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The Young & Rising Women Architects & Designers

Their thoughts, work and
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FARAH AHMED MATHIAS

PARTNER, FADD STUDIO, BANGALORE

WADe YOUNG WOMAN INTERIOR DESIGNER 2016

EMERGING CATEGORY AWARD



Farah Ahmed studied under graduation at Northwestern University, learning Photography and Political Science and later moved to Milan to complete her Masters degree in Interior Design from Istitutio Marangoni. Farah Ahmed Mathias and Dhaval Shellugar are Partners in the firm FADD Studio, which is an acronym for Farah and Dhaval Design, founded in 2012 in Bangalore. FADD Studio's projects range from residences to offices and retail spaces to hospitality. Currently, the studio is designing a music lounge in Bangalore, a house boat in Goa, luxury villas in the outskirts of Bangalore and a holiday home in the heart of Bangalore. Apart from several awards that she won, Farah is also the winner of WADe Emerging Award 2016 for Young Woman Interior Designer. She loves Excel as much as she loves Photoshop and that we believe makes her work unique & interesting.

www.faddstudio.com

Farah Ahmed has had an interesting exploratory journey before stumbling upon Interior Design. During her undergraduate studies at Northwestern University, Farah studied Photography and Political Science and then moved to New York where she worked in advertising at Ogilvy and Mather focusing on key client relationships. With her right brain craving more stimulation and her desire to break the shackles of the corporate world to explore her independent creative side, she delved into fine art photography. She produced, showcased and sold fine art photography as an artist based out of India. Still not fully satiated, and in her desire to add tangible and practical aspects to her creativity, she began working at renowned architecture and interior firm of Khosla Associates. After a year and half, Farah knew she had struck the balance she sought between numbers and colours, and of leveraging her creative skills to help clients achieve their vision.

Farah moved to Milan and received a Masters Degree in Interior Design from Istitutio Marangoni and returned to India in 2011 to start her Interior Design firm. As fate would have it, on her return from Milan, Farah reconnected with Dhaval. Their skill set complemented each other. They started FADD Studio in 2012.

As per WADe India research, women designers are better accepted and supposedly face lesser gender discrimination as compared to women architects. Let's read what Farah has to say about this, and more.

S What is your advice for young girls who wish to be Interior Designers?

Interior Design and Architecture are a combination of precision and creativity. It's about taking ideas and realizing them though fine calculation and detailing. If these are her skills and this is what she can see herself doing day in and day out, I couldn't recommend a more perfect field. She should expect to work in a way where 100% of the design should be the expected result. She should expect not to be disappointed or dejected when only 80% of this is achieved. Things on paper are very different from the available site conditions; the ability of labor; the quiriness of client decisions; and the acquiescence or lack there of builder specs and rules. Be patient for your design to materialize. Design is just 10%-20% of the job. The rest is figuring how and making sure it happens as you imagine it.

S Comparatively, interior designers are said to face less or no discrimination as compared to female architects. What is your experience about this?

When I began and was single, I believe there was no difference between a male architect and me. I could see this as I also have a male partner. I think being a woman in general makes it much easier to never take no for an answer!

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They say for a working mother that when a child is born, guilt is also born. I now understand what that means. When I'm at work I'm guilty about my son; when I'm with him, I'm guilty about work. I feel this guilt is something a man would never understand!

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Now, being a mother of a two-year old and having a second on the way changes things a lot. They say for a working mother that when a child is born, guilt is also born. I now understand what that means. When I'm at work I'm guilty about my son; when I'm with him, I'm guilty about work, which is also my baby in a way. So juggling and making time for both, making sure both get 100% of as much as I can give is extremely difficult. I feel this guilt is something a man would never understand.

S We can understand the 'guilt' you are talking about. Responsibilities only increase with time.

I am ready to handle as much as I can to a point just before I drop down from exhaustion. You only have on life – you must do as much as your can professionally and personally.

S What would be your ways & tools to scale up smoothly?

Surrounding myself with a fantastic support system at home and a great team at work. When you are able to delegate smaller tasks to someone your trust, whether it is making small furniture changes for a client or taking my son to the park, if I can trust someone to do it and to do it well, it gives me the ability to do more. TIME MANAGEMENT AND WORK LIFE BALANCE IS KEY.

S Who is your greatest inspiration?

My mother.

S Farah, share with us one unforgettable & defining moment of your life.

Seeing a mother pushing a cart down the steps of a New York subway to get her child to daycare so she can go to work. She was running late and her boss would probably be angry one more time! On my way to work, running late myself, to report

to my own boss, I decided that no matter what I did, I needed to be my own boss; make my own decisions and answer only to myself.

S As a torch bearer for other young & enterprising women designers, how would you contribute towards them?

Mentorship, offering internships and by being an example they can respect.

S What are the secrets of Good Partnership that women should learn?

Define your roles, trust and respect your partner, compromise, and most importantly, communicate.

S Any tip to juggle between work and home successfully?

Stop feeling guilty!

S We have heard numerous stories about construction sites being predominantly male driven. Please share your views.

When you go to a site, you are going to there to have your design executed. It is not about the builder or his building; it is not about the contractor - it is about your design and for your design, you are the boss. This is the attitude to have. Confidence in your ability and design can take you far, and make people stop and listen.

S What is your opinion about WADe India?

WADe is very encouraging and positive for women designers.

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I think being a woman in general makes it much easier to never take 'No' for an answer!

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*To check Farah's total profile and
extensive work portfolio, log on to
www.wadeindia.com*





TPL DEVELOPERS & FADD STUDIO

Status: Completed

Area: 850 sqft

Location: St. Marks Road, Bangalore

If an image of a gentlemanly-elephant flying on a cloud with a bird perched on his back doesn't inspire out-of-the-box thinking and creativity, then nothing will. This surreal image along with a motley cement floor sets the stage and welcomes you the FADD Studio and TPL Developers Office. Light streaming in from the windows highlights the three cabins that are a sunflower, turquoise and indigo. At the end of the passage, a mirror reflects the reindeer heads, which, originally robe hooks, are the doorknobs to each cabin. The conference room table is made of scrap wood painted in soft pastels that are reflected on the ceiling conduits. This light and fresh office resonates with any creative person and gets their mind ticking.





SOTALLY TOBER, BANGALORE

Client: Karthik, Prathna & Nidhi
Status: Completed
Area: 5000 sqft
Location: Koramangla, Bangalore

If our studio were to be inspired by a name, then “Sotally Tober” would have had to be the first! While we were most definitely sober while conceptualizing the space, the concept itself was on a total high! The facade with its gravity defying chairs will make anyone, inebriated or not, stop in their tracks. The feeling of surprise is only elevated after entering the space, which is completely covered in Jackson Pollock style drips, sprays and splashes. Each seating cluster is unique with its own colour and its very own suspended lights. Most lights are elements picked from the kitchen – whisks, ramekins, baking trays, mason jars, bottles, and even teapots!! To break some of the colour blocks, some chairs are also hand-sprayed with vibrant colours. This concept continues outside with the painted furniture against a ribbed cement wall. This quirky, bold and all-encompassing concept of soft splashes and sprays of blues and grays lend Sotally Tober a totally cool vibe with energy, rhythm and drama.



SHAH RESIDENCE

Client: Tejesh Shah

Status: Completed

Area: 5000 sqft

Location: Palace Grounds, Bangalore

This pent house duplex was designed for an avid nature and photography lover with earthy and Zen elements. This home is unabashed about using earthy tones in some areas and soft pastels in others; about subtlety in one corner and opulence in another. The whole shell is an unobtrusive beige-grey colour in amour coat. Wood and cement are predominant materials. The highlight of this house is Japanese style raised tea area in bamboo prudently positioned under a double height origami-inspired chandelier that is set against large curtain-less windows. The tea table is a work of art and the chandelier emits just the right light on it. The living space houses a blue and rust cluster with a vibrant rug. Adjacent to this, a plush and stylish piano room has two conversation chairs against a vintage mirror. On the opposite wall, a sculpted marble bench, a sculptural black floor lamp and an ethnic artwork are seen against wooden mosaic wall creating an overall feeling of eclectic-ness.







WIPRO GREAT DINING ROOM

Client: Wipro
Status: Completed
Area: 2400 sqft
Location: Bangalore

After walking through the campus, we understood and felt strongly an overall aura of grace, simplicity and naturalness. Nature was left undisturbed and so the campus itself was an inspiration to us. We decided to use materials and colors as natural as possible. The final palette consists of heritage wooden flooring that resembles an old church floor; the walls are amour coat (a composite wall finish made from sand, cement, and stone bits etc) in a travertine finish; the ceiling consists of radial sections of banana fiber segmented with teak rafters; the furniture and door style is colonial using wood and cane; the buffet counter uses travertine marble; the blinds are designed natural linen fabrics; and finally the lights are made with papier-mâché. The pièce de résistance of this dining area is the central screen that is used to divide the space in to multiple events taking place simultaneously. The outdoor consists of simple black colonial chairs set along black iron lampposts. The area radiates austerity and calm in discreet way, not disturbing anything around it but instead camouflaging itself into its surroundings.