

BUILDING ON

IDEAS

Experiment and carve a niche space of your own—that's what successful interior designers and architects believe. **MARWAR** meets four unconventional Young Turks to learn how they change the look and feel of residential and commercial spaces with their innate sense of aesthetics.

Text * Debarati Chakraborty

A trail from Benares: The bed is inspired from temple details and colours are disintegrated in the form of ikat fabrics, the ceiling is hand-painted with a Hyderabad-inspired Noor Chand Bali chandelier

Shantanu Garg Design

Shantanu Garg, architect, interior and product designer, lives in Jaipur, Rajasthan, and is inspired by everything that the Pink City is famous for. What the 29-year-old does best is add a sense of balance to his designs and creations. According to Shantanu, any form of design is a consequence of balance—be it contrast, conflict or rhythm—with the final visual appeal also evoking a sense of equilibrium.

Shantanu explains: "The blending of different styles and elements and their interaction is where my idea of design germinates from. My design ideology is based on aesthetic and functional detailing."

Shantanu is currently working with colours, which are replicated

on his design canvas along with contrasting patterns and shapes. As an interior designer, he is always experimenting and his latest work essays transitional design themes. "This is where luxury and simplicity meet, where clean modern lines enclose the traditions of classical designs. Abstracts, fabric prints and blending of styles is what I am currently working with and thoroughly enjoying," he exclaims.

His design house, Shantanu Garg Design, works on high-end residential projects and boutique brands, restaurants and hotels. Shantanu is designing a restaurant in Jaipur called 'RJ-14', where he is lending a modern feel to the rustic character of a dhaba.

Talking about his residential projects, he says, "Our residences reflect the client's personality. We work on embellishing art and varied application of material in our projects and dedicatedly work on our own furniture details and designs."

What gives Shantanu and his design house an edge over competitors? "Our USP is our portfolio of design and style variations," he





says. His rendition of transitional themes is carving a niche path for the design house with a burgeoning demand for designs that seamlessly combine modern with the traditional. It is imperative that there be a blend of the dweller's and the designer's visions. The concept germinates from various experiences that are derived from travelling across the globe, embracing the environment, experimenting and innovating.

Shantanu's family hails from Ajmer, Rajasthan, while his business is based out of Jaipur, Rajasthan, and Pisa, Italy. He would like to believe that he has inherited all the Marwari attributes of his grandfather, who himself was an enterprising businessman. "My mother encouraged my brother and me to travel a lot, which increased our exposure to the world and helped hone my creative skills. I have my father's warm nature, which is an important quality when you are interacting with people, both at work or socially. My brother assists my father in the family business and is an enormous guiding force. We are extremely involved as a family, and I suppose that is what Marwaris are known for," he smiles.

After a formal training at MNIT

Jaipur, Shantanu took up small-scale projects, after which he started his design firm in 2009. Since its inception, Shantanu Garg Design has worked on nearly 80-85 projects in various spheres such as high-rise residences and apartments, retail, corporate, commercial, hospitals, offices, hospitality spaces and more. Today, the house is providing support for brand revamping exercises and event decor conceptualisation.

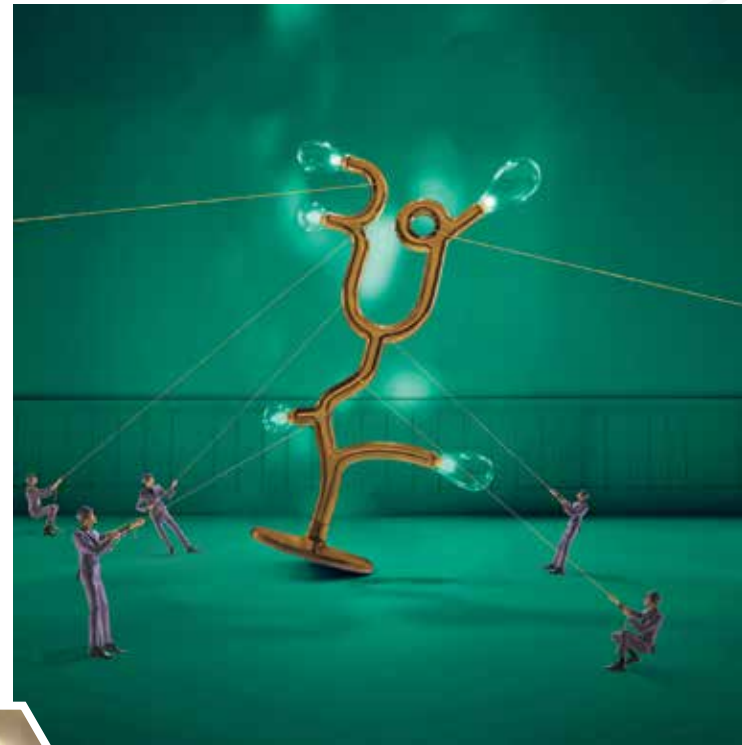
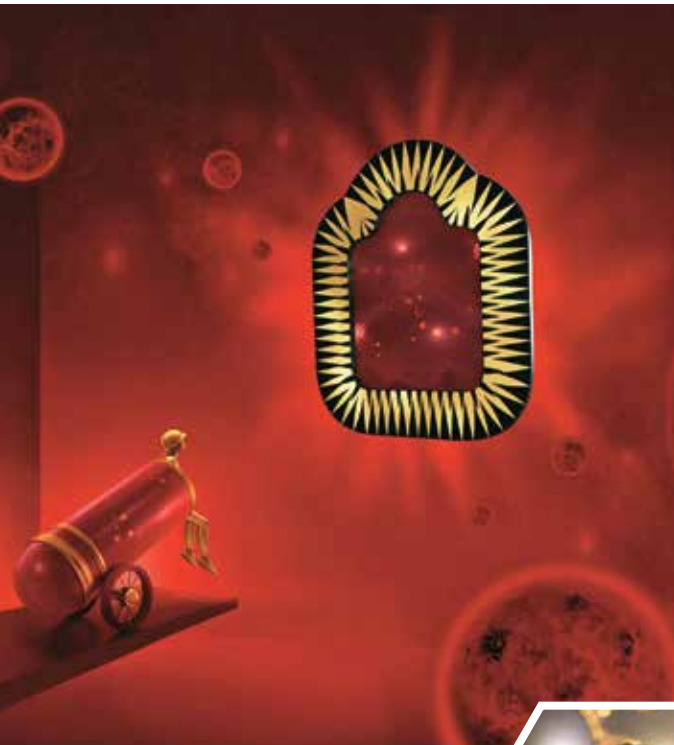
"I have a design extension in Italy, which acts as a route for me to explore international trends as well as release my design sensibilities across the globe. In the pipeline are unique concepts such as a design studio and orientation centre," he says. Since striking the right balance is important to Shantanu, he regularly takes up projects in his hometown to keep himself connected to his roots.

Shantanu has successfully blended his passion and business acumen, and hence calls himself a "design businessman". "I envision and create designs that I have faith in, hoping people see value in what I do. It is because my clients see value in my designs that they are appreciated, and appreciation is what drives my business," he says.

Scarlet Splendour

It is said that business acumen is inherent in every Marwari. For brother-sister duo Ashish Bajoria and Suman Kanodia, that skill is coupled with a creative outlook. The siblings merged their skills and passion for design in 2014 to set up Scarlet Splendour, which manufactures and markets luxury products globally, in collaboration with designers from all over the world.

Top (l-r): Indigo goes neutral and acts as a backdrop for vibrant colours; Salon Interiors —a fusion of art deco details with traditional influences accentuated by pop art style



L-R: The Big Parade, a large fun-shaped mirror from Scarlet Splendour's 'Vanilla Noir Collection'; The Five Bulb Floor Lamp from Scarlet Splendour's 'Luce Naga Collection'

Apart from taking luxe designs and masterpieces crafted by designers of international repute to the world forum, Scarlet Splendour has also taken Indian handicraft to highest international levels.

While Suman has been an interior designer for more than two decades and has innumerable residential and commercial projects to her name, Ashish has been a successful entrepreneur with marketing expertise and a love for design.

So, what made the two launch their luxury brand? "A few years ago, while we were designing Ashish's new house, we sourced products from across the globe. It was then that we were inspired by our exposure to the international design arena to start our own experiments in design and production, in collaboration with our first designer Matteo Cibic," Suman says.

Their latest collection is the in-house 'Fools Gold' (pure brass amorphous contemporary furniture) collection, 'Karesanui' (carpets) designed by Matteo Cibic and 'Terra' (vases) designed by Dario Contessotto. The duo keeps adding to the repertoire continuously. Ashish says, "We are also the dealers of 'Gufram' (luxury pop furniture) in India. We have beautiful vintage furniture and accessories from Europe, apart from our debut collections 'Vanilla Noir' (resin inlay furniture) and 'Luce Naga' (gold-plated ceramic lights made in Italy). Currently, we are working with a European designer, whose works we will unveil at the 2017 Milan Design Week."

Scarlet Splendour was perceived as a global design company right from its inception, which is why it was



launched at the 2015 Milan Design Week. The siblings follow international interior design and décor trends and have 12 stores across the world and plan to add 13 more before 2017.

Ashish and Suman's ancestors had moved to Kolkata (then Calcutta) from Fatehpur, Rajasthan, five generations ago. "Our great great grandfather, the late Rai Bahadur Ramjidasji Bajoria, had devoted his life to public service. He built a super speciality hospital at Amherst Street, Kolkata, to make better health facilities available to the Marwari community. Our grandfather and father have been successful businessmen, and we feel privileged to belong to this family," Ashish says.

The siblings agree that the community's ability to retain its traditions and customs and adapt to global influences are reflected in their own work ethic.

"Needless to say, business skills are almost instinctive!" smiles Ashish. But how do they manage to blend business with creativity? Suman explains: "We grew up in an atmosphere of creativity and appreciation of the arts. We have to thank our mother Anandi (Haralalka) Bajoria, who is a painter herself, for those countless art and craft, carpentry and sculpting lessons, visits to museums and art galleries."

MAIA Design

Launched in 2011 in Bengaluru by interior designer Shruti Jaipuria, MAIA Design pushes the boundaries of design with fresh, timeless and continuously evolving concepts.



Top (l-r): Pebble Bay Penthouse, a luxury residence designed by MAIA Design; Installation at Toast & Tonic, a restaurant and bar designed for Chef Manu Chandra

Shruti explains, “At MAIA we draw inspiration from the world around us, constantly questioning what we see and how it can be applied to the world of contemporary design. Nature, spirituality, geometry, materials, people’s behaviour, psychology, colour, all provide us with an endless source of inspiration. We have a lot of tools at our office—blocks, magnets, play dough, different materials that we just like to play with. It’s like being a child again. Curiosity, fun and wonderment are at the core of the creative process for us.”

Shruti is currently working on projects in the F&B, retail, office, and residential sectors. A coffee roastery, a microbrewery, an organic store, a chocolate store and lounge, a holiday home in the hills, a few luxury residences, and an office space are in the pipeline.

Though Shruti studied finance at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, she always had an inclination for creativity. Self-taught in design software, she took as many art classes as she could. After graduating, she worked for a consulting firm in Connecticut. “It was then that I realised if I don’t go to a design school now, I never will,” she says. And so she did. She went to Parsons School of Design, New York, and there was no looking back. There, she trained with Tony Chi and then with an architect in Bengaluru, before setting up MAIA in 2011.

Shruti’s family has its roots in Nawalgarh in Rajasthan. The family moved to Kolkata in the early 1900s and set up a textile trading and manufacturing business. Her father, Pradeep Jaipuria, moved to Bengaluru in 1973 and set up a business of manufacturing and exporting natural products such as organic biopesticide from neem and

natural food colours. Her mother’s family, the Kejriwals of Kolkata, who hail from Chirawa in Rajasthan, were into tea estates, textiles and stock brokerage.

Shruti feels she has inherited her creative spirit from her grandfather, Dr HK Kejriwal, a passionate art collector and philanthropist, who is also a trustee of the National Gallery of Modern Art, Bengaluru, and the founder of Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath. Her mother runs the Mahua Art Gallery and the Mahua Art Foundation in Bengaluru to promote Indian culture. “I believe creativity is in my genes,” Shruti smiles. “But so is business; and therefore it was pretty natural for me to start my own office, as opposed to continue working for another architect.”

Shruti believes in designing ‘experiences’ and building brands. “It’s not just about how a space ‘looks’, but also how someone ‘feels’ and responds to that, and the function it serves. It’s a total sensorial experience that is orchestrated through design. We love experimenting with materials and working with artists to develop installations within spaces,” she says.

MAIA’s projects are unique and tailor-made to suit individual requirements. No wonder the studio doesn’t have a signature style. “It’s very easy to copy designs from the internet. To me that defeats the purpose of being a designer. Come what may my honesty in the creative process is what matters the most to me,” Shruti concludes. *