



FOLIO 6

THE OPENINGS WE FRAME

inscape

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERIOR DESIGNERS



Of Songlines and Openings

In *Of Songlines and Leaping Sails*, Edgar Demello traces beginnings, not conclusions. Uluru and the Sydney Opera House stand as two very different points of departure: one rooted in deep time and ritual, the other in bold design and modern ambition. Together, they mark an opening into a journey—across land, culture, and imagination—where drawing becomes a way of setting out, not arriving.

The
Openings
We
Frame

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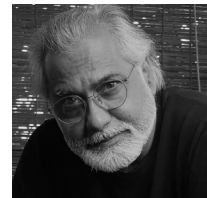


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Foreword

Dear Readers,

As the Indian Institute of Interior Designers celebrates its Golden Jubilee, we find ourselves in the midst of a truly remarkable term, one filled with energy, vision, and a renewed commitment to design excellence.

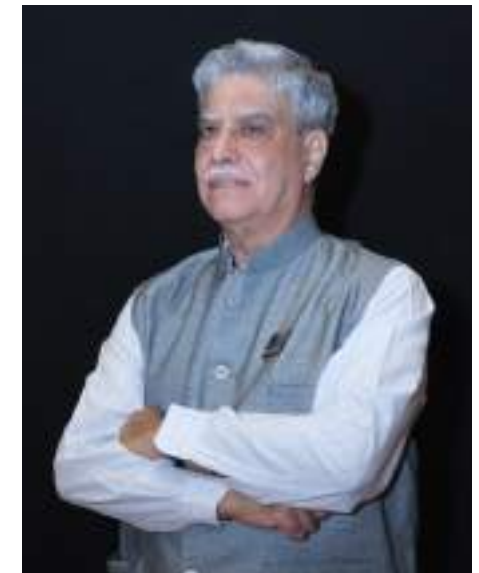
From the National Convention to the Awards platform, this has been a year of landmark events and meaningful collaborations. Yet, among all of these, the IIID Inscape Golden Jubilee Rainbow Series stands apart, a collectible, coffee table anthology that will remain one of the most thoughtful souvenirs of this era. Each folio in the series focuses on a deceptively simple design element. Yet, under the hands of a powerful editorial team and a visionary lead editor, each one unfolds into a layered meditation on our profession, our values, and our evolving responsibilities as designers.

“The Openings We Frame”, the sixth in this series, is no exception. It explores a topic that, on the surface, seems purely architectural. But as the essays reveal, the concept of “openings” extends far beyond walls and windows. It is about light and air, yes, but also about possibility, inclusion, empathy, and the very attitude with which we engage the world, a simple idea, elevated into something timeless and profound.

The editorial team deserves heartfelt appreciation for curating such depth and perspective. The contributors, some of the most brilliant voices in the design community, including celebrated architects, educators, artists, and thinkers, have brought nuance and spirit to every page.

As President of IIID, I am proud of the clarity of purpose this series reflects. It is more than documentation, it is an ongoing dialogue about what design can mean and what it must now strive to do. I hope readers, especially younger professionals and students, will explore not just the pages of this folio but the larger Inscape platform and website, which offers dynamic engagement with each theme.

Let this not be a souvenir that sits still, but one that travels with us, provoking thought, opening conversations, and guiding the next 50 years of IIID with the same spirit in which it was born.



AR. SAROSH WADIA
PRESIDENT - IIID

Editor's Note



JABEEN ZACHARIAS
EDITOR, IIID INSCAPE

OPEN SESAME!

1981 – Second year, B.Arch. Design studio. Prof. Narayanan, the youngest in the department, sat at my drawing board, staring at our first residential project. Well, I was a topper. My design was good. I knew he wouldn't have much to critique. So, I was surprised and slightly amused when he asked, "Why did you place this window here, and not anywhere else?" How do you answer that? The room needed windows. Two, for cross ventilation, placed on different walls. What more was there to say?

He then, quite dramatically, brought his hands together, forming a rectangle with his fingers, the way a film director would border a shot or check a set. He asked me to look through it, out of the window of the studio, panning it gently to open up a vista of what I could see differently. What unfolded in that moment was a quiet revelation.

Framing is important, to bring us and leave us with the right perspectives. Sometimes, all it takes is a small shift in how we open up.

Openings are not just voids, cut-outs for air or light. They are **decisions**. They are **positions**. Positions we as designers take, on the choice of what people should see, and what they should not. What they should hear, and what must stay unheard. What they should feel, know, ignore, or question. It is an overwhelming role we hold, **playing God in many ways**.

Remember how the four lines we first drew as kids would remain a rectangle, a meaningless box, until we put that door at the centre and windows on the sides? Suddenly, it would bloom into a beautiful house. Yes, those lines, the frames – those openings, are what still differentiate between a dead/half-dead coffin space and a happy habitable home. As designers, we are the puppet masters drawing those lines for a family, a school, a street, a city. Lines along which people will move, look, relate, be conscious, conscientious, robotic, or aloof. **The line decides**.

Shankaracharya said, "You cannot draw a line without changing the universe".

For me, the converse is what is really exciting. With the right lines, we can change the Universe. Open up spaces, lives, and surrounds, for a collaborative, holistic tomorrow.

Often it escapes us that windows are not only to be looked out of but also to be looked into. Framing an opening is also about how much of our lives we allow the world to view & witness. Privacy, yes. But to what extent, and to what end?



Credits: Wikimedia Commons

Can we truly cut ourselves off from the grid of people, in the name of security? Gated compounds and secure homes, as proudly and boldly advertised from the blissful-looking billboards, are the new norm? A world where we have a 'privileged inside' and an 'outcast outside.' Properly sealed with no openings? A new definition of community, divided by walls that refuse to open? How do we handle that quotient? A question mark that still hangs out there for answers.

The openings we offer to the outside world are reflections of our empathy, our transparency, and the courage we carry within. They measure how willing we are to interact, to be seen, to be accountable, to belong to a shared human landscape.

Well, dear Readers, **Folio 6 of Inscape, The Openings We Frame**, brings an array of viewpoints for you to consider. The connection which Architect Pau inspires, the conversation that Habeeb Khan gives insight, the issues which Rohan talks about, the camera lens by which Avantika innovates, the collage which Shilpa Gore presents, and the unique threshold which Matharoo explores, each is about crafting such frames. Not just as architectural elements, but as attitudes. It is a call we take. A choice we make. To be open. To open up openings

In 2006, at the New York University library, I happened to reach for a pale-yellow book, one of those by the Dalai Lama. I can't remember its name, but I've never forgotten the lines in its preface.

*"I stand by the door, I see the garden.
I stay by the window, and I see the world.
I sit on my chair and close my eyes,
I see the entire universe."*

That has stayed with me ever since. A quiet puzzle.

How is it that we see most with our eyes closed? How is the fullest frame found in the stillness within? There's something in that thought, something powerful. The most open place isn't always the door or the window.

Sometimes, it is **us**. Sometimes, the opening we need to frame is **inward. Open Sesame!**



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Sarosh Wadia

In this milestone moment for IID, this foreword frames not just a publication, but a purpose: to reflect, reimagine, and reframe the future of design.

04 Editor's Note

Jabeen Zacharias

Inviting you to rethink every door and window, not just as design features, but as choices that shape how we see, connect, and belong.

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Curated research tracing pivotal moments where openings brought design to life through cultural resonance, artistic innovation, and timeless flair.

Framing Openings: The Double Twist

Pau Millet on Thresholds and Transitions

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN PAU MILLET LÓPEZ (PM) AND JABEEN ZACHARIAS (JZ), EDITOR- IIIID INSCAPE AT MUMBAI, 2 JUNE 2025.

Few spatial experiences rival the challenge and inspiration of the Sagrada Família, and for four pivotal years, Pau Millet López was at the heart of its technical leadership. As Chief Architectural Head of the Technical Office, he worked closely with master builders, artisans, and digital designers to help bring Gaudí's extraordinary vision to life. This once-in-a-lifetime role left a lasting imprint on Pau's design philosophy: a deep respect for craft, a fascination with geometry, and a commitment to collaborative innovation. Today, Pau brings that spirit to his work as Founder and CEO of Double Twist, a design and architecture firm that thrives at the crossroads of tradition and technology. Trained as an architect and with over 25 years of experience across design, construction, and project management, he also founded MIRAG Arquitectura i Gestió in 1999 to explore new architectural languages rooted in curiosity and care.

Pau is a passionate advocate of teamwork as the engine of design excellence. His leadership fosters an environment where ideas flow freely, and every team member's creativity contributes to a shared vision. For him, architecture is not a solo pursuit; it's a dialogue between minds, materials, and meaning.



“Walls do not define spaces, openings do.” This simple truth sits quietly at the heart of Pau’s work, where light, memory, and human presence weave through thresholds, frames, and transitions. In this rare and deeply reflective conversation, Pau, architect, educator, and former chief of the technical office for the Sagrada Família, invites us into his design world, where the visible and the intangible meet.

From childhood hallways in Gràcia to spiralling towers in Barcelona, from the ethical dilemmas of housing to the unseen power of climate-conscious openings, Pau speaks of design not as a static form, but as a living dialogue between past and future, body and space, self and society. In an era of fast builds and fleeting visions, this interview offers something else entirely: a pause. A place to listen. To consider that every opening we create may also be an invitation: to feel, to connect, to remember, to aspire.

All Images and Drawings courtesy: Pau Millet

JZ: Architect Pau, as we begin this conversation for Inscape on the ‘Openings We Frame’, my first question to you would be, what comes to mind when you hear the word ‘Openings’?

PM: The first thing that comes to mind is connection. It’s the possibility to access and connect different ambiances, ecosystems, people, activities, and even memories. I think it reflects something very human, our natural curiosity to know what’s on the other side. We want to connect with others. We are, after all, social beings. So, we need doors, openings, corridors, things that link us with the people and the world around us.

JZ: What a lovely response. Can you recall the first time you thought about openings in a special or meaningful way? Perhaps a memory from your childhood, something that may have shaped your later understanding or thoughts?

PM: Well, going back to my childhood, we lived in a small flat, not particularly dramatic in terms of design, but I remember that opening of a corridor vividly. Barely a metre wide, it connected all the rooms, my sisters’, my brother’s, my parents’. That narrow space became our universe. It was where we played, argued, laughed; it linked everyone who mattered in my little world. It wasn’t just circulation, it was life opening up and happening.

Then there’s another memory, from a modest row house we had in the mountains. It had a simple window with curtains my mother had sewn herself. That window was my portal into an outside world, where I discovered the joy of friendship and connection. Friends would call out through it, “Come on, let’s go play!”, and we’d spend entire days on the street, returning only when my mother called us back for meals. Both these openings, very simple memories, had a deep impact on me.

JZ: Could you also tell us how you got into Architecture? What sparked your interest in design, perhaps during childhood or through your education?

PM: Good question. I’ll be honest, when you’re asked to choose what to study, you’re often too young to truly understand the weight of that decision. In Spain, your university admission depends on your final school marks, and at 16 or 17, I think the focus should really be on growing as a person, on nurturing your soul and your sense of self, not just your grades.

I had decent marks, not exceptional, and I was curious about many things, history, maths, physics. So I made a list. My first choice was mathematics. My second was architecture. I remember telling my parents, “I think I’ll like it... but I’m not sure.” And that felt honest. But quite soon, I realised that architecture was exactly what I needed. It felt like a beautiful meeting point of everything I cared about, history, art, science, creativity, and social purpose. It made sense of my curiosity.

And maybe just as important, I found my people. From day one, I had a circle of friends who made me feel like I belonged. That changed everything.

JZ: So, all those subjects you were interested in, history, maths, physics, eventually came together in architecture. Looking back, do you feel it was a calling? As if someone, or something, guided you towards this path?

PM: You know, when I was younger, I didn’t believe in that sort of thing. It felt too abstract, too poetic. But over time, I’ve come to think that maybe some things do happen for a reason. Maybe that’s why I’m here today. There were moments, like meeting a mayor on a plane, which somehow led me to La Sagrada Familia, that felt like more than coincidence. Things just aligned. I was the first architect in my family, with no background in the field, yet now it feels like this was always meant to be.



Every opening in the Sagrada is a question, and the light is its answer. Photo by Berk Ozdemir

JZ: Destiny found you for a very definite purpose. On that note, could you share a bit about your core philosophy or approach towards your Architectural and Design practice?

PM: For me, and I feel this more deeply as I grow, architecture is about shaping the world we live in. It's a chance to improve life for others. So we must work not for our egos, but for the community, people, the environment, culture, and context.

I believe the project shapes the process. Decisions evolve alongside the work. It's not always the most efficient path, but it allows for reflection. Complexity builds, demands rise, and often, better solutions emerge. I always say: if we finish a project having solved problems without creating new ones, then we've done well.

At its heart, architecture is about aligning space and knowledge with purpose, and doing it collaboratively, with care.



The Mercat del Peix Research Centre in Barcelona, a winner of an international competition, features two net-positive buildings focused on planetary well-being.

JZ: That integrated philosophy is powerful. But in practical terms, how do you ensure the interiors speak the same language as the architecture throughout a project?

PM: Whenever we start a project, no matter the scale, the interior is just as important as the form, exterior, or landscape. Early on, we create a document called the Look and Feel. It's a conceptual guide covering construction techniques, materials, colours, textures, and ambience, the full sensory experience. This becomes our compass. It keeps the project coherent and intentional, grounding every decision in that initial vision. It also helps clients, especially when we're not designing every interior detail. The Look and Feel gives them a strong foundation.

Ideally, the interior designer is involved from the start. When that collaboration begins early, the project flows better, and finishes stronger, because the dialogue between architecture and interiors is built in from the beginning.



Every point inside offers at least three views out, revealing a hidden richness no floor plan can show.

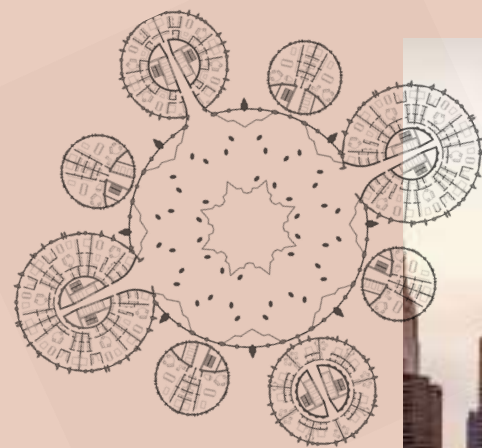


A building within a building- The Funeral Home in Barcelona- where soft openings of light and space honour the past while gently ushering in a new purpose.

JZ: IILD, as you know, puts a core emphasis on Interior Spaces and Design. How is the general perception of architecture and interior design viewed in education and practice in your country?

PM: In Barcelona, our architectural education is very holistic. We're taught to see architecture as one integrated whole, not divided into design, construction, interiors, or structure. Everything is connected.

That's why, in our culture, it's hard to separate interior design from architecture, they're deeply intertwined. Over time, we've come to see that the richness of interior decisions often shapes the success of a project. From the façade to the furniture, the thinking must be unified.



In 1908, two American businessmen sought Antoni Gaudí's designs for a grand New York hotel. Gaudí envisioned Hotel Attraction, a stunning arrangement of nine towers, blending architectural beauty and symbolism of global unity. Though never built, his detailed sketches remain, symbolising a visionary project that could have reshaped Manhattan's skyline.



Casa at LAmetlla del Vallès opens not to the street, but to the forest, where each carefully framed opening draws light, calm, and nature into daily life.

JZ: Let us shift focus to the main theme of this folio, ‘The Openings We Frame’. When you design openings in a space, what is the most important key consideration for you?

PM: For me, an opening is a threshold, a moment of transition between two distinct atmospheres. It’s not just about aesthetics, but about what someone feels as they move through it. There’s a conceptual layer, but also technical demands. Openings often separate contrasting needs, like noise and silence, or different climates, and we have to resolve those precisely. In a narrow space, we’re addressing acoustic, thermal, and spatial challenges all at once. It really comes down to understanding both sides of the opening, and designing that in-between space with care and thoughtfulness.

JZ: Are there any particular projects where you reimagined the concept of an “opening” in a surprising way so that the threshold could give a different transition or perception to the users?



PM: Some of the most surprising ideas came from two unbuilt projects: The Challenge New York and the Icon Project in Barcelona. In New York, we wanted to move away from the typical “beehive” feeling of high-rise living. So, we designed an external skeleton with grouped openings that organised the building into vertical clusters, each spanning three floors. These clusters acted like small neighbourhoods stacked on top of each other, bringing a sense of community into the vertical experience.

Barcelona’s Icon Project explored the geometry of openings. We used hyperboloids to transform round apertures into dynamic, volumetric projections. These weren’t just aesthetic, they created internal air chambers that improved climate control, especially important in a retrofitted building with limited height. The façade became more than a skin; it became a system. As for surprises, some companies now create hyper-realistic windows that replay filmed views of a day. But personally, I’m uneasy with that. I believe reality is something we need to face and learn to live with.

A vertical landscape shaped by Gaudí’s spirit, Challenge NY blurs the lines between structure, sky, and soil.

JZ: Climate and temperature, health and well-being are central to global conversations today. In that context, what role can openings play? So many buildings now have glass façades, yet they feel sealed, with no real breeze, daylight, or sense of time. Are we losing something vital in how we frame our openings?

PM: That’s one of our biggest challenges. Openings aren’t just about light or access, they’re thresholds between atmospheres. You can’t solve them with a single-layer fix. They need depth, intention, and awareness. We should feel the difference between a space in Mumbai, Barcelona, or Scandinavia. Climate, culture, even time of day shapes how a space breathes. Yet too often, we see sealed, identical spaces everywhere, disconnected from context.

Openings should adapt, seasonally, daily, even hourly. They can filter light, air, sound, even time. With material innovation and thoughtful design, I believe they’ll evolve into layered, responsive elements that shape how we truly inhabit space. Technology, paired with vernacular wisdom, can help. Openings must move beyond flat surfaces to become deeper, more adaptive skins. That’s the future I see.



From simple to complex geometries, the stained glass windows and metal explorations inside La Sagrada Família transform its openings into revelations of light, meaning, and wonder. Photo by Lars Knudsen



Sunlight through Sagrada’s stained glass creates an opening not of stone, but of light, time, and shifting colour; a silent portal into the divine. Photo by Leksandr Kuzmenko

JZ: Is there a particular opening, maybe even just one, that has really left a lasting impression on you? Something that’s stayed with you or shaped your thinking?

PM: Yes, absolutely! At home, I still live in a 120-year-old house with its original front door, solid timber and very heavy. Opening it takes effort, and over time, that act has come to symbolise arrival. Each time, I feel a deep sense of coming home.

But the most powerful experience of an opening was at the Sagrada Família. I entered from below, in a glass lift built for the Pope. As it rose, light from the stained glass slowly poured in, a vertical journey from darkness into colour. Inside, the light shifts with the seasons, reds deepen in summer, blues soften in winter. It’s not a typical doorway, but for me, it’s one of the most extraordinary openings: a portal shaped by light, time, and silence.

JZ: That’s astonishing. Could you tell us a bit about how that opportunity came to you? How were you appointed to be involved with the Sagrada Família?

PM: It’s a bit of a fairytale. Through a surprising turn of events, I was introduced to Xavi Miralles, then-CEO of the Sagrada Família. He initially had questions about architectural labour issues. Honestly, I was just hoping for some free tickets for my family to visit the temple! But our conversations kept going, long ones, often from 4 p.m. to 11 p.m., and at some point, he must have seen something in me. After our third meeting, he asked if I’d like to come on board. I was stunned, and deeply honoured.

I told him honestly, “I don’t know much about Gaudí.” He smiled and said, “We already have plenty of Gaudí experts. That’s not why we need you.” He gave me a few days to decide, but that evening my wife said, “Think about what? You have to do this.” I’m very glad I listened.

JZ: After being involved so closely with the Sagrada Família, would you say your philosophy or perceptions have changed, especially after engaging with Gaudí's work so intimately?

PM: Absolutely. I don't think anyone who works at the Sagrada Família comes away unchanged, it touches your spirit in quiet, profound ways. What struck me most was Gaudí's approach to architecture as a deeply collaborative act. He worked closely with artists, scientists, engineers, and craftsmen, not for show, but because he needed their knowledge to solve real, complex problems. That reaffirmed my belief: collaboration isn't just valuable, it's essential. Architecture at that level requires humility to listen, and the courage to truly integrate.



Gaudí's architecture as collaboration, a fusion of artists, scientists, and craftsmen, proving that great design begins with listening and thrives on shared knowledge. Photo by Alex Quezada

The second shift was more internal. Today, architecture often feels muted, minimal, and restrained. While there's value in that, I now feel our buildings must also express more, offer joy and meaning that lasts.

Gaudí showed us how to do that, with elegance, joy, and timeless beauty. Since then, I've been embracing more emotional resonance in my work, more expression, but in a way that feels lasting, not just trendy.

JZ: I still wonder how Gaudí could conceive something of such scale and expressive power, especially without computers or advanced technology.

PM: I mean, Gaudí is Gaudí. At Colònia Güell, there's a quote from his professor: "I'm not sure if I'm graduating a madman or a genius." Clearly, it was a genius.

He had an instinctive, almost sculptural understanding of space. But more than that, he was relentless. People romanticise creativity, but it takes discipline. Gaudí kept asking, "Can it be better?" He refined, reworked, and treated architecture as a craft, and that's what made his work timeless.

JZ: That's incredibly inspiring. So, how do you see your practice evolving? What are your dreams and plans for the future?

PM: In many ways, I feel my future is now deeply connected to your country, call it destiny. When we started our studio, Double Twist, inspired by Miralles and lessons from Gaudí at the Sagrada Família, we thought we'd launch in New York. Gaudí had even sketched ideas for the city. But fate brought us to India. I first came here on my honeymoon, nothing to do with architecture. Later, after meeting Ameya, now my associate, we returned. There's a unique energy here, open to new beginnings. That's why we've chosen to invest our time here.

Through Double Twist, my dream is to share not just architecture, but the spirit behind it, a glimpse of the knowledge, emotion, and depth of a place like the Sagrada Família, brought into dialogue with India's own rich design legacy. That's my romantic goal.

JZ: I wish you all the very best with that dream. As someone who's engaged deeply with architecture, teaching, and practice, what message would you leave for young designers and the IIID community?

PM: Stay open. Architecture is no longer a solo act; it's about collaboration, empathy, and long-term thinking. What we build will outlast us. Let it be something that matters.

Always dream, without limits. Create opportunities, take initiative, and remember: with every design decision, we shape the world



Gaudí's upside-down genius, the catenary string model revealed how gravity itself could sketch the perfect arch.



Some openings are carved in stone, others unfold in silence.

In Pau Millet López's world, the truest thresholds are not always visible, they live in the pause before a question, the shadow cast by care, the light that enters not just a room but a life. To speak of architecture, then, is to speak of memory, of humility, of the unseen labour behind beauty. It is to recognise that what we frame is never just a view but a possibility, an encounter, an invitation. Through this conversation, we are reminded: the spaces we design are not just for use, but for meaning. Not just to enter, but to feel. And every opening, if held with intention, might just open us too.

Pau Millet with Jabeen Zacharias



Teshima Art Museum, Japan by Ryue Nishizawa

Openings, A Spiritual Journey

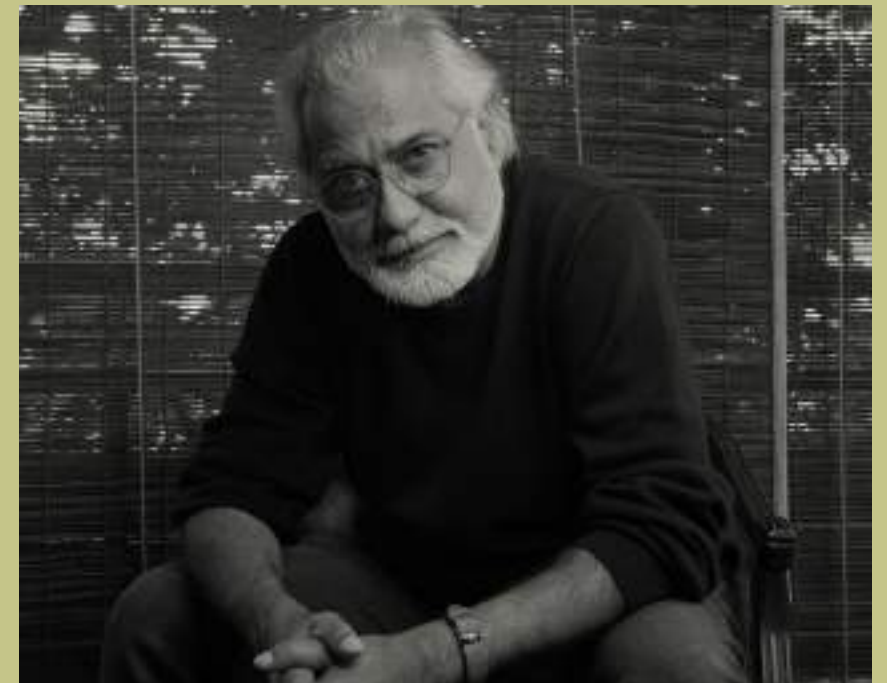
HABEEB KHAN

To understand this complex term, we need to first understand its genealogy. If we take “openings” at face value, reducing them to mere gaps or entrances, we do a disservice to a concept that holds immense symbolic power in architectural thought. What is “Archetypal Imagery”? Carl Jung defines an “archetypal image” as a recurring symbol, motif, or character pattern that appears across various cultures and mythologies considered to be a universal image residing within the collective unconscious, essentially, it’s a primordial image that holds deep, shared meaning for humanity, often seen in literature, art, folklore and architecture. Since archetypal imagery

exists within the shared consciousness of a society, its representations become deeply familiar over time, woven into the fabric of cultural memory. To give an example, the “mother figure” in Indian cinema, “the unwed younger sister” of the lead character and or good winning over evil perpetually and typified rich woman-poor man love story are archetypal images very strongly embedded in the collective Indian psyche. Thus, these tropes are not just storytelling devices; they reflect the subconscious expectations of an entire culture. And space, with its permanence and tangible form, becomes a vessel for these collective narratives.

Ar. Habib Khan, former President of the Council of Architecture, founder, SHK Architects, and director of two colleges of architecture in Maharashtra, is a guiding force in Indian architectural and design thought. With decades of experience as a practitioner and educator, he has continually emphasised the importance of context, culture, and continuity in the built environment. His tenure at the Council was marked by a strong advocacy for design education that balances technical rigour with philosophical inquiry.

Exploring the opening at the cusp of architecture and interiors, Ar. Khan brings a uniquely relevant voice. To him, the edge is not a line of division, but a zone of transformation. His insights illuminate how openings, physical, emotional, and spiritual, can define the soul of a space, inviting users to engage with design on a deeper, more intuitive level.



The Space of Light, a meditation pavilion designed by Tadao Ando, embodies a poetic interplay of light, concrete, and sharp geometry, where cross-shaped openings carve pathways for illumination and contemplation.



When it comes to the domain of design and architecture, it is pertinent to understand the design language that is the basis of all theory and conceptual thought processes. The "Design Language"WW consists of two elements- the archetypal images and spatial volumetric elements, which together constitute the core content of a 'language'. This content forms the basis of "design theory"- the soul of any built mass. The design that we visually perceive is the body skeleton, while the theory, through its language, is the soul of that built mass. Along with the archetypal built form of walls, roofs, columns, beams, floors, stairs, etc., openings constitute a vitally critical element of architectural language. Language communicates through an act and not through its function. For instance, a staircase is not a mere function of moving between two floors but an act of rising, an act of constantly changing eye levels and views. Design language needs to be viewed through

these archetypes. In the same way, a bedroom is not merely a place to sleep, it is a space of retreat, of unwinding, of intimate conversations between souls.

Similarly, "Openings" need to be looked at through these eyes. Openings are not only a puncture in a surface to let in light and ventilation, but are a means of communication between the outside and the inside, a portal, so to speak, from what is external to what is internal. They are thresholds not just in a physical sense but in a psychological and emotional one as well, of opening yourself up or shutting yourself down, of entering or leaving or transitioning. Spiritually speaking, of "openings", the highest form of archetypal imagery is the process of transitioning. Openings facilitate transitioning. This transitory process plays a vital role in the making of a built form. Before we understand the intangible meaning and connotations of transition, let us understand the tangible. The tangible representation of Openings could be Doors, Windows, Skylights, Fenestrations, and any other means that connect two volumes or surfaces or planes.



Spiral oculus and the cascading daylight

The design language consists of two elements- the archetypal images and spatial volumetric elements, which together constitute the core content of 'a language'. This content forms the basis of "design theory"- the soul of any built mass.

However, beyond their physical presence, openings serve as metaphysical thresholds, linking not just spaces but entire worlds, palettes, and canvases. This intangible aspect of transition, which is a major component of any opening, and the archetypal imagery and connotations related to it, is critical to understanding its purpose psychologically and spiritually. Architects and designers need to

look, understand and incorporate the spiritual facet of this to take their designs to the next level. Keeping in mind the gist and spirit of this narration, we would avoid the tangible description of the openings but would discuss more on the aspects of the intangibles and aspects which bridge them with the tangibles. No entity, however spiritual, exists in isolation.

Openings are not only a puncture in a surface to let in light and ventilation, but are a means of communication between the outside and the inside, a portal, so to speak, from what is external to what is internal.



Oscar Niemeyer's Pavilion at Chateau La Coste

Many factors influence the character of openings and the resultant quality of space and volume inside. They also influence the emotional response of the user and indirectly affect their quality of life and experience. They dictate how a space feels, whether enclosed or expansive, introspective or outward-looking, static or dynamic. Understanding this interplay allows architects and designers to craft spaces that resonate on a deeper level, impacting not just the visual composition of a structure but the very essence of human experience within it.

To begin with, the most influential factor affecting the openings is Climate. Climate not only governs the size of the opening but also defines the very nature of it. The type of climate, say very hot and arid or extreme cold, will dictate the nature of an opening, influencing its proportions, placement, materiality, and functionality. Apart from this, openings also interface with the temperature. Every space has a temperature that is felt and experienced. Imagine a cosy, warm, heated space inside while it is freezing outside. It is the opening in between that acts as a buffer between the two diverse worlds. It not only mentally prepares you to step outside in the

freezing cold but also visually connects these two diverse worlds. Similarly, in scorching climates, deeply recessed or shaded openings become portals of relief, offering respite from the harsh sun while still maintaining a connection with the outside. While climate governs the physical nature of openings, culture shapes their character and meaning, which brings us to the next influential factor governing the characterisation of opening, Culture.

Culture defines the sociological, religious and other societal aspects that will influence the character of openings. For example, in orthodox Islamic cultures where social structures emphasise privacy and gendered spaces, openings are carefully modulated, screened, or positioned to maintain discretion while still allowing light and ventilation. The intricate Mashrabiya screens, for example, are not just ornamental; they serve a deeper purpose, offering privacy without isolation, and visibility without exposure. Similarly, in Japanese architecture, where the idea of seamless indoor-outdoor living is intrinsic to cultural philosophy, openings are designed to blur boundaries, fostering a constant interplay between built spaces and nature. The use of shoji screens, courtyards, and sliding panels ensures that the act of "opening" is not merely functional but also ritualistic.



Mashrabiya screens: the elegant segregator

In orthodox Islamic cultures where social structures emphasise privacy and gendered spaces, openings are carefully modulated, screened, or positioned to maintain discretion while still allowing light and ventilation.

Materials and Technology not only define openings but are the basic essence of the spiritual aspect of openings. Ironically, a tangible element is the most defining feature of the intangible. An opening in brick, stone or metal will have a totally diverse visual representation and impact on the user. The sublime and organic character of a brick-framed opening or the strong masculine presence of stone apertures cannot be compared with each other. Beyond aesthetics, materiality also dictates structural feasibility. The type of opening is also governed by its material; for example, a large span opening cannot be made in brick or stone. Similarly, making a small size span in steel would be criminal to the characteristics of the metal itself. The availability of technology and its constant evolution over time have defined the openings and their expression throughout history. Imagine a stained glass window of a church or a clear edge-to-edge glazing of an office high-rise as an opening. One filters the light inside while the other erases the boundary. Thus, the material that bifurcates the realms transforms an opening from a mere void into a statement of intent, a bridge between the two worlds. Beyond material and technology, typology and function dictate the character of openings. It is but obvious that the function for which the built space is being built governs openings. Its typology, public or private or social, governs the nature of openings. Going into details of the functionality and typology dilutes the intent of this narrative. Yet, within interior spaces, the role of openings shifts. An interior designer is constrained to alter or affect the openings which are interfaces between the interior and the outside, but is free to play with openings and fenestration as tools to create visual interest, channel movement, and evoke emotional responses.

Openings as frames for nature's canvas

Thus, the material that bifurcates the realms transforms an opening from a mere void into a statement of intent, a bridge between the two worlds. Beyond material and technology, typology and function dictate the character of openings.



An opening only becomes an opening when it is designed not just as a void but as an experience, a dialogue, a transition between worlds.



The final defining factor in the spiritual journey of an opening is detailing. Materials alone cannot express their full potential without meticulous craftsmanship and articulation. It is rightly said that “God is in the detail,” for it is in the finest, almost incredible details of execution that an opening attains its true spiritual depth. In the end, it suffices to say that openings are not only like relationships but are Relationships themselves.

Church of Light by Tadao Ando: Spirituality through the interstice

A mere acquaintance transforms into something meaningful only when it is spiritually connected and when it carries depth, emotion, and purpose. Similarly, an opening only becomes an opening when it is designed not just as a void but as an experience, a dialogue, a transition between worlds; else they remain a plain and simple door or chaste and drab window or a mathematical computation of fenestration.

With editorial inputs and photographs courtesy Ar. Anuya Killedar-Moharil

Through Gentle Lines, We Enter

EDGAR DEMELLO

Edgar Demello is a Bengaluru-based architect and educator whose work spans the worlds of architecture, art, and storytelling. Drawing on decades of professional and personal experience, he blends memory with imagination, fact with fable, to craft richly layered visual narratives. His illustrated travelogues, what he fondly calls “drawing between the lines”, are part architectural meditation, part personal mythology.

Demello's drawings are not mere representations of place; they are textured fables, where buildings converse with poets, landscapes echo with memory, and time flows in unexpected directions. With a deep love for walking, slowness, and the stories that spaces hold, his work maps a world where architecture meets anthropology, history meets invention, and the self is always in motion.

In this Inscape Gallery feature, Of Songlines and Leaping Sails, Demello takes us across continents, from the sacred rock of Uluru to the floating theatre of Venice, from cycling into Vienna's unconscious to tracing the Camino's quiet mysteries. Through a series of expressive, annotated drawings, he invites us to experience the architecture of encounter, intimate, restless, and profoundly human.

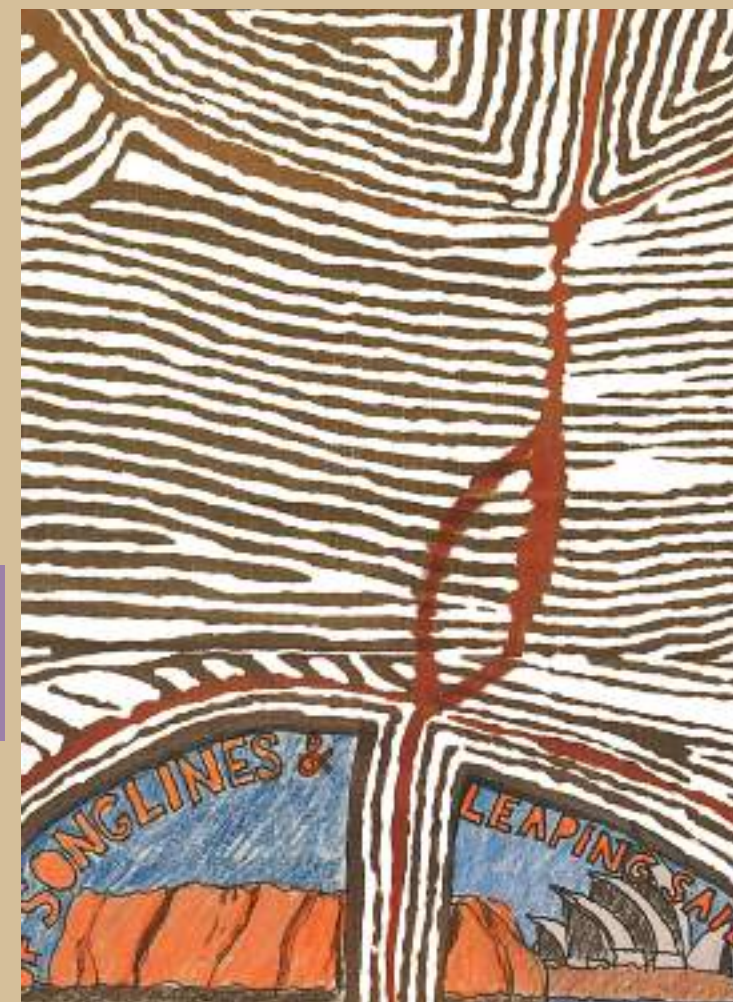
All photos are courtesy of the author unless mentioned otherwise.

I have always held travel writers in high esteem, as well as the biographers and filmmakers who documented their lives. A case in point is *Nomad*, that masterful film by Werner Herzog on the life and exploits of Bruce Chatwin, English anthropologist, adventurer, novelist and bon vivant. His book, ‘*The Songlines*’, describes the metaphysical connection the indigenous people in Australia have to their land and, by extension, to the universe. He does it with an empathy that comes from his astute understanding of people and place - everyone, anywhere!

Then there is the writer WG Sebald, an émigré German academic in Norwich who undertook slow, solitary, marathon walks across England and the continent. ‘*The European traveller*’, he writes, ‘walks to experience recovery, whilst his American counterpart does so for discovery’. By comparison, we Indians have been late starters. It's only in the post-modern era, led by the opening up of the economy, that we've set forth, as a people, to discover lands across our borders.

But since then, the expatriate Indian travel writer Pico Iyer has become the patron saint of Indian travellers seeking ‘off the beaten track’ experiences. These travels rely on slowness as the key, often resorting to the ways of our sages and monks of old, by walking. Or at best on a bicycle. This slowed-down and stretched sense of time allows one to not just see but seek, and through it find our true self, shorn of subterfuge and posturing, to discover what truly lies within.

Of *Songlines and Leaping Sails*, which makes this cover, is an intersection of our discipline with that of anthropology. It is a reconstructed graphic map of nomadic travel in the Australian outback. The framed sketches within are of two iconic structures I visited. One, the 550 million year old sacred rock, Uluru; the other, the 50 year old Sydney Opera House, an outrageously defiant project, on reclaimed land, by the Danish architect Jørn Utzon.





Returning to Venice, again, a double spread, brings together architecture and poetry. In it, the protagonist Aldo Rossi (who staged two Biennales) is in an imaginary conversation with Carlo Scarpa and the dissident Russian poet Joseph Brodsky, a serial visitor to Venice in winter. The latter's seminal prose poem 'Watermark', is a homage to Venice.

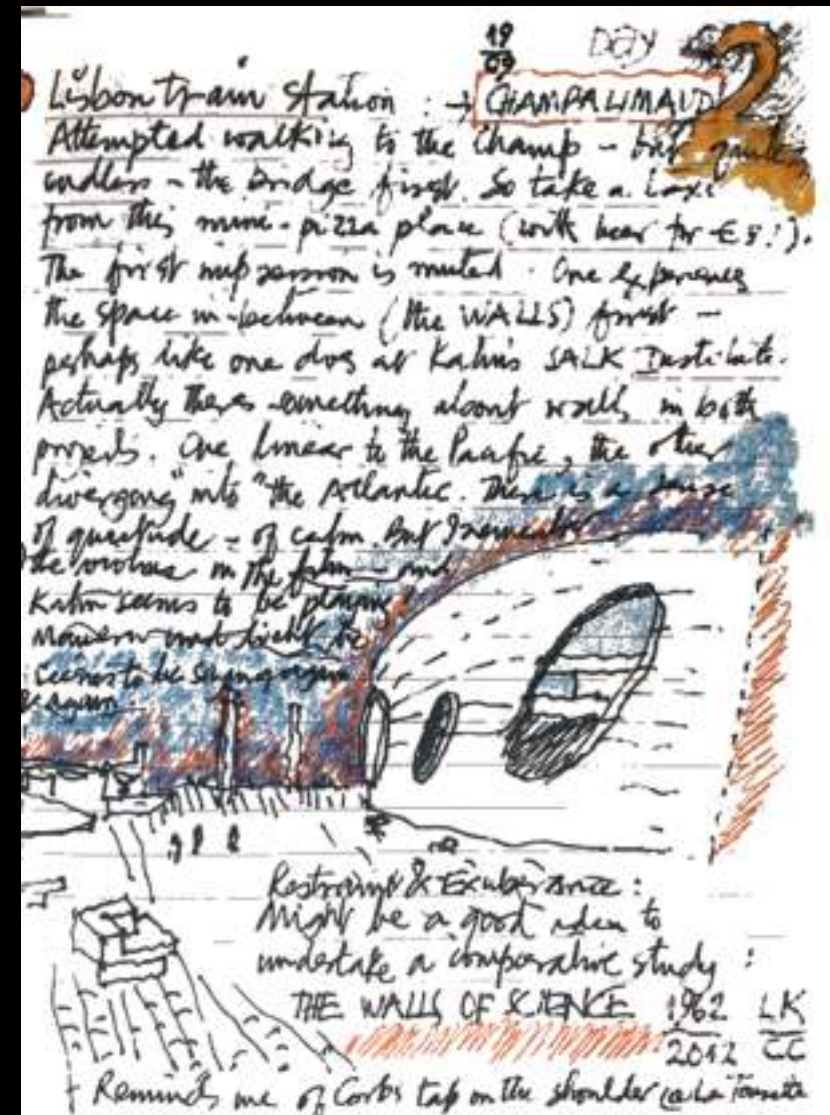


And so is Teatro del Mondo, the floating theatre of Rossi, built for the sixth Architecture Biennale in Venice.

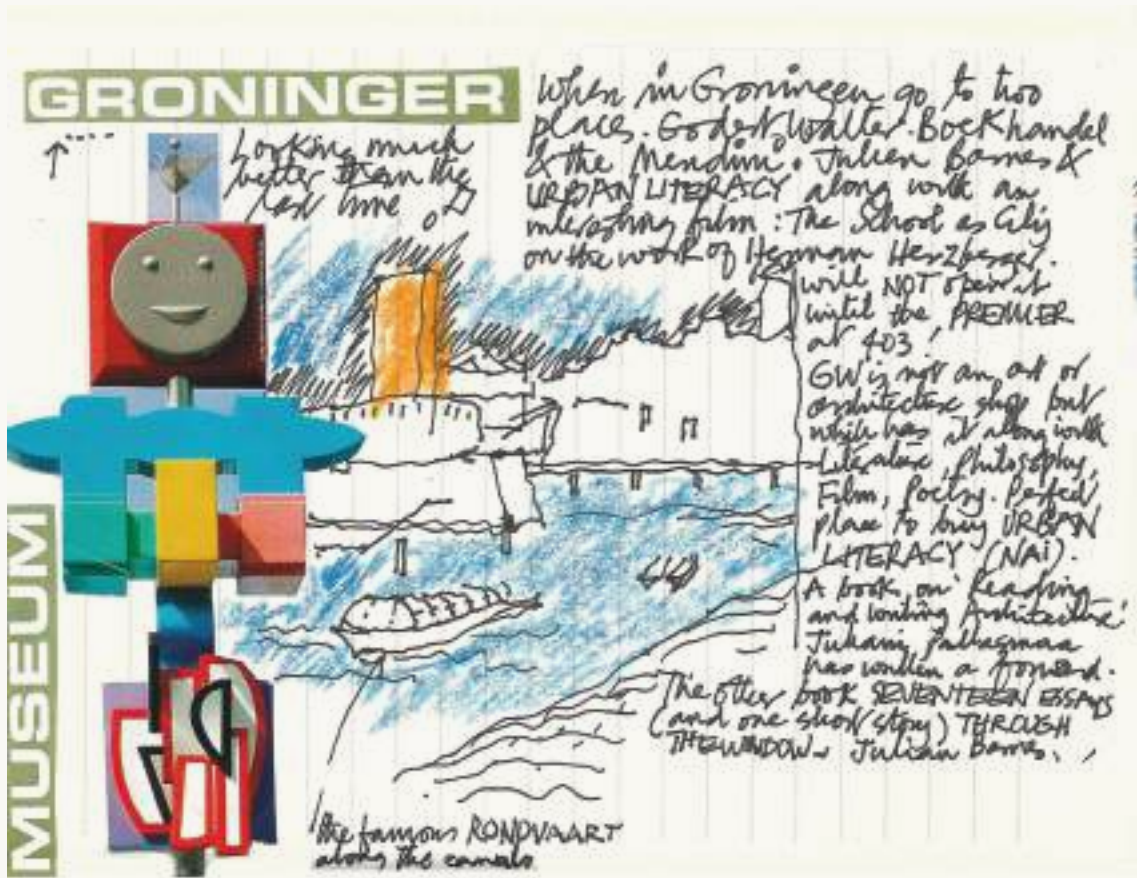


Überfahrt nach Wien was a very special cycling trip along the Danube into Vienna. The landscape, art, architecture and psychoanalysis inform the drawing. Having lived in Vienna for almost six years, it was Adolf Loos and Sigmund Freud who caught my imagination. The architect dismantled the petty bourgeois taste of the monarchy in the same way that the psychoanalyst deconstructed its state of mind. The self-portrait creates a collage of those two binaries, the conscious and the unconscious forces that make our life what it is.

In *Walking into the Unknown*, one made an arduous ten-day journey on foot...the Camino, from Lisbon to Santiago de Compostela. Starting at a point where Vasco da Gama set sail into the mysterious unknown, it is now a site for a beautiful building by Charles Correa: The Champalimaud Centre for the Unknown.



A building for the biological sciences, it is an allusion to another mystery - that of the brain.



And finally, The Winter of Our Content, where, in a triptych, designed spaces, the city and patronage become interlinked with two iconic projects in Groningen. The Dutch are often considered experts in thinking out of the box. So, one is not taken aback when one project is done by three architects: two post-modernists and a deconstructionist. Mendini, Starck and Prix. At first derided, the museum has since been embraced for its democratic and eclectic spirit. The other is the Wall House by Hejduk. First imagined for a Connecticut site, it has now become an art residency for the Mendini Museum. The experiential quality of a museum that sits in water yet straddles both banks is certainly unique. Seeing those three diverse 'marine beings' seemingly come to the surface for air was, for me, the force vitalé of the city.

In these sketches and stories, the line between spaces and journey dissolves, what remains is a map of the soul in motion. Each drawing becomes a threshold, where memory, myth, and meaning converge. And in walking, seeing, and drawing, we return not just with images of the world, but with a deeper sense of where, and who, we are.



TO OPEN IS TO BE VULNERABLE; TO OPEN IS TO BE PRESENT

ROHAN SHIVKUMAR



Rohan Shivkumar is an architect, urban designer, and filmmaker based in Mumbai. He is the Dean at Kamla Raheja Vidyaniidhi Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies and a principal at Collaborative Design Studio. His work spans architecture, urbanism, film, and visual art, focusing on housing, public space, and the city. He has led research projects in Dharavi and Sanjay Gandhi National Park, co-edited Project Cinema City, and directed acclaimed films like Nostalgia for the Future, Lovely Villa, and Squeeze Lime in Your Eye. His work has been showcased at Documenta, Sharjah Triennale, and the Chicago Architecture Biennale.

To open something, be it a door, a window, or even a conversation, is to invite in uncertainty. It is to allow something beyond our control to enter, whether light or wind, a stranger's gaze, or a new idea. Openings are never neutral; they are charged with risk, hope, curiosity, and fear. They are where the self meets the world.

In architecture, openings are often understood in physical terms, doors, windows, thresholds. But they are also symbolic gestures of how we relate to the outside. Do we welcome it, resist it, or attempt to erase it altogether? The history of architecture can be told as a history of oppositions, between the inside and the outside, the within and the without. What is within is usually something seen as precious and fragile, and it must be protected from what is outside, dangerous and maybe even evil. Herein lies the basis of almost all architecture, retreat. Therefore, the inside can never be truly separated from the outside.

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"The Primitive Hut" illustration from Laugier's Essay on Architecture

According to Marc-Antoine Laugier in his Essay on Architecture from 1753, this is the fundamental characteristic germane to the built environment. In the frontispiece that accompanied the text, there is an illustration of 'The Primitive Hut'- supposedly the ground zero, as it were, of spatial explorations. In the image, a robed woman with a compass is reclining on what seems to be the remains of ruined Greek temples and is pointing to a rudimentary shelter made of logs of wood. It seems as if she is the muse of architecture, asking us to forgo ornament and reach out to the fundamental elements that protect us from the weather, in this case, just the roof.



This primitive hut cannot exist in isolation. Its form transforms in a dialectical relationship with the climate it is responding to. This climate may be the weather conditions, but it is often much more than merely those physical characteristics. It would include the social and economic conditions, real or imagined, that compel us to retreat. The harsher we imagine this climate, the more impermeable the envelope becomes. The history of the design of interior space is the history of the evolution of this envelope- the technologies that enable the manipulation of the environment for human needs, and the factors that give these transformations meaning.



Vilhelm Hammershøi, Interior from the Home of the Artist

A timeline could be drawn that would range from the earliest cave dwellings, to agrarian homes to modernist homes, to the gated communities being built in our cities. It would study how an opening is strategically created to allow only desired phenomena to enter within, whether those are for purely pragmatic purposes, like for ventilation, light or physical movement, or for metaphysical reasons, like a skylight to connect to the sky and the unknown. It might also document how the space in-between is not merely an interface between two poles but also serves itself as a space, a liminal space caught between the two, but belonging to neither.

A history would consider the ways the imagination of the interior as a space for safety against natural weather conditions and wild animals in early human societies, evolved into the shelters of nomadic society. Here interiors were a cocoon recreated wherever the community travelled to. The home was made with the objects carried with them, assembled every time, and arranged in formations that reproduced themselves over different spaces. In agrarian societies, land became an important resource and needed to be protected from the outside. The invaders could be wild animals, or, for that matter, other human beings. The strength and the stability of the walls that surround this property were paramount to determining the design of the openings. The homes here had to depend on passive techniques of heating or cooling. The nature of the skin- its material and structural properties determines the position and the size of openings according to the weather conditions. This ingenuity can be seen in many vernacular settlements built around the world.

In industrial societies, man begins to exert more control over the environment. As technologies allow human societies to be able to manipulate interior environments, the skin between the outside and the inside changes. In the twentieth century, thinner walls in the form of steel and concrete frames were seen as universal building techniques. They proliferate around the world, regardless of geographic conditions. Air conditioning systems allow for larger windows and turn the world outside into merely a view for consumption, as we now seem to no longer be afraid of the heat or the cold. Capitalism turns this view into a commodity and sells it at a premium. In their words, man's alienation from the immediate context is seen as an asset. This proposed history would also consider the ways in which different socio-economic and cultural conditions lead to the design of the openings. For example, the ways in which women's spaces in traditional homes were often hidden from view, yet allowed for other kinds of interface with the outside.

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However, the length of this essay does not permit such an indulgence. Instead, we shall cut directly to the end of such a speculative timeline and arrive at its end- the culmination we see of this journey of interfaces as they seem to have reached in the apogee or nadir of architecture, depending on your point of view, in three icons of contemporary architecture- the call center, the gated community and the mall - or the twenty first century spaces for work, living and leisure respectively. Through how these buildings react to the 'outside', we shall think about the nature of openings today and how they are shaped by contemporary concerns around security and comfort.

The first example we shall examine is the gated community. These are the large-scale developments we find catering to the upper classes in our cities. In the way that they advertise themselves on billboards along highways, they place a premium on their exclusivity. Here for example is a possible narrative spun: "Discover a world of serenity within your own private haven, a luxurious gated community where every day is a retreat with top-tier security, lush green landscapes, world-class amenities like a swimming pool, fitness center, and clubhouse, all while enjoying the peace and privacy you deserve. Live life on your terms, within a secure embrace."

The iconic scene from Jacques Tati's Playtime gently nudges us to contemplate modern systems.



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These projects pride themselves on the hardness of the wall between the outside and the inside. Towards the city, they place banal doorways of parking garages or high compound walls often covered with plants to 'soften the edge'. Within the interiors is a world of make-believe- a fantasy of peace, health and pleasure that transcends the local. The windows do not look at what is in the immediate neighbourhood but prefer to meditate upon a distance- the distant horizon, the vast expanses of sea and sky, or the image of a forest. Nature here is evoked as the space where a private transcendence can be found. The architecture is meant to recede into the background so that the upper classes can live out their primitivist fantasies with 'their kind of people'. This is, of course, antithetical to the idea of the city, where one can meet a stranger and be changed by that encounter. Yet, this is precisely what the gated community fears. It is afraid of new faces, new languages, new colours, and new smells. The gated community lives in a perpetual anxiety from the possibility of a chink in the wall that was meant to sequester it away. Fear is its foremost feature.

The covered interior passages of these served as early shopping and social spaces. They were places where the bourgeoisie could engage in consumer culture, browse through dazzling artefacts displayed in the windows and participate in the urban culture of the industrialising city.

The second example we shall consider here is that of the Mall. In his ‘The Arcades Project’, the German philosopher Walter Benjamin meditates on the nineteenth-century arcade as the emblematic space of capitalism. The covered interior passages of these served as early shopping and social spaces. They were places where the bourgeoisie could engage in consumer culture, browse through dazzling artefacts displayed in the windows and participate in the urban culture of the industrialising city. These are the precursors of the malls of the contemporary city. Here, our bodies are meant to drift from amusement to entertainment to commodity, enticing us into a reverie of capital and consumerism. Our bodies seem to float weightlessly through the corridors, reflecting off the shop windows, but otherwise leaving almost no trace of our presence. Everything is smooth and shiny- polished and controlled. You are never too hot, or too cold, too wet or too dry. Your body has been anaesthetised.

The mall presents a paradox of openness. Its interiors mimic the vitality of open street markets and town squares, suggesting fluidity, exchange, and public gathering. Yet these are only simulations, carefully curated environments that sever any real connection to the urban fabric. The “streets” within meet at gleaming atria, not as nodes of civic life but as spectacles of consumption. The true opening, the one that connects inside to outside, citizen to

city, is missing. Instead, the mall is sealed shut, surrounded by parking lots and blank compound walls that buffer it from its surroundings.

Natural light is allowed in only through measured skylights, not windows that might offer a view, a breeze, or a sense of time. There are no thresholds here that invite the city in; every aperture is instrumentalised. Even the entrances are guarded and surveilled. Every opening is filtered, managed, and securitised. Surprise, chance, or encounter, hallmarks of a truly open space, are designed out. What remains is a hyper-controlled interior where ritual is hollowed into spectacle, and architecture performs openness while denying it entirely.

The Call Centre is a uniquely twentieth-century typology emerging from the possibilities offered by new age digital technologies to optimise and streamline processes of work. These buildings can be found in business districts of cities across India. They have large floor plates, are usually clad in mirrored curtain glazing and are set back from the main road with manicured gardens and high compound walls making a barrier between them and the streets. As a result, a sea of asphalt surrounds them. Employees within the call centre must work at hours that are convenient to the people at the other end of the line, who may be on the other side of the world.

The glass-clad facade that the building presents to us is a delusion. These windows do not work to make a relationship between the inside and the outside. Only a few offices look out over the landscape of asphalt. The windows cannot or are rarely opened. The insides are hidden from the outside- all we see is the reflection of the sky or the other buildings in the precinct. These are buildings that deny any sense of scale or location. They can effectively be found all around the world in almost the same form. This uniformity is what makes them attractive to an economy more concerned with international networks than with local conditions.

The workers of the call centre must not be aware of the time of day where they are. They are given new names that can be pronounced by the customer; they must know the weather in New York and Los Angeles. They are also trained in the history of the place they speak to. The employee must be tricked into believing they are in the time zone they speak to. They are kept huddled away in the middle of the large floor plate- the only window they are allowed to look through is the computer screen. Their alienation from their own selves, their context, is as complete as it possibly can be.

It appears that much of contemporary spatial culture resists presence, of time, of place, of the body. As Guy Debord observed in *The Society of the Spectacle*, “Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation.” Where Laugier’s Primitive Hut offered the barest, most elemental threshold/opening between self and world, today’s environments often aim to eliminate uncertainty altogether. Openings are no longer moments of encounter, they are mechanisms of control.

These tendencies speak to deeper anxieties: a wish to insulate rather than engage, to perfect rather than participate. As Richard Sennett suggests in *The Uses of Disorder*, the search for order can sometimes deny us the friction that enables growth. When spaces filter out all that is unpredictable or unfamiliar, we risk losing contact with what is vital, difference, surprise, and transformation.

To open is, in this sense, more than a spatial gesture. It is a quiet act of courage. It recognises that to be fully present is to be exposed, to climate, to community, to change. And perhaps it is only through such openings, however small or fleeting, that we begin to sense who we are, and who we might become.

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THE COLLAGE HOUSE CHRONICLE

Collage House seeks to challenge societal perceptions of waste, presenting it not as an undesirable by-product but as a valuable cultural and aesthetic resource. While much of society views waste as ritually and hygienically impure, evoking disgust and repression, as impure or undesirable, this project reframes it as a repository of collective memory, holding stories of cultural practices, individual behaviours, and consumption trends.

Of Windows, Whispers, and Wonder

SHILPA GORE-SHAH

Each design project evolves uniquely, shaped by its purpose, context, programme, geography, materials, and aspirations. Among the many ways this evolution manifests is through a building's fenestration. Openings act as a structure's dialogue with its surroundings, narrating its story. Collage House initiates a conversation about architectural openings while addressing broader issues of sustainability, material reuse, and cultural memory. To understand how the openings in Collage House came to be, one must explore the project's conceptual foundation and the multitude of factors that influenced its design.

The clients and architects shared a deep commitment to addressing the environmental toll of construction. They recognised the significant amounts of material required to build and the waste produced by Mumbai's unrelenting urban growth. Mumbai, one of the world's largest cities, generates vast amounts of waste daily. According to 2010 figures, India produces over 150,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste every day, with only 80% collected and less than 30% treated. Urbanisation exacerbates these challenges, with waste generation expected to double by 2025.

Ar. Shilpa Gore-Shah, co-founder and Design Principal of S+PS Architects, is a distinguished architect and educator based in Mumbai. An alumna of the Sir J. J. College of Architecture, she established S+PS Architects in 1997 alongside Pinkish Shah. Their practice is renowned for its innovative approach to architecture, urban design, and interior design, emphasising the unique characteristics of each project.

Her designs often explore the interplay between architecture and interiors, creating spaces that are both functional and emotionally engaging. Projects like the Collage House exemplify this approach, where reused materials and thoughtful design converge to create a home that is both sustainable and reflective of personal histories.





The shutters open opportunities from inside the living room

Living in Mumbai, India, it is impossible to ignore the informal settlements in the city, and if looked at closely, there are several lessons to be learnt in recycling this waste besides ideas of frugality, adaptability, multi-tasking, resourcefulness and ingenuity. These settlements reveal a visual language of found objects, ad hoc, eclectic, patched, and collaged. Collage House draws on these principles without romanticising or fetishising them. The project explores recycling and collage in tangible ways, such as reusing materials, and intangible ones, like evoking history, memories, and space.

The resulting design language feels both novel and familiar, inviting a re-evaluation of conventional notions of beauty. To make this mélange more “acceptable” to society, it is encased in a “garb of modernity”. A concrete

frame with a rough aggregate finish on the exterior and a smooth form finish inside encases the building, uniting its spaces across three levels. This duality bridges the past and the present, transforming traditional materials into contemporary expressions.

The house is organised around a raised courtyard, its inward focus dictated by the site’s surroundings, a hilltop location with neighbours on all sides. Unlike traditional courtyards, this one is situated on the first floor below, where a rainwater harvesting tank is wrapped in stone excavated from the hillside during construction. The courtyard serves as the heart of the home, bringing together four generations of the family who live within its walls.



The courtyard from inside and outside. Resting over the rainwater harvesting tank that is scooped from the bedrock.



The courtyard from inside and outside. Resting over the rainwater harvesting tank that is scooped from the bedrock.



The openings carved in the slab for vertical connectivity and along the walls

The building's C-shaped plan creates distinct external and internal facades. While the party walls remain solid, the courtyard-facing facades feature an interplay of materials and textures. One side incorporates aluminium-framed windows set within walls clad in cut-waste stone slivers salvaged from stone-cutting yards and on-site waste. The opposite facade uses rusted metal plates, while the end wall is composed of off-cut metal pipes assembled to form a striking "pipe wall" that integrates structural columns and rainwater downpipes with aluminium-framed windows. This wall transforms into a sculptural installation of spouts, delighting the senses during monsoons.

The logic of the front and rear facades responds to its context. The rear south wall is largely opaque and has what seems like a single opening (enclosed by aluminium-framed sliding windows) over two floors with a layer of bamboo, which was retrieved from the process of construction to provide a screen from the south sun. The roadside facade sets the tone for what lies within, with a "corner of windows" that recycles old wooden windows and doors of demolished houses in the city. It also becomes a major backdrop for the living room with an exposed concrete faceted ceiling above, countered by polished white marble with intricate brass inlay on the floor.

The old windows were sourced from 'Do Tanki' (literally two Tanks), a recycling hub of construction and building waste in south Mumbai. Several windows were selected, measured, documented and then organised to create areas of opacity and screening. Several had to be repaired with missing or broken glasses and were replaced with recycled coloured and patterned glass from Dharavi, also one of the large recycling hubs in the city. The hardware was remade from old moulds that the client found with an antique dealer in Chor Bazaar. The fundamental characteristics of the windows and doors were kept intact, and almost all are operable as they may have been earlier. The reuse and upcycling of the windows evolved in consultation with the



Exploded view of the House

carpenters, wherein a system was evolved to individually support and frame them. Unlike a traditional system wherein a window is set into a wall all around, here, each window is surrounded by a metal frame into which it fits. This combined frame then hangs in front of the slab, much like a curtain wall, and is anchored at key points to the slab at the top, middle and bottom. A wooden cover mould is capped over the metal frame, both hiding it and rendering the window system waterproof. One gets the option to choose what part of the surroundings one wishes to communicate with by operating a variety of different types of shutters. They allow for natural ventilation and light, which enters in a myriad of ways, making way for playful surprises. They not only appear in the living room but also in the two



Windows salvaged for the Wall

bedrooms upstairs, and the walk-in wardrobes and toilets. Openings need to always be an integral part of the building's design, not an afterthought merely to serve their function.

Continuing with the idea of recycling in other parts of the building, a hundred-year-old columns from a dismantled house bring back memories and nostalgia by supporting a lightweight steel and glass pavilion (with solar panels above) on the terrace level overlooking fabulous views down the hillside. The house plays up this contrast between the old and the new, the traditional and the contemporary, the rough and the finished.

This approach is reinforced again in the interior materials and elements. One finds the use of recycled materials like old textile blocks, flooring of old Burma teak rafters and purlins, colonial furniture, recycled denim, papier mache and fabric waste (chindi), along with new ways of using traditional elements and materials like carved wooden mouldings, bevelled mirrors, heritage cement tiles, etc. This layered approach creates a rich narrative that connects past and present, function and memory.



Details of the Window Wall



Salvaged Columns create a unique cocoon on the roof

Collage House pushes the boundaries of how recycled materials can shape architectural expression. Its innovative facades challenge the notion of waste, presenting it as a medium of beauty and meaning. By integrating sustainability with cultural storytelling, the project opens new dialogues about the role of architecture in addressing environmental challenges.

As architects, we are tasked not just with designing buildings but with rethinking the systems and perceptions that define them. Collage House exemplifies how we can transform the ordinary into the extraordinary, creating architecture that is as thought-provoking as it is functional.



Shilpa Gore-Shah, Founding Partner & Design Principal, S+PS Architects

PROJECT TITLE: COLLAGE HOUSE

- LOCATION :** Parsik Hill, Belapur, Navi Mumbai
- CLIENT :** Mr. Bhargava
- ARCHITECT :** S+PS Architects
- DESIGN TEAM :** Pinkish Shah, Shilpa Gore-Shah, Mayank Patel, Gaurav Agarwal, Shrutika Nirgun, Divya Malu, Manali Patel, Ved Panchwagh, Priyadarshi Srivastava, Rhea Lopes, Divya Jain
- SITE AREA :** 350 Square Meters 3775 Square Feet
- PROJECT AREA :** 520 Square Meters 5600 Square Ft
- LIASION ARCHITECTS :** Sopan Prabhu Architects
- STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS :** Rajeev Shah & Associates
- MEP CONSULTANTS :** Arkk Consultants
- SITE SUPERVISION :** Amish Mistry Architect
- INITIATION OF PROJECT :** 2006
- COMPLETION OF PROJECT :** 2015
- PHOTOGRAPHERS :** Sebastian Zachariah, Ira Gosalia, Photographix

Openings: Through My Lens

AVANTIKA GARGYA



Avantika Gargya is an architect, interior and furniture designer, photographer, and occasional design writer with over two decades of experience. She founded Spaces Within in 2008 and co-founded Kaava, The Design Studio in 2015, expanding into design + build and handcrafted furniture. Now working between Singapore and India, Avantika embraced photography as a second skin. Her practice blends visual storytelling with a refined and timeless design sensibility. Rooted in material honesty and human connection, her work reflects a deep understanding of form, function, and emotion. Avantika continues to explore new mediums and collaborations, pushing the boundaries of design and creativity with elegance and authenticity.

Openings in architecture are more than just functional elements, they are the spaces that allow buildings to breathe, to connect with the outside world, and to create emotional resonance within. The negative space in a frame, the void within a mass, the yin to the yang, openings are the architectural thresholds that bridge the interior and the external environment. They are not only physical gaps but also offer opportunities for light, air, sound and movement, while sometimes acting as barriers when needed.

All photos are courtesy of the author unless mentioned otherwise.

The simple act of pausing to gaze through a window or into an arch reveals the profound role these openings play in our interaction with space.

At their core, openings serve critical roles: they admit natural light and fresh air, guide movement through spaces, and sometimes delineate functions within a building. However, beyond their utility, they have a profound emotional and experiential impact on the way we engage with our surroundings. The form, size, placement, and materiality of an opening can dramatically alter the perception of a space, fostering an intimate connection between the inside and the outside world.



The simple act of pausing to gaze through a window or into an arch reveals the profound role these openings play in our interaction with space



Openings shape how we experience a place. This image is from Ar. Geoffrey Bawa's design marvels in Sri Lanka. The openings are such a perfect balance of form and shape and frame the most perfect views available on Earth.

As architects and designers, we often think of openings as merely functional elements, windows, doors, or arches, but there is an inherent romanticism to these architectural elements. The simple act of pausing to gaze through a window or into an arch reveals the profound role these openings play in our interaction with space. They are more than access points; they shape how we experience a place.

The design of openings is influenced by various factors, including climate, topography, and culture. They also respond to a building's function and the available technology of their time. A few years ago, I moved to Singapore from Hyderabad, India, trading my drawing board for a camera and a zoom lens. As creatives, we are constantly memorising our surroundings, not knowing when we may go back to them for inspiration. Some sketch them out, some write them down, while I photograph and catalogue them away in my external drives. This essay delves into how I've captured the role of openings through my lens across four coastal tropical cities, each distinct in culture but united by their topography.

This essay delves into how I've captured the role of openings through my lens across four coastal tropical cities, each distinct in culture but united by their topography.



The Corinthian column in the neighbouring building, as seen from the window of my ancestral home in Kolkata.



The wooden louvred windows are a defining feature of Kolkata homes.

Kolkata and its Louvered Windows

I begin my journey in Kolkata, the city I grew up in. As a child, I never saw the old Bengali homes as anything special; they were just part of the cityscape. It wasn't until later that I recognised the ingenuity of Bengal's vernacular design, rooted in an acute response to climatology. Kolkata, with its hot and humid climate, lies on the Bay of Bengal. It is a city steeped in history, shaped by the Pala kingdom, Muslim invasions, and later, British colonial influence. Over time, these foreign influences shaped the region's architecture, but the old Bengali "rajbari" (royal residence) retained its authenticity at its core.

A defining feature of these homes is their wooden louvered windows, which can be adjusted to control light and privacy. When open, they filter light into the interior while offering a view of the street; when closed, they shield the occupants from the outside world. Interestingly, a design principle that is taught in architecture schools is to minimise openings on

the western and southern faces of buildings in the northern hemisphere to reduce exposure to the harsh summer sun. However, in Kolkata, windows are often placed on the south and west to harness the cool south-western monsoon winds, bringing relief from the oppressive humidity.

Returning to my ancestral home after many years, I found myself appreciating these windows in a new light. Through my camera lens, I noticed details I had never observed before, the Corinthian column of the neighbouring building, partially obscured by peeling paint, offering me a fresh perspective on the familiar.



In modern-day Pondicherry, French colonial styles blend with traditional Indian materials such as terracotta tiles and wooden screens, resulting in openings that offer privacy, ventilation, & light.



An arched window with wooden louvred shutters and a beautiful, ornamental metal railing. The opening gives you a hint of what lies inside.

Pondicherry: The French Influence

Travelling south along India's eastern coast, we arrive at Pondicherry in Tamil Nadu. With its French colonial heritage, Pondicherry presents a different design story. The openings here reveal a fusion of European design and local influences such as terracotta sunshades and cane lattice. Colonial French buildings often feature arched windows with shutters, offering not only a sense of openness but also controlling the interior's light and airflow. These openings lead to courtyards, verandas, or gardens, establishing a seamless relationship between indoors and outdoors.

The use of arched openings is common in Pondicherry's architecture, where they evoke grandeur and formal elegance while enhancing ventilation. In modern-day Pondicherry, French colonial styles blend with traditional Indian materials such as terracotta tiles and wooden screens, resulting in openings that offer privacy, ventilation, and light. These windows, set in narrow streets, may not provide expansive views but work creatively to maximise natural light deep within the interiors.

Sri Lanka: Geoffrey Bawa's Mastery of Inside & Outside

Further south, across the Palk Strait, lies Sri Lanka, an island paradise defined by its lush landscapes and backwaters. The country's most renowned architect, Geoffrey Bawa, is celebrated for his ability to harmonise architecture with nature. His designs often feature large windows and picture openings, framing the breathtaking views that surround his buildings. Bawa's architectural style dissolves the boundary between indoor and outdoor spaces, creating a flow that allows occupants to experience the natural world while remaining protected by the structure. Bawa's work epitomises the power of openings to connect people with nature, an architectural expression that speaks not just of function but also of a profound relationship with the environment.

Bawa's architectural style dissolves the boundary between indoor and outdoor spaces, creating a flow that allows occupants to experience the natural world while remaining protected by the structure.

Bawa's work epitomises the power of openings to connect people with nature. Lunuganga, Ar. Geoffrey Bawa's estate, Sri Lanka.





Openings at the Esplanade Theatre, Singapore, designed by DP Architects and Michael Wilford. The theatre's distinctive glass domes have an elaborate external shading system. They consist of triangular metallic louvres that adjust according to the sun's movement, mimicking the spiky exterior of a durian fruit.

From the colonial windows of Kolkata and Pondicherry to the inside-out experiences of Sri Lanka and Singapore's modern glass towers, openings define how we interact with our environment, experience light, and navigate between public and private spaces.

Singapore: The Intersection of Tradition & Modernity

As we head southeast to Singapore, we enter a city-state where architecture is a vibrant blend of history and innovation. Singapore's early Chinese settlers constructed shophouses, row houses with commercial spaces on the ground floor and residential quarters above. These structures featured wooden doors and windows, often decorated with elaborate facades. The windows, designed with wooden louvres or glazed panes, protected interiors from the harsh sunlight while allowing for ventilation.

The British colonial period introduced large, stately buildings - the iconic black-and-white bungalows. These structures, inspired by Kolkata's colonial architectural style, also featured louvered windows. Yet, modern Singapore has transformed the cityscape with towering glass facades. A striking example of this modernity is the Esplanade Theatre, designed by DP Architects and Michael Wilford. The theatre's distinctive glass domes have an elaborate external shading system. They consist of triangular metallic louvres that adjust according to the sun's movement, mimicking the spiky exterior of a durian fruit.

Conclusion: Openings as More Than Just Frames

As an architect and photographer, I have often seen parallels between architectural openings and my camera lens. Like a window, my camera lens frames the world, allowing me to capture and focus on what matters most. Both the lens and the opening serve as filters, shaping our view of the world, controlling the entry of light, and framing moments of beauty and intrigue.

Openings are more than mere structural elements; they are cultural expressions, responding to climate, tradition, and innovation. From the colonial windows of Kolkata and Pondicherry to the inside-out experiences of Sri Lanka and Singapore's modern glass towers, openings define how we interact with our environment, experience light, and navigate between public and private spaces. For designers, understanding the influences that shape openings allows us to create spaces that are not only functional but also meaningful and enriching.



Shophouses of Singapore, with their colourful wooden doors and windows.

Shifting the Threshold:

The Spatial Theatre of Matharoo Associates

GURJIT SINGH MATHAROO



Gurjit Singh Matharoo is a celebrated Indian architect, designer, and academician. He is a visiting faculty at CEPT University Ahmedabad where he was also Chair of Architectural design. In the year 1991 he founded Matharoo Associates, which is known for its pathbreaking innovative and context-sensitive architecture. The practice was initially backed by his structural designer father, Late Rajendra Singh Matharoo, and advisor Late Prof. M.C. Gajjar, and now by his architect wife Komal Matharoo and his dedicated Architectural Associates, Mohit Maru and Trisha Patel, besides a team of passionate senior

and junior architects. Winners of bespoke architectural awards, the firm is recognized internationally for its sustainable design, material honesty, and architectonic clarity. Their diverse portfolio includes mass housing and residences, industrial and commercial spaces, healthcare and educational institutions, all marked by sensitivity to green, water, and light. Using local crafts as an integral part of their process, their work reflects a harmonious blend of cost-saving approach, cultural depth, and timeless simplicity.

We come into this world by crossing a threshold between womb and world, between silence and sound, between the known and the vast. And perhaps this is why, all our lives, we keep seeking openings. Not just in walls, but in time, in thought, in possibility.

Matharoo Architects understands this yearning not as a stylistic gesture, but as a deep human instinct. In their practice, the opening is not a detail. It is the very heart of architecture. It is where form meets feeling. Where space meets spirit. Where the stillness of material is coaxed into motion.

To open is not merely to access. It is to relate. To invite. To trust. And so, the doors, windows, walls, and thresholds in Matharoo's work do more than just be an article, they perform, they speak, they listen. They become moments of choreography between people and place, stone and sunlight, memory and movement.

Their buildings are shaped not by ego, but by empathy, with the land, the user, the everyday. Every opening is a negotiation: how much light? How much wind? How much sky? And in this careful calibration lies their genius.



The door gently twirled to allow passage. Photo credits: Dinesh Mehta

Movement as Meaning

In most buildings, a door is just a door, a threshold, a means of entry. But in Matharoo's universe, doors are transformative, theatrical. The Curtain Door of the Joint-Family Residence in Surat (2007) exemplifies this. A flat plane of forty Burmese teak logs undulates into a fluid wave with a single push, opening up the house like a stage

curtain. Here, the kinetic becomes poetic. The door is no longer an object; it becomes an event. It could have been a wall. But it chose to become a wave. Here, opening is not a switch to flick, it's an event. A tactile moment. It asks us to slow down, to feel the passage, not just move through it. There's dignity in that gesture. Reverence, even.





This emphasis on motion is not frivolous; it is profoundly functional. In Ahmedabad, the Gando Barno unfolds across a 23-foot span, not in symmetry, but in eccentric rhythm. Each panel moves with its centre, like a family of individuals dancing to a shared memory. This is not an opening that simply leads from the street to the house. It becomes a gathering of thresholds, each one holding a story, each one performing a role, security, shade, intrigue, shelter. It satisfies the most severe of technical demands while also evoking wonder, the hallmark of Matharoo's approach.

The Open Door project at the CREDAI Corporate Headquarters (2018) takes this further, translating residential playfulness into a civic gesture. Giant pivoting walls blur the boundary between street and interior, reinforcing the firm's belief that public architecture should invite, not repel. Architecture here is activism, inviting people in, not shutting them out.

*Gando Barno, literally means the crazy door, and we know why!
Photo Credit : Dinesh Mehta*

Material Honesty and Reinvention

Matharoo's work also reflects a deep reverence for material. But he rarely uses material in expected ways. Instead, he delights in revealing its hidden potential, reimagining its limits.

In the House with Balls (2007), for example, galvanised pressed steel shutters hang from top-hung baubles, the cheapest possible counterweights, made by casting concrete into plastic play balls. What could have been industrial and heavy becomes light-hearted and graceful—A window held open by a child's toy, a joyful opening. The 33-foot span becomes a lesson in structural ingenuity and frugality. These are not gimmicks but grounded experiments, where local craft and innovation replace expensive imported solutions.



*Unhinged, these balls act as a counterbalance to the opening.
Photo credit: Matharoo Associates*

empowering the inhabitant to interact with architecture, to live with it, not merely within it.

Similarly, the Heat Shield Shutter (2014) uses custom louvred panels that can be manually adjusted with the sun. These are not automatic or tech-heavy but are tactile, human-scaled solutions for modulating light and privacy. They demonstrate Matharoo's belief in empowering the inhabitant to interact with architecture, to live with it, not merely within it.

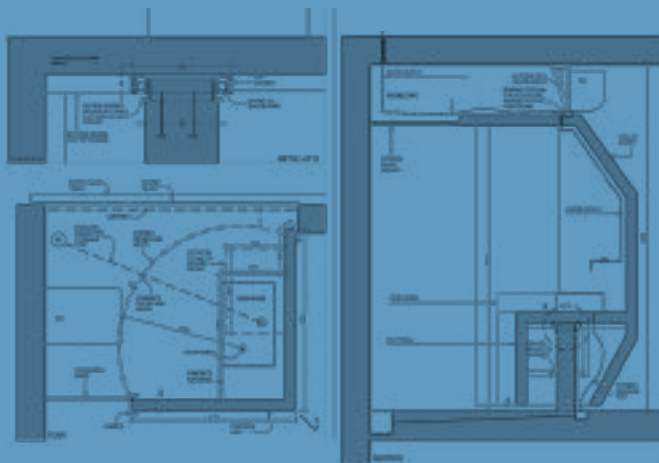


Modulating light and privacy manually. Photo Credit: Bharat Agarwal



A 1.5-ton concrete toilet, cast as a single piece, swings open with its plumbing and drainage intact. The door remains stationary. The room itself becomes the door. It's surreal, humorous, and profoundly original. Yet it remains functional and durable, an artful moment grounded in technical precision.

What looks like the door is stationary, surprise!!! The entire set-up of the wall and water closet moves! Photo credit: Matharoo Associates



Space as Surprise

Delight, often considered an ephemeral quality, is central to the Matharoo vocabulary. In a world where buildings often mute sensory experience, his architecture embraces the unexpected. The Moving Water Closet (2014) is perhaps the boldest statement of this ethos. A 1.5-ton concrete toilet, cast as a single piece, swings open with its plumbing and drainage intact. The door remains stationary. The room itself becomes the door. It's surreal, humorous, and profoundly original. Yet it remains functional and durable, an artful moment grounded in technical precision.



Transforming the building margin to an inhabitable space by pivoting walls. Photo Credit: Joginder Singh

This spirit of surprise pervades Inside Out (2004), where ton-weight cast concrete walls pivot outwards, transforming the required building margin into an inhabitable space. The transformation is not merely spatial; it is psychological. The inhabitant participates in this change, becomes aware of their environment, and gains a new sensitivity to space.



Large stone walls can be easily pivoted to allow the passage of light, air, people and more. Photo Credit: Edmund Sumner

In Moving Landscapes (2010), the metaphor becomes architectural. The house is encased in 15-foot-high Bidasar stone walls, forming an "impregnable shell." Yet, like an amethyst geode cracking open, these heavy panels spin and slide to reveal an interior of light and air. The dialogue between fortress and cocoon, weight and levity, permanence and motion, all play out in quiet choreography. The house becomes a living organism, responsive and revealing.



Photo Credit: Dinesh Mehta (left) & Edmund Sumner (right)



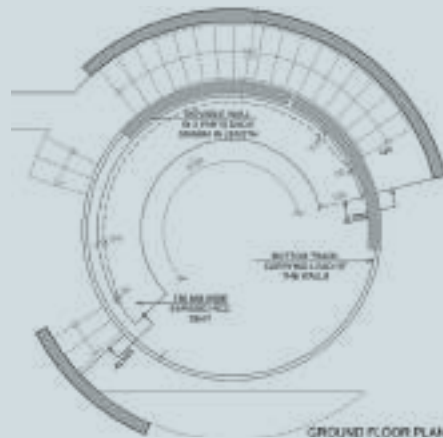
Photo Credit: Dinesh Mehta (left) & Edmund Sumner (right)

Craft, Context, and Control

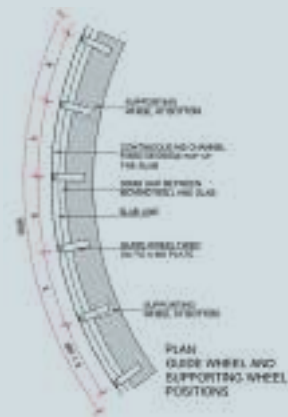
Though Matharoo's buildings appear fluid and spontaneous, they are products of immense control: over detail, proportion, and construction. They reveal a mastery of joinery, mechanics, and custom fabrication. But this control never overshadows the local. On the contrary, their work often collaborates with local craftsmen and uses regionally available materials, like Bidasar stone, concrete, and Burmese teak.

Plain Ties (2018), designed by Komal Matharoo, is a single-family dwelling in Surat, uses rotating concrete arcs to define space, embed functions, and suggest continuity. Skylights, stairs, seating, and services are all housed in the concrete threads. The building becomes a radial composition, not only in plan but also in experience. The static and dynamic co-exist, echoing the complex rhythms of Indian life.

Matharoo's philosophy is inseparable from his context. Gujarat, with its extremes of light, heat, and culture, becomes both laboratory and muse. Rather than emulate global styles, his practice listens deeply to the climate, the family structure, the craft traditions, and even the playfulness of Indian life.



The walls and openings are now interchangeable



A Language of Delight and Defiance

This is the philosophy at the heart of Matharoo Architects: that design is not static. Spaces should flex with our needs, breathe with our climate, and move with our bodies. Openings are not mere voids; they are invitations, where spaces come alive. Matharoo designs not in pursuit of form, but in pursuit of experience. What will it feel like to push this? To hear it slide? To see the shadow fall just so?

Often, this experience, interactive, dramatic, kinetic, unfolds right at the very beginning. Like a bold set-piece that opens a film, it grabs your attention, immerses you in the world of the building. And then, with that sense of wonder awakened, the architecture steps back into function, into quiet contextual intelligence. The user, now engaged,

continues the story, co-authoring the life of the building, one movement, one moment at a time.

This is kinetic architecture, yes, but it is also deeply humanist. It places movement not in the domain of technology alone, but in the dance between mind, hand, and material. A door is not just a panel to hinge. It is a threshold to honour. Their practice, rooted in Gujarat, is profoundly local yet universal. It draws from the craft traditions of the region, stone masonry, woodwork, metal casting, and lifts them into new expressions. The hand is always present. The climate is always respected. The user is always central. Through their openings, Matharoo tells us that architecture is not about closing us off from the world, but reconnecting us to it. To the street. To the sun. To the breeze that enters gently

through a crack you had not noticed. To the weight of a shutter you raise each morning. To the joy of pushing something and watching it move, not because it must, but because it can.

In a time when much of the built world feels sealed, insulated, and distant, the work of Matharoo reminds us to open again. Not just our doors. But our eyes. Our bodies. Our imagination. Because to open something is to offer a possibility. And in every possibility, there is hope.

25 MOMENTS THAT DEFINED OPENINGS



Openings play a pivotal role in bringing spaces to life, embodying cultural resonance, artistic flair, and moments of sheer innovation.

They invite light, air, and emotion, turning static volumes into living, breathing spaces.

From the enduring elegance of Roman arches to the cooling intricacy of Mashrabiya and Jali screens, openings have always expressed cultural identity and design intent. Gaudí's organic forms choreograph sunlight into art, while Ando's Church of Light proves that even a single cut can evoke profound spirituality. Contemporary feats like the retractable roof of Al Janoub Stadium remind us that openings continue to evolve, as bold acts of both engineering and imagination.

These 100 moments celebrate openings as thresholds of experience, connecting inside and outside, form and feeling, the built and the beyond.

01

2560 BCE

Great Pyramid Egypt

Sealed with wonder

High within Khufu's pyramid, narrow stone shafts lead into darkness, sealed, tilted, and unreachable. These weren't meant for walking through, but for aligning souls and stars. Their placement, far above ground level, remains unmatched in any other ancient structure. In 2017, a mysterious 'void' was found behind one such shaft, deepening the enigma. These openings challenge our assumptions of function; they're cosmic, symbolic, and deliberate. The Great Pyramid doesn't just enclose space; it opens a timeless riddle.



Entrance vault of the Great Pyramid



Warren LeMay Big Void inside the pyramid Fatpencilstudio

02

1300 BCE

Lion Gate of Mycenae Greece

Framed in stone

The Lion Gate at Mycenae is among the earliest architectural openings to carry symbolic weight. Flanked by carved lions and crowned with a tapered column, it transforms a defensive threshold into a sculptural declaration of authority. Passing beneath it was a performance; one entered not just a citadel, but a civilisation asserting divine order and dynastic strength. The gate framed power itself. Later, Babylon's Ishtar Gate (575 BCE) would echo this grandeur, proving that monumental openings don't merely divide space; they construct the very identity of those who pass through them.



Lintel with lion carvings

Zde



Ishtar Gate at Pergamon Museum Raimond Spekking

03

400 BCE

Arches and Buttresses Rome

Openings that hold

The Roman arch wasn't just a shape; it was a revelation. Its curved geometry carried forces sideways and downward, allowing spans that lintels never could. These openings didn't weaken walls; they made them. Later, the flying buttress took this further, flinging weight away to make space for stained glass and soaring vaults. Openings became systems; dynamic, responsive, structural. They weren't empty anymore; they were active. They held, they pushed, they lifted. Architecture finally learned how to open without collapsing.



Arches of a Roman palace

Painting by Antonio Joli in Christie's London



Flying Buttresses of Amiens Cathedral

Acroterion

04

312 BCE

Service Manholes Rome

Access to the invisible

Below the grandeur of Rome, a quieter genius unfolded; service openings within aqueducts, arches, and drains. These small access hatches enabled repairs, redirected overflow, and prevented flooding. They were early forms of manholes, unseen but crucial. The idea of opening infrastructure, not just buildings, marks a turning point. Even today, ornate cast-iron manhole covers trace this lineage, proving that access points can be both functional and crafted. It's an unsung kind of opening, one that makes civilisation possible from underneath.



Tunnel of Eupalinos

Tomisti



Manhole cover for a storm system in Ohio

Mbrickn

05 113 CE

Oculus of the Pantheon Rome

The divine aperture

At the dome's peak, the Pantheon's oculus opens directly to the sky. Neither glazed nor framed, it welcomes rain, light, and time itself. Measuring 30 feet across, this central aperture acts like a celestial eye, casting a moving spotlight across the vast interior. It transforms the dome into a clock, a compass and a theatre of the cosmos. An opening without a barrier, this is where the heavens enter the temple. The architectural feat was unprecedented in the ancient world and remains a source of wonder to this day.



Spotlight from the Oculus



Massimo The Oculus on the dome

Wilfredo Rafael Rodriguez Hernandez

06 1194 CE

Stained Glass at Chartres Cathedral France

Divine gospels

The stained glass at Chartres doesn't just colour the light, it tells stories. Positioned high above the nave, these windows catch the sun and scatter it through cobalt blue and ruby red, projecting sacred scenes onto stone. They lifted the medieval church into another realm, where light became language. Each pane was both scripture and spectacle. These weren't mere windows; they were thresholds between worlds, where matter dissolved in radiance, and the divine entered through a frame of glass.



Northern rose window of Chartres Cathedral

Eusebius



Rose window of Ebrach Kirche

Ermell

07 1305 CE

Jali screens India

Porous Poetry

Jali screens are perforated stone panels that cool, shade, and enchant. Common in Indian and Islamic architecture, they allow filtered light and air while offering privacy. Their geometric and floral patterns shift with the sun, casting intricate shadows. Found in structures like Alai Darwaza and the Taj Mahal, jalis are not quite walls or windows, but breathable skins; architecture in dialogue with wind and light.



Mughal jali screens

Naik,pratik



Mashrabiya Screens of Iran

Phileon



Limited opening of the Igloo

Yair Haklai



Small openings in the adobe walls of Sahelian Architecture

Dr. Ondřej Havelka (cestovatel)

08

1485 CE

Oriel Windows and Jharokhas

Great Britain and India

Light on a ledge

Projecting outward from stone walls, oriel windows, and jharokhas stretch the boundary between inside and out. In Britain, corbel-supported oriel's pulled daylight deep into dark interiors. In India, jharokhas offer veiled views, allowing women to observe the street below while remaining unseen. Both extended the window into space; sheltered, elevated, and ornate. These weren't mere apertures but spatial devices, enriching light, view, and privacy. A window became a room; small, suspended, and charged with presence.



Oriel window



Ermell Ajharokha in Maheshwar Fort Bernard Gagnon

09

1500 CE

Aanavathil

India

Magestic moves

The Aanavathil, or 'elephant gate', was built not just for scale, but for spectacle. These monumental thresholds in Kerala's temples and palaces welcomed royal elephants, living emblems of power and ceremony. Arched and intricately carved, they transformed arrival into ritual. In North India too, massive fort gates like those at Delhi's Red Fort or Rajasthan's Amer echoed this grandeur, designed for beasts and battalions alike. Whether south or north, these gates bore the weight of sovereignty, staging power in motion. Openings through which kingdoms moved, and majesty was made visible.



Gate of Mysore Palace



Derawar Fort Gate

Fazal Khaliq

Babasteve

10

1591 CE

Charminar

Hyderabad

The gate that became the place Charminar rose as both prayer and plan, a four-arched gateway marking the founding of Hyderabad and anchoring its streets. Each opening led to a vibrant bazaar, making it not just a monument but the city's living heart. With Indo-Islamic grace and urban clarity, it framed direction, commerce, and collective memory.

Centuries later, Mumbai's Gateway of India echoed this civic symbolism, welcoming royals, farewelling ships, and heralding modernity. Both structures are more than thresholds; they are openings that etched themselves into the cities they helped birth.



Charminar in Hyderabad



DidierTais Gateway of India in Mumbai

A.Savin

11

1661 CE

Veins of Versailles

France

Behind the pageant

Beneath the staged perfection of Versailles ran a secret; a network of discreet tunnels, invisible yet vital. These openings, hidden from view, allowed servants to move unseen, supplies to flow silently, and royalty to slip away if needed. The grandeur above stood undisturbed, upheld by this invisible web. Versailles wasn't just about what was shown; it was about what was concealed. These tunnels remind us that every performance of power is propped up by quiet, unseen openings.



Underground tunnel of the Palace of Versailles

Chateauversailles

12

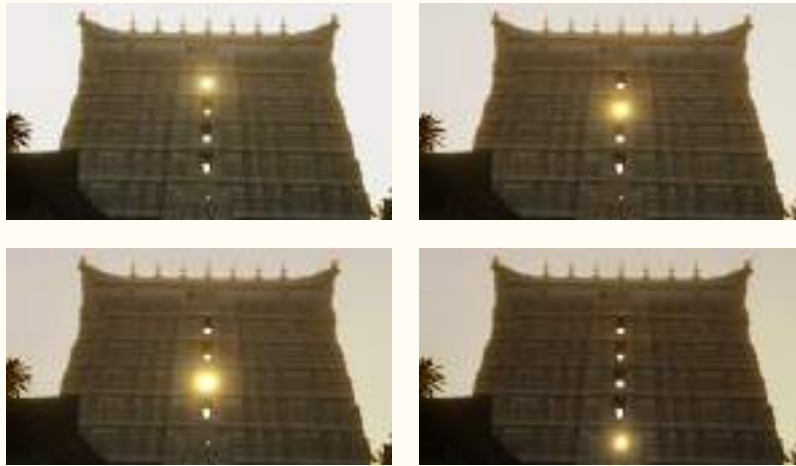
1700 CE

Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple

Kerala

Ritual in light

Twice a year, the setting sun aligns with the eastern gopuram of the temple, pouring golden light through a vertical series of windows to reach the sanctum's threshold. This precise alignment reveals a cosmic choreography encoded in stone. The openings are not mere voids; they are instruments, tuned to the sky. Framing the sun's descent in five-minute intervals, they blend astronomy and devotion into ritual light. Here, architecture doesn't just catch the sun, it predicts its path.



Sunset through the openings of Gopuram

Vijayan Madhavan

14

1900 CE

Tea Stall to Team and Steam

India

Where people gather

The humble hatch of a tea stall is more than a closure; it's a small celebration on community life. Raised each dawn with a metallic rattle, it reveals a familiar world of steaming chai and shared silence. These simple openings frame spaces of pause and conversation, offering warmth to workers, wanderers, and regulars alike. When lowered, they preserve not just supplies but stories. In their daily rhythm of open and shut, these openings mark time with the dignity of the ordinary.



A tea stall in Pushkar

Satish Krishnamurthy

13

1882 CE

Gaudi's Openings

Barcelona

Wander and wonder

Gaudí carved light into curves. In Casa Batlló and Casa Milà, windows undulate, courtyards spiral, and skylights bloom; each an invitation to air and wonder. These openings don't just serve, they dance. They let sunlight fall like water, filter air like trees, and turn structure into story. Inspired by shells, waves, and bones, Gaudí's apertures blur line and ornament. They aren't cuts in walls; they are living thresholds, through which the outside whispers, swirls, and sings into the heart of home.



Openings in the interiors of Casa Batlló

Amadalvarez

Openings of Sagrada Família

Luis Miguel Bugallo Sánchez (Lmbuga)

15

1920 CE

Picture Windows in Modern Homes

USA

Open, Yet Shut

The picture window marked a quiet revolution, an opening that didn't open. Popularised by Frank Lloyd Wright, it turned homes into galleries of landscape, where nature was always present but never touched. These large, fixed panes shifted architecture's gaze from function to feeling; from letting air in to letting wonder in. They reframed domestic life as a composed view, constant yet changing.

Later, in tropical regions, mosquito meshes (1980) complemented this ethos; openings that breathe but protect, allowing air and light while shielding life from intrusion.



Picture windows of a Wright home

James Haefner

Mosquito mesh screen for ventilation and protection

16

1942 CE

Door at Anne Frank's Annexe Germany

The hidden threshold

Behind a revolving bookshelf, a narrow doorway once concealed the lives of eight people. This secret opening into the annexe wasn't grand, but it was life. Built by Johan Voskuil, it disguised both fear and hope. To pass through it meant to disappear from a world on fire. Though ordinary in appearance, this door marked a profound boundary between seen and unseen, danger and defiance. In history's darkest hours, it stood for the quiet courage of concealment and the sanctity of survival.



The bookcase that hid the entrance to the Secret Annexe

Maria Austria/MAI/Amsterdam

18

1950 CE

Ronchamp- Vessel of Light France

Light sculpted in silence

Le Corbusier's chapel pierces heavy walls with shards of light. High-set clerestory windows slice through thick concrete, casting divine patterns on bare surfaces. These irregular openings, scattered like stars, transform the sanctuary into a vessel of light and shadow. No stained glass, no symmetry; only spirit. The silence inside is illuminated, not by ornament, but by geometry and grace. In a world rebuilding after the war, these windows offered an architecture of transcendence; unspoken, solemn, and filled with sacred light.



Diffused light entering the interiors of the Chapel of Ronchamp



Facade with penetrations

Cara Hyde-Basso

Cemal Emden

17

1948 CE

Jantar Mantar- Measuring Time India

Geometry meets cosmos

At Jantar Mantar, architecture opens to the sky with a scientific purpose. Slits, frames, and angled apertures carve the heavens, turning celestial motion into measurable truth. Built to align with stars and solstices, these fenestrations aren't decorative; they're instruments. Through them, sunlight tracks time and shadows trace cosmic rhythm. Here, openings become observational tools, marrying masonry with astronomy. In every notch and slit is the echo of an ancient gaze upward; precise, poetic, and persistent in its pursuit of the infinite.



Jantar Mantar, Jaipur



Sudipta Maulik

Rama Yantra at Jantar Mantar

Kishore J

19

1963 CE

Gateway Arch USA

Framing ambition

Rising from the Mississippi's edge, the Gateway Arch frames a nation's westward dreams. Saarinen's stainless steel arc, sleek, silent and soaring, offers no door yet functions as a threshold. It opens space as a symbol of departure, expansion, and ambition. Climb within, and a viewing slit reveals the land pioneers once crossed.

Similarly, the Dubai Frame (2018) is a striking architectural landmark in Dubai, UAE, designed by Fernando Donis. Shaped like a colossal picture frame, the design allows for breathtaking views of both old and new Dubai, embodying a connection between the city's past and its modern aspirations.



Gateway Arch, USA

Daniel Schwen



Dubai Frame, UAE

Travelxp

20 1986 CE

Lotus Temple India

Leading Light

The Lotus Temple unfolds like a prayer in stone. Its 27 marble petals rise and part, catching sunlight and sky. At the apex of its inner marble petals, oculi invite daylight from above, their circular forms echoing the temple's celestial aspirations. Between petals, narrow skylights allow soft light to slip through the seams, casting delicate shadows that shift with the sun. At ground level, nine doorways open from each side of the temple, grounding its radial form and welcoming visitors from all directions. Through oculi and skylights, soft beams spill into a vast, silent hall; no idols, no words, just light. Inspired by a flower, the design opens upward, turning architecture into revelation. As the sun shifts, the space transforms.



Interiors of the Lotus Temple, Delhi

Courtesy of bahaihouseofworship

21 1990 CE

The Mandela Cell Door South Africa

Hope behind bars

A steel door in a prison wall became a global emblem of endurance. Nelson Mandela's 27-year confinement on Robben Island was marked by this unyielding opening; sketched by his own hand, remembered with a key left in its lock. It didn't just confine; it symbolised the waiting arc of justice. In its eventual swing outward, the door became not escape but the emergence of a man, a movement and a nation. What once barred freedom now frames one of history's most powerful openings - liberation.



Nelson Mandela's sketch of his prison cell door

Bonhams



Church of Light by Tadao Ando, Japan

Hetgallery via Visualhunt.com



Uniform openings that lead into the hall

Akash

Much like the Lotus Temple, Tadao Ando's Church of Light (1989) uses form and minimalism to sculpt faith. A cross-shaped cut-out in its east-facing wall lets in a stream of light, transforming the interior into an evocation of divine presence. Through restraint and geometry, Ando sculpts silence, letting light alone deliver faith.

22 1993 CE

India Habitat Centre India

The civic lungs

Joseph Allen Stein's India Habitat Centre reimagines institutional space as a living organism. Its central courtyard draws in light and breeze, surrounded by buildings stitched together through skywalks and shaded walkways. These interstitial openings between, above, and around invite nature to move within the structure. Large windows, terraces, and voids create a rhythm of porosity. This openness is not only spatial but also social. Designed for gathering, exchange, and pause. The building breathes through its openings, making it a civic lung in the heart of the city.



Atrium of India Habitat Centre

Surbhi



Shaded open space in India Habitat Centre

Naim Keruwala

23 2000 CE

The British Museum Great Court London

Sheltered not Sealed

Once hidden from public view, the grand courtyard of the British Museum was rediscovered and transformed in 2000 by Foster + Partners. Enclosed by a vast glass and steel canopy, the Great Court breathes with light and openness. Though covered, it remains defined by its connection to the sky, a transparent ceiling that shelters without sealing. At its centre, the once-secluded Round Reading Room now stands embraced, no longer isolated but integral. What was once a museum without a gathering place is now a luminous civic space that restores focus, frames history, and welcomes the world back in.



Undulating glazed roof of the British Museum Great Court

Nigel Young

Much like the British Museum's Great Court, whose soaring canopy

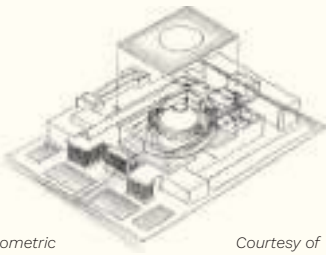


Crossrail Place Roof Garden

Nigel Young

holds space through openness, the Crossrail Place Roof Garden is a study in contrasts, open, yet covered; structured, yet organic. Enclosed within a striking timber lattice roof, its design offers protection without enclosure. The roof itself, with its

geometric glazing and open panels, filters light while leaving deliberate gaps that frame the sky, the skyline, and moments of movement below. Paths meander through plantings from both hemispheres, echoing its position on the Prime Meridian.



Axonometric view of the court

Courtesy of Foster+Partners



Sectional view of the Roof Garden

Courtesy of Foster+Partners

24 2020 CE

Al Janoub Stadium Qatar

Tradition in Transit

Inspired by the dhow sails of Qatar's seafarers, the Al Janoub Stadium's retractable roof opens like wind-catching fabric. More than a feat of engineering, this kinetic canopy adapts to climate, cooling or revealing the sky as needed. The opening merges tradition with innovation, anchoring a futuristic venue in cultural memory. Inside, the movement of the roof reshapes air, light, and spectacle, creating an atmosphere that is both intimate and grand. The stadium's ability to control natural light and ventilation with the opening roof enhances the fan experience and sets a new standard for stadium design in hot climates.



Aerial view of Al Janoub Stadium, Qatar

Courtesy of Zaha Hadid Architects



View of the retractable roof from the stadium

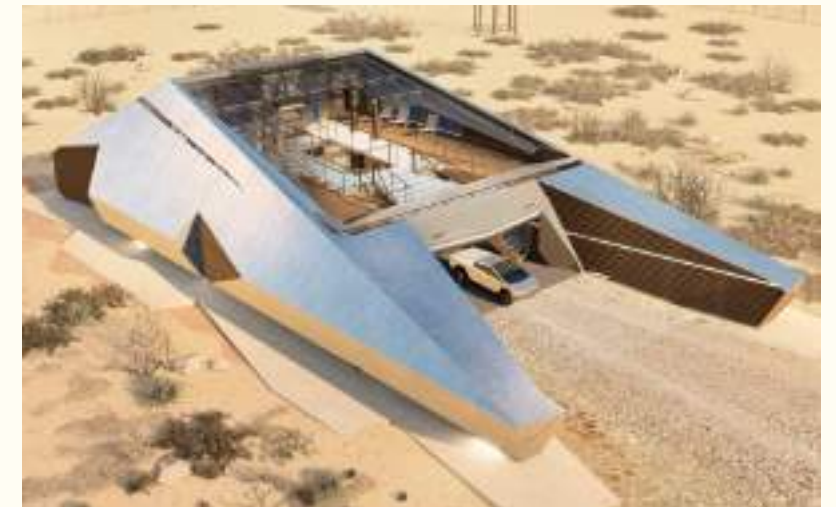
Hufton + Crow

25 2020 CE

Smart Glass Windows in Cybertruck Prototype House USA

Windows that think

In Tesla's prototype house for the Cybertruck, glass becomes intelligent. At a touch, windows transition from opaque to clear, opening privacy to light and vice versa. This is not just transparency, but transformation. Responsive to choice and context, these panes reframe the idea of openness; no longer fixed, but fluid. Beyond smart homes, it signals a future where architecture responds, adapts, and thinks. Here, a window isn't a frame for the outside world; it's a canvas for how we choose to see and live within it.



Cybertruck house prototype

Courtesy of Dezeen

inscape

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Content Developer and Coordinator:

Sonam Ambe

IIID Office Address

109, Sumer Kendra,
Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Worli,
Mumbai, Maharashtra 400018
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