



FADD STUDIO

Interview By Shweta Salvi

Timeless designs are attainable if you court the unknown. And the young duo at FADD Studio is doing precisely that. Farah and Dhaval, the Principals at FADD, after gaining valuable experience at Khosla Associates set-up their own firm in 2012 in Bangalore. Ever since, they have carved an oeuvre that seems a touch unreal. That's because the firm doesn't believe in riding on a wave but believes in creating a new one with each progressive project.

There is a sense of unpredictability, which is consistently achieved by reinterpreting different techniques and trends. It is difficult to trace a fixed pattern in their work - the bizarre excesses in Sotally Tober can even make a teetotaler feel a little drunk, whereas the quaint French motifs at the office of La Vie evoke the elegance of the vintage era.

Signature styles are clichéd and marked by vanity, and therefore, the duo believes not in forcing their vision but letting the space talk to them. They can effortlessly swing between quirky eccentricities and classical frills; their only leitmotif is the 'wow' factor which is omnipresent in each of their projects.

Our question about merging global trends and identity crisis receives a very Zen response from them, 'a design that borrows from different cultures goes into a category with no definition'. And with this overarching philosophy, the studio continues to create a stir in the world of design.

What factors define the sensibilities of FADD Studio?

The world of design is in a constant state of flux; exploring and evolving into and out of new ideas, concepts, trends and fads. It is also about revisiting older trends that were set decades ago and reinterpreting them in a fresh and contemporary way.

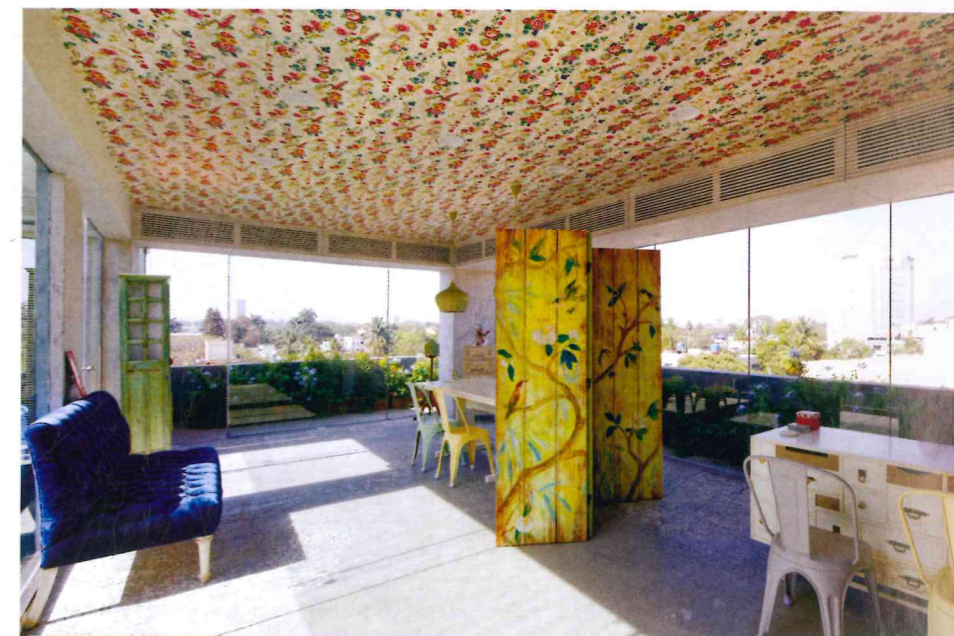
So is the philosophy of FADD Studio. While FADD is an acronym for Farah and Dhaval Design, it is also a play on the word 'fad'. It is easy to stagnate into a style that becomes a firm's identity. And we believe that having a singular style defies the purpose of design, which is to push beyond what we know, achieve something novel and unique in every project, and be constantly propelled out of our comfort zone into a world where we not only embrace new concepts and techniques but also create fads of our own.

With this stubborn sensibility and desire to be original, we aspire not to create a style unique to us but to give you a design identity that is exclusive to you and your space whether it is a home, restaurant or store.



Each project undertaken by the firm has a unique identity. How do you manage to instill this organic aesthetic in each project?

Because we are stubborn about not having a singular style, we never turn down a client who has a particular style in mind that we haven't explored or because that style is not "in". We work with what we have from the client, augment the style with inspirations from other trends and complementary aesthetics; and satisfy them by giving them a little of what they want and surprise them by showing them a lot of things they didn't know could be done with what they want!



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What according to you is the most ignored aspect of design today?

We think people pay too much attention to filling the space than the space itself. More importance is given to branded furniture than to the kind of finish on the walls. Walls are definitely ignored.

From the perspective of designer to client, we feel original thinking is ignored. It's not enough nowadays to explain a creative thought from your head. The clients want to see a "reference" image. And that defeats the purpose of an original idea because if we are able to show a reference then it means it's been done. So we find that when we have an idea we need to sketch it out or show a 3D view to convince the client.

A design that borrows from different cultures goes into a category with no definition, a category where design has no limits - an area where creativity can flourish without having to be a certain way. Sometimes identity can be restrictive.



Colour, form, and visual illusions often replace the presence of physical accessories in your projects. How important are these elements to your design?

We believe that only placing things within a space without doing anything else is just surface embellishment. While placing furniture and accessories in the right place is usually the final step and an important one, it is most definitely not the step that defines a space. How the space houses these accessories and furniture elements is far more important because the smaller items are transient. People can change them, decide they don't like them, and replace them for new travel souvenirs and so on and so forth.

So it's the colours, the forms of the space and any illusions we create using them that make up the immovable shell. Relative to things and items, the shell of the space is more permanent and thus forms an integral part of the design and something the occupier will love for a long time.

All projects for an architect have some memories attached to it. Was there one such project which remains your top favourite, for the way it turned out or what you took away from it after its completion?

Flower Box is a project very close to our hearts. It was our first retail project and there was something very Zen about the client, the design, the way it was executed; it still feels like that when we visit. As it was one of our first projects and we had only one staff member, we ended up doing everything for it - drawings, presentations, shopping in Bangalore's Chickpet market for oil/milk cans to hold the flowers, long site meetings till 11pm (a fast track project we completed in 28 days!). So something about all that combined always brings back amazing memories.

Can you name one country (not India) whose cultural heritage charms you and has great design potential?

Cuba.

The design scene has changed drastically in our country with ample exposure to global trends. Do you think that would lead to an identity crisis?

On the contrary, the world is slowly moving toward homogeneity with inter-racial and inter-cultural marriages, with gorgeous looking offsprings who have several identities and cannot be defined with a singular term. For example, what would an offspring with an African-American father with Jewish and Christian descent and an Indian-Chinese mother with Buddhist and Muslim descent be? I don't know.

Same, a design that borrows from different cultures goes into a category with no definition, a category where design has no limits - an area where creativity can flourish without having to be a certain way. Sometimes identity can be restrictive. I think instead of an identity crisis in design, it will be an identity closure and the beginning of eclectic design that does not conform to an identity - a truly international design.



What immediate goals have you lined out for the practice?

From the perspective of our practice, we would like FADD Studio to not just be a local or national name, we would like to be known globally as a boutique studio where great ideas are born. From a design perspective, we would like to infuse more local Indian arts and craft which are fading out into our design in order to give them and through their use our design a new perspective.

What are you currently working on?

Currently, we have 3 club houses, a marketing office, a mock up, two villas, three apartments, two restaurants, a gallery/retail space, office, gated community's common areas and mock villas simultaneously progressing in various stages of development.

Your favourite architect/designer amongst your contemporaries.

There are many. But just to name a few, Frank Gehry, Patricia Urquiola, Yabu Pushelberg, Kelly Hoppen, Sandeep Khosla, and Philippe Starck.

What do you prefer to do in your spare time? Any interests?

Dhaval - I love travelling and sports. Farah - The list is a tad longer. Travel, cooking, eating, art, photography and spending time with my son Luca!

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