

Editorial



This is the third issue of Tekton being brought out since the COVID pandemic hit the world. In nearly two years now, we witnessed the life as we knew it drastically change. The prolonged nature of the pandemic indicates that some of these changes will have a lasting presence for better or for worse. At the time of going to press in December 2021, we can already sense what they might be. Even if the end is not really in sight, not yet.

On the downside, the pandemic has worsened the inequalities in the world – in vaccine distribution and hoarding, in travel restrictions, in dispensing the medical supply and financial aid. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened while the concentration of power in the hands of authoritarian regimes has deepened. These scenarios (or their tiny reflections) of the larger political arena are seen to be playing out at more intimate scales too – that of local area authorities, institutions, workplaces, down to the families. Democratic principles and individual agency are too messy and time consuming when the ‘emergency’ situation becomes a handy excuse for convenient dictats. On the upside, many are taking the opportunity to reflect on the nature of our homes, workspaces, schools, cities and their impact on common people’s lives. So many things have been learned about living and working – it would be unfortunate if the policymakers consigned them to dustbins once ‘normal’ times return.

The practice and education of architecture should not remain immune or deaf to these changes, good and bad. If we refuse to learn from innovations we were compelled to adopt and go back to the status quo, it would be most unfortunate. Afterall, we call ourselves creative people.

We can always hope for a better world.

In this issue of Tekton, we feature the following:

Peu Bannerjee in her paper on laterite ek-ratna temples in Bishnupur, Bengal brings a fresh approach in studying the temple form – does construction technique play a part in form-making? She has meticulously analysed a temple to show how its geometry is a result of material and construction besides aesthetic and cultural drivers.

Sushama Dhepe and **Archana Gaikwad** in their paper, draw a much needed attention to the concept of outcome based education (OBE), its adoption in architecture pedagogy is overdue. They use Bloom's taxonomy to analyse the existing guidelines and practices in India and then create a framework to design curriculum that speaks of the learning outcomes.

Anushka Shahdadpuri in her evocative essay asserts that the Indian city on ground is inherently messy, chaotic and heterogenic. The technocentric imaginations of smart, tidy, ordered etc. do not sit squarely with the lived realities and life of people find a way in a very different manner than what was envisaged on paper. She makes a case for understanding the urbanscapes through the lens of everyday and reinforce the association of 'city' to 'citizenship' in the spirit of democratic negotiations.

For the 'Practice' section in this issue, **Rohit Shinkre**, a teacher-architect, Principal at Rohit Shinkre Architects makes his recent renovation and extension of the Lycée Français Internationale de Pondicherry as an opportunity to write about and discuss many questions thrown up in the course of his engagement with the project. He makes a simple yet emphatic point that every design project should become a means to debate broader questions about the discipline. Critical reflection can generate a discourse to further design thinking in the practice of architecture.

In the pages of Tekton, we have repeatedly made a case for the need for having such critical discourse on architecture practice (in all its myriad forms, not just erecting buildings). The journal has created space for it through the sections – 'Practice' and 'Dialogue' – not usually found in an academic publication. We do not believe in unproductive binaries of academia and practice nor do we subscribe to disciplinary gatekeeping. Thus, we have always welcomed practitioners of design, engineering, teaching, publishing, curating and writing to pen their views reflecting upon their work or the state of affairs in the profession. Seen together, these sections contain a wealth of wisdom and insights. **Kevin Low** in his conversation with **Kiran Keswani** (Tekton, vol. 4, issue 2) spoke of self-criticism, reflection and peer review as vital but largely missing parts of the profession. He said, "The reason why our profession has become irrelevant is because it has been too obsessed with the hawking of formal aesthetics, and not enough with the discursive issues of critical content."

Another voice of reason and reflection in the pages of Tekton has been that of **Kamu Iyer**. He contributed essays and also offered healthy critic and advice. After a long and rewarding career he passed last year, having just completed a volume chronicling his works – *From Diagram To Design* – which was published posthumously. The book contains author's reflections on the principles, issues and processes that governed his projects. **Jinu Kurien** has reviewed it in this issue where he puts in perspective its

thematic structure. He calls it a document of time and memory. Considering the long and prolific nature of Iyer's output, the document to use his own words is "the ideas and experiences gathered become memory from which to draw later"

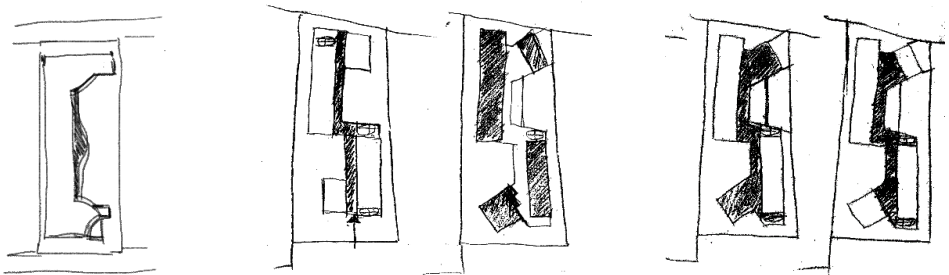
We also feature in the 'Dialogue' section of this issue a conversation between him and **Mustansir Dalvi**. This interview conducted by Prof. Dalvi in 2014, engaged Mr. Iyer on several subjects close to his heart, centered on the evolution and urbanity of Bombay, his *karmabhoomi*. We reproduce the main excerpts from the author's blog as a way of paying tribute to Mr. Iyer whose works, writings and teaching have inspired many generations of architects and students.

Kamu Iyer's characteristic mode of reflection and review has been making diagrams. We see him using them in his books – whether on Bombay's urbanism or about G.B. Mhatre's buildings. The diagram becomes both a thinking tool and expository medium for him. In his last book he deploys them to narrate his own works. In his Practice essay in Tekton 2.1 titled, *A Project's Journey*, he used them extensively. Here, we reproduce a few, again to commemorate his association with Tekton.

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Diagrams by Kamu Iyer to illustrate his design process for the School at Gudalur, Tamil Nadu. Excepted from his essay, A Project's Journey, featured in Tekton, volume 2, issue 1.