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THE ATYPICAL DESIGNER

*At the crossroads of architecture and product design lies a plethora of possibilities that gives rise to unique objects, spaces, experiences and opportunities. **Nishita Kamdar** writes exclusively for **mondo*arc india|STIR** outlining the growing need for a complementary approach to design, and discusses the process of creation with a set of eminent Indian designers.*

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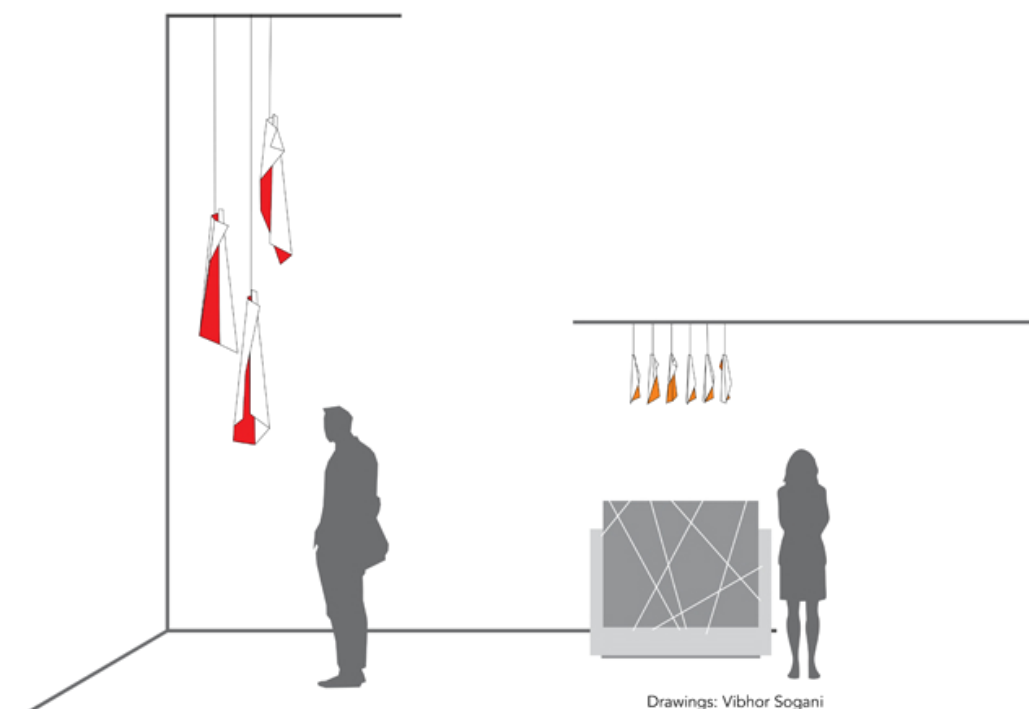
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VIBHOR SOGANI STUDIO

www.vibhorsogani.com



Pic: Shubra Mudgal

VIBHOR SOGANI

Delhi based industrial designer Vibhor Sogani's studio engages itself in a wide range of creative graphic, retail and product design projects. Being one of the foremost light designers in India, his lights border into lighting installations, and are an eclectic mix of delicate handcraft and industrial production techniques.

FOLD LIGHT SERIES

What made you try your hand at product design?

Frequent travels with my father who was a geophysicist exposed me to diverse landscapes, rural scenarios and cultures, thus, creating mindless and imaginary stuff amused me. My formal design education at NID integrated design with my way of life and thinking, giving me a clear sense of direction. It is here that I was exposed to various design disciplines, and invariably product design found me.

What is the role of a product designer in today's world?

A product designer has to play a multi-faceted role - from understanding the project or product to creating a tangible 3D object that has a definitive function. In the process one has to thoughtfully combine technology, ergonomics, aesthetic, function and other factors while leading it up to the market. To be able to design successfully

each time, the designer has to literally get under the skin of the client/subject and comprehend the requirements in a pertinent context.

The journey of creation is always a bit of a roller coaster ride. There is usually a long phase of deliberation and even frustration, but that is what leads to creation; the joy of which is immense.

Challenges never lie in the process of design and development; it is the complexities attached to managing people, administration, finances, or 'the business of design' that is a challenge.

What serves as the key inspiration behind the 'Fold' light series?

The 'Fold' light series was recently launched at the Light and Building exhibition in Frankfurt. It derives inspiration from the traditional Japanese paper-folding art of Origami. Sometimes when form takes centre stage, geometry



Pic: Shailan Parker

gives way to a viewing experience that is akin to meditation.

The unique feature here is that each form is crafted out of a singular sheet of stainless steel, portraying the folding process of origami by creating a diverse set of seemingly unfinished forms marked by minimalism.

The series is a visual representation of dynamic possibilities, where each of the products can be looked at as being part of a continuum. Each fold emerges out of meticulous thought and completely alters the resultant form and its visual meaning. On adding light in the inner folds, these mirror-finished pieces with copper leafing form an ocular symphony that can transform into a centrepiece.

In general, life around us poses varied trigger points that are inspirational. My work is influenced and abstracted from elements around me and a literal translation has never worked for me; I look for layers and for the abstract.

What is the process you follow from conceptualisation of the idea to production?

The best way for me to start a project is to sit back and enjoy the flight of imagination, which I derive through solitude in or outside my studio. My efforts are minimal and simple because I believe 'less is more'. I feel this tends to make the outcome more timeless and not confined to an era or any particular trend.

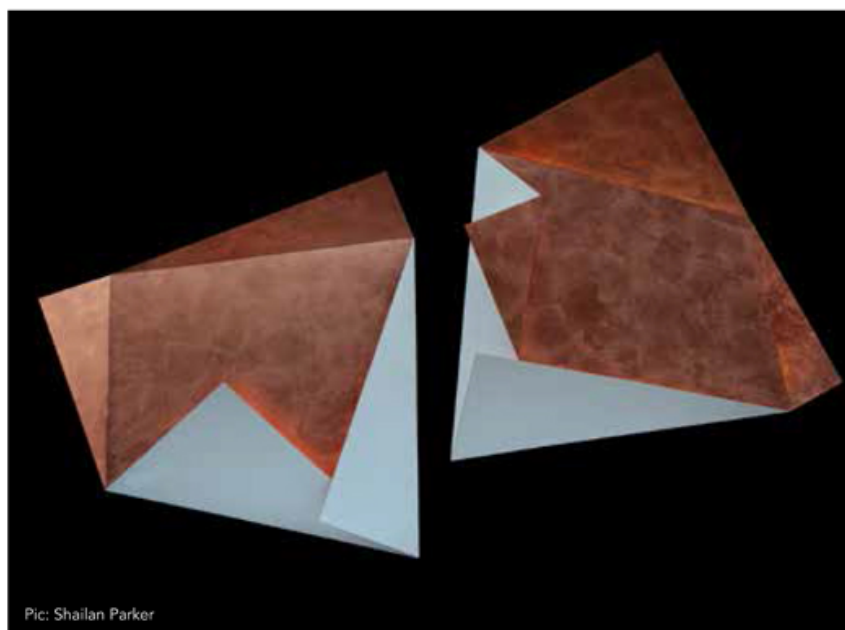
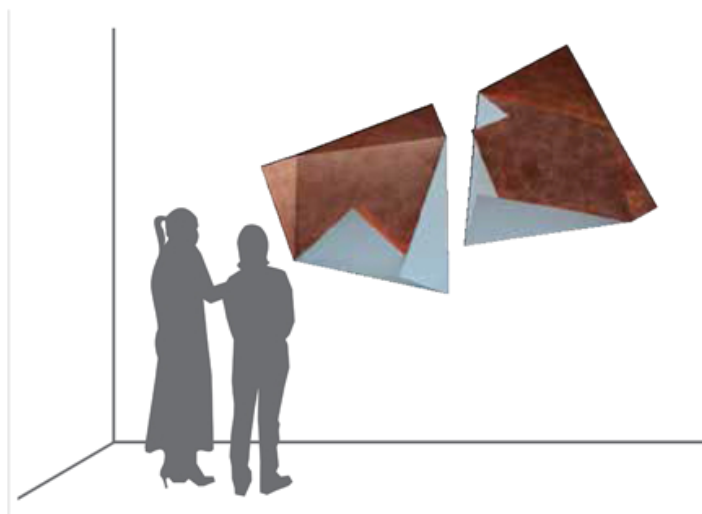
Conceptualisation often does not result in the final design. The process involves observing the product from multiple aspects and continuously tweaking its scale, materiality and application so that it attains a disparate personality and optimum production quality. Often, scale models are created to better understand the form-function relationships. Available technology also plays a critical role in the final stages of decision-making. The simplicity and ease of this aspect can lead to consistency in results thereafter.

In retrospect, should/can architects design products? Should product designers design spaces/architecture?

Many great architects have successfully and effectively dabbled in product design - Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Zaha Hadid, Norman Foster, and Ron Arad, to name a few. It goes to show that the realm of design is colossal. Of course, the diversity of design domains and the larger intent of design education do not restrict the process of design to any one domain. Training adds to expertise, but often, the multi-disciplinary nature of design works successfully. While the fundamentals of design are similar in each domain, its details and execution differ. A certain degree of work needs to be done and time needs to be dedicated to experience the production of design ideas, be it a product or a space. Conceptualization may be inter-disciplinary, but execution is not. Thus, architects can design products and product designers can design spaces as long as the quality of work is not compromised.



Pic: Vibhor Sogani



Pic: Shailan Parker