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From left:
Raj Shamani,
Ambika Nayak,
Harsh Agarwal
and Sakshi
Sindwani

30 UNDER 30

Meet India's
brightest young
entrepreneurs,
innovators
and stars



A Lasting Impact

By MOHAN SIDDHARTH & KAMAYNI

“Architecture is the thoughtful making of space.”
—Louis Kahn

Architecture provides the physical environment in which we live, it is an expression of the true strength of society. It is a powerful reflection of human culture.

India boasts of architectural diversity like no other country in the world, ranging from ancient caves to modern-day skyscrapers. Indian architecture is rooted in its history and culture. Today India is witnessing an amalgamation of styles in architecture. Modern Indian architecture honours and upholds the traditions of India, with contemporary form and style.

The second of the series features yet another set

of promising young architects and designers who are creating a huge impact with their modern approach towards building structures and designing units, keeping sustainability and carbon footprint on top of their agenda as they get going with their projects. At the same time, these young architects and designers have successfully integrated technology into designs while taking care of Indian sensibilities.

In the words of renowned architect BV Doshi, “Design is nothing but a humble understanding of materials, a natural instinct for solutions, and respect for nature.”

Today, the importance of context, sustainability, nature, and creating an architecture that is true to our culture and one that creates an ‘Indian Identity’ have gained much credence. Read on.



METHODOLOGY

The research for the final list of Top 30 under 45 followed a step-by-step process. First, an exhaustive list of over a hundred young and promising architects and interior designers was created. Next, a basic sanity check that included age, education, experience, achievements and prominent projects narrowed it down to 50. Last, the ones who made it to the final 30 fulfilled a defined set of parameters comprising their work philosophy, challenges faced, vision and prospective contribution to the field of interior design and architecture.

COURTESY STUDIO GULMOHAR

Shaping Spaces

Adding value through sensible design defines the work ethic of VS Vigneswar. Hence the name of his award-winning architecture and design firm, Architecture + Value (A+V). With 11 years of practice and having completed over 100 projects, it is a firm of high-quality design repute.

Vigneswar believes the “spaces we inhabit have an impact on the lives we lead”. The opportunity to shape the spaces that serve people was inspiration for him to choose architecture as a vocation. He studied architecture at CEPT, Ahmedabad, and Delft Technical University, Netherlands. Besides being an architect, he has also served

as visiting faculty at some of the top architectural colleges in India.

“The success of any project is measured by the value we have added to the project, the users, clients and the environment,” says Vigneswar. A+V’s award-winning projects are testimony to that—Radiance IRIS, a sustainable group housing project in Bengaluru and the GKS Convention Centre in Chennai are examples.

Vigneswar attributes his success

Architecture + Value, Chennai

VS Vigneswar, 36
 Principal Architect

to his biggest learning: “To keep the fire of curiosity burning and the thirst to make things better alive.” He strongly believes that at A+V, they have developed a unique skill set in designing successful real estate projects with a focus on sustainability, low carbon footprint and commercial viability that create a lifestyle-enhancing environment.

In the future, A+V would like to build on its good work by partnering with developers who aspire to have good designs. Vigneswar dreams of A+V to be one of the best design practices in the country that is known for the tangible value created in the built environment. **F**

• MOHAN SIDDHARTH

VS Vigneswar believes in designing projects with a focus on sustainability and commercial viability



Past Meets The Future

We believe in blurring the boundaries between architecture, interior [design] and landscaping,” says Aditi Pai, a landscape architect by qualification, and co-founder and principal architect of The Purple Ink Studio, established in 2011 with Akshay Heranjal. The studio is an award-winning multifaceted practice that is young, experimental, contextual and ambitious.

The Purple Ink Studio usually takes on projects with unique briefs and typologies. It wants to create spaces that are futuristic with learnings from mythology, history and the past. The approach to projects is a means to connect the dots of Indian wisdom and carry

The Purple Ink Studio, Bengaluru

Aditi Pai, 37

Principal Architect

Akshay Heranjal, 38

Principal Architect

forward its ethos to the future. Its project Ahana Spa at Shreyas Yoga Retreat in Bengaluru, for instance, has been designed as a ‘Retreat within a Retreat’, focusing strongly on the connect of man in the realm of the future. It offers spectacular layers of spaces and experiences.

“There is a lot of layering that goes behind the design process... drawing inspiration from the natural site context, sensitivity towards local materials, and collaborating with artisans form some of the core values tuning the design parameters,” says Pai.


At The Purple Ink Studio, they constantly work on the



Akshay Heranjal and Aditi Pai have an approach that is non-linear and eccentric

inherent qualities that a space stands for. The work at the studio is deeply experimental and constantly challenges design exploration with an approach that is non-linear and eccentric. The studio wants to create a unified consciousness where the building goes beyond the sole purpose of existence. “Architecture not just impacts the urban fabric but

also has the timeless equation fundamentally connecting several aspects of human life,” says Pai.

Going forward, they foresee themselves within a highly collaborative and symbiotic environment with a tremendous exchange and sharing of opportunities, thoughts and learnings. 

• KAMAYNI

Monarch Champaneri is a history buff inspired by historical monuments for their cultural relevance and scale. This continued obsession since his student days led him to pursue a master's in architecture from the University of Illinois. After gaining international experience and expertise in architecture, he co-founded OpenIdeas Architects with Nilesh Gajera and Niralee Champaneri in 2009.

For Champaneri, design is a way of life. "Anything that makes life easier, simpler and aesthetically beautiful is design for me. It is an omnipresent phenomenon in which we live," he says.

The design studio always tries to get on the same wavelength as its clients with respect to their aspirations. Backed by research and case studies, it tries to balance the rational and creative aspects of designs—whether it's at the concept level or detailing level.

With resilience and hard work, OpenIdeas has carved a niche for itself in the strong architectural landscape of Ahmedabad. "There was initial resistance to many of our ideas, but slowly we overcame that with better detailing, site executions and technological integration," says Champaneri.

Hive, an internationally acclaimed house in Surat, is its flagship project because of its unique metal kinetic façade system and mono-volume structural design. Another landmark project is Link House in Ahmedabad where three residential units are linked into one building mass. This design strategy resulted in creating interesting volumes, architectural elements, varied landscape features and a bold new approach toward single family homes.

As it continues to grow, OpenIdeas

Global Outlook, Indian Roots



OpenIdeas Architects,
 Ahmedabad

Monarch Champaneri, 40

Founding Partner

would like to be a part of India's growth with its work having a global outlook while keeping its Indian design roots, with underlying tones of sustainability and technology. **F**

• KAMAYNI

Diversity, Destiny & Design

We share an insatiable passion for creation... to be able to breathe life into ideas in the form of habitable spaces,” says Barun Patro, who along with Shiju Pareed and Sekar Dhandapani, co-founded Amar Architecture and Designs Pvt Ltd, an award-winning comprehensive architectural design and interior consultancy.

Their journey has been of diversity and destiny. While pursuing their architectural education, they gained experience in building and design, working on a side hustle in the workshop headed by Dhandapani. This helped them become seasoned professionals while they were students. Fresh out of college, they collaborated to establish their firm, Amar, meaning immortal in Sanskrit. “Our inspiration has always been a vision that we will create a design legacy that is bigger than all of us together,” says Pareed. Today they have three studio offices in Chennai, Bhubaneswar and Kozhikode, with more than 100 employees, and over 600 completed projects across five countries.

Each of the three directors has a different personality, style and approach to design, and they are all loyal and committed to work. Every new project has one identified project lead, while the rest are advisors, which has proved to be a successful mantra in their journey. They also empower their younger teams to lead projects and recognise their efforts. “We have well-defined policies and structure in our organisation that give us uniformity among our teams and helps us



(From left) Barun Patro, Sekar Dhandapani and Shiju Pareed have completed over 600 projects across five countries

Amar Architecture and Designs Pvt Ltd, Chennai

Barun Patro, 38

Director

Shiju Pareed, 38

Director

Sekar Dhandapani, 43

Director

grow steadily,” says Dhandapani.

Design to them is the art of storytelling via scientific knowledge, material application and spatial

experiences, a power to manifest an idea into reality. This is evident in their wide array of projects across residential, hospitality, health care and commercial sectors, including Zaman Villa in Vadakara, New Yorkers restaurant in Chennai and Metro International Cardiac Center in Calicut to name a few.

Instead of competition, they believe in collaboration, and want to create opportunities for the same. They consciously want to encourage students, designers, vendors and clients to practise design with a more sustainable approach and adapt more technology. **F**

• KAMAYNI

In Harmony With Nature



George E Ramapuram's Earthitects is rooted in the values of the land

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George E Ramapuram grew up surrounded by an abundance of nature and splendid architecture at Coorg. It was through his architect uncle that he understood the impact nature and architecture have on the way one lives. These went on to become driving forces in improving lifestyles through design.

After his bachelor's in architecture from the University School of Design, Mysuru, he began his apprenticeship years at the in-house architecture and design division of Evolve Back Resorts. During this period, the formal inception of a division called 'Earthitects' was envisioned and initiated by him. "I understood the value of sensible design with my first project at Stone Lodges Private Residences by Earthitects," he says.

Earthitects, Bengaluru

George E Ramapuram, 36
 Principal Architect and MD

"At Earthitects, we endeavour to ally with the earth to create dwellings that are in harmony with oneself and the natural environment that enables 'natural life'," he adds. Earthitects is rooted in the values of the land and crafts spaces that emanate from the earth that binds us all.

Estate Plavu from The Stone Lodge at Wayanad, Kerala, a three-lodge private residential unit with handcrafted furniture and panoramic views of the Wayanad forests, is one such remarkable project by Earthitects.

Ramapuram envisages design as a way of life that facilitates ease of living. "Good design understands the mannerisms of its inhabitants and provides a thriving environment for the mind, body and soul," he explains.

At Earthitects, a lot of research, development and implementation goes into a new project. "If the critical objectives of a new project are defined, they help us curate every possible way of using the space. We believe a space should be an extension of one's natural mannerisms, down to the most minute detail," says Ramapuram.

In future, Earthitects would like to imbibe more cultural elements in its projects and let them be an embodiment of the 'spirit of the land'. **F**

• MOHAN SIDDHARTH

Dialogue For Change



(From left) Tahaer Zoyab and Anupriya Subbian use design as a tool to create positive change

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Anupriya Subbian and Tahaer Zoyab first met through the architectural school they were studying in and graduated to work with renowned architects in India and abroad. They added to their interest by further specialising in interior design and urban design before collaborating and co-founding Triple O Studio, a multi-disciplinary architecture and interior design firm, in 2010.

Their journey has been a conscious and constant exploration of design through travel, research and experimentation. The studio has a participatory, non-hierarchical approach where everyone is open to ideas and is given an equal opportunity to contribute to the design process. This has led to the creation of new initiatives such as Madras Inherited (heritage walks and engagement activities), TripleOpixel (architectural photography) and

Triple O Studio, Chennai

Anupriya Subbian, 38

Co-founder & Head of Design

Tahaer Zoyab, 38

Co-founder & Head of Design

Evolve Wednesday (an open community platform for people from different fields to share their knowledge), contributing to an enriching and diverse environment.

For them, every new project is a collaboration with their clients. “We believe that the best results stem from a healthy and holistic dialogue with all the stakeholders,” says Subbian. After a complete understanding of the context, scale and requirements, they follow a customised process-driven workflow to ensure the best possible outcome. This project-

and scale-specific system ensures that every design is unique in practice, process and output.

Design is always given priority as a conscious stream of thought. For them, it is a way of expression and a tool to create positive change. “We strive to create impactful designs that aspire to have positive, social, economic and environmental effects that are rooted in their context,” says Zoyab. These are evident in projects like the Gateway Bridge on the IT expressway, Chennai, the Monterosa House in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, and others.

They are hoping their thirst for new experiences will lead to varied and new typologies of projects in future. “We want to continue pushing the boundaries of research, process, design output, and challenge our comfort zone as much as we can.” 

• KAMAYNI

Modern Makeover



Jannat Vasi wants to create a social impact through innovative problem-solving solutions

Jannat Vasi believes that design strategy starts with human experience. Bringing in a sense of well-being and comfort with subtle luxury is what brings about a successful design outcome. A project should align with the client's vision, aesthetic and functional preferences. "We design a tailor-made space for them through intricate planning, detailing and design which we aim is one-of-a-kind in every way possible," she says.

Vasi feels to be successful one needs to consistently hone one's skills and undergo an independent journey of self-discovery through experience. Practical knowledge, social relationships and surpassing the client's expectations have given her confidence and a sense of freedom.

As the owner of her studio, Vasi says, "I have come to the realisation that besides design skills, an interior designer needs to wear many hats such as perform the role of a team leader, a management expert and sometimes, hilariously even a psychiatrist."

Among the studio's prominent projects are the innovative Pop Art House at Peddar Road in Mumbai and Summer Home (highly customised design with a balanced play of textures, materials and colour) in Goregaon East in Mumbai.

Vasi wants to create a social impact through a blend of innovative problem-solving solutions which are aesthetically pleasing and of superior quality, working with the right people in the right spaces using the right products at the right time. "I would want to think out-of-the-box by blending age-old techniques and crafts in innovative ways to create a modern outcome that appeals to a global palette," she says. 

Jannat Vasi Interior Design, Mumbai

Jannat Vasi, 33

Owner

 **KAMAYANI**

Substance Over Style

Design is fundamentally an extension of life—a powerful agent for change that exists within everyday life, be it personal, community or the larger public. This belief motivates Akshara Verma, partner at Ace Group Architects, to create landmark architecture. For Verma, pursuing architecture was an intrinsic decision. She grew up in an ambitious, supportive and nuclear household with an architect father and an IT professional mother.

After graduating from RV College of Architecture in Chennai, Verma continued her pursuit of learning in Sri Lanka and Mumbai, with lessons on perseverance, teamwork, landscaping and the art of drawing. She went on to pursue a master's from The Berlage Center for Advanced Studies in Architecture and Urban Design in the Netherlands, where she gained valuable experiences and friendships. Thereafter, she returned to India with plans of being an independent professional and academic, and joined her father's firm, ACE Group Architects. She is also an academician and loves imparting her knowledge and learnings to architecture students. As she puts it, "Travel and learning by observation have been an integral part of my design journey."

While approaching a new project, Verma tends to have brainstorming sessions with clients which are backed by researched information, geographical feasibility, projections and case studies to seek ways to push a project into something new and exciting—both for the client and for them at the studio. She believes in the 'Charette Model', where all the consultants and collaborators focus on utilising the time together to problem-solve



Akshara Verma wants to explore new materials and techniques within the parameters of environment and ecology


ACE Group Architects, Bengaluru

Akshara Verma, 34
Partner

while working on a project.

Her landmark projects include RV University School of Design (retrofit architecture) and New Horizon Public School (urban, with lots of amenities) in Bengaluru, Jamjar restaurant in Mumbai, and Humblebean Cafe in Bengaluru.

Verma looks forward to exploring new materials and building techniques within the parameters of environment and ecology. She hopes to continue working with students, future architects, and the design community to drive ideas and innovation.

"I wish to contribute to the making of good architecture with an impetus on substance over style, long-term solutions over quick-fixes—architecture that remains thoughtful and thought-provoking in design and experience," she says. 

• KAMAYNI

Perspective Play



(From left) Narendra Pirgal, Smaran Mallesh and Vikram Rajashekar have completed over 75 projects

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Steve Jobs had famously declared: “Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works.”

Smaran Mallesh feels that this is the ethos of design at their studio, Cadence Architects, an award-winning architectural firm founded by him, Vikram Rajashekar and Narendra Pirgal in 2005. The co-founders studied together at RV College of Architecture in Bengaluru, where they collaborated on their first live interior project. Since its inception, the studio has completed more than 75 projects across India as well as abroad.

While taking on a new project, the site’s physical context, the client’s background and the budget are considered. Their working style is collaborative, both within the office as well as with other stakeholders on the site. “The biggest learning

Cadence Architects, Bengaluru

Smaran Mallesh, 38

Founding Partner

Vikram Rajashekar, 38

Founding Partner

Narendra Pirgal, 38

Founding Partner

has been about taking new and unforeseen directions the work can take with such collaborations, and the unique perspectives that each of these stakeholders possesses,” says Rajashekar.

The studio aspires to create architectural experiences that are pleasurable, both visually and sensorially. Rather than imposing a particular style, the studio looks

to evoke the latent potential of each project specifically to weave new possibilities of organising programme, culture, climate and site. Their projects, Java Rain (a resort amidst nature) in Chikmagalur, and Cloaked (a monolithic design abode) and KMYF (a dialysis centre) in Bengaluru are examples of their exquisite architectural designs.

Going forward, they would like to take on projects that would inspire them to push the boundaries of design and help hone the sensibilities and beliefs as a studio, projects that are accessible to a larger audience.

As Pirgal puts it, “The studio’s ideology has always been about trying to conceive architecture which is deeply rooted to the culture and place, while it has its own voice in the widely varied architectural landscape of India.”

• MOHAN SIDDHARTH

Creative Soul

Pavitra Sriprakash drew inspiration to become an architect from her mother Sheila Sriprakash, an architect of international acclaim and founder of Shilpa Architects. Since childhood, she was exposed to the world of architecture and design, having learnt drafting software at the young age of 12.

Sriprakash studied architecture at Anna University in Chennai before pursuing her master's in architecture and urban design from Columbia University. She gained experience in urban design, planning and sustainability in the US for a decade before joining the Global Design Studio at Shilpa Architects as chief designer and director.

Indo-centric sustainability is the ethos of Sriprakash's designs. She tends to use elements of local architectural practices and aesthetics in her designs. Her designs and architecture are inspired by India's legacy and culture, and philosophy of yoga and vaastu.

Shilpa Architects, Planners & Designers, Chennai

Pavitra Sriprakash, 45

Design Director

For a new project, spaces are set for landscape, ecology, and built form based on the geography of the site and its contribution to the sustainability of our planet. "I have learnt the importance of infusing every project with a unique 'soul'—an indelible character which comes from a creative abstract of the connection between the project and its culture," she says.

The design of Eluru Convention



Pavitra Sriprakash's designs are inspired by India's legacy

Center in Andhra Pradesh has a Buddhist influence with a traditional stupa design. Another piece of remarkable architecture is the Mahindra World City Clubhouse in Chennai, with an Indo-centric reciprocity and sustainable design.

Success comes with its own challenges like when they faced setbacks at a project in Dubai. "There was a lot of learning here, and the experience of coming out of this

disappointment has been a defining moment in my career," she says.

Sriprakash is interested in urbanism and hopes to work on projects that serve the city, environment, and shape the modern lives of urban India. "I would like to be part of bigger and more significant projects that have the ability to shape our cultural, aesthetic, and environmental footprint." **F**

● MOHAN SIDDHARTH