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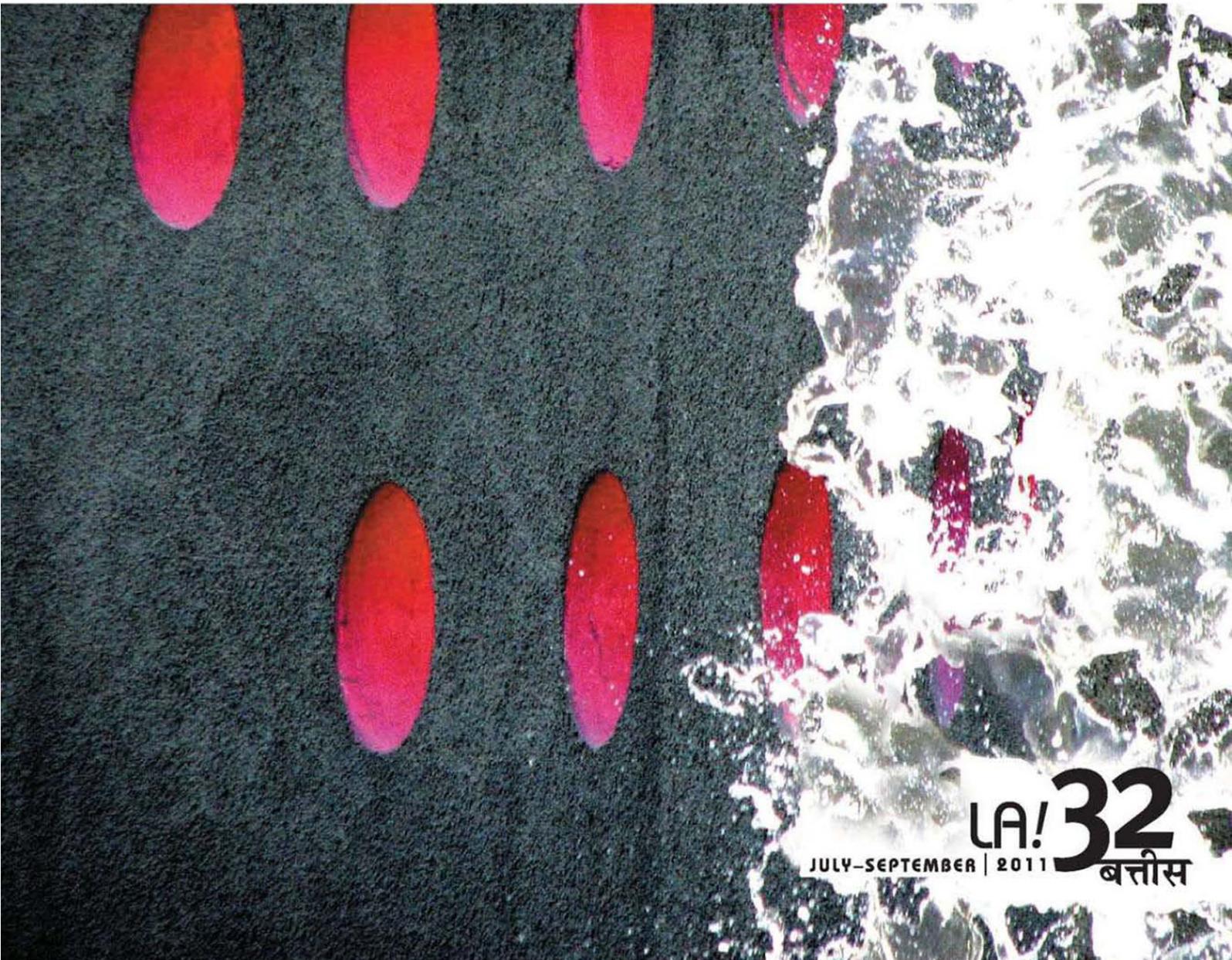
# landscape

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## OUT OF THE GLASS BOX AND INTO THE GARDEN

& NATIONAL POLICE MEMORIAL COMPETITION | DENNIS PIEPRZ | TANMAY TATHAGAT | LANDSCAPE IN INDIAN LITERATURE | LAKI'S DIYABUBULA



LA! 32  
JULY-SEPTEMBER | 2011  
बत्तीस



From government departments, banks and single storey institutes of mid-twentieth century to contemporary Information Technology Parks, the idea of an office work place has undergone a sea change. Brand name, availability of budgets and space, awareness of the importance of a functional and aesthetically pleasing outdoor environment are some of the reasons for newer work places in India being designed in several imaginative ways. A typical project brief includes the creation of a unique identity for the company or organization, a sense of place and at the same time providing a stress free environment for the employees, employers, clients and visitors. The current issue of the Journal features a few of the many such examples of works across the country.

Over the couple of decades, various research organizations, planning departments and institutes across India have been involved in working on various types

and scales of sustainable solutions for our future developments. Areas of focus include construction technologies, city planning, infrastructure, and design. However, in comparison to the scale and pace of development that we see around us today, we would argue that very little has been achieved in real terms. Tamnay Tathagat, one of the leading names in the area of providing consultancy for sustainable design and building solutions in the country discusses various aspects of the subject.

Do we always have to look *ahead* to find solutions and ways to address challenges of the present day? Cannot our past guide us for our future? The idea of exploring history with that perspective is the theme of a brief essay by this Editor. Along the same lines, this issue introduces a new three part series – Landscape in Indian Literature. It explores examples of relationships that humans shared with nature during ancient times

as recorded and documented in our literary sources. The writing implies that a study of the various reasons for the endurance and timelessness of such knowledge is the key to creating more meaningful and abiding landscapes in the present times.

Moving ahead with the idea of covering national design competitions with a strong landscape basis and context, we present here the three prize winning entries of the recently concluded proposed Police Memorial Competition at New Delhi. As in case of every competition, we do hope to see soon the final scheme constructed one day as conceived by the winning team.

Editors | contact: [lajournalindia@gmail.com](mailto:lajournalindia@gmail.com)

# Journal of landscape architecture

ISSUE NO. 32 | JULY-SEPTEMBER 2011

# contents issue 32!



- 6 feedback | news | announcements
- 16 advertorial  
**Playing it Safe!**  
Allene Noella
- 19 report  
**Cultural Landscapes**  
ISOLA 7th National Conference, 2011  
Saurabh Popli
- 22 competition  
**Saluting Our Brave**  
National Architectural Design Competition  
for the National Police Memorial
- 23 **Reflection & Remembrance**  
First Prize Winning Entry  
Siddhartha Talwar & Nikhil Dhar
- 30 **Immortal Monument**  
Second Prize Winning Entry  
Saket Jain, Sachin Jain & Ritu Jain
- 35 **Imprinting the Landscape with Memory**  
Third Prize Winning Entry  
Anita Tikoo Matange, Vijay Matange  
& Sroboshi Das

- 40 landscape design  
**Out of the Glass Box and Into the Garden**  
Defining Office Landscapes  
Samir Mathur | Sandeep Menon
- Reclaiming a Brownfield for the City**  
Maker Maxity
- Interweaving Art, Architecture & Landscape**  
Uppal Business Centre
- 52 **Connecting with Nature**  
**Software Campuses**  
Infosys Park 1, Velankani Information Systems, Wipro EC4  
Nina Chandavarkar, Oikos
- 58 **Exuberant & Playful**  
Ecohub, Rajarhat  
Anuradha Rathore, Salient
- 64 urbanism  
**Regenerating Change**  
In conversation with Dennis Pieprz
- 72 sustainability  
**Sustainability Today**  
Tanmay Tathagat
- 79 view from within  
**Future of the Past**  
Geeta Wahi Dua
- 82 landscape in indian literature  
**Poetic Clues**  
Depiction of landscape in the plays of Kalidasa  
Uma Sankar Sekar
- 90 profile  
**Rohit Marol**
- 96 indian sub-continent  
**Laki's Diyaububula Enchanted Forest**  
Varna Shashidhar
- 104 landscape industry  
**Well-designed Hardscapes**  
Mehul Jain
- 108 book review  
**Space for Engagement**  
by Himanshu Burté  
Book review by Suhasini Ayer
- 109 **The Secret Abode of Fireflies**  
Edited by Nanni Singh  
Book review by Snehanshu Mukherjee
- 111 know your plants  
**Ronjh, *Acacia leucopholea***

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Samir Mathur | Sandeep B Menon

# OUT OF THE GLASS BOX AND INTO THE GARDEN

## DEFINING OFFICE LANDSCAPES

One of the apparent concerns while designing for offices and institutions is that of an appropriate style of design. But the real issues of designing for an office or institutional complex are not that of design styles but that of the 'design response to human behavior and natural processes'. Contemporary developments must go beyond the current trends of sustainability and 'green wash'. The challenge faced during the landscape design is to create urban spaces that respond to the users for whom it is designed and at the same time are attuned to the local ecological processes.

The approach adopted for the design of institutional and office hubs are not as mere problem solving exercises of circulation, movement and green space calculations. These are tackled as an 'experiential' approach to design where the human experience within the landscape forms the conceptual framework for the design. Extensive research has been carried out to de-

fine the co-relation between 'human behavior' and 'work environments'.

Behavioral scientists maintain that the surroundings consciously or unconsciously affect our moods and responses to situations, evoking calmness or tension, content or contempt. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that much of our present environment adds tension, aggravating the already hectic stress of modern day work environments.<sup>1</sup>

In his seminal work, *So Human an Animal*, René Dubos suggests that adaptability, a special character of the human mind frame is both boon and bane to our well being.<sup>2</sup> Many diseases originate from the detrimental urban environmental influences under which we work and to which we have become so adjusted. The 'glass boxes' that form contemporary offices may provide a conducive environment in which to work comfortably but the need to break out to spaces where users can relax is equally important in an office building.

FACING PAGE | LEFT TO RIGHT

**Wipro EC4, Bangalore**

Landscape Architect: **Oikos, Bangalore**

**Pasco Motors, Yamunanagar**

Landscape Architect: **Integral Designs, New Delhi**

**Ecohub, Rajarhat**

Landscape Architect: **Salient, Kolkata**

1. Pg:8, Rutledge, Albert, "Anatomy of a Park – The Essentials of Recreation Area Planning and Design", McGraw-Hill, 1971

2. Pg:8, 'Dubos, René, "So Human an Animal – How are we shaped by Surroundings and Events", Transaction Publishers, 1998



The landscape spaces in an institutional or office environment need to be designed keeping several parameters in mind. The first is that the designer should maximize the 'Human-Nature' interface to bring about a stress free environment. It has been proven that contact with nature for brief spans of time during a stressful day can reduce the stress levels of an employee. 'Gardens as stress busters' is a key phrase that figures out frequently while discussions are on to design the garden spaces.

The second is that physical and emotional refreshment should be explicitly identified as a factor for design of these spaces. From our research, it was understood that the uninterrupted monotony of enclosed architectural spaces leads to mental lethargy. This becomes an issue which needs to be addressed to ensure work productivity.

Another important aspect is the design of spaces which can be personalized. The garden spaces adjoining an office complex should be designed as a series of interconnected spaces which offer the user enough opportunities for creation of personal spaces. Facilities are to be organized in a way that they maximize interaction. The spaces have to be envisaged as accommodating enough to allow their use to be interpreted by the user/ user groups.

Finally, there is the need to impart an identity to the office or institutional development. Landscaped zones need to permeate between the blocks of built masses and hold them together. This landscape fabric can be used as a powerful tool to create an emotional image about the development – an image powerful enough to render the banners and posters ineffective. This image is meant to be perceived by the user and assimilated by his brain to produce a simulated sense of the place or its *genius loci*.

Visual sterility, so common in contemporary office building landscapes should be avoided; at the same time restraint should be maintained in the variety of experiences possible in the landscape. The designer should steer clear of the usual practice of limiting landscape design to 'material palettes' and 'horticultural palettes'. Design processes have to be relooked at the basic parameters that define how we perceive the space including lines, textures, planes, colors and contrasts.

The biggest challenge while designing office and institutional buildings in dense urban situations is the lack of open spaces dedicated for use. Often the open spaces in such a development are generated as an obligation owing to requirements such as a mandatory emergency access corridor or a statutory setback. To fulfil the design intent within the limited space and still do justice to the development is the real challenge in such cases.

landscape design |

OUT OF THE  
GLASS BOX  
AND INTO THE  
GARDEN

Integral Designs NEW DELHI

# A RECLAIMING BROWNFIELD FOR THE CITY

M A K E R M A X I T Y



**M**umbai, the commercial capital of India, is its most populous city, and the sixth most populous city in the world, with a density of about 20,482 persons per square kilometer.

Much like the other Indian cities, Mumbai is undergoing a massive change in its urban structure. The much celebrated 'island of prosperity' – South Mumbai's downtown area, is plagued by high capital land costs, deteriorating infrastructure, congestion, high densities of built masses and poor safety standards. The trend of offices relocating to suburban districts is fast catching up since the urban centres can no longer cater to the demand for more space.

The Bandra-Kurla complex was planned in the late 1970's to decongest South Mumbai and was almost entirely built on reclaimed marshy land on the banks of the Mithi River in close proximity to the airport. Excellent accessibility to this area fuelled this endeavour. Large tracts of mangroves were destroyed and marshes filled in to create the new business district. The now polluted Mithi river has a catchment which covers about three-fourths of the city of Mumbai and plays an important role in controlling its floods. The mangroves along the Mahim creek were reported to have about 225 species of birds in the late 80s while their numbers have now dwindled down to only a few.

The recent spate of flooding reported from Mumbai has been mainly due to encroachments into the flood plains and marshes of the river and creeks. The demographic pressures on Mumbai demand more land to satisfy its requirement, and hence reclamation seems to be a justified phenomenon. But more often than ever, the large pockets of unused industrial/commercial land or brownfields within the cities are ignored when the developmental schemes are proposed.

FACING PAGE | A landscape section for the mangrove esplanade at the Mithi River edge. Source: 1<sup>o</sup> North Pte. Ltd, Singapore

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BELOW | Landscape layout plan for the institutional and office area. Source: 1<sup>o</sup> North Pte. Ltd, Singapore

BOTTOM | Landscape layout plan for the mangrove esplanade at the Mithi River edge. Source: 1<sup>o</sup> North Pte. Ltd, Singapore

The site for the project Maker Maxity was a drive-in-theatre in the edge of the present Bandra-Kurla Complex, where a whole generation of viewers grew up watching their favorite movie stars come to life on a suspended screen among the mangroves. The theatre stopped functioning in the late 90's and the land was abandoned. This provided an opportunity to redevelop this almost entirely asphalted stretch of land parcel measuring about 20 acre to create a mixed use development with office and commercial spaces, a shopping mall cum entertainment hub, and a hotel and serviced apartments. The project was envisioned as an integrated complex designed to revive the public space for a modern Indian – 'a microcosm of a city-within-a-city'.

Integral Designs and 1<sup>o</sup> North Pte Ltd were commissioned to develop the Landscape Master Plan for the project. The objective of the Master Plan was not to restrict itself to an exercise of clinical laying out of built volumes, but was an attempt to create a scenario where the different land uses could be arranged



intelligently to achieve a balance. The project scheme was divided into three phases and the phase comprising of the institutional and office hub was to be constructed first, forming the front edge of the development. The rear edges were reserved for the hotel and service apartments overlooking the creek while the central part was for the shopping mall.

The institutional and office zone consists of five superblocks arranged parallel to one another creating linear cor-

ridors of open space in between them and an integrated open space along the main Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) Road, that is the main connector to the site. The design brief specified that each block had to be a self-contained unit with its own set of vehicular drop offs and ramps down to the basement. The linearity of spaces between buildings were seen as an opportunity rather than a constraint and were designed to form plazas with well defined vehicular and pedestrian movement zones.





The paved space was punctuated by green areas and a defined set of tree planters arranged in a rhythm generated by the column grid of the building. The planters also helped define the parking space and the driveway. The entrance drop offs were kept at par with the inner floor level so as to avoid having visitors negotiate a grade separation while getting dropped off at the building. The vehicular circulation runs all around the building with the ramps to the basement placed in between the blocks.

A set of portal frames was designed to frame over the basement ramps emphasizing the rhythm of the planter boxes. Rain curtains and water bodies were incorporated into these portal frames to create visual and auditory interest. The portals were linked to one another using steel wires and an opportunity for creepers to grow along and from a green carpet in the air was created, thus camouflaging the ramps from the floors above.

The open space adjoining the towers along the BKC road was designed to function as a series of garden spaces for the users to come out and relax or even work. The wi-fi enabled campus helped in taking this concept forward.

Simple lines and planes were used to delineate spaces. The design of the individual gardens maintained the character of each space while the design read as a coherent whole. Small seating enclaves were incorporated among the garden spaces. The design of the seating was meticulously done so as to ensure that the users could 'personalize' these spaces without feeling lost in the larger landscape.

The percentage of lawn versus ground cover was balanced in order to reduce the water requirements for irrigation while not compromising on effective usage areas. The planting within the landscape was deliberately kept low, and the seating enclaves located thus so that one has the prospect of being connected to the rest of the space and at the same time offer the refuge to feel exclusive.

Neutral colors and earthy textures were preferred so as to give the landscape a defined contrast to the glass facade of the building. The building facade inspired the color palette of the stones used in the driveway while fired bricks and seasoned timber were used in the garden areas to create a warm and relaxed environment.



TOP | LEFT TO RIGHT

The site – Year 2000; the site – Year 2010; and, the site – Landscape proposal superimposed on satellite image. Source: Google Earth

CENTRE | Artistic rendition of the Boulevard between the office complex and the proposed commercial component. Source: Morphogenesis

BELOW | Artistic rendition of the development form the main BKC side. Source: Morphogenesis



**TOP | Landscape detail plan for the garden space.**  
Source: [r North Pte. Ltd, Singapore](#)

**CENTRE | The visual contrasts between the materials of the gardens have been restrained so as to achieve a coherence thus tying up the landscape.** Source: <http://picasaweb.google.com/architectsanddeep/MakerTownez>

**BOTTOM | The open space adjoining the towers along the BKC road is designed to function as a series of garden spaces for the users to come out, relax and work.** Source: [Integral Designs](#)





**THIS PAGE**

**TOP LEFT |** Discreet lighting has been used to create dramatic effects in the night landscape. Source: <http://picasaweb.google.com/architectsanddeep/MakerTownez>

**TOP RIGHT |** The design language employs simple lines and planes to delineate spaces. Source: <http://picasaweb.google.com/architectsanddeep/MakerTownez>

**FACING PAGE**

**TOP |** Rain curtains and waterbodies are incorporated in the landscape to create visual and auditory interest. Source: <http://picasaweb.google.com/architectsanddeep/MakerTownez>

**BOTTOM**

**LEFT TO RIGHT |** The paved plaza between the towers are punctuated by green areas, tree planters and portal frames arranged in a rhythm which responds to the building facades. Source: Integral Designs

Neutral colors and earthy textures are used to give the landscape a defined contrast to the glass facade of the building. Source: Integral Designs

The design of the seating was done so as to ensure that the users could 'personalize' these spaces without feeling lost in the larger landscape.

Source: Integral Designs

The visual contrasts between the materials of the gardens were restrained so as to achieve a coherence in the landscape. The boundary edge was kept low to maximize the views into the development from outside while the planting height was regulated to ensure that while seated in the garden space, one would not be able to see the traffic outside.

The tropical climate of Mumbai allowed for a rich palette of plants to be selected for the site based on their color, texture, foliage and growth pattern. Each zone in the landscape was assigned a set of plants after analysis of the kind of use, location and character of space.

The degraded river edge will be eventually restored to its past ecological vibrance. The species of mangroves

which grew there are proposed to be replanted and the existing fragmented patches are to be strengthened. An inventory of the species of mangroves which grow in that region was carried out as part of the exercise. A board walk has been proposed to let the public experience the creek edge. Seating spaces and pathways will be provided for allowing visitors to experience this ecosystem which has been disconnected from the city thus maximizing the 'human-nature' interface.

Landscapes develop distinctive qualities with time, use and their perception by the users. The design for this project is to be seen as a process of adding form and meaning to the existing conditions and at the same time remaining integral to the architectural spaces and user perception.

**MAKER MAXITY, Mumbai**

Client | Indian Film Combine Pvt. Ltd.

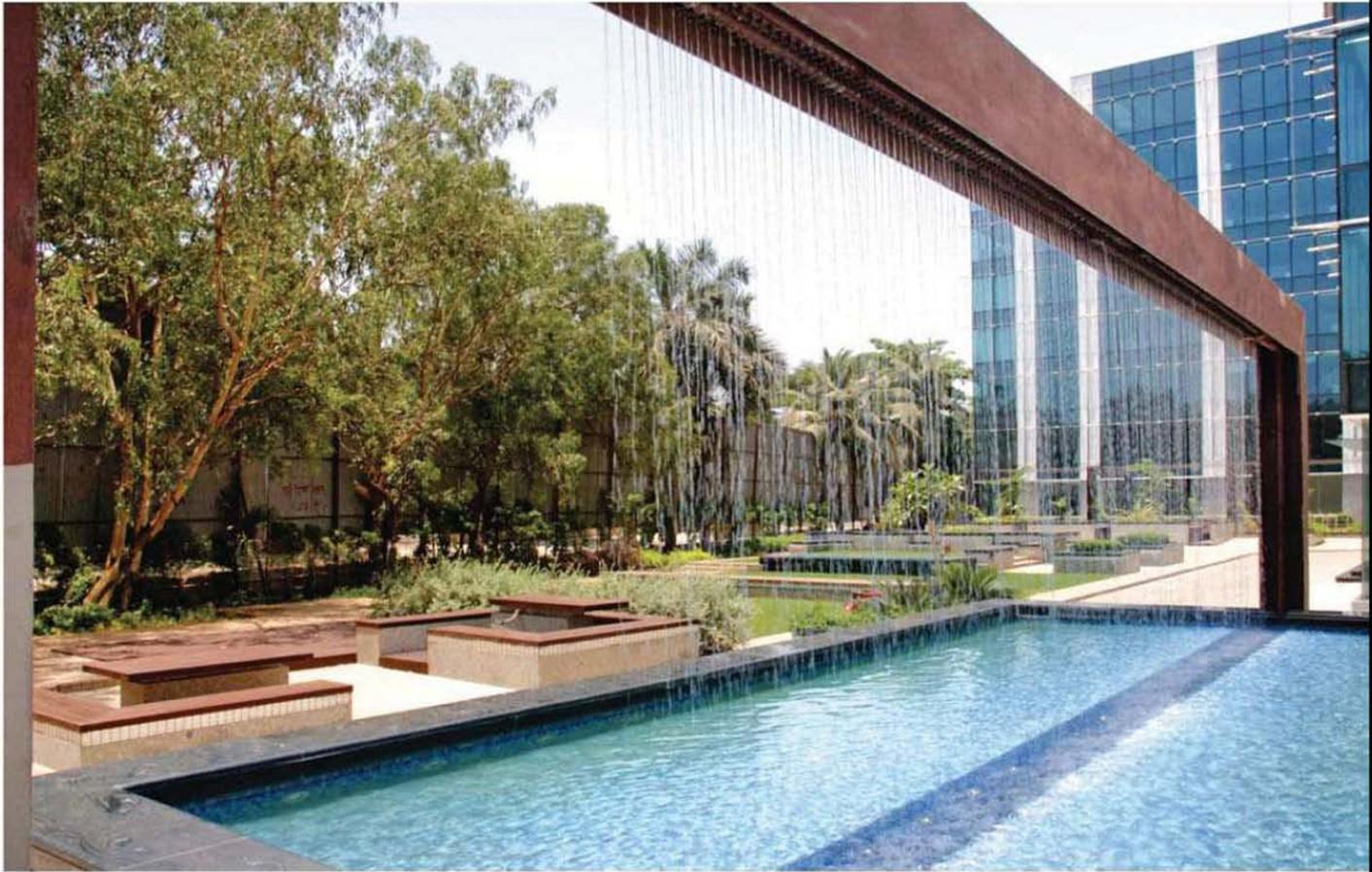
Plot Area | 20.0 acres

Landscape Architect | Integral Designs

Landscape Concept Partner | 1<sup>o</sup> North Pte Ltd, Singapore

Architect | Morphogenesis Architecture Studio

Completion | 2008



landscape design |

OUT OF THE  
GLASS BOX  
AND INTO THE  
GARDEN

Integral Designs NEW DELHI

# INTERWEAVING ART, ARCHITECTURE & LANDSCAPE

U P P A L B U S I N E S S C E N T R E

**U**ppal Business Centre is located in Gurgaon, the information technology sub-city of Delhi. Unlike a conventional office building, this centre has been designed as an “interweave of closed office spaces and open social spaces”.<sup>1</sup> The building is located in a 4,000 sq.m plot in an institutional neighborhood.

The landscape design brief specified a contemporary landscape which complements the building comprising of rentable office spaces for a range of clients. The concept design of the centre is an amalgamation of both pragmatic requirements and environmental concerns, both of which are non-negotiable in present times. The landscape realm comprises of two kinds of spaces – the interactive plaza at the ground level and the private sky gardens at the various terrace levels.



The ground floor landscape is envisaged as a barrier-free plaza which goes beyond than being a mere forecourt to the building. Pedestrian access into the site and vehicular access are restricted by a nearly invisible line created by a row of palms strategically planted to accentuate the axiality of the landscape.

*ABOVE | The Context: The building is located in an institutional neighborhood in Gurgaon in the suburbs of New Delhi. Source: Integral Designs, Montage on Google Earth image*

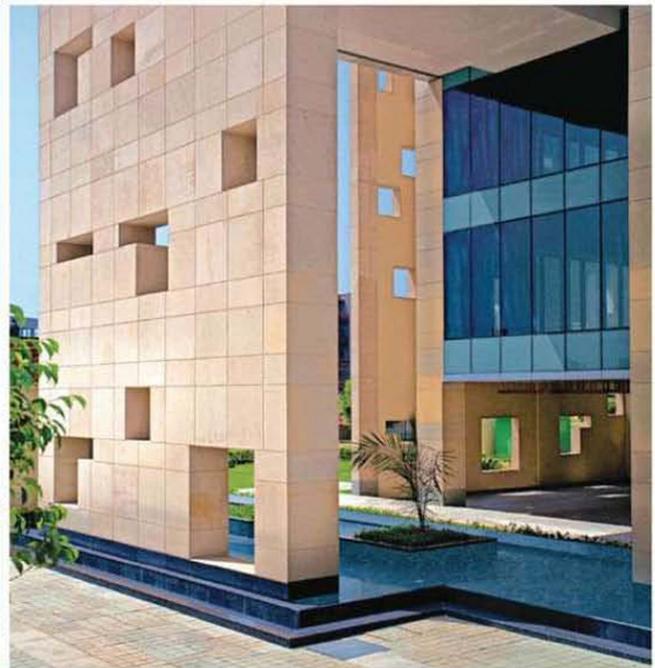
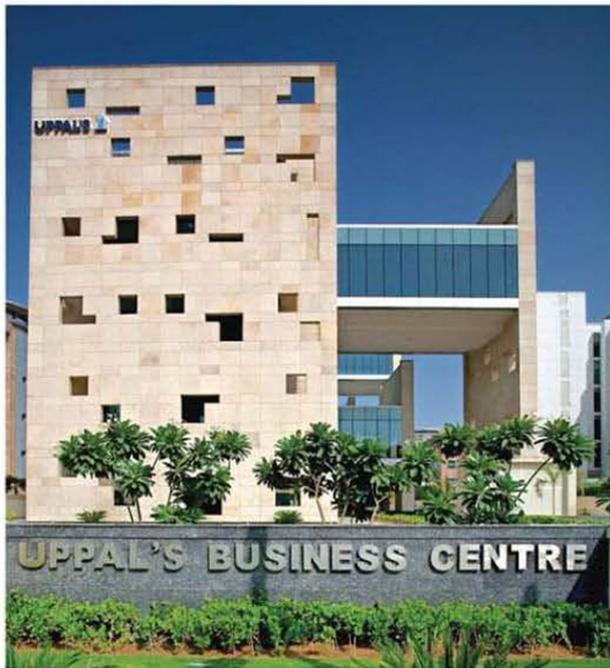
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TOP | Landscape layout plan at the ground floor. Source: Integral Designs*

*BOTTOM LEFT | The main facade of the building as seen from the road outside. Source: Morphogenesis*

*BOTTOM RIGHT | The drop off carved out of this water feature, makes the act of entering the building an experience apart. Source: Morphogenesis*

1. www.morphogenesis.org, referred on 5.10.11

The terraces of the building project out at various levels creating visual interest to the building. A linear water body, slightly raised above the ground plane ties these built masses together to form a coherent whole. The drop-off carved out of this water feature, makes the act of entering the building a interesting experience, while the 'floating trees' in the water give it a surreal feel at night. This waterbody also helps in passive cooling of the non-air conditioned public areas. Taking a cue from the Mughal Gardens of Delhi, the depth of the water channel has been kept at a minimum to achieve maximum impact with minimum volume of water.



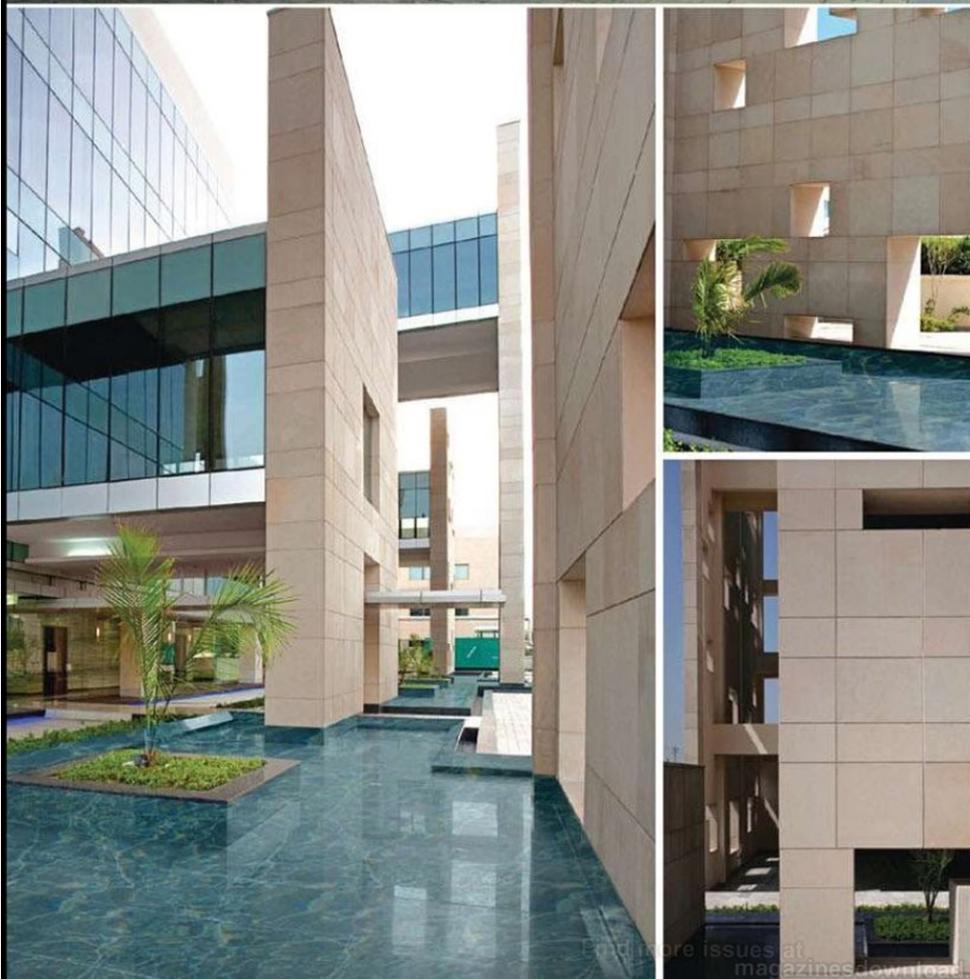


The cafe at the ground floor overlooks the front lawn. A shaded 'break out' space with ample seating has been provided in the rear side of the building, overlooking the water body. Each individual floor has been provided with a sky garden which becomes its private, informal breakout zone. These are designed as quiet spaces for contemplation in between work hours or to double up as after hour party venues. The design of these spaces is kept clutter free and simple.

As an environmentally conscious move, the orientation of the building is optimized by the creation of built volumes in which the sky gardens help in insulating the building from unwanted heat gain. The east and west sun is blocked in the design with solid stone walls while the glazing and voids are mainly concentrated on the north and south sides.

The planting scheme was intended to be minimalist to avoid visual clutter. The trees were chosen based on their sculptural quality, while the shrubs and ground covers were chosen on the basis of their textural quality. The site was designed to be a zero discharge zone and all wastewater gets recycled and reused.

The landscape spaces which permeate the building at various levels create an interplay of built and open volumes and aid in defining a visually appealing and functionally sound work environment.





**FACING PAGE**

*TOP | Lighting has been used to create dramatic effects in the night. Source: Morphogenesis*

*BOTTOM | The linear waterbody at the ground floor ties the built masses together to form a coherent whole. Source: Morphogenesis*

**THIS PAGE**

*TOP | A shaded 'break out' space with ample seating has been provided in the rear side of the building, overlooking the waterbody. Source: Morphogenesis*

*BELOW | Each individual floor has been provided with a sky garden which becomes its private, informal 'break out' zone. Source: Morphogenesis*

**UPPAL BUSINESS CENTRE, Gurgaon**

**Client | Uppals Housing  
(Excellent Agencies Pvt. Ltd.)**

**Plot Area | 1.0 acre**

**Built-up area | 79,000 sq ft**

**Landscape Architect | Integral Designs**

**Architect | Morphogenesis Architecture Studio**

**Completion | 2009**

Landscape architect **Samir Mathur** has been in practice in New Delhi for more than seventeen years. His landscape design practice 'Integral Designs' has been involved in a variety of projects ranging from urban parks to sustainable city designs. He also teaches at the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi. Samir can be reached at [designsintegral@gmail.com](mailto:designsintegral@gmail.com)

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