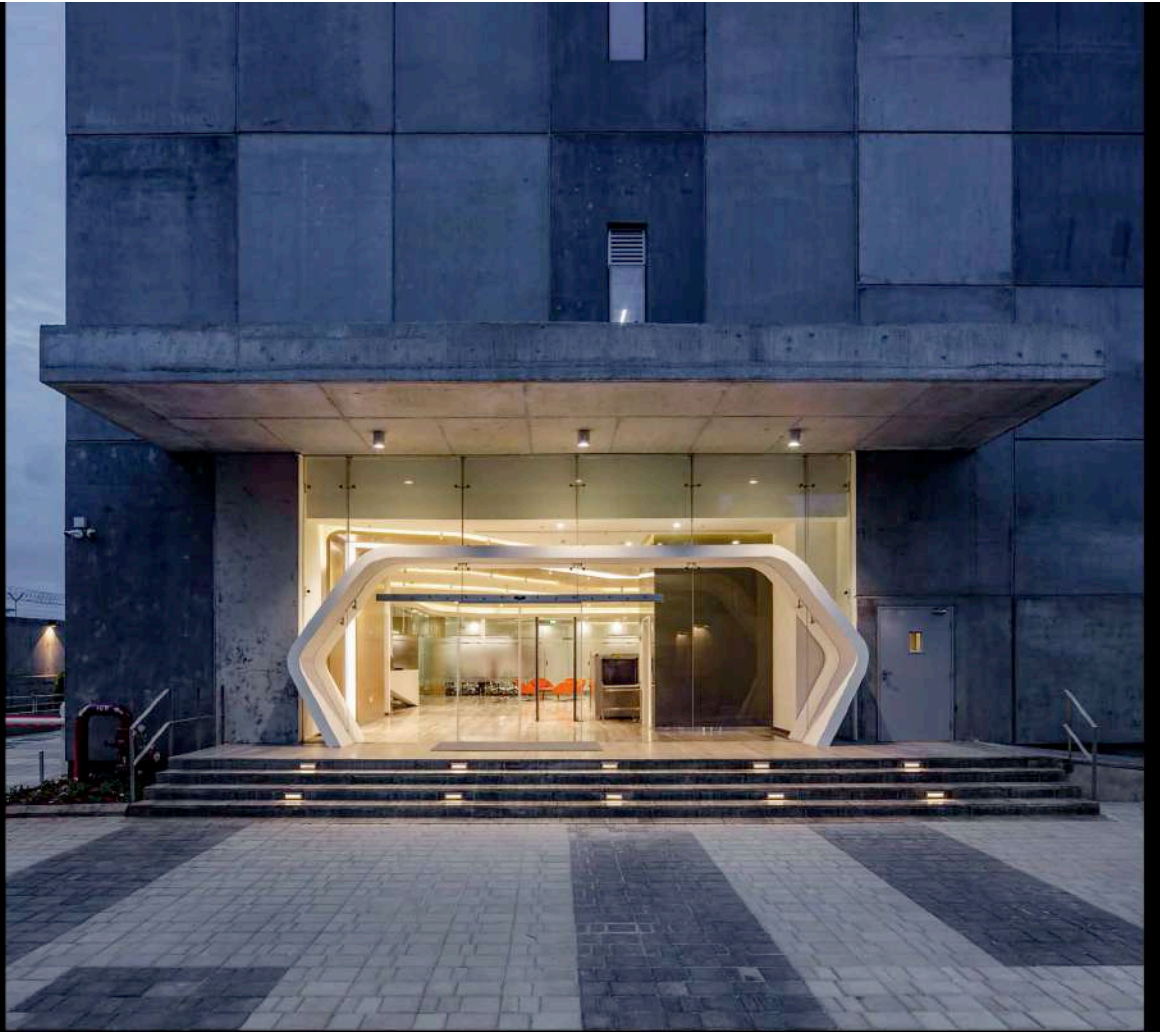


The stacks volumes refer to ancient landmarks of stone piles for orientation and place making. The volumes of Cascadia Tower can be seen as pebbles or rocks that create a vertical park – a park for plants, a park for working, a park for free time and relaxation, a park for retail and for culture activities. Another reference point was the national flag - a symbol of unity and peace. The Urban Park set the project apart as a unique public space and experience. The park also complements the urban design vision of the linear park along the east-west axis in the new city.

NETMAGIC DATA CENTRE, BGRT BANGALORE

This is the second project by Collaborative Architecture on the BGRT Campus for Bearys Developer based in Bengaluru. The client's wanted an invigorating, innovative lobby that could complement a functional building. Data centres are digital warehouses, but the client wanted to soften the perception by giving it a design upgrade. Data centres are one of most secure places and the design needed to respond to security protocols of the program. The lobby has three meeting rooms of various sizes, a waiting lounge and cloak room facilities, apart from the main reception.





HETERO PHARAMA, HYDERABAD

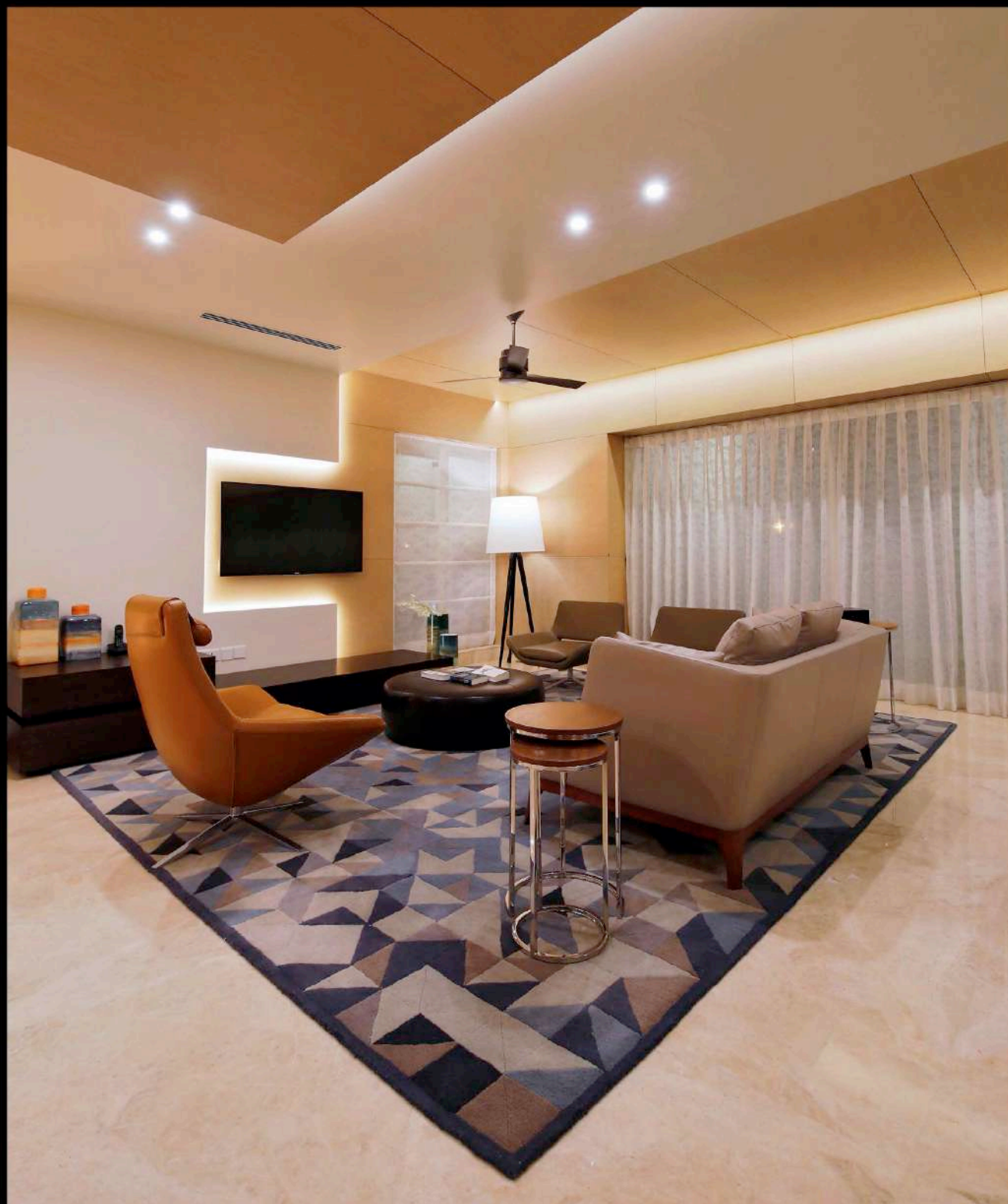
For the chairman of Hetero Pharma, the team has designed a very personalized office, spread over an area of 5,000 sq.ft. The office has separate reception, a VIP lounge, a spacious foyer, a state-of-the-art conference apart from Chairman's office and ancillary facilities, including his personal gym. One of the most important clauses of the brief was to have the design as per Vastu dictates, while being contemporary in the over-all design and detailing, which the team has successfully delivered.





SKYLINE LEGEND, COCHIN

This show apartment was designed for an uber-luxury, condominiums building in the heart of Cochin. The team has focused on universal aesthetic appeal, while striving to create something unique. Spread over 3,800 sq. ft., with 4 bedrooms and an expansive living-dining space, the layout has been totally reworked, and the kitchen and two bedrooms have been totally overhauled.





The USP of the project is the panoramic living-cum-dining, and the design celebrates it by enhancing the spatiality as one enters the apartment. The space was designed as a shell with curated pieces accentuating the decor. The toilets have been designed to be replicated for the entire project, but with attention to detail and the selection of a material palette that could elevate the design that unmistakably positions Skyline Legend as one of the best luxury apartment units in the city.



INDIAN NATIONAL WAR MUSEUM, NEW DELHI (FINALIST - 2-STAGE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION)

The architect firm was one of the 7 finalists in the 2-stage international competition for the War Museum in the historic hub of Lutyens' Delhi. "War histories are as much about peace as about aggression. Taking forward the idea of peace, we were more interested in understanding the museum as a celebration of efforts towards peace, good governance that especially the Indian Military and Armed Forces have struggled for. A celebration of Indian military's democratic and societal credentials, as the strongest pillars of India's democracy and as the most socially engaged troops with civilian life in the entire world," explains Lalita.

As an urban artefact, this museum would sit as a monumental and iconic structure - much like the other monuments in the vicinity from different ages and varying styles.





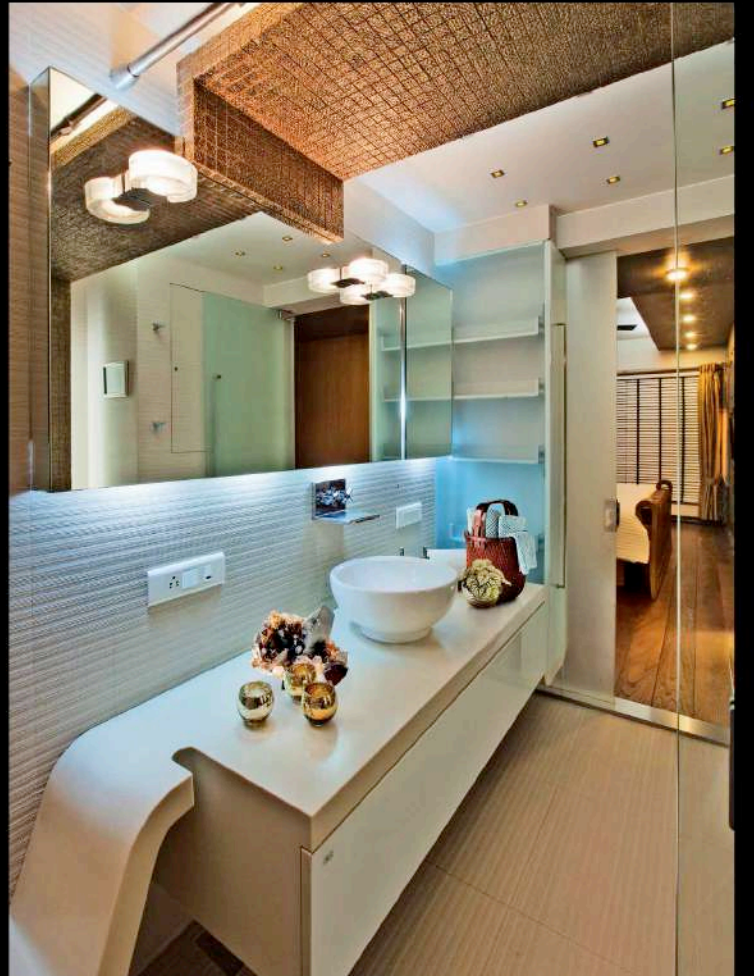
"Forts did shape the idea of protection at one point, but today they are heritage of an era gone by - and so this museum draws on the memory of a fort, but only as a tectonic architectural reference," says Mujib. The fort form is broken and punctuated with glazed inserts, such that the exterior image of the building is one of multiple scales. The form is not continuous, but segmented with crevices and double-curve glazed surfaces, partly to make it less imposing, partly to build around the landscape, creating a language of arches and petals. These forms remain abstracted ideas of images and references from a past and a hint towards a new future of materiality and technology.

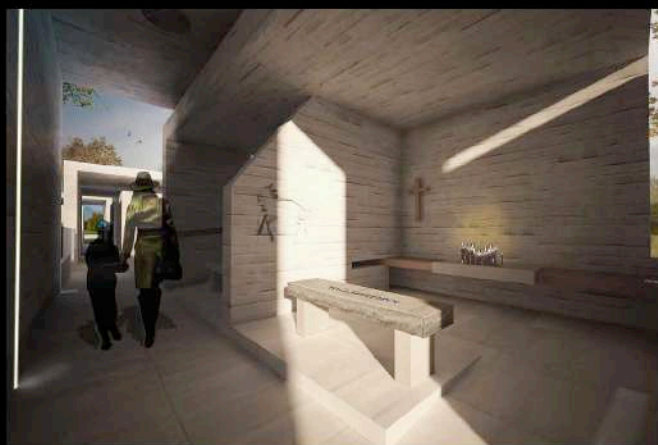
The farther end of the museum block will have a perpendicular rectangular block floating above the ground plan, housing a library, a restaurant, as well as an amphitheater.

APARTMENT, CUFFE PARADE MUMBAI

The clients, a couple in their mid 40s, wanted a space that would not challenge them daily and a space that their young boy could frolic in. The couple had a distinct preference for wood and was averse to some extent to highly contemporary space, except for their kitchen. Hence, the strategy was to have muted living spaces defined by a refined material palette, coupled with right choice of furniture and lights that complement the design strategy.







SANDY HOOK MEMORIAL, CONNECTICUT, USA

This was an entry for the international competition for a memorial at Newtown, for the 26 victims killed in one of the worst gun violence incidents in USA. The memorial is proposed to be implemented in 3 phases. The design proposes easily deployable, locally accessible construction technologies to make the project as a participative endeavour to some level. Simple RCC construction is proposed for the enclosed and semi-enclosed structures. The paths/decks are in wood with mild-steel sub-frames and pre-cast RCC pile/struts- a complete reliance to accessible technologies to make the project viable to build and maintain in the long run.

Two chapels are located in the lower field, which forms the main part and the first phase of the memorial. The chapel is a dedicated space for each of the 26 victims - a sacred space for the family and friends to reconnect and remember; an intimate space for the visitors to pay homage. The chapel is bare, except for the granite bench the community has gifted, and a wooden ledge with a granite top for the candles.

The existing landscape plays a singular role in the over-all design direction of the memorial. Most of the surrounding landscape is kept untouched with minimal interventions.

Overall the firm showcases a very systematic style of working, making a very conscious effort that each building is one-of-its-kind. With more projects in the pipeline, I guess there is more to look forward to... ■