



Minaz Ansari

Sanjay Patil – Nesting in Nature

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Sanjay Patil's tryst with architecture began in his early childhood as he soaked up the environs that surrounded him in his birthplace, Nashik. Moving on to formal education in architecture at the Sir JJ College of Architecture in Mumbai, Sanjay returned to his hometown in 1981 to immerse himself into a meaningful and sensitive architectural practice.

Over the years, Sanjay Patil has received many honours from the industry and his projects have been widely published in architectural journals. His greatest reward however continues to be the appreciation and support of his numerous clients who have played a vital role in his approach to architecture. His workspace »Environ Planners« has also evolved into a centre for learning; inspiring, training and providing roots and wings to budding architects from various parts of the country.

»Knowledge sharing is integral to me and has always given me great pleasure and satisfaction. I have always made a conscious effort to share with others the little bit that I have learnt through my work, travel and other hobbies. This book is just an extension of this love for sharing; a humble effort to document some of my works across the last three decades and present it to a wider audience. It is an honest endeavour to make the reader a part of the design process and my passion for my work that is so much a part of my being.«

The book is an attempt to chronicle the architect's journey and delve deeper into his philosophy towards architecture and life, his love for nature and his commitment to architecture. Our journey thus encompasses influences from vernacular architecture, his leaning towards sustainable design, response to nature and his diverse use of courtyards in varying building typologies. It showcases 19 noteworthy projects, which include private residences, restoration projects, educational institutions, resorts and retreats, office spaces including his own workspace and farmhouse.

It also includes essays by Christopher Benninger, Anand Mahindra (chairman and managing director, Mahindra Group) and Anurag Kashyap (principal, BNCA College of Architecture, Pune) providing valuable insights and perceptions about Sanjay Patil's work.

Minaz Ansari is an architect, writer and educator and has worked in the industry for over a decade in various roles. Over the years Minaz Ansari has written for various publications including leading newspapers in the country, architectural journals and other design magazines. She has been studying and analyzing Sanjay Patil's works for the last two decades as a student, an architect and a writer.

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Ritu Sharma is a landscape architect with over ten years of professional experience and active involvement in academics. Besides being a freelance writer since 2008 with her writings featured through various media, she was also associated with India's AEC magazine Indian Architect & Builder (IA&B) for more than 2 years as senior writer. Ritu is currently working as an Assistant Professor with the Department of Landscape Architecture at BNCA, Pune and associated with the BNCA publication cell. She has been working on some of the significant publications initiated, promoted and supported by the institute for the past four years.

A patch of earth, a fragment of sky
Brick and stone, wood and steel
Simple geometry, zen views
Pools of daylight, mounds of green...

Lessons from the past
In a language of the present
Crafted into spaces that embody
Dreams of the souls that house them...

Architecture, it is said, is not one big thing
But many small things put together
in the right measure.



NESTING IN NATURE

SANJAY PATIL

BNCA
PUBLICATION CELL

SUPER
BOOK
HOUSE



NESTING IN NATURE
SANJAY PATIL

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Christopher Charles Benninger

BEYOND THE RIM

Sanjay Patil was born in the small town of Nashik lying comfortably away from the influences of the great metropolises of India. He and his town grew up together into a man and a city. Maturing in a relatively remote environment, Sanjay evolved his own personality and concepts in a setting where few people had ever heard of architecture, much less fretted over the fads and fancies of burgeoning consumerism. Lying just four hours by train up the mountains from Mumbai, the mercantile center of India, where new styles imported from Paris, London and Manhattan tell people what to wear, which label to check and ‘what’s in,’ Nashik awoke gradually to globalization.

This gradual, yet steady, awakening fed the young architect with a variety of commissions without clouding his mind with preconceived follies. Nashik’s location gifted its population a kind of benign neglect and innocence, liberating it from the straight jackets of disruptive, alien glitter and the inane styles influencing India’s Eurocentric metropolises. Deconstructivist, Post Modernist and Critical Regionalist theories and labels, born from frenetic intellectual competition and the

ideological inebriation of the West, were only the dribble of pseudo-intellectuals in India. Alien theories, Mickey Mouse caps, New Age beliefs and Old Spice underarm deodorants, all arrived through media-driven peer group pressures and hot air ad-men, luring youth and tempering the imaginations of Generation X, who wanted to ‘get it right,’ and be ‘with it!’

Sanjay’s imagination was left free to grow on its own; to define itself, to be fluid and to drift in serendipity innocence; maybe never to get homogenized, amalgamated and gelled into the global mould!

In America, the Walt Disney Company perfected something I call ‘imagineering.’ They can design and engineer people’s imaginations! Disney designed, packaged and marketed artificial realities that had never existed, fabricating make-believe realities through animated films. In the 1990’s Disney took their fabricated dreams off the silver screen and brought them into the streets of America. In Disney’s gated communities, people could live the Disney World illusions and fantasies, in place of their own personalities!

The Walt Disney Company and hundreds of



others in Hollywood, in Manhattan, in Milan, Paris, London and Tokyo produced and labeled ‘imaginations’ for people to buy in place of their own life-journeys of self-discovery.

Megalopolis invented hyper-reality products, exchanging boring reality for make-believe experiences. Celebration, the New Urbanist real-estate development in Florida, offers clients an option of cashing in their own imaginations for the virtual reality of a once-upon-a-time imaginary ‘Small American Town.’ The camaraderie of casually chatting with friends on streets and in cafes is replaced with animal friends. Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse, in which life becomes a fable of truths spoken by anthropomorphic cartoons, are placed as fiberglass manikins about the town, some doubling up as trash bins!

In this construct of ‘virtually imagineered minds,’ filled with a hunger for consuming branded dreams, buying Chinese made bric-a-brac, carrying Louis Vuitton and Gucci bags, defacing oneself with Revlon lipstick, and disguising one’s natural aroma with Gillette sprays, an architecture of nothingness has emerged. Glass boxes, gingerbread front

porches, cute little things, decorated facades, all environmentally certified, looking like wood, but made of PVC! Fakery and the artificial permeate the ambiance.

In this construct, where the cultural epicenters are frantically reaching out their octopus-like arms into ever expanding cultural realms, marketing their vapid nothingness through rings and layers, out to peripheries through managers and ads, the world’s imagination is being transformed! In this world of branding, labeling, media and marketing, a new construct of the twentieth-first century imagination has matured. Old myths, fables and folklore have been replaced with contrived and designed imaginary products, responding to imaginary needs. You can now buy your personality, mail-order your inner sense of self, choose a spiritual system on the web, window-shop for smiles and grins! You can SEEM to be whatever you want to BE. You can choose your personae from supermarket displays, and compose your own little you, but all made from pre-imagined, off-the-shelf images and dreams.

Imploding forces gather at the global cultural epicenters, under humongous marketing gravitational forces, leaving free energy floating

randomly out on the far-off edges. In this construct one can see the world of dreaming of millions and billions of human imaginations, within a structure of circles, each drawn out around the others in concentric rings, all influenced by ideas emanating out from the center.

As one moves from the outer circles back inward towards the center, the ‘imagineering of the mind’ becomes more intense and constraining! One’s imagination becomes a prison from which there is no escape. In this construct, the center is an intense, all-enveloping molten drug, generated by workaholic zombies, driven by man-eat-man competition, ruthless greed and rampant desires; all driving fabricated ideas and newly contrived concepts; all competing to be the next ‘big seller!’

As one nears the center of this cultural meltdown there is a high density of ambitious young designers, elbowing one another, running toward the center, clambering over each other and clawing their way to dominance, only for the few winners to be branded and broadcast back out, back into the vast consumer markets of the mind. Every season needs a ‘new concept’ leaving aside piles of failures, last year’s worn-out fads, all lying in heaps beside the alter of fame and wealth!

Fashion houses and ‘style studios’ architects, elite galleries, design journals, architectural critics, documentary films, and ‘the design business’ are all branding what’s right and rubbishing what’s out of style - wrong!

The center is obstreperously dictating and directing its commands of what is good and what is bad, out to the furthest reaches, ring by ring, across cultures and economic systems.

Finally, like the waves of a stone thrown into a still pond, the ripples, somewhere beyond the last rim of the fashionable, disappear into the vast universe of the real. In that objective reality beyond the edge, Sanjay Patil grew his own imagination, design concepts and his architecture!

In this center-periphery construct, a nucleus of hyperinteractive global mega-metropolises lie at the molten core, the burning hot nucleus of competition, screaming and yelling through advertisements, film, music, fiction, news, fashion, art, poetry and politically correct thinking to dominate the world’s boundaries of questioning, thinking and even of ‘imagining’! Around this center, secondary clusters catalyzing secondary circles feed a sphere of mirrored fashions.

Yet a step further out, another imaginary loci of the old port cities of Miami, Caracas, Rio and Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Durban, Mombasa, Istanbul, Cairo, Mumbai, Colombo, Chennai, Kolkata, Rangoon, Singapore, Jakarta, Sydney, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Osaka form a third imaginary concentric circle of influence, sucking its ideas out from the center and vomiting their own magic spells on thinking within their own hinterlands of thought and creativity.

Provincial cultural centers, within the forth ring, like Pune, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow and Ahmedabad in India, lie still further out towards a frayed imaginary edge, yet vibrating with half-baked western theories, principles, axioms and ideas, with less fanaticism and intensity. Yet they still spit out the clichés, ideas and concepts they’re told are true and beautiful, returning home at night to their Apple Macs, Heineken beer and plagiarized television serials, wearing faded jeans and baseball caps turned backwards.



Then further out into the vast archipelago of smaller towns, where an occasional fake Gucci or counterfeit Levis will do, in a fifth ring, still another faint circle catches only small beeps of the hallucinating correct way to ‘be,’ and finally the energy dissipates off into the rustic villages, and into the wildernesses of mankind’s imaginations, where an ancient rhythm, with its own primordial beat, fills the air with a beautiful emptiness. This emptiness is called civilization!

As one moves out, further and further, over one edge and across to another, jumping from rim to rim, the entrapping knowledge and the magnetic pull of the dominating center dissipates and finally disappears, waning into a wonderful blissfulness. In this emptiness and peace the mind is free, and imaginations wander here and there in the forests of creative nothingness. There are no templates, icons, masters, journals, critics or great universities telling little minds what they should think as they mature, and telling people ‘who they should be.’

It is here, out on ‘the edge’ of the mumbo jumbo world of fashion that Sanjay Patil evolved, in relative freedom from the disruptions of fads, styles and fancies; free to swim in the fluid context of his projects and the real needs of his patrons.

I see in this document, in this archive of Sanjay Patil’s life work, the ‘sketches’ of his own imaginary journey to self-discovery. His design process was born from small cottage projects, re-modeling houses and interior designs, drawing him towards craftspeople, drawing him to local materials and drawing him into the limited techniques and methods of a native vernacular.

In this microcosm he learned of stone walls,

tilled roofs, wood beams, the countryside landscape and its rustic nuances. He knew to use the courtyards he grew up in as ‘enclosing spaces’ and not as rubber stamped ‘ethnic architecture.’ He imagined ‘floating through spaces,’ and ‘sailing across surfaces’; he invented objects looking at one another, rather than engaging each other in some theoretical preconceived, superficially contrived paradigm. In Patil’s work there are no articulated, velvet boxes copied from Europe, blemishing his repertoire of thoughts. There are no paramodern clichés yelling and screaming.

This struggle between freedom of imagination and disruptive imagineering, is where the Indian mindset struggles; each one of us is situated somewhere along the influence line between the molten core and the blissful edge.

The core is beckoning us like an imaginary beautiful siren; calling out to us to migrate, tempting us to copy, asking us to do advanced foreign degrees, and luring us to jump into the fire of no return, perhaps surviving it all in some remote Texas suburb, or in an ethnic neighborhood of Manchester.

Out on the edge there is the music of the wind in leaves and rustling branches; the lullaby of birds singing full throated; the aroma of flowers... real flowers, in full bloom; with the clouds forming vast, lost patterns in the skies; and the satisfaction that one can BE themselves and not SEEM to be what they are not!

Page 10,11: The champa court in the architect’s farmhouse.
Left: Built form enveloped by elements of nature at the Sonawane Residence.

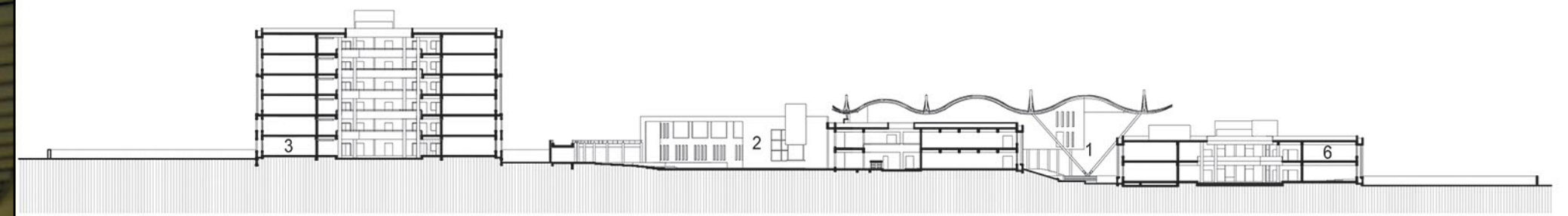




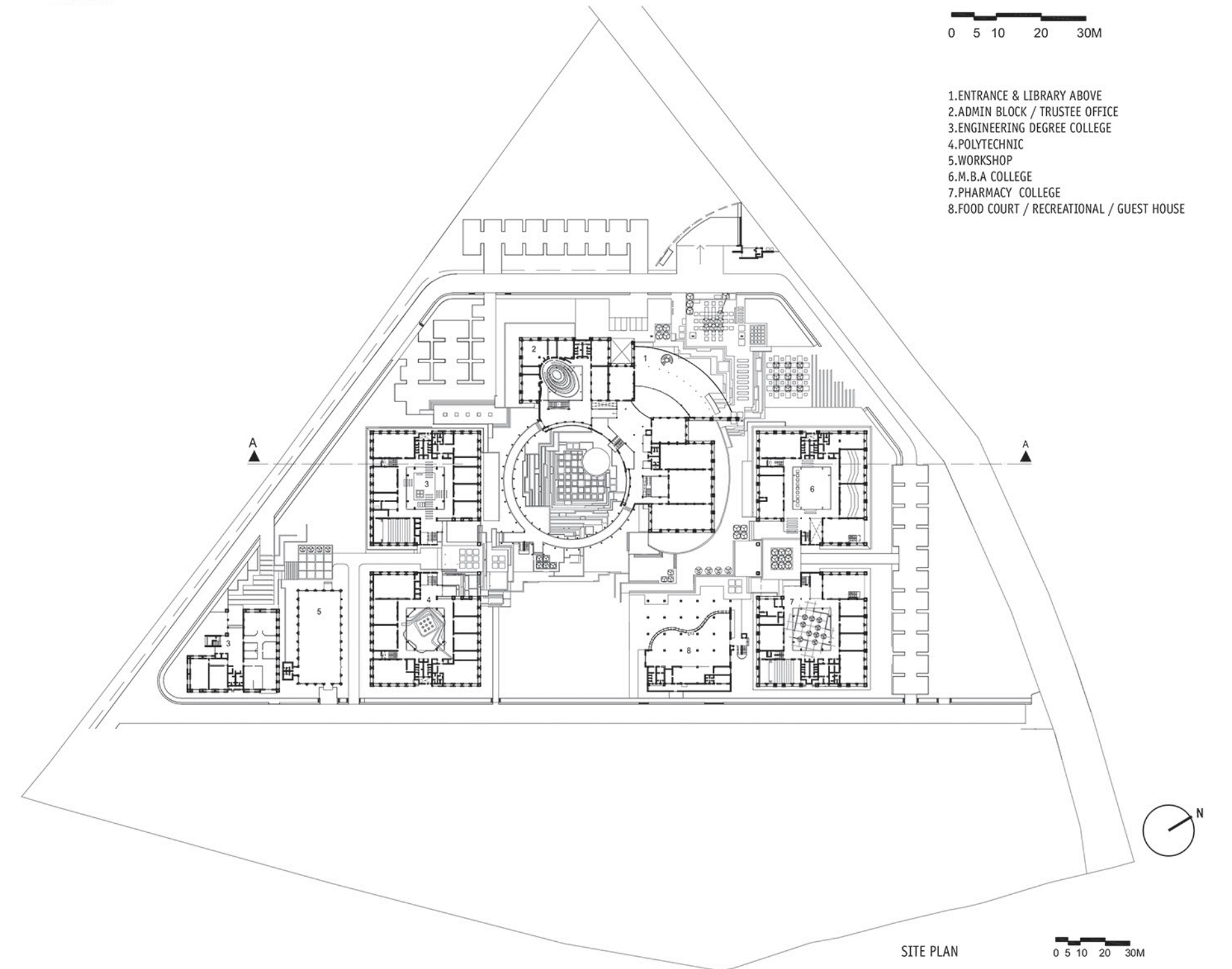
Page 150: The elevated circular walkway connecting the modules.
Page 151: The accentuated column connections enhance the structure of the bridge.
Left : The cafeteria block extending into the outdoor spaces
Right: The vocabulary of simple frames find an echo in the campus.







SECTION AA

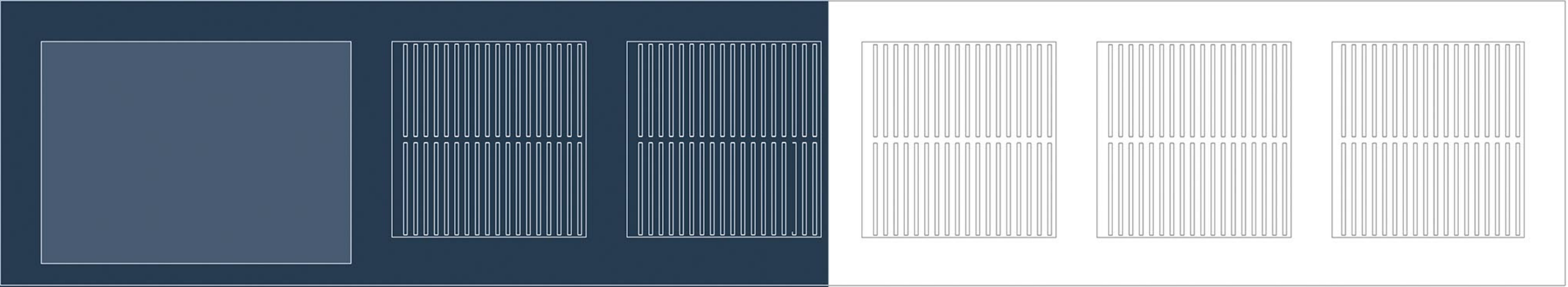


- 1. ENTRANCE & LIBRARY ABOVE
- 2. ADMIN BLOCK / TRUSTEE OFFICE
- 3. ENGINEERING DEGREE COLLEGE
- 4. POLYTECHNIC
- 5. WORKSHOP
- 6. M.B.A COLLEGE
- 7. PHARMACY COLLEGE
- 8. FOOD COURT / RECREATIONAL / GUEST HOUSE

SITE PLAN

Left: The lobby and library bathed in diffused light

BHUJBAL KNOWLEDGE CITY



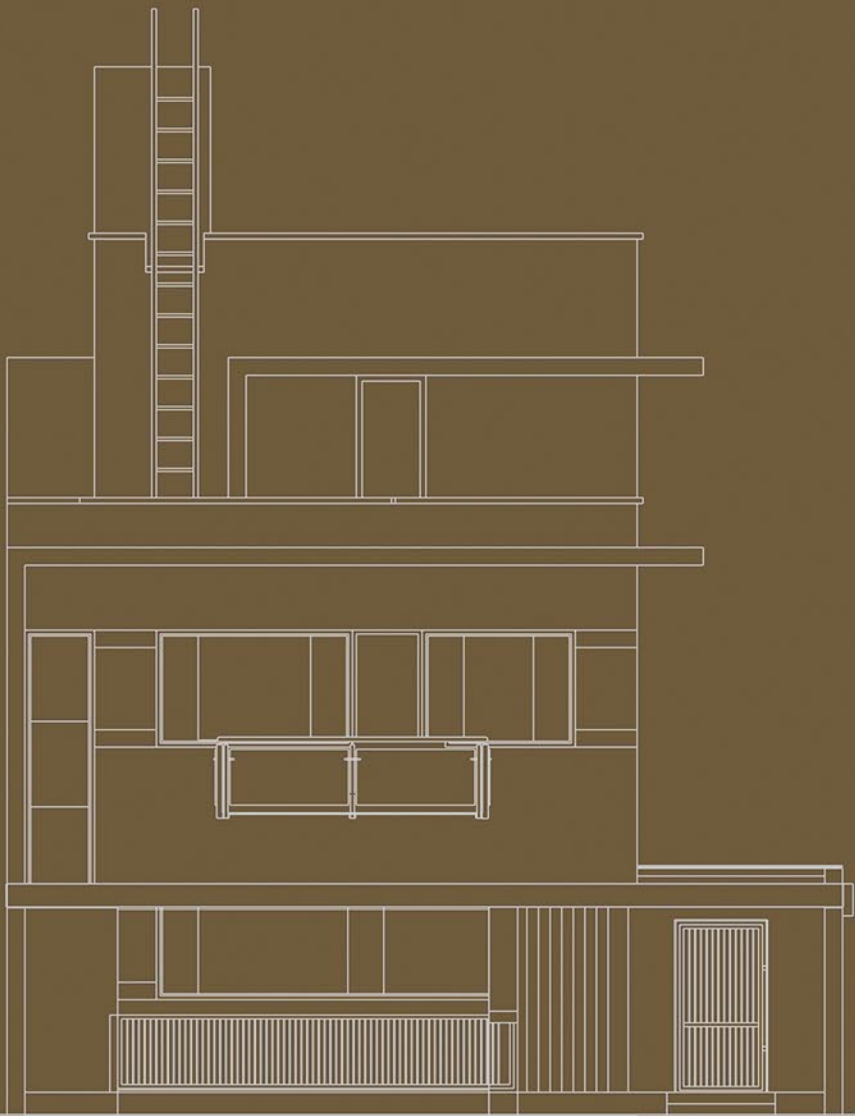
Above: Vertical louvers in square modules define a vocabulary of design.

The design of an institutional building campus can have a profound impact on the young minds of the students who use the facility. The campus of Bhujbal Knowledge City is one such example of excellence in structural engineering and the ability to develop a novel design approach in order to offset the project time constraints. Situated on a thirty three acre parcel of land, the Bhujbal Knowledge City is a stimulating environment for innovative ideas to be nurtured.

Built on a fast track schedule, the campus reveals a vocabulary of design that uses modular planning, scale and height variation to interpret the needs of the design brief. A massive organic curve forms the roof of the entrance to the campus, a suitable metaphor to the vision of the institute and its goals. A thoughtfully designed structural system holds up massive spans, generating rhythm and dynamism. An example of innovation in engineering, it is meant to serve as an inspiration to the budding engineers in the campus. A curved north facing glazed wall bathes the lobby and the library beyond with diffused daylight.

Beyond this, the campus is composed of orthogonal modules spread in a simple grid across the triangular site. The various departments are located in these pods each with a central focal

WORKSPACE FOR GREEN SPACE REALTORS



Every project provides its own set of challenges. The measure of good design is in seeing these challenges as opportunities and converting them into merits of the project. This design for a developer's office space was one such new challenge, where the project constraints have been used positively to produce sustainable architecture.

The office is designed on a compact site located in the midst of the new business center of Nashik. The site housed an existing building shell built to accommodate multiple dwellings at each level with a common boundary wall. The client expressed a leaning towards sustainable design which extends from his personal liking to his business philosophy.

Being totally in sync with the architect's outlook, the plan started out with an attempt to salvage the entire structure. However, with several constraints due to change of use, finally the existing basement was retained and remodeled to accommodate a water tank, hence reducing on energy used to demolish and rebuild the space.

The design builds its way around the very basic philosophy of 'respect for environment' and finds its answers in amazing ways. Simplicity in space planning clubbed with openness and vertical

Above: The main entrance defined by wooden pergolas and splashes of green.

connections, makes the compact volume appear generous.

The main entrance moves along the axis of the garden wall meticulously patterned in fly-ash and terra cotta wire-cut bricks, creating shadows on its surface which help avoid heat gain. Open grid pavement for the parking spots allows the ground to breathe. Doors, windows and furniture are made out of reclaimed wood. The visual and tactile feel of natural materials adds warmth and comfort.

Daylight filtering through the foliage of existing trees reduces glare. The common building edge houses a stretch of courtyards within, providing natural light and visual relief to the cabin spaces. Mechanical turbo ventilators help extract the hot air and generate a stack effect.

The existing basement is used for rain water harvesting. This water is recycled through pipes under the floor surface to provide radiant cooling to the building. Modern and traditional methods of passive cooling are harmoniously integrated through the design. Use of LED lights reduces the energy consumption to a great extent. Low VOC paints and adhesives eliminate health hazards to the occupants and the site team.

While being functionally distinct, this building tells a story of how sincerity of purpose can find its way through every constraint; that sustainability can be infused into every design and good intent always finds a route to its fulfilment.

Right: A tranquil water body at the rear end, adding to the evaporative cooling.





Above left and right: Vertical connections open out the compact spaces.
Right: The single stringer staircase with a mural creating a focal point.



Left: The board room and beyond.
Right: Open office layout allows daylight to penetrate.



