

# home review

52 page Green By Design supplement free  
with Home Review April 2009 issue

Rs 50

Apurva Amin  
Graphic Connect

Tokujiro Yoshioka's  
Art Of Illusion

**PLUS**

In The Know  
Unbuilt Works  
Go Green  
Cult Products  
Retail Therapy

Shell House  
A Natural Contrast

Space Dynamix  
Timeless Living

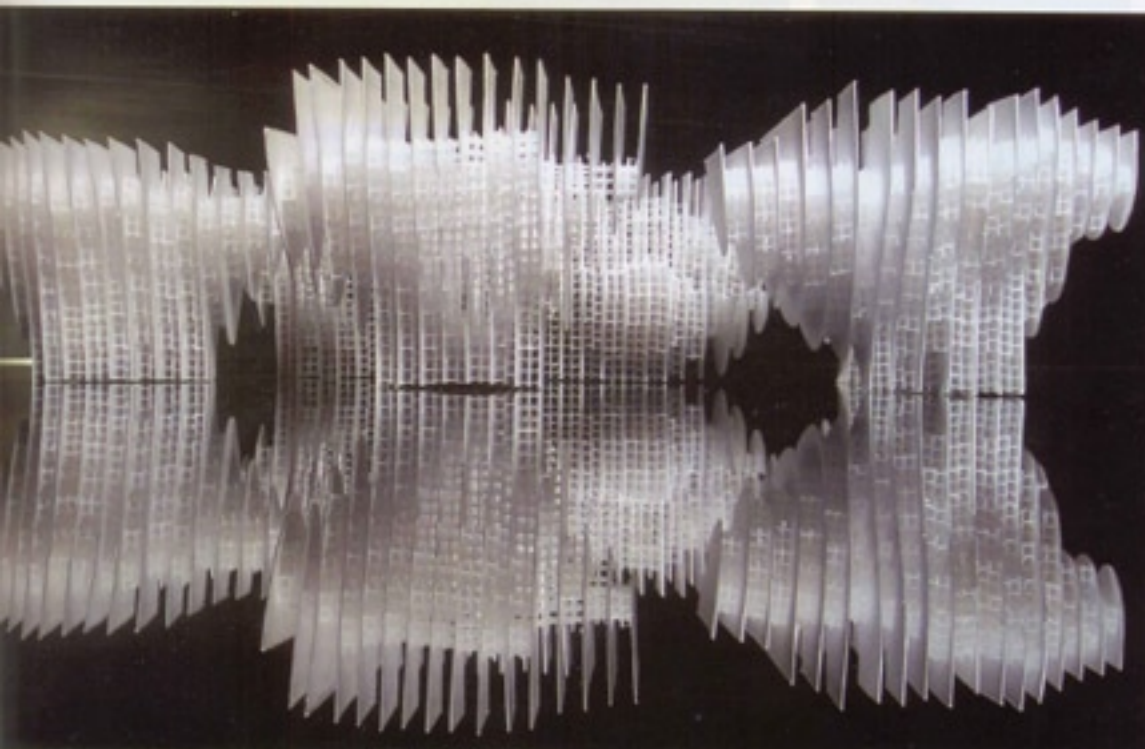
INCLUDES HOMES | RESTAURANTS | BARS | SPAS | OFFICES

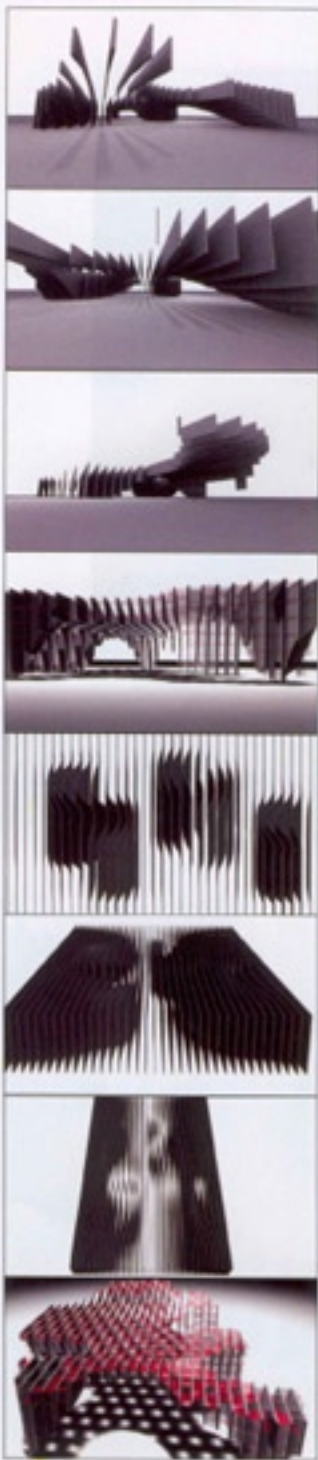
An intellectual and cultural haven, this project by Morphogenesis Architect takes its inspiration from nature. The form is surreal, the circulation is fluid, and the design evolves as a living cell in a controlled organised spatial distribution. This unbuilt project seeks to take its visitor on a journey of thoughts, exploration and discoveries, within the confines of nature. Text By Parvathy Menon

◆ Sometimes designs on the drawing board do not reach the site, they get stuck enroute and often go unheard. But if you sift through those numerous sketches, you sometimes come across a couple, which urge you to probe into them; and you think, 'If it were built, what a magnificent structure it would have been.' Swabhumi hotel is one such project, designed by Morphogenesis Archi-

**THIS PAGE TOP** The central promenade, an organic street which encompasses within it numerous kiosks, both formal and informal, elevating the project from being a hotel to a cultural centre.

**BOTTOM** The grouping creates many bylanes which spill into the central promenade, crafting chance encounters.





jects for a client in Kolkata, the 'city of joy', attempting to epitomise the history, culture and aspirations of this vibrant and thriving city. What emerged from the design charrettes was a morphological formation which was pluralistic and non-deterministic, stressing on the process rather than the part.

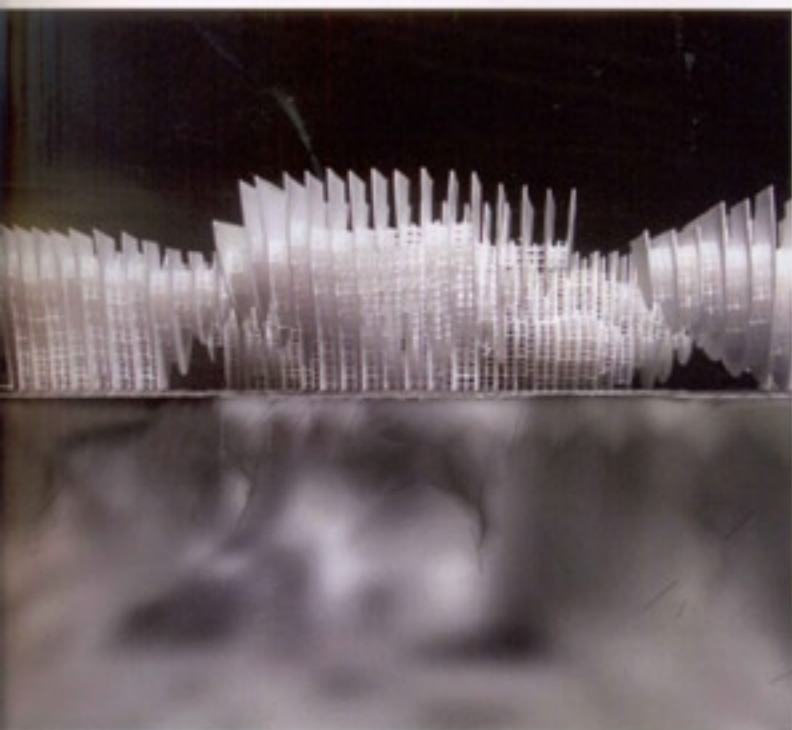
For the architects at Morphogenesis, sustainability is at the core all through the evolution of the design process. The vision they conceived for the hotel was of an organic street, naturally ventilated and self shaded, typical of the Indian urban and rural fabric. The client envisioned the hotel as a cultural node filled with the spiritual ambrosia of Taxashila, the ancient Indian university; a place that would lure people away from the tawdry malls growing everywhere.

The hotel is placed on 12 acres of land which was a former landfill and now detoxified, and due to its proximity to the upscale suburbs of Kolkata, would be a popular destination. A challenge that was met in the design was to create a balance between preserving the natural sanctity of the site and connections to the dense urban areas whilst optimising the natural features and micro-climate of the site.

The land had extremely low bearing capacity; hence the approach to the design was to have small structural footprints on the ground with a tree-like spread on ascend. The programme of the hotel did not limit itself to simple hospitality, but to be supported by other ancillary functions to be accommodated in kiosks,

**THIS PAGE TOP** The fins that flare out create microclimates within the scheme, controlling the wind and sun, thereby shielding the visitor from the hot humid climate prevalent in Kolkata.

**FILMSTRIP** The formation of the vertical and horizontal frames create patterns that allows the functioning of passive systems like the 'Stack effect' and 'Venturi Effect'.



carts, shops. The aim was to create an atmosphere which reflected the intellectual and cultural values that define Kolkata. Thus emerged a design which was morphological in nature, and pluralistic and non-deterministic in formation.

The biomorphic forms of the building does raise eyebrows; in question, in awe or even in doubt. The forms have been inspired by nature, growing slowly like an organism and spreading like the dense foliage of a tree. They remind you of clusters of marine flora, maybe mushroom corals, and have a bioclimatic intent. The deep fins that flare out could be either tree branches or the coral reef spreading out. But the form is not just an eye catcher, but intended to create microenvironments. Passive systems like the 'stack effect' and venturi effect' along with the form and grouping create micro-environments, accelerating the wind velocity, thereby cooling the temperature in the humid climate.

The design has a fluid circulation pattern which generates a lot of junctions and hence many more encounters and surprises. The secondary lanes spill into the main artery, the central promenade, which has been conceived in thought as an organic street unfolding to create the seam linking all functions of the project. This space is like movie set, with a spectrum of activities so eloquent, that the interaction and exchange of thoughts which the client desired automatically gets concocted. Swabhami ceases to be just ▶

**THIS PAGE TOP** The low bearing capacity of the soil governed the form that was developed, small footprints on land which blooms into a wide spread as it grows up.

**FILMSTRIP** The gradual evolution of the form of Swabhami. The forms have been inspired by nature that demonstrate a very distinct resemblance to a cluster of marine flora.





a hotel with the range of retail, both formal and informal in nature scattered around. The chaat wala, flower shops, fruit carts, street musicians serenading to your tune, all compliment the primary programme. The hotel gets metamorphosed into a place more fragrant and rich with vibrant social interaction.

The architecture at morphogenesis has always given importance to sustainability and factors pertaining to the same. Apart from creating the micro-environments to control the winds, day light has also been controlled through design, to create the kind of atmosphere where the humid and hot Kolkata weather is toned down and almost nullified, but at the same time the contact with nature is nurtured. Like an organism, the porous nature of the design, the form, organic circulation, the central promenade, all allow people to just flow in an out,

without barriers.

The form of the building does seem surreal but what you have is a design which is scrupulous, open ended, and evolving, a space which allows a man to think, explore and discover, naturally by choice and not force from the natural forces prevalent on the site.

What the client desired was an 'intellectual destination', and the project delivered not an ending but an intellectual journey. ■

**FILMSTRIP** Different angles of the model divulge the accurate effect of the lanes and pockets designed to create visually stimulating spaces. **THIS PAGE BOTTOM** The fluid circulation patterns create an adventurous maze that generate chance encounters.

