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DESIGN DIARY

INTERNATIONAL

*Celia
Sawyer*

TURNING YACHTS
AND JETS INTO
ICONS OF DESIRE

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DESIGN DIARY

INTERNATIONAL

Founder's Note

This issue of Design Diary International opens with a name that has redefined luxury in motion. Our cover features **Celia Sawyer**, a designer who has shaped an entirely new category of luxury. For years, she has transformed private jets, superyachts, and airborne residences into moving works of design, redefining what it means to create a sanctuary that travels. Featuring her was not a choice; it was an inevitability. Celia stands at the very top of a field where precision, engineering, and elegance must coexist without compromise. She is, without question, the undisputed force in luxury aviation and yacht interiors today.

We are also honoured to feature **Sonali Bhagwati**, one of the most respected voices in Indian architecture. As a global magazine, it matters to us to highlight an Indian design leader whose influence extends far beyond geography.

This edition carries some of the strongest international submissions we have received so far. From **SAOTA's Lagoon Villa** on the shores of the Ébrié Lagoon to **Breathe Architecture's** layered reimaging of **Sydney's Paramount House Hotel**, the projects reflect a shared clarity and commitment to context. **Tristan du Plessis's Cullinan in Dubai** and **Vyom by Studio Tattva in India** bring another register of luxury, one rooted in narrative, craft, and cultural lineage.

We continue our focus on craftsmanship and product culture through conversations that bring design thinking to the surface. Our interview with **Andrea Turri** offers a rare look inside a century-old Italian brand navigating heritage and modernity with equal discipline. **Bellavista & Piccini** discuss proportion, restraint, and the architectural rhythm behind their work, while **Pierre Yermia** takes us inside the emotional and spiritual core of sculpture.

Across these pages, whether architecture, interiors, product design, or art, a few common threads emerged: precision, intention, and an insistence on substance.

Thank you for reading and for supporting a publication shaped by independence, curiosity, and a sincere respect for the world of design.



(Founder—Design Diary)

DECOR

FURNITURE

ART

DESIGNER

PROJECT

BRAND PROFILE



IN THE FRAME

New kitchen architectures with Brooklyn

Brooklyn by Falmec, designed by Francesco Lucchese, transforms the concept of kitchen extraction into a modular architectural feature. Built as a bridge structure over the island, it merges form and function, allowing complete flexibility in layout and personalisation. The core system features a 90 cm hood body with an opening panel, which can be combined with 45, 60 or 90 cm side modules, or a 60 cm water module with tap—each positioned to suit the island's configuration and workflow.

Finished in black satin aluminium and smoked glass, Brooklyn maintains visual harmony across its elements. Optional accessories such as glass and roll holders extend its usability without disturbing the clean aesthetic. An integrated LED strip allows control over both colour temperature and brightness, adapting from ambient mood lighting to focused task illumination.

At its core, the A+++ rated extraction unit delivers 800 m³/h of airflow through a brushless motor engineered for silent performance. Filters using Carbon.Zeo Microtech technology ensure long-lasting absorption of odours and moisture. Operated by a discreet touch panel or remotely through Falmec's Dialogue System, Brooklyn combines precision, practicality, and contemporary design in one refined structure.

www.falmec.com



Sculpted Narratives INSIDE THE WORLD OF BOHINC STUDIO

In each issue, we visit remarkable design studios and concept stores around the world, hand-picking pieces that capture our editorial team's attention. This time, we feature Bohinc Studio, known for its sculptural forms, poetic geometry, and furniture that feels as much like art as it does design.



Apollo Dining chair



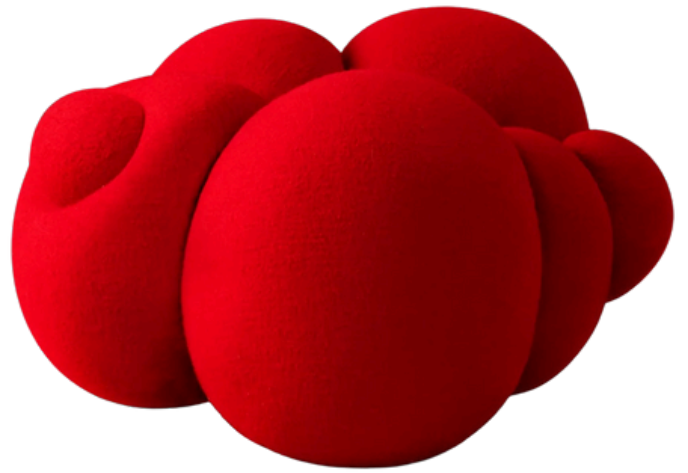
Betsy Console



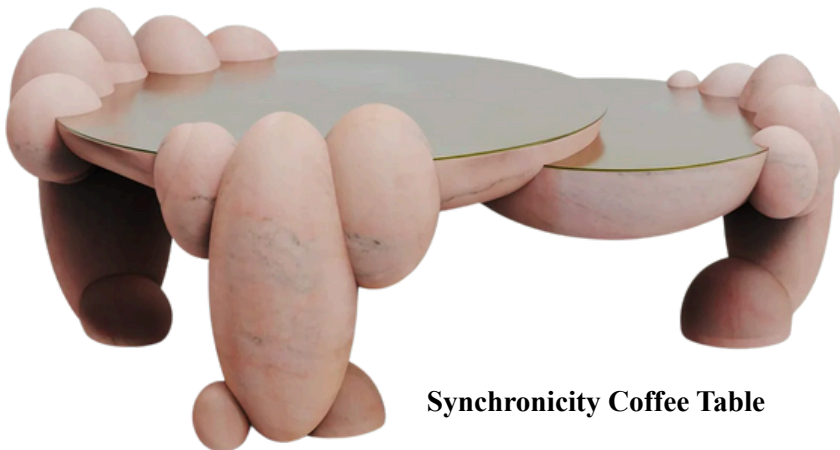
Jupiter Vase



Celeste Chair



Peaches Pouffe



Synchronicity Coffee Table



Profiterole Small Coffee Table



Spirit Sculptural Stand

A celebration of light, texture, and thoughtful design, the Christmas Edit brings together décor and gifts that capture the season's quiet elegance. From sculptural accents to handcrafted treasures, each piece reflects warmth, artistry, and the joy of giving and designs to be cherished long after the festivities fade.





Crate & Barrel



Royal Collection Shop



McGee & Co.



Pottery Barn



This season, Neiman Marcus reimagines festive living with a collection that captures the warmth and wonder of Christmas in every detail. From intricately crafted ornaments and elegant dinnerware to cozy décor accents, each piece blends timeless charm with contemporary design. Rich textures, soft hues, and handcrafted finishes come together to create spaces that feel joyful, inviting, and beautifully personal.

Handcrafted by skilled artisans in Ohio, Santa's Throne embodies festive artistry with its intricate embellishments and finely wrapped Christmas present. Crafted from resin and polyester, it reflects the charm of meticulous design and timeless holiday craftsmanship.



Handmade by artisans in Ohio, the Winter Balsam and Berry Sleigh shimmers with glittering details and intricate embellishments. Made from resin and polyester, it captures the elegance and joy of the festive season with timeless craftsmanship.



Handcrafted with precision, this illuminated carousel features 382 LED lights and Swarovski® crystals, bringing festive brilliance to life. Made from plastic, metal, electronic components, paper, MDF, and polyester, it plays 20 classic Christmas songs as reindeer gracefully rise and fall with each rotation. Adapter operated.



This tabletop Nutcracker Christmas decoration depicts Santa holding a charming cuckoo clock. Handcrafted from wood, polyester, and faux fur, it is 100% handmade by Steinbach in Marienberg, Ore Mountains, reflecting the region's renowned tradition of fine German craftsmanship.



Hand-painted with exceptional detail, the King Christian Claus of the North Pole Doll wears an opulent red robe adorned with metallic embroidery and faux fur, bringing regal elegance to holiday décor. Crafted from polyester, resin, and wool, this collectible piece is handmade and artisan-designed in Ohio by Katherine's Collection

T U R R I



*For almost a century, Turri has defined Italian luxury through craftsmanship, precision, and timeless design. Founded in 1925 in the heart of Brianza, the brand continues to evolve while preserving the artistry that shaped its legacy. In an **exclusive interview with Shweta for Design Diary International, Andrea Turri, CEO of the company**, speaks about Turri's journey from its artisanal origins to its modern expression of luxury, and how the brand continues to unite tradition with contemporary vision.*



Turri has been a name in Italian luxury for decades. How did the company get started, and what events affected it along the way?

My great-grandfather, Pietro Turri, opened his lab in Carugo, in the heart of Brianza (Italy), in 1925. This is where Turri's journey began. From the beginning, wood was the most essential material used in Turri's creations. It was masterfully carved to make one-of-a-kind sculptures that were both high-quality and elegant. Our identity was built on this dedication to craftsmanship. The brand changed over time, with each new generation of the family guiding it. The 1950s were a big turning point for us. We expanded our business, opened a showroom in Milan, and moved production to Briosco.

Participating in the first Salone del Mobile in 1961 made our place in the Italian design world even stronger. Turri started to grow internationally in the 1980s, especially in Europe and the Middle East. In the 1990s and early 2000s, we joined the Chinese market, which sped up our global reach and made Turri a true ambassador of Made in Italy excellence. It was an honor for me to lead the organization in 2007. With a vision that included both our past and the future, I brought in a more modern, international look that was both simple and important. This was the start of what we now call the "Modern Luxury era." Turri joined the Dexelance organization, the only design organization listed on the public exchange, in 2023. This relationship has made us more visible in foreign markets and lets us address the growing demand for high-quality, custom-made furniture more quickly and accurately.



Every brand changes, but some things stay the same. What parts of Turri's DNA have stayed the same, and what parts have changed over time?

Our passion for handcrafted excellence and the search for beauty through design has not changed. Turri has been making furniture for almost a hundred years, and they don't simply make things; they make things that reflect how people live. We have modified the way we look to fit with modern tastes, but the core of our work (custom craftsmanship, attention to detail, and the best materials) has not changed. We still reinterpret these ideals for modern life today, making designs that speak a global language while staying true to our Italian roots.

For us, custom design is more than just a way to change something. The customer is involved at every step of the design process, making it a real creative experience. We can make one-of-a-kind pieces that are very unique and fit your needs since we work so closely together. One of the most important parts of our bespoke concept is choosing the right materials carefully. This is to make sure that each piece is genuinely one-of-a-kind and to support Turri's idea of tailor-made. We choose every part, from beautiful woods to high-end leathers and finishes, to fit the client's concept flawlessly while still keeping our promise of quality and perfection.

What three terms would you use to describe Turri's style?

In fact, just two: "Modern Luxury." This is the essence of our style: modern, classy, and clearly luxurious. Today, Turri is a unique style that combines workmanship with the authenticity of "Made in Italy" seen from an international perspective. The brand can look at new lifestyles and design trends from a global perspective and come up with new ideas. For us, modern luxury means making spaces where style and comfort come together and where every detail (materials, finishes, shapes) is important to create a feeling of timeless refinement. It's a celebration of beauty and harmony made for people who want to live.

Turri symbolizes a very personal approach through both our collections and entirely custom projects. Every piece is made to show off the person's individuality and wants, from the idea to the finished product.

Italy has a long history of outstanding design. How do you pay respect to that heritage while simultaneously talking to younger, newer buyers?

We use two different strategies to find this equilibrium. On the one hand, we keep our historical workmanship and style. On the other hand, we have come up with a business plan that comprises both special projects and a curated collection of series-designed products. This lets us work with both our regular high-end clientele and a new, younger group of people who want designs that are stylish, useful, and adjustable. It's about putting our history into a language that is relevant to everyone now.



You have collaborated with designers including Andrea Bonini, Matteo Nunziati, Giuseppe Viganò, Paola Navone, Monica Armani, Toan Nguyen, Marco Acerbis, and Francesca Lanzavecchia. How do these kinds of partnerships change the way Turri collections come to life?

Working with well-known designers from around the world is at the heart of our creative growth. We created two separate product lines after renaming Turri and introducing our new logo. The Turri Collection was made by modern designers with a modern luxury concept, and the Heritage Collection keeps our more maximalist designs from 2014 to 2018. Designers like Andrea Bonini, Matteo Nunziati, Giuseppe Viganò, Paola Navone, Monica Armani, Toan Nguyen, Marco Acerbis, and Francesca Lanzavecchia have not only shared their ideas, but they have also helped us rethink what "house" means through their work. Their ideas help us connect the dots between high-end residential and contract demands, which helps us define who we are and reach more people.

A lot of your collections have their own characteristics, including Vine and Eclipse. How do you come up with a story or tone for each collection?

The materials we choose and the feelings we want to bring out in each collection give it its distinct personality. For instance, Frank Jiang's Vine armchair has a branched natural wood construction and original armrests that are typical of 50s design. The story behind each collection comes from the balance between new ideas and old ones, drawing on different cultural inspirations but constantly trying to present a story that feels personal, timeless, and modern at the same time. We aim to create an environment that feels specifically tailored to our customers. The basic characteristics that distinguish the brand - savoir-faire, bespoke design, excellence, artisanal craftsmanship, attention to detail, and the essence of Made in Italy are what tie all of our collections together, in addition to their unique looks. These rules are what every piece is based on, making sure that our whole collection has a consistent, authentic, and refined personality.



The materials are what make each collection unique. How do you balance quality and new ideas?

Wood is still the main character in every Turri piece since it is beautiful and can be used in many ways. Our craftsmen meticulously choose the best timbers so that each piece has its own tale to tell. We also welcome new ideas, including lacquering techniques and high-quality polishing, that improve our designs while keeping the traditional workmanship that makes our work unique.

To balance quality and innovation, we remain faithful to our artisanal heritage while also using new technologies that help us make designs that last longer. We push our limits, but we ensure that everything is still luxurious and high-quality, as Turri is known for.

Along with wood, we also choose the finest marbles since we love their natural beauty and unique veining. Every product is made with a mix of materials, such as wood, leather, marble, and metal, that work together well. This meticulous mix of materials shows a conversation between textures and finishes that makes pieces that are both modern and classic.

The quality of the work is frequently what makes something "Made in Italy." How crucial is the artisan's hand in your job today, especially with all the modern technologies?

At Turri, the artisan's hand is essential to what we do. We need new technology and machinery to make things, but we can't replace the ability and intuition of our craftsmen. What really makes each piece unique is the care, precision, and emotion that goes into making it.

Our concept is based on finding the right balance between craftsmanship and technology. We employ contemporary tools to improve and speed up some steps, but every piece still gets the painstaking, hands-on finishing that makes it a true example of Made in Italy quality and art.

Are there any details, finishes, or methods that you would say are clearly Turri?

Our characteristic finishes, especially our one-of-a-kind wood lacquering processes, the feel of polished wood, and the careful leatherwork are all very Turri.

We also put a lot of focus on custom-made finishes, which often push the limits of standard methods to find new ways to make things look good.

One of our best qualities is that we can mix different materials (wood, leather, marble, and metal) in a way that feels rich, balanced, and harmonic. We take pride in making custom solutions that meet the specific demands of each of our clients.



How important is it to your clients that things are made just for them? Do you get more requests for custom pieces now than you did before?

Customization is a big part of what we do. Our customers want things that match their preferences and lives, and they want to be able to change the designs to fit their needs exactly. We have always focused on a personalized approach, and the demand for unique pieces has increased in recent years.

As the globe gets more connected, clients want their interiors to show off their culture, personality, and specific demands. We have embraced this by providing not only customizable furniture but also entire bespoke design services for both private homes and high-end contract projects. This method keeps us at the top of luxury design and makes sure we satisfy the changing needs of markets that are more global and distinct.

What do you find most exciting about the global design scene right now? What do you imagine luxury interiors will be like in ten years?

The lines between diverse styles, materials, and traditions are becoming less clear as design becomes more global. This gives designers a new, exciting environment to try out new ideas and make new things while still honoring local culture and workmanship.

I think that over the next ten years, luxury interiors will keep changing to be more subtle, eco-friendly, and useful. We will see a move toward more individualized, immersive settings where comfort and beauty go hand in hand. However, more refined, minimalist luxury will replace the richness of the past.



Finally, what does "luxury" mean to Turri today, and how will it affect the future of interiors?

Today, luxury is about how you live. Turri says that luxury is the right mix of legacy and new ideas, as well as customization and quality.

We think that the future of luxury interiors will be smartly simple, with better materials, better design, and an emphasis on craftsmanship that tells a narrative. Luxury will be about creating welcoming, harmonious spaces with a focus on craftsmanship, materials, and unique design. It will be about beauty that lasts and is just as important tomorrow as it is now.

The main idea behind this vision is that everything is completely customizable, from the material to the shape. The customization of space is complete: a design philosophy that brings together every surface, finish, and even the smallest details. Every detail, including custom furniture, wall paneling, unique finishes, and unique decorative items, aims to showcase the individual's personality and lifestyle. This style makes the room as distinctive as the person who lives there.

BLUEPRINTS



Paramount House Hotel, Sydney

*The Past
Restored,
The Present
Reimagined*

Design Firm: Breathe Architecture

Photographer: Kat Lu

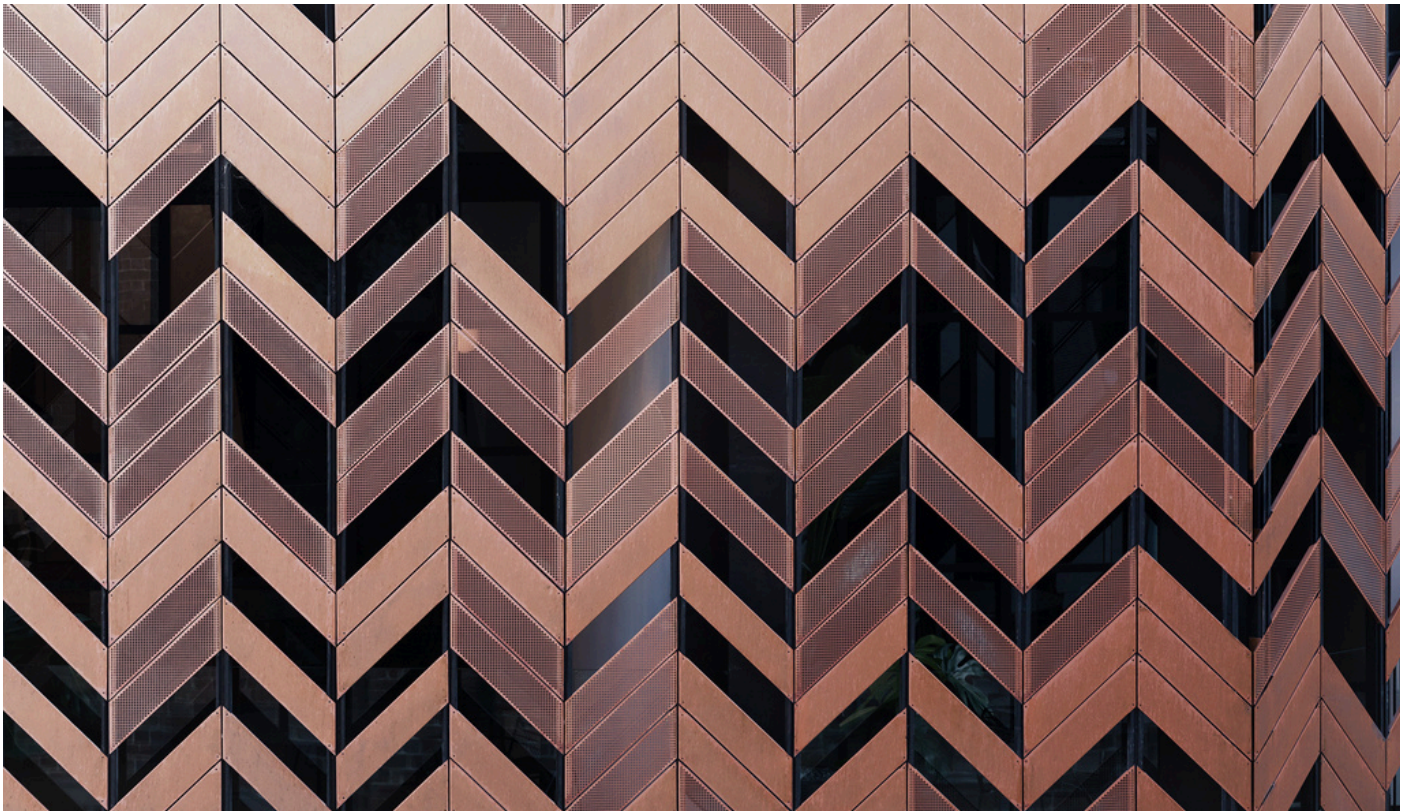
Builder: Calida (Hotel) | Promena
Projects (Lobby)

Location: Surry Hills, Sydney,
NSW, Australia



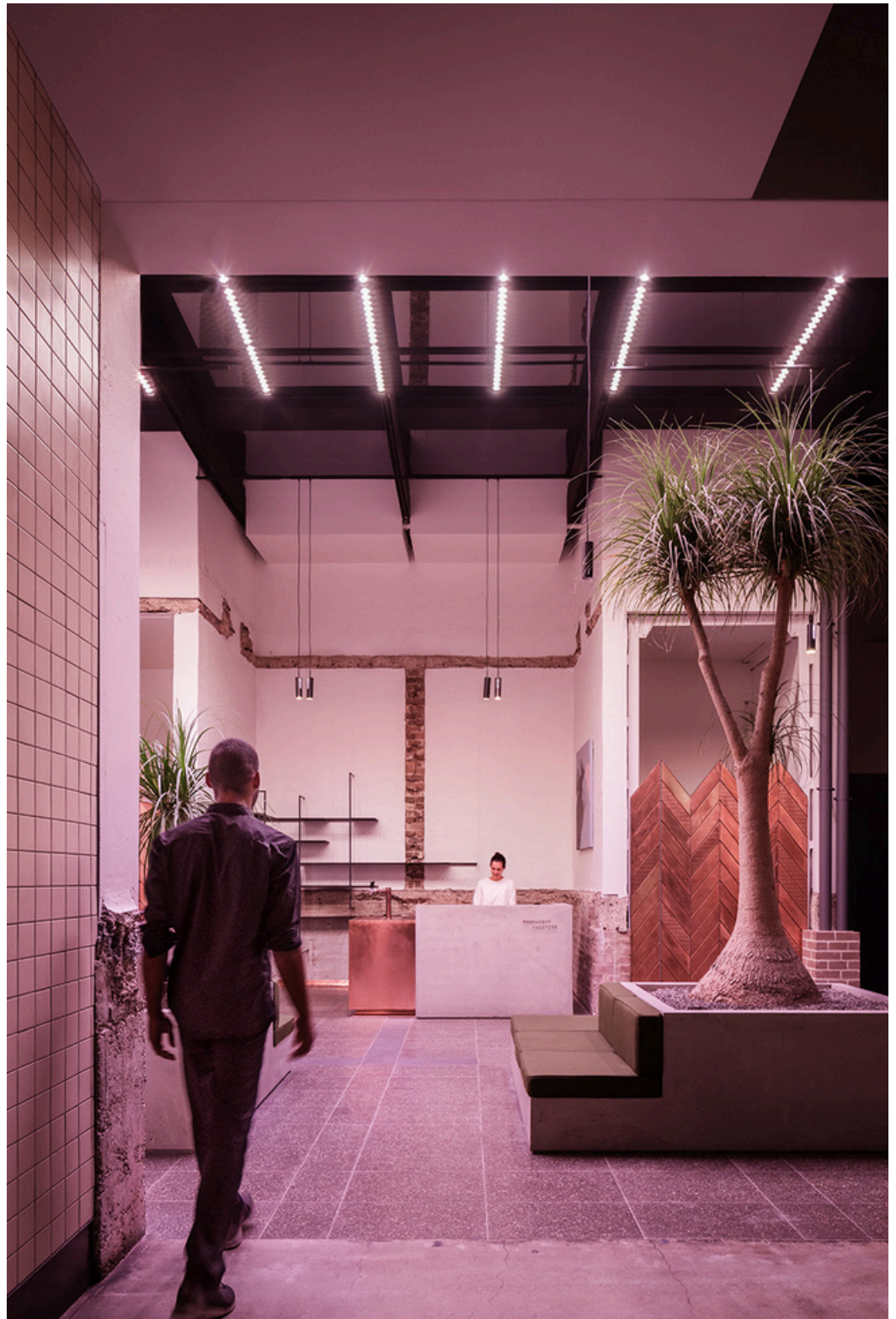
Principal Architect: Jeremy McLeod

Paramount House Hotel rises from an 80-year-old warehouse in Sydney's Surry Hills, its brick shell now crowned by a delicate copper chevron screen that glimmers against the neighbouring art deco architecture of this former film precinct. The hotel is a story of artefact and ornament, of memory and reinvention, expressing the raw, honest fabric of the existing warehouse while capturing the spirit and excitement of the golden era of cinema.





The project introduces 29 individually designed suites, no two the same. Each room embraces the imperfections and patina of the building, celebrating traces of its history—a column that interrupts a corner, remnants of stairwells, the expressive brick parapet. Layers of time are both preserved and revealed, while generous winter decks open the interiors to Sydney's mild climate and the rhythm of the streets below.





Materiality grounds the hotel in tactility and truth. A jewel-like copper screen crowns the parapet, catching northern light and casting soft, dynamic shadows across the balconies. Concrete defines the new interventions- its slabs and cuts carving quiet new pathways through the warehouse. Recycled Tasmanian oak floors lend warmth and familiarity to the suites, giving them the feel of lived-in spaces that welcome rather than impress. Robust steel windows and detailing frame the city views, their surfaces designed to patina gently over time, recording the movement of guests in the building's ongoing story.

Across the hotel, key details anchor the experience: the former film vault reimagined as a reception lounge; lush greenery softening edges and blurring thresholds; and freestanding solid timber bathtubs and brass joinery offering moments of indulgence and pause. Paramount House Hotel is as much about the lived experience of the guest as it is about the continuing life of the building and its street.

The process of adaptive reuse brought structural, fire, and acoustic challenges, but it also gave rise to the project's greatest strengths- its tactile honesty and unconventional rhythm. Paramount House Hotel sits at the intersection of old and new, of heritage and future. Guests arrive through a hidden entrance filled with daylight and creative energy and leave feeling looked after, restored, and intrigued enough to return, knowing no two stays will ever feel the same.

Paramount House Hotel rises out of the 80-year-old warehouse that occupies the site, with a copper chevron screen crowning the building in direct dialogue with the art deco context of the neighbouring Paramount House, once home to Paramount Pictures Studio. The conceptual approach was about





marrying these two ideas—the artefact and the ornament. It is an expression of everything old, true, and raw about the existing warehouse, and a celebration of the spirit and excitement of the golden age of film.

There are 29 rooms in the hotel, each distinct and layered in its own way. The building’s imperfections are embraced rather than hidden. Columns appear in unexpected places; details and artefacts found on site are preserved and celebrated. Some rooms reveal the patina of brickwork, others expose remnants of old stairwells or traces of the historic brick parapet. Ornamentation is embedded throughout, sometimes bold, sometimes quiet—from the freestanding timber bathtubs and brass joinery to the presence of greenery that softens the industrial lines.

Copper, concrete, steel, and recycled Tasmanian oak define the project’s material language. The delicate copper screen rises from the parapet of the warehouse like a crown, catching northern light and casting a play of shadows across the balconies beyond. The hotel entry unfolds as a hidden journey— guests move through Paramount House, past the Paramount Coffee Project, into a foyer carved out from the heart of the building. Concrete and brickwork reveal their history in places where time and intervention have cut away the old fabric. Large in-situ concrete slabs mark new structural directions, contrasting against the existing surfaces. In keeping with the building’s raw honesty, recycled Tasmanian Oak flooring runs throughout the suites, adding warmth and a sense of home. Counterweighted, gridded steel windows enclose the balcony spaces, forming a robust edge between the old and the new. Architectural metalwork features throughout—folded soap trays, bedside tables, bathroom enclosures, and furnishings—each designed to develop a patina over time with the movement of guests.

Amid a cluster of heritage and inter-war buildings in Surry Hills, the hotel occupies a three-storey 1930s brick warehouse adjacent to the historic Paramount House, built in the 1940s. Completing an irregular city block once associated with the pioneers of Australia’s film industry—Paramount Pictures Studio and the 20th Century Fox Film Association—the hotel embraces both the historical weight of its setting and the cultural energy of the neighbourhood.







At **Design Diary International**, we find the **Paramount House Hotel** to be a rare example of adaptive reuse done with restraint and respect. It neither glorifies the past nor overwrites it. Instead, it allows history, material, and memory to coexist with quiet confidence—proof that the most powerful architecture often comes not from invention, but from listening to what already exists.

PERMANENT
VACATION

Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab, Dubai

The Cullinan

Name of the Project: The Cullinan

Design Team: Tristan du Plessis Studio
(Interior Designer); Killa Design
(Architect)

Location: Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab, Dubai

Size: 961 sq. m.

Photo Courtesy: Natalee Cocks

Designer: Tristan du Plessis

Tucked into the lower curve of the yacht-inspired Marsa Al Arab Hotel, The Cullinan holds one of Dubai's most enviable views—the Burj Al Arab to one side, the marina and open water to the other. The concept draws on the quiet glamour of dining aboard a superyacht from another time, where craftsmanship and atmosphere met effortlessly, and every moment unfolded against the backdrop of the sea.





The design moves with a sense of light and rhythm—the slow sweep of the sun across the water, the stillness between waves, the constant dialogue between horizon and city. Every finish and material has been selected to catch that changing light, creating a space that feels cinematic yet grounded, timeless but never nostalgic.

Collaboration defines The Cullinan. de Gournay created bespoke hand-painted wall coverings, while Watts 1874 developed custom textiles that mirror the greenery of the hotel's lower terraces. From Australia, Lost Profile Studio designed sculptural light installations that weave through the space like suspended jewellery, introducing a subtle sense of movement above.

The furniture was handcrafted in South Africa, connecting the project to its origin story—a family-owned restaurant group that began humbly in Johannesburg in 1974. The Cullinan stands as the culmination of that legacy, expressing African creativity through a lens of quiet luxury.







Refined over two years, the design balances composition and atmosphere with precision. Every line and proportion has been considered to frame intimacy and view, culminating in an open kitchen that serves as the restaurant's heartbeat. Guests watch the theatre of cooking unfold against a panoramic canvas of ocean and sky.





A defining element within the space is a work by El Anatsui, the Ghanaian-born, Nigeria-based artist known for his monumental sculptures made from recycled bottle caps and aluminium. His works—shown at the Venice Biennale, The Met, and the Tate—speak of transformation, memory, and resilience. Within The Cullinan, his installation adds both cultural depth and emotional weight, placing African artistry at the centre of a global stage.

At **Design Diary International**, we see **The Cullinan** as more than a fine dining destination. It is a study in identity and refinement, proof that when craftsmanship, art, and meaning come together, design can move beyond spectacle to something far more enduring.

Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire: A Modernist Retreat

Lagoon Villa

Name of Project: Lagoon Villa
Design Team: SAOTA
Interior: Claude Missir Interiors
Location: Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Photographer: Adam Letch



Set at the edge where Abidjan's restless energy meets the stillness of the Ébrié Lagoon, Lagoon Villa feels both anchored and weightless. Designed by SAOTA, with interiors by Claude Missir, the home captures the quiet confidence of modernist architecture while responding instinctively to its tropical surroundings. It's a structure that doesn't so much sit on the landscape as breathe with it.

The villa unfolds along the waterfront, every gesture shaped by the client's wish to blur the line between inside and out. Sunlight filters through a roof of concrete beams and skylights, casting soft patterns that shift through the day like light under leaves. Courtyards step gently down to the garden, drawing air and calm through the plan. Together, these elements create an easy rhythm of shade, light, and openness that defines the entire house.

The architecture is responsive rather than assertive. Deep overhangs temper the heat; wide sliding doors open to the lagoon breeze. Rooms expand and contract in step with the weather, offering shaded retreats and bright, open terraces in equal measure. There's a natural equilibrium here; a sense that every volume has found its right proportion against the vast horizon of water and sky.









Claude Missir's interiors continue the dialogue with restraint and texture rather than excess. His approach favours atmosphere over decoration. "The indoor colours were taken from the surrounding landscape," he says. "It feels as if the inside and outside merged in a natural way." The palette reflects this - stone, sand, and shadow; tones that shift gently with the light.



A modern interior space with a minimalist design. In the foreground, a wide staircase with grey concrete steps and a dark metal railing leads up. To the right, a glass-enclosed staircase with a white marble wall and a glass railing is visible. In the background, a bright orange armchair sits on a raised platform, next to a large potted plant. The ceiling is white with a black track light fixture. The walls are a mix of white, brown, and wood paneling.

The materials are honest and enduring: exposed concrete, flamed granite, glass, timber. Nothing shouts; everything settles into place. Sustainability comes quietly too, through natural ventilation and the soft choreography of daylight that makes the house glow without effort.

Lagoon Villa is more than a home. It's an act of translation, taking the clarity of modernism and shaping it for a humid, equatorial world. The result is both disciplined and deeply human, a piece of architecture that looks outward to the lagoon yet feels private and grounded within.







Abidjan's long modernist heritage runs through the project like a current. It's a city that has always embraced experimentation, and Lagoon Villa stands easily within that lineage- a contemporary expression of light, air, and proportion.

At **Design Diary International**, we see **Lagoon Villa** as an exercise in quiet confidence. It reminds us that modern architecture doesn't need to dominate its setting to make an impact. Sometimes, it's enough for it to listen to the light, the climate, and the slow, steady pulse of the landscape it inhabits.

In the Sky Above Mumbai, a Sky-Reaching Residence

Vyom

Name of the Project: Vyom

Location: Mumbai, India

Typology and Size: Residential
3,000 sq.ft.

Design Firm: Studio Tattva by Aditi Savani

Principal Designer: Aditi Savani

Photography Credit: PHX India,
Aditya PHX India





High above the fast pulse of Mumbai, where the city thins into light and the sea folds into the sky, lies a home that feels suspended between both. Vyom, designed by Studio Tattva, seems to breathe in rhythm with the clouds outside its glass walls. Every room opens to an endless horizon, every window frames a shifting shade of blue. It's a space that doesn't just overlook the city but rises above its noise, holding stillness in the middle of movement.





Designer- Aditi Savani

The penthouse, spread across 3,000 square feet, is shaped by the idea of balance — between calm and colour, between the still tones of the skyline and the gentle energy within. The home belongs to a young business couple and their parents, and it carries a quiet optimism in its air, an almost lyrical sense of ease that makes every corner feel lived-in yet deliberate. The design doesn't chase grandeur; it settles into grace.











The entry sequence stretches for nearly twenty feet, unfolding like a prelude to what lies ahead. A sculptural chandelier falls from the ceiling, light scattering softly across abstract planters and bright red chairs that break the calm in the right way. Beyond this, the apartment divides into two distinct wings — one leading to the parents' and guest rooms, the other to the study and the master suite. The living, dining, and breakfast areas lie between them, merging fluidly into one another, with a frosted glass panel that can slide across to conceal the kitchen. It's a clever detail, one that adds a sense of openness when drawn and intimacy when closed, a balance of utility and design that keeps the house breathing in rhythm.

The first thing that truly catches your attention here is height - a rare, almost forgotten luxury in Mumbai. Twelve-foot ceilings expand the sense of scale, turning even the quietest light into an architectural element. As daylight filters through the sea-facing windows, it glides over soft pastel walls, resting gently on textured finishes that seem to absorb and return it. The palette is calm, almost whispering: blush, cream, and pale grey tones blending in a way that feels like silence turned visual.

In the living area, that language of calm deepens. Textured walls painted in muted earth tones form the backdrop for a striking work by Nitush Aroosh, its colours rising like a conversation between warmth and restraint. The furniture doesn't sit still; it curves, it moves, and it feels sculpted to the rhythm of the light. A geometric rug, vivid and strong, anchors the space and breaks the uniformity, its energy in dialogue with the wide blue outside. Everything seems to be connected not by symmetry but by intuition - as if the pieces had simply found their natural place. The dining space continues that sense of quiet indulgence. A marble-topped table stands on gold-finished legs, surrounded by chairs on three sides and a tailored sofa along the fourth. Above, a handcrafted chandelier glows like a thought suspended in time, and behind it, a Boca do Lobo mirror captures fragments of the changing sky, pulling them into the room. It's not showy or loud; it just belongs, and that belonging is its luxury.



Hidden behind the breakfast counter is a kitchen that almost feels too beautiful to be practical. The Amazon green marble counter catches light differently at every hour, and the cabinetry in deep rust-red introduces just enough contrast to hold the room's attention. Spanish-tiled floors and white Caesarstone surfaces complete the palette, tying everything together in a quiet rhythm. Nothing here feels forced or ornamental; every detail earns its place.

The master bedroom feels like standing inside a morning. The walls catch the same pinks and blues that rise over the Arabian Sea, and the upholstery carries that faint horizon tone that sits between water and air. A small seat by the window invites a moment of stillness, a pause to look out, while the wardrobe hides a rotatable TV unit — one of those details that keep the design both smart and effortless. The guest bedroom, dressed in monotone greys, introduces warmth through texture. Oak flooring and curved wooden panels finished in lime wash create soft reflections, turning even shadows into design elements.

What holds the home together is not a single style or statement piece, but its steady rhythm — the way the design moves from one space to another without ever repeating itself, and yet never breaking the flow. It's a rare balance between motion and calm, whimsy and order. Nothing feels staged, and that's precisely why it works.





In a city where the skyline is often claimed rather than admired, Vyom offers something unexpected, and that's a sense of belonging to the sky itself. It's not a home that looks down on the city but one that looks outward, into light, into distance. There's a serenity in its proportions, a quiet audacity in its restraint.

At **Design Diary International**, this home feels personal at first glance, a reminder that architecture can be as emotional as it is visual.



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW | DESIGN DIARY

Celia Sawyer:
The Designer
Who Turned
Yachts and Jets
into Living
Works of Art



"Luxury isn't what stands still; it is what moves with grace. True design is knowing how to create stillness even when the world, or a jet at 600 miles an hour, is in motion."

The first thing you notice about **Celia Sawyer**'s work isn't the luxury. It's the precision. Every reflection, every texture, every shimmer of gold or glass carries intention. Where most designers create for spaces that stay still, Sawyer designs for movement itself. Her interiors travel across skies and seas, taking beauty into motion. **In an exclusive conversation with Shweta for Design Diary International**, the British designer reveals her world of elegance in motion, of sanctuaries that float, soar, and redefine what luxury means when it no longer stands still.

Sawyer's career has always existed beyond boundaries. She has mastered the rare ability to bring human warmth into the most technically complex environments, shaping private jets, superyachts, helicopters, and ultra-luxury homes into seamless works of emotional design. "Designing for air and sea is very different to a home on land," she says. "You have to think in terms of engineering, physics, and weight distribution, but also in terms of emotion. It's about creating a sanctuary that feels still, even when it's moving at 600 miles an hour."

One of her most celebrated commissions came from a Middle Eastern royal, who asked her to transform a privately owned Airbus A340 into what he called a "residence in the sky." It became one of the most extraordinary aircraft interiors ever created.



"Gold and crystal became the language of the aircraft, flowing through its interiors like light through glass—an illusion of a palace in motion."

The master suite was a vision of deep blue, centered around a king-sized bed framed by a hand-stitched crocodile leather headboard. The bed was flanked by bespoke hanging crystal fixtures, each carefully engineered to remain perfectly still during flight. Gold and crystal became the language of the aircraft, running through its interiors like light through glass. The main bathroom featured a Swarovski crystal and glass washbasin, while the adjoining bath was sculpted from midnight-blue marble and fitted with an integrated mirror-faced television.

In the salon and lounge, Sawyer accentuated the aircraft's natural curves with a series of individual gold-plated sections tracing its ceiling, visually widening the space. To balance these organic forms, she introduced linear seating upholstered in hand-stitched Tuscan leather, silk, and velvet. The arrangement, inspired by the majlis tradition, created intimacy and conversation within a grand layout. Two crystal chandeliers with gold accents illuminated a bar that glowed softly from beneath, completing the illusion of a palace in motion.







“Designing a jet or yacht is like composing music under rules,” Sawyer says. “You can’t rely on excess. Every curve, every line, every material has to earn its place. When you get it right, it feels effortless.”

That effortlessness, in truth, is her art. On sea, the same balance of precision and poetry guides her work. Her yacht interiors move with the rhythm of water. Curved cabinetry mirrors the horizon, light shifts with the tide, and champagne tones ripple across silk and polished wood. “The light is never still,” she reflects. “You design not only for how something looks but how it moves with the water.”

Even in these dynamic environments, her approach begins with emotion. “When I walk into a project, I don’t think about what I see,” she says. “I think about how it should make someone feel. That feeling becomes the foundation for everything.”

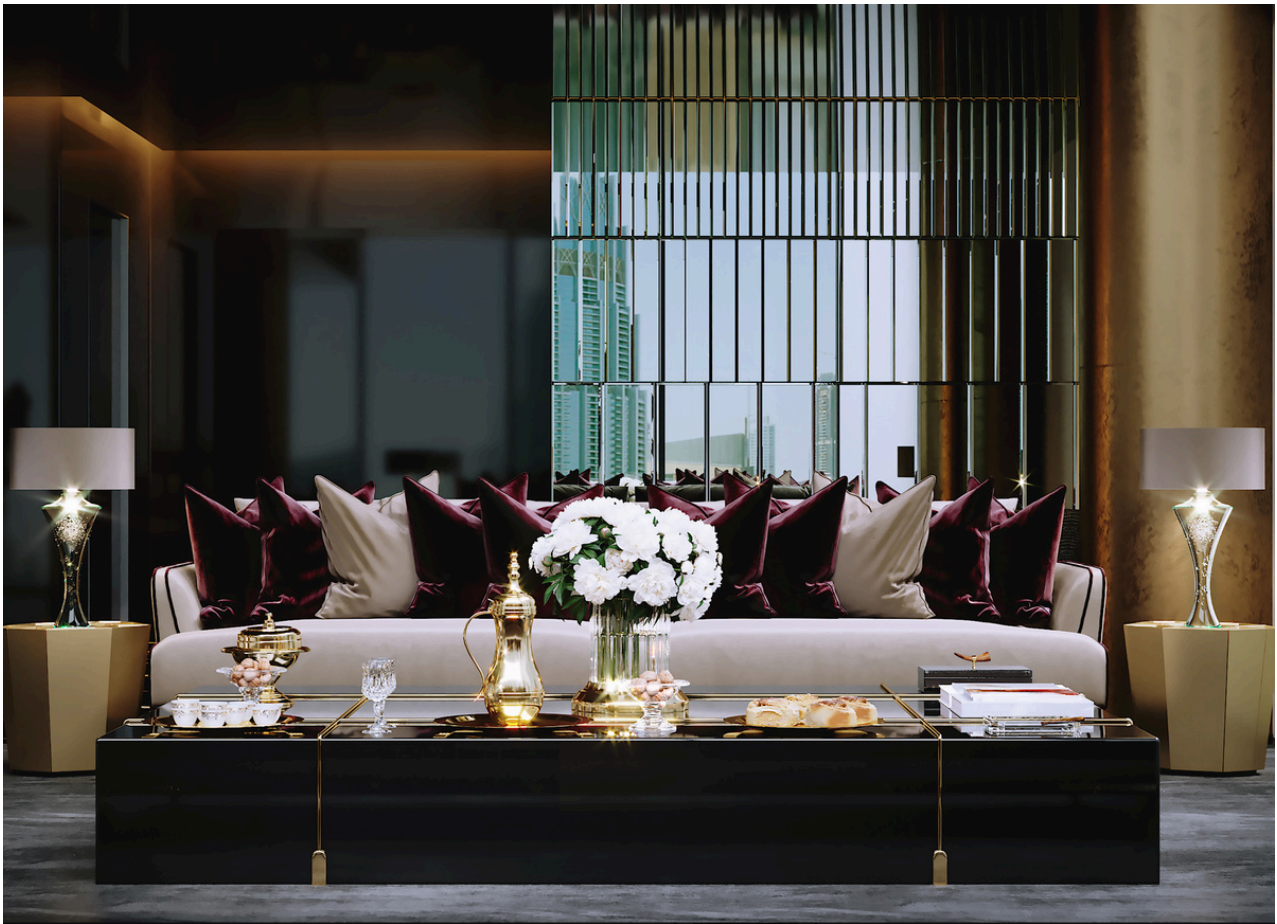
Sawyer’s clients often speak of her ability to combine drama with restraint. Her spaces are cinematic, yet calm. “I often think of my interiors as film scenes,” she says. “Light, reflection, texture—they all play their part. Even in compact environments like jets or yachts, I choreograph movement and emotion. Design should move you, quite literally.”

Behind the beauty, there is discipline. Sawyer’s work demands collaboration with engineers and technical specialists to ensure that every inch meets safety and performance standards. “When you’re designing something that flies or sails, you are working within the laws of nature,” she says. “You have to respect those limits, but that’s where the challenge becomes inspiring.”

Her discretion is as legendary as her design. Her clients include royalty, global leaders, and creative icons, yet she never names them. “Privacy is everything,” she says. “My clients’ trust is sacred. Success doesn’t need to be loud; it can live quietly in the confidence of your work.”







That quiet confidence shapes her definition of luxury as well. “True luxury is calm,” she explains. “It’s comfort, silence, beauty without noise.” In her interiors, this means technology hidden beneath texture, soft lighting that feels organic, and materials that breathe rather than shout. “Too many statement pieces compete with one another,” she says. “One beautiful focal point lets the space breathe.”

Her understanding of materiality is both refined and emotional. “Materiality still matters,” she says. “But the meaning of luxury has evolved. It’s no longer about rarity- t’s about emotional luxury. It’s about how a space understands you.”

From glass and chrome to velvet and rare wood, her materials are chosen not for display but for resonance. Each texture plays its part, every finish balanced with restraint. “Technology should whisper rather than shout,” she adds. “The goal is to marry innovation with craftsmanship so that you have precision and soul.”

It’s this equilibrium between technology and warmth that defines Sawyer’s signature style. Her interiors are never about spectacle. They are about the quiet assurance that every line, surface, and reflection serves a purpose. Even her career’s pivotal moment came from this understanding. “It was a private jet project early on,” she recalls. “That’s when I realised, I wasn’t just designing spaces; I was designing experiences. I was designing emotion.”



Her approach to beauty has evolved with time. “Beauty used to be about perfection,” she says. “Now it’s about harmony, authenticity, balance. Nature always shows you how it’s done. Whoever said you can’t mix green and blue has never looked at the sky meeting the trees.”

Her clients, regardless of background or geography, share a single common trait: discernment. “People of taste recognise authenticity instantly,” she says. “They value things made with intent, things that have meaning.”

That commitment to meaning and longevity is at the heart of her practice. “I want my work to last, not just physically but emotionally,” she says. “Luxury should endure, not fade.”

Sawyer’s philosophy extends seamlessly across air, sea, and land. Whether designing a serene London residence, a modern yacht, or a jet that carries a family across continents, her approach is constant: balance, intimacy, and soul. “Even in the largest spaces, I start with intimacy,” she says. “I think about how someone will sit, how the light will fall, how they’ll feel. Design should always begin with the human experience.”

For Celia Sawyer, movement itself is an art form. She builds stillness into velocity and emotion into precision. Her interiors redefine what travel feels like when beauty becomes the vessel.

While others design for where we live, she designs for where we go. And in that rare space between departure and arrival, Celia Sawyer continues to shape a new definition of home—one that floats on light, breathes with air, and endures as art.

The **Mirage Floor Screen by Koket** is a sculptural statement that merges artistry with refined design.

Its hand-applied gold leaf and straw marquetry form bold geometric patterns, creating a play of texture and contrast that elevates any space. Serving as both divider and décor, Mirage transforms interiors with its dynamic interplay of light and shadow. Reflecting KOKET's signature elegance and modern femininity, it balances luxury with expressive craftsmanship, making it a true conversation piece for sophisticated settings.

www.bykoket.com





COLLECTIBLE

The **Baloo Bed by Circu Magical Furniture** brings the charm of childhood stories to life, inspired by the beloved bear from The Jungle Book. This playful piece evokes warmth and adventure, creating a cozy retreat for little dreamers. Upholstered in soft Paris Velvet, the bed combines comfort with whimsical character.

www.circu.net





COLLECTIBLE

The **Venice Mirror** by **Maison Valentina** captures the timeless allure of reflection, transforming a functional object into a work of art. Hand-cut and meticulously carved, each piece reveals a passion for craftsmanship and detail that defines the brand's contemporary design language. The mirror's ornate form draws the eye and stirs emotion, making it more than a decorative element; and it becomes the focal point of any interior. Venice embodies Maison Valentina's pursuit of elegance, celebrating the artistry of handmade design in its most luminous form.

www.maisonvalentina.net



Noor-e-Banaras wallpaper collection by UDC Homes captures the timeless spirit of Banaras through walls that tell stories of heritage and light. Inspired by temple silhouettes, glowing ghats, and the festive hum of its bazaars, the collection blends hand-drawn motifs, radiant hues, and intricate textures that echo the city's sacred charm.

www.udc-homes.com



The **Cromática Floresitas Rug** by **Roche Bobois** is a vivid tribute to filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar's chromatic world, where colour and emotion intertwine. Reflecting his signature visual language, the rug transforms bold hues and organic forms into a dynamic composition that celebrates the art of storytelling through design. Hand-tufted in 100% New Zealand wool, its border follows the natural rhythm of the floral pattern, giving the piece sculptural depth and movement. Both expressive and refined, Cromática Floresitas embodies the dialogue between cinema and craftsmanship—where colour becomes the soul of the space.

www.roche-bobois.com



PRACTICE & PERSPECTIVE
FEATURING
AR. SONALI BHAGWATI
FROM INDIA

*Across three decades, Sonali Bhagwati has helped define the language of contemporary Indian architecture. Her work is marked by clarity, empathy, and an unwavering respect for context, bringing together modernity, memory, restraint, and human experience in a way few practitioners manage with such consistency. In this **exclusive interview with Shweta of Design Diary International**, she reflects on the lessons that shaped her from CEPT and Paris to large-scale urban work in Delhi-and on the evolving meaning of design in a rapidly changing India.*



You have worked for several decades shaping India's architectural landscape. When you look back, what does the word "design" mean to you today compared with when you began?

At the beginning, design was focused on aesthetics, proportion, materiality, and visual balance. Over time, it has become far more layered. Today it is about empathy, context, and human experience. Architecture must take responsibility not only for crafting spaces but also for shaping how people relate, behave, and belong.

What were your earliest lessons at CEPT Ahmedabad that stayed with you through the years?

CEPT taught me to question everything. It was never about memorising solutions but about developing a way of thinking. The focus on context, climate, and human scale formed the basis of my approach and taught me that design is a dialogue between the built and the unbuilt.

Before starting Designplus Architecture, what experiences shaped your approach to form, light, and space?

Early in my career, I worked across many scales—from homes to public buildings to larger urban projects. This taught me to see form as an outcome rather than a starting point. Light became the most powerful design element, defining space more sensitively than any material. That idea still guides DPA: every project must respond to its people, place, and purpose.



Early in your career, you trained in Paris. How did that period influence your view of architecture, particularly in an Indian context?

Working with Bernard Kohn was eye-opening. It introduced me to the idea of social architecture and the relationship between design, inclusivity and dignity. Returning to India made me more aware of the cultural richness and contradictions of our urban fabric. It strengthened my belief that Indian architecture should evolve from its context rather than imitate global trends.

Your work often uses restraint and natural light. Do you believe silence or restraint has a role in good design?

Definitely. Silence allows architecture to breathe. Restraint reveals truth-in form, in material, and in intent. In a world that celebrates excess, I find comfort in spaces where light, proportion, and materiality speak quietly but with depth.

Urban India is changing rapidly. Having worked on projects in Delhi, how do you see the relationship between the built environment and collective well-being today?

Cities reflect our values. Unfortunately, urbanisation often prioritises efficiency over empathy. My years at DUAC reinforced that the true measure of a built environment is the experience it creates. Human-focused, pedestrian-friendly, and green cities are not luxuries; they are essential for collective well-being.

You have engaged in heritage and urban reform. How do you negotiate modernity and memory in your projects?

Heritage is not nostalgia; it is continuity. I try to interpret history through a contemporary lens. The goal is not to replicate the past, but to let it inform our identity. Whether it is a performance block in a historic district or an urban intervention, the dialogue between old and new must be respectful to the larger whole.

Is there one material or element that continues to fascinate you?

Light. It is intangible but the most expressive material I know. It shapes emotion, scale, and atmosphere. Every project begins with understanding how light will inhabit the space; everything else follows.

Many of your projects balance precision with warmth. How do you maintain that balance between discipline and human scale?

Precision offers clarity; warmth gives soul. Geometry and structure create order, while material textures, light, and human scale bring comfort. The balance lies in knowing when to restrain and when to allow emotion and memory to shape the experience.

Do you think architecture is becoming more globalised, or simply more connected?

More connected. Ideas travel quickly, but the best architecture still emerges from context. Global exposure has enriched design dialogue, yet local intelligence is what gives meaning.

How do you approach mentoring young architects in your studio?

I encourage curiosity and fearlessness. There are no shortcuts in architecture. You must observe, listen and be patient. I remind them that design is not about ego but about enhancing human experience.

From your experience working in Delhi, what do you see as the city's most urgent architectural challenge?

Delhi must reclaim its public spaces for pedestrians, communities, and green life. We need to shift from car-centric planning to human-centric living. Architecture should help reimagine this balance.

What has time taught you about what endures in the spaces we build?

Spaces that endure respect both people and place. Trends fade, but honesty in proportion, light, and human comfort remain timeless.

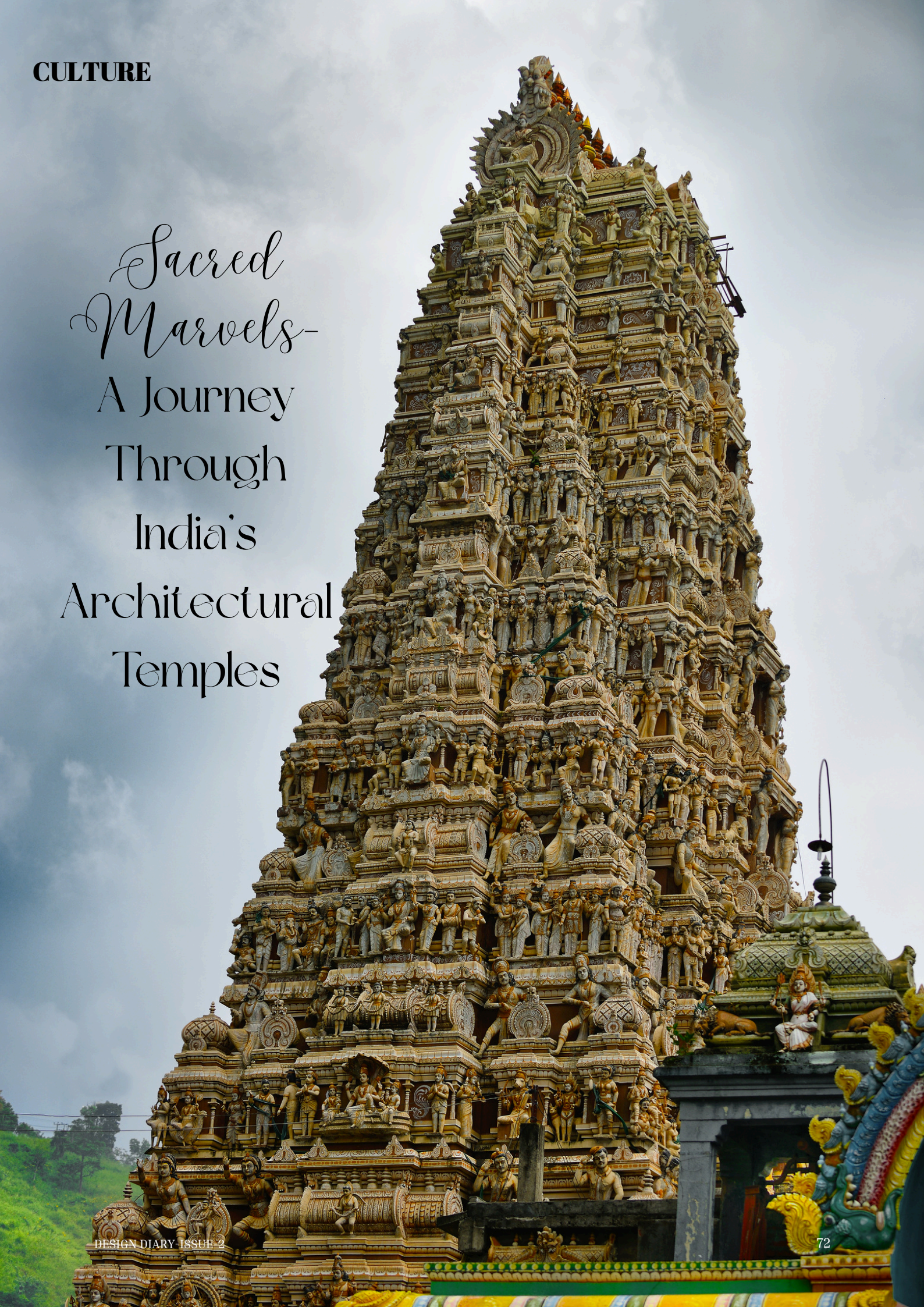
Outside of work, what feeds your curiosity and creativity?

Travel, nature, and dialogue. Observing how people inhabit space, how light moves through a city, and how the day unfolds. Much creativity comes from quiet observation, not constant noise.

What single idea would you want young architects to hold onto as they begin their careers?

Design with empathy. Architecture is about people. If your work improves even a small part of someone's experience, you have succeeded.

*Sacred
Marvels-
A Journey
Through
India's
Architectural
Temples*



BUILDING ON THE EXPLORATION BEGUN IN OUR PREVIOUS ISSUE, WE RETURN TO INDIA'S SACRED LANDSCAPE TO EXAMINE TEMPLES THAT EMBODY THE BREADTH AND COMPLEXITY OF THE SUBCONTINENT'S ARCHITECTURAL LEGACY. EACH OF THE SITES FEATURED HERE REVEALS A DISTINCT INTERSECTION OF ARTISTRY, ENGINEERING, AND DEVOTION. FROM THE SCULPTURAL MASTERY OF **VIRUPAKSHA TEMPLE** AT PATTADAKAL TO THE RITUAL DEPTH OF **SRI JAGANNATH TEMPLE** IN PURI, THESE STRUCTURES CONTINUE TO SHAPE CULTURAL IDENTITY AND SPIRITUAL LIFE ACROSS REGIONS.

IN BHUBANESWAR, THE **LINGARAJA TEMPLE** STANDS AS A CULMINATION OF KALINGA ARCHITECTURE, WHILE **THE SOMNATH TEMPLE** ON THE WESTERN COAST REFLECTS CYCLES OF RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL. THE FINELY DETAILED SANCTUM OF **EKLINGJI TEMPLE** IN UDAIPUR FURTHER ILLUSTRATES HOW EACH DYNASTY TRANSLATED ITS BELIEFS INTO STONE, PROPORTION, AND ORNAMENT. TOGETHER, THESE TEMPLES HIGHLIGHT INDIA'S ENDURING ABILITY TO WEAVE HISTORY, CRAFTSMANSHIP, AND SACRED INTENT INTO SPACES THAT REMAIN PROFOUNDLY ALIVE.

VIRUPAKSHA TEMPLE





VIRUPAKSHA TEMPLE

Pattadakal, Karnataka

The Virupaksha Temple at Pattadakal, Karnataka, is a masterpiece of early medieval Indian architecture. Built in 740 CE under the patronage of Queen Lokamahadevi, consort of the Chalukya king Vikramaditya II, it commemorates his victory over the Pallavas of Kanchipuram. Dedicated to Lord Shiva as Virupaksha, the temple is a monumental testimony to the Chalukyan synthesis of Dravidian (South Indian) and Nagara (North Indian) styles, making it one of the most architecturally significant temples in India.

PATRONAGE AND PERIOD

The Chalukyas of Badami (6th–8th centuries CE) were prolific temple builders. Pattadakal, their royal ceremonial center and later a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was where coronations took place. Queen Lokamahadevi commissioned the Virupaksha temple, the grandest at Pattadakal, to rival the Kailasanatha Temple of Kanchipuram (built by the Pallavas). Its construction marked both a political triumph and a cultural fusion.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Virupaksha is the finest example of the Dravido-Nagara style, blending the towering southern vimana with elements of the northern shikhara. This hybridization illustrates the cosmopolitan outlook of the Chalukyas, who were exposed to influences from both north and south.

- The temple has a Dravidian vimana (pyramidal tower) over the sanctum, rising in progressively smaller tiers, capped by a domical finial.
- At the same time, the rekhanagara (curvilinear) elements and roof forms borrow from Nagara traditions.
- The complex includes subsidiary shrines, a Nandi mandapa, and cloistered colonnades, reinforcing the Dravidian style.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUE

The temple is constructed of local red sandstone, quarried from the Malaprabha valley. Ashlar masonry with interlocking stones was used, requiring no mortar. Skilled sculptors employed both trabeate (post-and-lintel) and corbelled roofing techniques, achieving balance and strength.



LAYOUT AND FLOOR PLAN

The Virupaksha temple follows a well-articulated axial plan:

1. **Mukhamandapa** (entrance hall) - elaborately carved pillars, with space for devotees to gather.
2. **Mandapa** (pillared hall) - rectangular, with multiple bays, used for rituals and assemblies.
3. **The Antarala** (vestibule) serves as a transitional passageway into the sanctum.
4. **Garbhagriha** (sanctum) - houses a large Shiva linga, symbol of Virupaksha.
5. **Nandi Mandapa** - a separate pavilion facing the sanctum, enshrining Nandi, the divine bull.
6. **Prakara** (enclosure) - colonnaded corridors with small shrines.

The temple stands on a raised platform, with staircases providing access, reinforcing its monumentality.

SCULPTURAL PROGRAM AND ORNAMENTATION

The Virupaksha temple is renowned for its rich sculptural decoration, which narrates mythology while showcasing refined artistry.

- **Shaivite imagery:** Nataraja, Lingodbhava, and other forms of Shiva.
- **Vaishnavite themes:** panels depicting episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata.
- **Durga Mahishasuramardini** and other Shakta motifs reflect syncretic devotion.
- Pillars are covered with intricate scrollwork, floral patterns, dwarfish ganas, and narrative friezes.

The sculptural style closely parallels that of the Kailasanatha Temple, Kanchipuram, yet surpasses it in scale and detail, reflecting the competitive spirit between the Chalukyas and Pallavas.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. Fusion of Styles - an unparalleled blend of Nagara and Dravida architectural idioms.
2. Victory Monument - built to commemorate Chalukya conquests over the Pallavas.
3. Prototype for Kailasa at Ellora - the Virupaksha temple's form directly inspired the later Kailasa temple commissioned by the Rashtrakutas.
4. Narrative Sculpture- continuous reliefs narrating epics with great clarity.
5. Queen's Patronage - rare and significant evidence of female royal patronage in early medieval India.

TIMEFRAME OF CONSTRUCTION

The temple was completed around 740 CE, likely in a relatively short period given its unified design. Unlike many temples, which expanded gradually, Virupaksha reflects a single, planned conception.



Text References: George Michell, *Architecture and Art of Southern India: Vijayanagara and the Successor States*, 1995. J.C. Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*, 1986. M.A. Dhaky, *The Indian Temple Forms in Karnāṭa Inscriptions and Architecture*, 1977. *Archaeological Survey of India, Pattadakal Monuments, Monograph Series.*

Images: Public Sources

SRI JAGANNATH PURI TEMPLE





JAGANNATH TEMPLE

Puri, Odisha

The Jagannath Temple at Puri, Odisha, is one of the most revered pilgrimage sites in India, forming a part of the Char Dham. Built in the 12th century CE by King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva of the Eastern Ganga dynasty, the temple is dedicated to Lord Jagannath (a form of Vishnu/Krishna), along with his siblings Balabhadra and Subhadra. Architecturally, it is one of the most significant examples of the Kalinga style of Nagara temple architecture, and ritually, it remains unique for its living traditions, particularly the annual Rath Yatra (Chariot Festival).

PATRONAGE AND PERIOD

Construction began under Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva (c. 1078–1147 CE) and was completed by his descendant Anangabhima Deva III in the early 13th century. The temple's completion marked both political power and the establishment of Jagannath as a state deity of Odisha, symbolizing the fusion of tribal and classical Hindu traditions.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The temple follows the Kalinga variant of the Nagara style, characterized by curvilinear towers and a strict axial alignment of spaces.

The complex features four principal structures that are aligned with each other:

1. **Vimana** (sanctum with tower): The towering deul rises to about 65 meters (214 feet), dominating the coastal town.
2. **Jagamohana** (assembly hall): A large pillared hall with pyramidal roof, accommodating devotees.
3. **Natamandira** (festival/dance hall): Used for cultural performances dedicated to the deities.
4. **Bhogamandapa** (hall of offerings): Where elaborate temple cuisine, the famous Mahaprasad, is prepared and offered.

The gopurams (entrance gateways) follow the Odishan pidha style, each richly carved with lions and other motifs.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUE

The temple is constructed of khondalite stone, a durable local sandstone. Walls were assembled with massive blocks, fitted together with precision, using iron dowels and clamps. The surface carving is somewhat less dense than Lingaraja but monumental in scale. The shikhara's vertical ribs and miniature spires emphasize upward movement, symbolizing Mount Meru.



LAYOUT AND FLOOR PLAN

The temple complex covers over 400,000 square feet, enclosed by two massive walls:

- Meghanada Prachira (outer wall)
- Kurma Bedha (inner wall)

Inside, along with the four aligned halls, are 120 subsidiary shrines dedicated to various deities.

The sanctum enshrines the wooden images of Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra, unlike stone or metal icons in most Hindu temples. These images are ritually replaced every 12–19 years during the Nabakalebara festival, a practice unique to this shrine.

SCULPTURAL AND ARTISTIC PROGRAM

- **Exterior Walls:** Carvings of divine figures, apsaras, lions, elephants, and floral scrolls.
- **Jagamohana:** Carved with mythological narratives and ornamental motifs.
- **Subsidiary Shrines:** Housing Vishnu, Lakshmi, Ganesh, and tantric deities, reflecting the temple's inclusiveness.
- **Deity Images:** The iconic wooden figures, painted in bright colors, represent a fusion of tribal and Brahmanical traditions.

COLORS AND AESTHETICS

While the temple's stone surfaces remain largely natural in tone (reddish-grey khondalite), the vividly painted wooden idols of Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra introduce a striking color element. The deities imbue their large eyes, bold outlines, and simplified forms with profound symbolic meaning. During festivals, the deities are adorned with vibrant textiles and jewelry, adding layers of temporary color and spectacle.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. **Char Dham Status:** Along with Badrinath, Rameswaram, and Dwarka, Puri is one of the four sacred Hindu pilgrimages.
2. **Living Deities:** The wooden idols, ritually renewed, connect directly with tribal practices.
3. **Rath Yatra:** The grand Chariot Festival draws millions, where the deities ride massive wooden chariots through the streets.
4. **Mahaprasad Tradition:** Temple food cooked in earthen pots, offered to the deities, and shared among devotees.
5. **Scale and Symbolism:** The tallest Odishan shikhara, embodying Mount Meru and divine centrality.

TIMEFRAME OF CONSTRUCTION

- **Initiated:** c. 1136 CE by Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva.
- **Completed:** Early 13th century CE by Anangabhima Deva III.
- **Additions and renovations:** Continued through Gajapati and Maratha periods, keeping it active as a major pilgrimage site.



Text References: K.C. Panigrahi, *History of Orissa (Hindu Period)*, 1981. Thomas Donaldson, *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*, 1985. George Michell, *The Hindu Temple*, 1988. *Archaeological Survey of India, Jagannath Temple, Puri, Monograph Series*.

Images: Public Sources

LINGRAJA TEMPLE





LINGARAJA TEMPLE

Bhubaneswar, Odisha

The Lingaraja Temple stands as the crowning jewel of Bhubaneswar, a city often called the “Temple City of India.” Built in the 11th century CE, during the rule of the Somavamsi dynasty, with later contributions by the Ganga rulers, this temple represents the zenith of the Kalinga school of architecture. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, worshipped here as Harihara (a composite form of Shiva and Vishnu), it is one of the most complete and mature examples of northern Indian (Nagara) temple architecture, specifically the Odisha sub-style.



PERIOD AND PATRONAGE

Construction began under the Somavamsi king Yayati II in the 11th century CE and continued under the Ganga dynasty. The temple’s integration of Shaiva and Vaishnava elements reflects both religious syncretism and political pragmatism, uniting worshippers under a single sanctum.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE AND LAYOUT

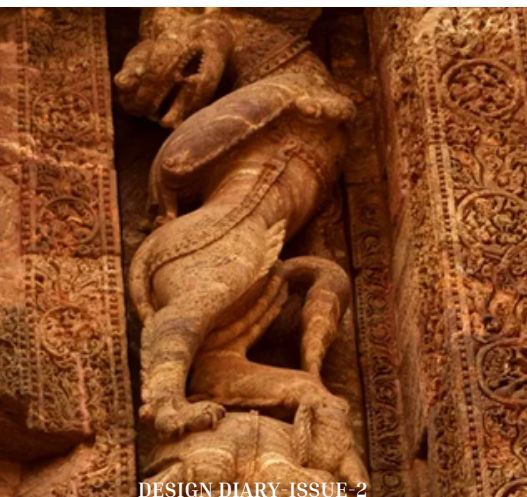
The temple is built in the rekha deul style that is common in Odisha. The sanctum (vimana) rises as a curvilinear spire and is topped with an amalaka and kalasha. The overall complex is enclosed within massive laterite walls, measuring about 520 by 465 feet, containing around 150 subsidiary shrines. The temple’s main tower rises to 180 feet, dominating the Bhubaneswar skyline. The plan of the temple follows the classic pancha-ratha projection—five vertical offsets along each side of the sanctum’s walls—giving the tower depth and rhythm. The axial alignment of the temple is strictly east–west, allowing the first rays of the sun to strike the deity.



STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

The Lingaraja complex is divided into the four essential components of Odisha temples:

- **Vimana** (sanctum tower): The tallest structure, housing the Shivalinga, carved from granite, continuously anointed with water from a natural underground spring.
- **Jagamohana** (assembly hall): Square and pyramidal in shape, with horizontal tiers instead of the vertical curvilinear rise.
- **Natamandira** (dance hall): Added later, reflecting the importance of temple dance traditions.
- **Bhogamandapa** (hall of offerings): A pillared pavilion used for rituals and offerings.



MATERIAL AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

The temple is primarily constructed in dark gray sandstone and laterite for the compound walls. Carving techniques involved chiseling deep relief sculptures directly into the hard stone, resulting in crisp, long-lasting forms. The tower was assembled using interlocking stones without mortar, relying on precise balancing and weight distribution.

Hundreds of miniature shrines, intricate scrollwork, and mythical motifs showcase the craftsmanship. The artisans utilized the natural polish of the stone to accentuate the contrasts between the figures and the background.

ICONOGRAPHY AND ORNAMENTATION

Lingaraja is a masterpiece of Odishan sculptural programs. Its walls are adorned with:

- Shaiva deities such as Parvati, Kartikeya, and Ganesha adorn its walls.
- Vaishnavite figures adorn the walls, reflecting the Harihara aspect.
- Surasundaris (celestial maidens) carved in graceful poses.
- The figures depict everyday scenes of musicians, dancers, and royal processions.

The spire is covered with vertical bands of miniature towers (urushringas), creating a mountain-like symbolism that mirrors Mount Kailash, Shiva's abode.

COLOR AND ATMOSPHERE

Though built in gray stone, the temple's surfaces often take on warm hues—golden at sunrise, deep amber at sunset—due to the stone's weathering. The ritual use of flowers, sandalwood paste, and vermilion adds vibrancy to the otherwise sober palette, while the sanctum's constant water flow keeps the central linga glistening.

UNIQUE ASPECTS

- The Harihara linga—half Shiva, half Vishnu—is unique and rare in India.
- Its combination of four structural units (vimana, jagamohana, natamandira, bhogamandapa) influenced many later Odishan temples, including the Sun Temple at Konark.
- It remains a living temple, with daily rituals performed since its inception.
- The annual Ratha Yatra of Lingaraja predates and inspired the more famous Jagannath Rath Yatra of Puri.

FLOOR PLAN (SCHEMATIC DESCRIPTION)

- Square sanctum with pancha-ratha projections.
- Large jagamohana to the east, connected axially.
- Natamandira and bhogamandapa in front, all aligned in a straight line.
- Hundreds of small shrines dotting the enclosure walls.

TIMEFRAME OF CONSTRUCTION

Scholars suggest that the main vimana may have taken several decades to complete, given the scale and complexity, with additions like the natamandira built later during the Ganga period.

In totality, Lingaraja Temple encapsulates the apex of Kalinga temple architecture, harmonizing grand scale, detailed sculpture, ritual function, and syncretic spirituality. It remains both an architectural marvel and a vibrant spiritual nucleus of Bhubaneswar.

Text References: Fergusson, James. *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*. London: John Murray, 1910. Hardy, Adam. *Indian Temple Architecture: Form and Transformation*. Abhinav Publications, 1995. Michell, George. *The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to Its Meaning and Forms*. University of Chicago Press, 1988. Panigrahi, Krishna Chandra. *History of Orissa: Hindu Period*. Cuttack, 1981. Donaldson, Thomas E. *Hindu Temple Art of Orissa*. BRILL, 1985.

Images: Public Sources

SOMNATH TEMPLE





SOMNATH TEMPLE

Gujarat

The Somnath Temple in Prabhas Patan, Gujarat, is one of India's most historically and spiritually significant shrines. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, it is revered as the first Jyotirlinga, a manifestation of Shiva. The temple is unique for its repeated cycles of destruction and reconstruction, reflecting the resilience of Indian temple architecture and devotion.

PATRONAGE AND PERIOD

The temple's origins are ancient, with mentions in the Rigveda, and likely dating to early centuries CE. Historical records indicate multiple reconstructions:

- Mahmud of Ghazni (1024 CE) destroyed it during his invasion.
- Maitrakas, Solankis, and later rulers over centuries rebuilt it.
- The current structure was completed in 1951 CE, sponsored by the Indian government and the Saurashtra Prant under the guidance of Vallabhbhai Patel, blending traditional design with modern engineering.



ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The Somnath Temple is built in a style influenced by the Chalukya and Solanki designs, featuring both Nagara elements (curved towers) and unique.

- **Vimana** (sanctum tower): The main shikhara is about 50 meters tall and has vertical ribs and a kalasha finial on top.
- **Mandapas** (pillared halls): The entrance halls and assembly halls feature intricately carved columns and ceilings.
- **Gopuram and porch**: The main entrance is flanked by a series of steps and gateways, drawing pilgrims toward the sanctum.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

The temple is primarily built of Chandlohi sandstone from nearby quarries, known for its durability and warm golden hue.

- Mortar and cement are used in conjunction with stone for modern stability.
- Traditional ashlar masonry and interlocking stone blocks ensure the sanctum maintains the classic proportions of earlier Jyotirlinga temples.
- Carvers employed high-relief sculpting techniques for deities, animals, and floral motifs.



LAYOUT AND FLOOR PLAN

The temple complex sits along the Arabian Sea, encompassing about 70,000 square feet, with:

1. **Garbhagriha** (sanctum): Housing the Jyotirlinga Shiva lingam.
2. **Mahamandap and Sabhamandap**: For congregational worship and rituals.
3. **Parikrama** (circumambulatory passage): Allowing devotees to circumambulate the sanctum.
4. **Temple tank** (kund): For ritual purification.

The temple is oriented east–west, with sunrise illuminating the sanctum during specific days of the year.

SCULPTURAL AND ARTISTIC PROGRAM

The Somnath temple showcases the Maru-Gurjara decorative idiom:

- Carved toranas (arches) depicting scenes from Shaiva and Puranic myths.
- The temple features pillars that are adorned with lotus motifs, dancing figures, and yali sculptures.
- The friezes depict divine narratives, which include Shiva's cosmic dance, Ganesh, and other Shaiva deities.
- Exterior walls integrate geometric patterns and floral scrollwork, typical of Solanki-era design.

COLORS AND AESTHETICS

The golden sandstone gives the temple a sunlit, warm glow, especially at sunrise and sunset. Minimal paint is applied, as the natural stone provides aesthetic richness, and polished surfaces enhance the visual drama. Temporary festival decorations, silk drapes, and flower offerings add periodic bursts of color.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. **First Jyotirlinga**: One of the twelve sacred Shiva lingams of India.
2. **Resilience**: Destroyed and rebuilt six times, symbolizing spiritual endurance.
3. **Seaside Setting**: Offers panoramic views of the Arabian Sea, integrating natural landscape with sacred architecture.
4. **Historical Significance**: Links India's medieval politics, invasions, and heritage conservation.
5. **Modern Reconstruction**: Combines traditional design with modern engineering for earthquake and coastal durability.

TIMEFRAME OF CONSTRUCTION

- **Original temple**: Early centuries CE.
- **Rebuilt multiple times** (11th–15th centuries).
- **Present structure**: Completed 1951 CE, designed to faithfully echo the Solanki and Chalukya style.



Text References: K.C. Panigrahi, History of Orissa (Hindu Period), 1981. Michell, George. The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to Its Meaning and Forms. University of Chicago Press, 1988. Hardy, Adam. Indian Temple Architecture: Form and Transformation. Abhinav Publications, 1995. Dwivedi, Chandra. Somnath: The Shrine Eternal. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2002. Archaeological Survey of India, Somnath Temple Monograph, 2005.

Images: Public Sources

EKLINGJI TEMPLE





EKLINGJI TEMPLE

Udaipur, Rajasthan

The Eklingji Temple complex, located about 22 km from Udaipur in Rajasthan, is a majestic example of Nagara-style North Indian temple architecture, dedicated to Lord Shiva in his form as Eklingji, the ruling deity of the Mewar dynasty. Revered as the spiritual guide of the Mewar rulers, the temple has been continuously active for centuries and is celebrated for its granite and marble craftsmanship, intricate carvings, and serene atmosphere.



PATRONAGE AND PERIOD

The present temple structure was primarily built in the 15th century CE under Maharana Kumbha (r. 1433–1468 CE), a prolific patron of arts and architecture. Earlier shrines at the site date back to the 8th century CE, as mentioned in inscriptions, but Kumbha's construction created the monumental temple complex visible today. Subsequent Mewar rulers contributed additional mandapas, walls, and subsidiary shrines over the next two centuries.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Eklingji Temple exhibits the classic Nagara (North Indian) style, specifically the Mewar variant, characterized by:

- **Shikhara** (curvilinear tower): The main sanctum rises as a high, curvilinear spire with vertical ribs, crowned with a kalasha.
- **Mandapas**: Multiple pillared halls leading to the sanctum, including an assembly hall and festival halls, which feature finely carved pillars and ceilings.
- **Subsidiary Shrines**: Over 108 smaller shrines dedicated to various forms of Shiva, his consort Parvati, and associated deities, arranged concentrically around the main sanctum.
- **Enclosures and courtyards**: High sandstone walls enclose the complex, integrating ceremonial processions and ritual spaces.



MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUE

- **Primary Materials**: Locally sourced red sandstone and marble. Granite was used for structural pillars and plinths, ensuring durability.
- **Construction Techniques**: Ashlar masonry for walls and plinths; pillars carved in situ from monolithic blocks. High-relief carvings of deities, yogis, and celestial beings cover walls and mandapas.
- **Roofing and domes**: Corbelled techniques were used in mandapa ceilings, allowing open interiors without modern supports.

LAYOUT AND FLOOR PLAN

The complex is a multi-courtyard arrangement along an east–west axis:

1. **Main Sanctum** (Garbhagriha): Houses a four-faced black marble Shiva linga, representing Eklingji's omnipresence.
2. **Maharana Mandap**: Used for royal ceremonies, featuring intricately carved columns and ceilings.
3. **Parikrama Pathways**: Circumambulatory corridors with subsidiary shrines.
4. **Festival Hall**: Large pillared hall used for Shivaratri and other major festivals.
5. **108 Sub-shrines**: Arranged symmetrically in concentric enclosures, reinforcing cosmic symbolism.

The temple's plan reflects the Mewar royal ideology—spatial hierarchy, symmetry, and sacred geometry, integrating devotion and royal authority.

SCULPTURAL AND ARTISTIC PROGRAM

- **Pillars**: Carved with mythological figures, musicians, dancers, and floral motifs.
- **Walls and ceilings**: Fresco paintings and geometric carvings, depicting stories from Shaivism and Puranas.
- **Shikhara Ornamentation**: Vertical ribs interspersed with miniature spire motifs and kalasha finials.
- **Royal Patronage Elements**: Inscribed dedicatory panels honoring Maharana Kumbha and successive rulers.

COLORS AND AESTHETICS

- The temple retains the warm earthy tones of red sandstone, complemented by polished marble detailing, giving a subtle yet majestic visual impression.
- During festivals, the temple is adorned with saffron, red, and yellow fabrics, flower garlands, and ritual paints, adding a temporary but vibrant color palette.
- Natural light filtering through the mandapas creates dynamic shadows on carvings, enhancing the depth of sculptural detail.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. **Royal Deity**: Eklingji was considered the sovereign deity of Mewar; rulers sought divine guidance here.
2. **Four-faced Shiva Linga**: Unique representation, emphasizing omniscience and omnipresence.
3. **Concentric Shrine Arrangement**: Symbolic of cosmic and royal order, rare in northern India.
4. **Continuous Living Tradition**: Daily rituals and festivals continue uninterrupted for centuries.
5. **Architectural Harmony**: Combines durability, sculptural richness, and ceremonial functionality in a compact but monumental layout.

TIMEFRAME OF CONSTRUCTION

- **Original shrine**: 8th century CE (small structures).
- **Major expansion**: 1430s–1460s CE under Maharana Kumbha.
- **Later additions**: 16th–18th centuries, including subsidiary shrines, mandapas, and boundary walls.



Text References: Michell, George. *The Hindu Temple: An Introduction to Its Meaning and Forms*. University of Chicago Press, 1988. Hardy, Adam. *Indian Temple Architecture: Form and Transformation*. Abhinav Publications, 1995. Sharma, R.S. *Art and Architecture of Rajasthan*. Jaipur: Rajasthan State Archives, 2003. Archaeological Survey of India, *Eklingji Temple Monograph Series*, 2010.

Images: Public Sources

PIERRE YERMIA
and the Art of Stillness

Pierre Yermia
French Sculptor Artist

For more than three decades, **Pierre Yermia** has explored the delicate balance between strength and fragility through his sculptural forms - human, animal, and hybrid - each suspended between grace and gravity. In an **exclusive conversation with Shweta for Design Diary International**, the French artist reflects on his early influences, his years at the Toulouse School of Fine Arts, and a lifelong pursuit of spiritual poise through form and rhythm.





Do you remember the exact moment you knew you were meant to be an artist? Did you slowly come to realize it, or did it hit you all at once?

Since childhood, I have always loved drawing and making my own toys. As a teenager, I felt that my life would be dedicated to art.

Please tell us something about your early years. What made you choose sculpture over other forms of art? How did your stay at École des Beaux-Arts affect the way you approach art?

I enrolled at the Toulouse School of Fine Arts at the age of 17 because I wanted to be a painter. However, when I met my sculpture teacher, Aroldo Zavaroni, he convinced me that I was truly a sculptor. He deeply encouraged me to follow my path, and I am infinitely grateful to him. Later, I continued my studies at the Paris School of Fine Arts, but I never encountered another master like him! He helped me shape my artistic vision. I learned a lot by studying works from the distant past to modern art.

Many sculptors spend years looking for their unique way to talk. When did you really feel like those long, poised shapes and creatures were "yours"?

Over the years, my artistic language has asserted itself. In the early '90s, I underwent a period of intense self-questioning. I was deeply dissatisfied with my work at the time. I returned to the source of my passion for sculpture. Gradually, I realized that the fragility of balance, the aerial dimension of sculpture, and its intimate relationship with space were the key to my artistic language. Throughout these years, I have continued my research. My artistic language has gradually evolved into new creations. This was particularly the case when I began working on the animal theme. A new horizon opened up to me because of the diversity of the animal kingdom.







Could you please tell us how you move from sketch to plaster to bronze? What do you look for before you cast when the sculpture still seems alive?

I always begin by drawing before creating a sculpture. For me, sculpture is a three-dimensional drawing. I strive to compose a sense of balance, to organize rhythms and proportions that reflect my monumental and aerial vision. I seek that moment of grace that resonates like a melody. I spend a long time working to ensure the relevance of my sculpture. Only then is the sculpture ready to be cast and brought to life in bronze.

Some of your most impressive works are huge. What happens to you emotionally, physically, and even spiritually when you go from a small studio piece to a piece suited for open air?

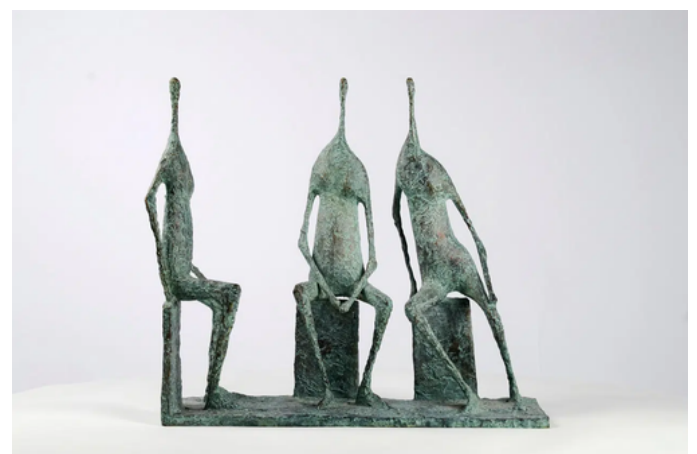
Your work has a wonderful sense of balance between power and weakness, grace and weight. What makes you want to look at this tension over and over again?

The precariousness of balance that characterizes my work is a quest for the fusion of grace and strength. This reflects my perception of life as eternally changing, unpredictable, fragile, and strong at the same time. The living world must always find its balance. We must live each moment knowing that it is unique. Art is an attempt to transcend the fear of death. It should not be an escape or a blindness to reality, but rather a path to spirituality. It connects us to one another, regardless of our cultural differences. This is why I always seek to express this fragile grace and vital force, which for me represent an ode to life.

You travel smoothly between species, from delicate human shapes to majestic stags and bulls. What do you think they have in common?

Both animals and humans belong to the same living world. Sculpture can reveal the beauty of the human or animal world through its poetic and metaphorical language.

Regardless of the dimensions of my sculptures, their proportions are designed to be monumental. When the works are permanently placed in a fitting environment, my goal is achieved. It brings me great joy and emotion. This was the case with the monumental deer that I created in collaboration with the Artistic Gallery. This sculpture has been permanently installed in the grounds of a large hotel in the Loire Valley, where it blends perfectly with its surroundings. This is what I have always dreamed of.



How do you see the connection between your figures and the places they live? Do architecture, light, or the landscape help shape them?

I think a sculpture can harmonize with its surroundings, no matter what they are. Many of my sculptures were not created for a specific place. A sculpture can offer a new dimension to a space.

What are one or two works that stand out to you as turning points in your life? They could be your favorite works or ones that taught you something new.

Each of my sculptures represents a new beginning and a new challenge. They always teach me something new and unexpected.

How would you explain the emotional heart of your work to someone who has never seen it before?

I would say that I am looking for a kind of spiritual grace, expressed in a language that is both timeless and universal and transcends all cultural differences.

How have you been able to keep your inspiration and discipline over the years in a world that often pushes against the meditative character of sculpture?

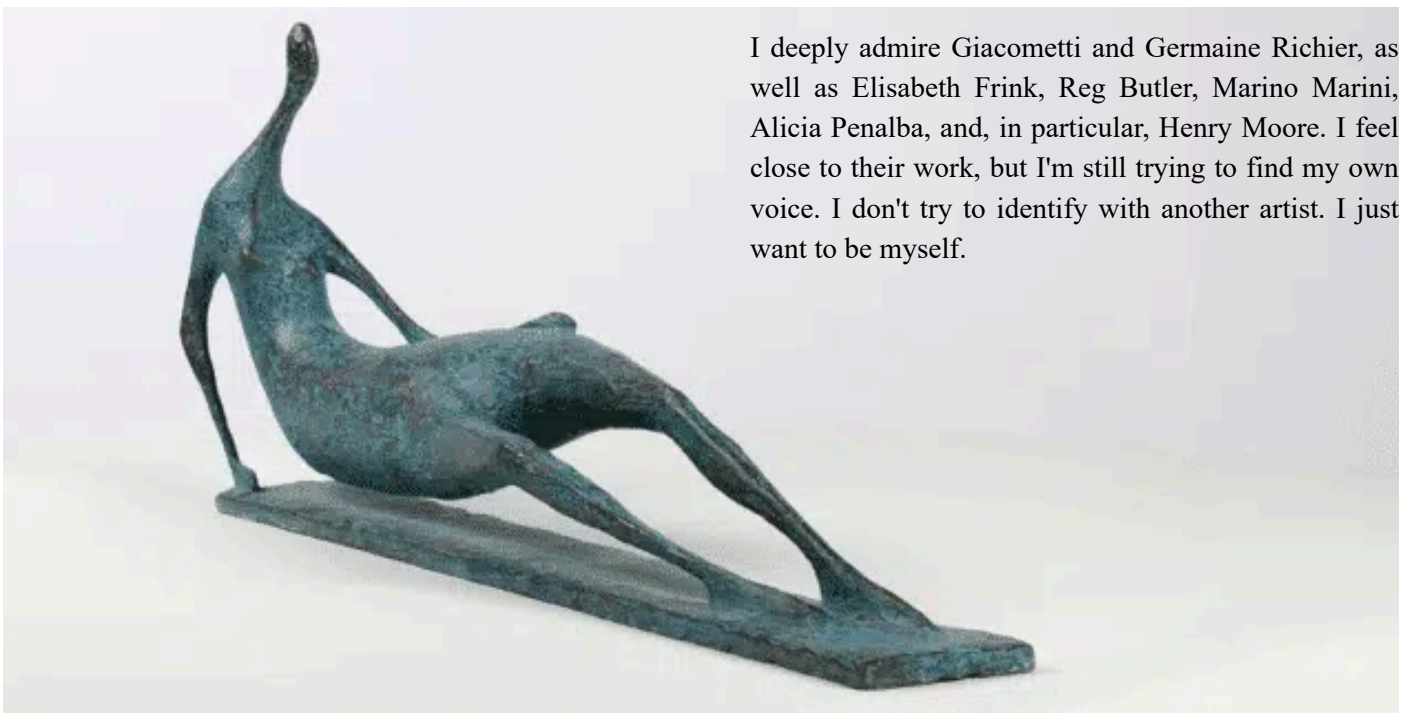
Sculpture is a very demanding and solitary discipline. Thanks to my diligent practice of Buddhism, I am able to focus on what is essential without being discouraged by circumstances.

What do you think about figurative sculpture today? How does it fit along with new media, installation, and digital art?

Although figurative sculpture has experienced a great revival, a certain tendency towards standardization risks impoverishing it. However, sculpture is not in competition with new media; it always retains its own unique characteristics. Technological development can also provide support for creation and open up new possibilities.

People often say that your art is like that of Giacometti or Germaine Richier. What do you think of these comparisons? Could you please share which of your predecessors you feel a strong connection with?

I deeply admire Giacometti and Germaine Richier, as well as Elisabeth Frink, Reg Butler, Marino Marini, Alicia Penalba, and, in particular, Henry Moore. I feel close to their work, but I'm still trying to find my own voice. I don't try to identify with another artist. I just want to be myself.





Collections and exhibitions around the world showcase your sculptures. What differences have you noticed in how people in Europe, Asia, and the Americas react to them?

I am very happy to see that my work is starting to be appreciated worldwide. However, I am uncertain if the perception of my work differs in Asia, Europe, or the USA.

What would you say to a young sculptor who wanted to know how to find their unique voice in art?

I don't feel I have the authority to give advice to young sculptors. What I do know is that it takes a lot of courage and perseverance to defend one's artistic ideals.

What are you currently working on, or what do you want to work on?

I am currently working on a monumental horse sculpture that I will soon cast in bronze. The horse is one of the most frequently depicted subjects in animal sculpture. In my view, it embodies nobility, beauty, energy, and sensuality.

What feelings come up when you think about how far you've come? Are you proud, curious, humble, or still amazed?

I am thrilled to have been able to realize my artistic vision. However, I still have a long way to go to develop my art further.

Three Windows, Three Worlds

Windows have always been quiet narrators of architectural history. Long before they became design statements, they shaped how people lived with light, climate and the outside world. Yet across cultures, the window evolved in remarkably different ways.

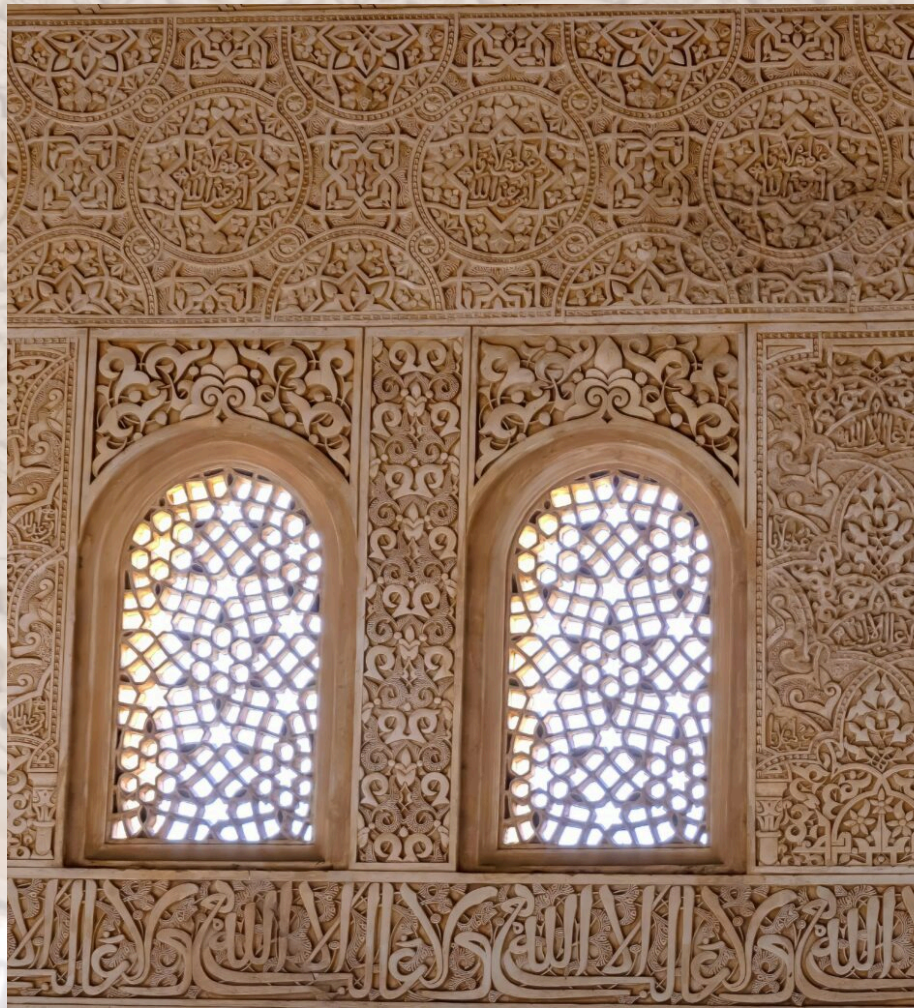
This feature brings together three of the most distinctive expressions of that evolution – the projecting oriel windows of Tudor England, the geometric lattice openings of the Alhambra in Granada, and the fluid Art Nouveau glazing of Casa Batlló in Barcelona. Each belongs to a different era, climate and visual language, yet all three demonstrate how a window can become far more than an opening. They show how craft, culture and technology shape the way light enters a room, how privacy is negotiated, and how buildings acquire character.

Seen together, these windows map a lineage of ideas: projection, filtration, and expression – three approaches that continue to influence contemporary design in unexpected ways.



Oriel Windows - Tudor and Elizabethan England

Projecting from the upper stories, the oriel window became a distinguishing device in Tudor and Elizabethan domestic architecture. Unlike a ground-level bay, the oriel is suspended above street level on timber brackets or stone corbels, increasing interior floor area and admitting daylight deep into the room. In timber-framed houses and grand manor façades, oriels were often richly articulated: moulded mullions, leaded casements, and carved supports signal both craft and status. Functionally, they offered quiet retreats—window seats, reading nooks, and vantage points over the street—while their projection moderated wind and rain. Material contrasts are part of their appeal; dark oak frames and sculpted stone bases read against plaster or brick, producing a provincial yet refined profile. As a device, the oriel negotiates the public and private: outward it punctuates the street with depth and shadow, inward it creates an intimate, light-filled alcove. Restored examples retain original joinery and leaded panes, and where replacements are necessary, careful attention to profile, sightline, and fastener detail preserves the window's historic proportion and presence. In domestic conservation, the oriel remains a rare combination of utility, ornament, and lived drama.



Geometric Windows - The Alhambra, Granada

At the Alhambra, light is carved as much as painted, and the palace's windows are principal instruments of that craft. Rather than simple openings, they are composed of intricate latticework, pierced screens, and finely modelled stucco that translate sunlight into patterned shadow. The geometric language derives from Islamic visual grammar: interlaced polygons, star motifs, and repeating tessellations that modulate glare while preserving privacy. These perforated screens perform multiple tasks at once: they ventilate, shade, and fragment the view so the interior feels both connected to and protected from the courtyard beyond. The material palette is spare and precise: wood, carved stone, and plaster, each element hand-worked to subtler tolerances than a machined screen. Close observation reveals a disciplined asymmetry: repeated units shift slightly in scale to create visual rhythm across an elevation. In plans and sections, these windows extend inward as deep reveals and splayed jambs, softening the light and turning every pattern into a moving ornament throughout the day. The Alhambra's windows remain instructive for contemporary façades: they show how porosity, proportion, and pattern can deliver climate performance and lasting beauty in equal measure.



Art Nouveau Windows - Casa Batlló, Barcelona

Antonio Gaudí's interventions at Casa Batlló reimagine the window as a living membrane—curved frames, stained glass, and organic ironwork combine to shape both façade and interior light. Here windows are not discrete apertures but sculptural elements that follow the building's undulating geometry. On the façade, irregular openings are set within ceramic mosaics and sinuous stone, their frames flowing like a shoreline; inside, clusters of slender windows and glazed panels filter daylight through graduated colours to create a warm, continuous luminosity. Gaudí exploited the material possibilities of glass, colours, textures, and opacities to modulate view and privacy, while the wrought-iron balustrades and wooden frames lend a tactile, handmade quality. The result is a controlled but sensorial daylight, where colour and curvature soften the interior and animate surfaces with shifting reflections. Technically, Batlló's windows demonstrate a rare integration of structure, ornament, and light control: mullions and frames serve both load and aesthetic roles, and glazing choices are matched to spatial hierarchy. As a study of expressive fenestration, Casa Batlló remains a benchmark for how windows can shape the atmosphere as decisively as a plan or section.

BELLAVISTA & PICCINI | A STUDY IN PROPORTION

Bellavista & Piccini is a studio that doesn't treat furniture as decoration or surface. Their work comes out of an architectural way of thinking, where every line has a purpose and every material is expected to do more than simply look good. From their base in Meda, in the heart of Brianza's long craft tradition, they work closely with local makers who challenge and refine their ideas in real time. The result is furniture with a quiet sort of precision - pieces that feel measured, balanced, and designed to sit naturally within a space rather than compete with it.

In this exclusive [conversation with Alisha of Design Diary International](#), designers [Giancarlo Bellavista](#) and [Matteo Piccini](#) speak about how they think, why materials guide them, and what keeps Italian design relevant in a world that's moving faster than ever.

Italian design has always carried an emotional geometry, a balance between order and soul. How would you describe the emotional thread that runs through Bellavista & Piccini's work?

The "Emotional Geometry" is not simply about seeking perfect lines but about creating spaces where rigor and feeling coexist. Every project is born from a dialogue between proportion and emotion: geometry structures the soul of the object, and materials reveal its tactile and temporal language. Our work is a silent dialogue between light and shadow, between what is shown and what is merely suggested. The geometric rhythm blends with the human rhythm, giving life to the object.

Your studio's philosophy often references the dialogue between architecture and design. How does this dual practice influence the proportions, materials, and rhythm of your furniture?

In our work and research, the coexistence of architecture and design is not merely a matter of scale. We conceive furniture and objects in general as micro-architectures, and when working on interiors, the space is conceived as a composition of objects. Proportions thus arise from this relationship, and the materials reflect the same architectural discipline: the interplay between solids and voids, modulations and recesses. The design object becomes an integral part of the space.



Italy's Brianza region is known as the cradle of fine craftsmanship. How does being based in Meda shape your creative process and your relationship with artisans and materials?

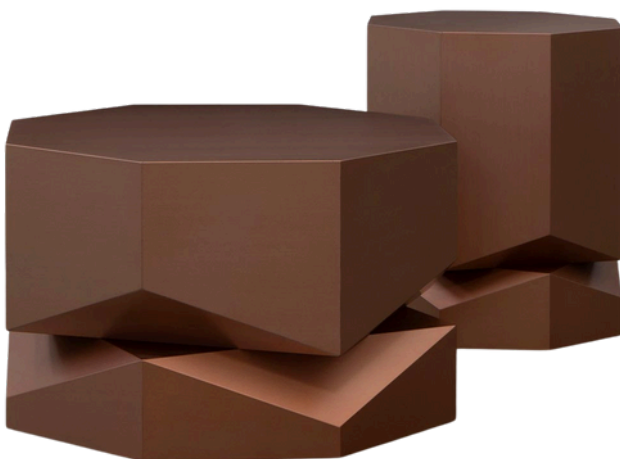
Being in Meda means working within a culture of making. Every idea must pass through the hands of an artisan before becoming a product. This proximity keeps the project honest: it reminds us that precision and soul are inseparable. The dialogue with artisans is exciting because, through the exchange between thought and gesture, one reaches design honesty.

Many of your pieces seem to echo architectural forms. Do you design furniture as small pieces of architecture?

We constantly try to see furniture as architecture. A sideboard can have the logic of a façade, and a table the balance of a structure. Proportions and narrative create objects that silently organize the space.

In a world obsessed with speed and visibility, your work feels quietly precise. What does timelessness mean to you as designers today?

Timeless objects are often discussed, but creating them does not mean resisting time; it means belonging to it in a deeper way. It means avoiding excess, trusting proportion, and honoring the truth of materials. An object is timeless when it seems inevitable—not merely new or old—but naturally integrated into its environment.



Tell us about your material philosophy. How do you select and combine materials to achieve the harmony your pieces are known for?

Materials are our expressive vocabulary, and again, being architects first influences this. Every piece is born from the search for balance: between warmth and clarity, density and lightness, permanence and breath.

Collaboration is central to your studio's ethos. How do you divide or merge your creative roles within the design process?

Our work is based on constant dialogue—sometimes sharing, sometimes friction, but always in motion. We have no rigid roles and let the project guide us. Often, the most effective ideas arise when our respective points of view intersect and merge.

Modern Italian design carries the weight of legends like Gio Ponti, Citterio, and Magistretti. How do you balance respect for that heritage with the need to create something distinctly contemporary?

We do not see heritage as a burden but as an evolving language. The masters taught us clarity, proportion, and measure—values that remain essential. Our task is to interpret them through today's materials, technologies, and sensitivities, without nostalgia or imitation.

When beginning a new project, where do ideas come from architecture, nature, geometry, or perhaps personal memory?

Ideas arise from careful observation: a shadow on the wall, a structure in balance, a tactile memory. Geometry provides order, natural imperfection, and memory emotion. The project is born in the dynamic space between these three forces.







Every designer has a project that teaches them something profound. Is there one work that reshaped how you think about design?

Many of your works show restraint and subtle detail instead of flamboyance. Is restraint a form of expression for you?

Absolutely. Restraint is not a limitation but an expression. By eliminating the superfluous, we let the essential resonate. Silence can be more expressive than noise. It invites one to feel, not just to see.

The dialogue between light and material seems integral to your interiors. How do you choreograph light in your design process?

We consider light as the final material that completes the form. We study how it moves and how it reveals and conceals. In our interiors, light is not decoration but rhythm. It unites geometry and emotion.

What does sustainability mean to you beyond materials? Is it about longevity, craftsmanship, or emotional endurance?

For us, sustainability arises from permanence. From designing objects meant to stay, not to be replaced. It lies in construction precision, material honesty, and the emotional bond between person and object. True sustainability is when a project endures in time and memory.

One such project was the Foosball Table Oskar designed for Vismara. Working on this table, we discovered how complex it is to create an object for play that is functional, elegant, and capable of evoking emotion. We were inspired by the abundant, soft lines of the 1950s and Oskar Schlemmer's theatrical figures, aiming to transform a game into a visual and tactile experience. This project taught us to consider design not only as function but as narrative and sensation. With our first self-produced Echino Collection, a series of tables and sculptures with geometric, faceted volumes, we learned to work with materials like aluminum and glossy metallic finishes, exploring the balance between geometric precision and visual impact. Both projects taught us to see design not only as function but as story, emotion, and sensory experience.

Looking at the global market, where do you think Italian design stands today, and what should it evolve toward in the next decade?

Italian design maintains a rare and unique balance between culture and intuition. Its future depends on its ability to preserve this integrity while embracing new materials, digital craftsmanship, and, above all, moving beyond mere cost and profit logics.

Finally, how would you like people to feel when they live with a Bellavista & Piccini piece? What emotional response completes the design for you?

We would like them to feel a sense of belonging. When an object enters the life of its user and becomes both necessary and invisible, the project is truly complete.



THE MING DYNASTY FOLDING HORSESHOE-BACK ARMCHAIR

The folding horseshoe-back armchair, known in China as the Jiaoyi, first appeared during the Northern Song dynasty (10th–12th century) as a portable seat used by scholars, military officials, and travellers. But it was during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) that the form reached its highest refinement. The Ming version, built in precious hardwoods like Huanghuali and Zitan, transformed a practical folding chair into one of the most recognised symbols of rank and cultivated living.

The Ming Jiaoyi is defined by its continuous horseshoe-shaped top rail, woven seat, narrow legs, and discreet metal mounts that protect the folding mechanism. What appears effortless is the result of advanced joinery, where mortise-and-tenon construction carries the full structure without nails. Its light, balanced proportions reflect the Ming belief that beauty should come from clarity of line and honesty of form.

These chairs travelled with officials on inspections, hunts, and ceremonies. Modern designers worldwide have studied its precision, restraint, and structural logic, looking to Ming furniture for lessons in proportion and longevity. Few early examples survived intact due to the repeated opening, closing, and transportation of folding chairs. This rarity, combined with the use of highly prized hardwood, makes authentic pieces among the most valuable forms of classical Chinese furniture today.

The design's influence has continued well beyond its era. Modern designers worldwide have studied its precision, restraint, and structural logic, looking to Ming furniture for lessons in proportion and longevity. At **Design Diary International**, we consider the Jiaoyi a benchmark of enduring design, where engineering and elegance meet without excess, and where a simple folding chair carries centuries of cultural weight.

Collector's Guide | How to Identify an Authentic Ming Folding Chair

1. **Wood:** Look for Huanghuali (golden, dramatic grain) or Zitan (dark, dense, heavy). These timbers define authentic Ming high-end examples.
2. **Joinery:** Pure mortise-and-tenon structure. No modern screws. Brass or bronze mounts should be hand-cast and slightly irregular.
3. **Proportions:** The silhouette should feel light and balanced. Heavy legs or bulky curves suggest later periods or reproductions.
4. **Back Splat:** Carvings are shallow, controlled, and symmetrical. Deep or overly ornate carving is typically Qing-era or newer.
5. **Patina:** Centuries of use create softened edges, darkened metal, natural shrinkage, and subtle surface movement.
6. **Seat:** Originally rattan or cane. A newer seat is expected, but the frame should show evidence of earlier weaving.
7. **Folding Action:** Should fold with smooth, quiet precision. A true Ming mechanism feels “locked” when opened and stable on the ground.
8. **Provenance:** Genuine examples are rare. Most known chairs have passed through museum collections or major auction houses.





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