

GO ON
RATTLE AWAY
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MAUNDER
CHATTER
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B L A B
YABBER CACKLE GOSSIP
SLABBER WITTER NATTER BABBLE
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MAG GAB BLATHER PATER



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blab

volume 1
october 2019

V-SPARC

School of Architecture
VIT

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FOREWORD

I am delighted that Blab has released its first issue! A newsletter of the V-SPARC school of architecture at VIT aptly complements the combined energies of the students and faculty of the institution.

Blab has been conceived as an open platform for expression by both students and teaching members of V-SPARC and is wholly managed by student representatives supported by a faculty advisor. This initiative which aims to serve as a connect among the V-SPARC community encourages freedom of expression and liberal outlooks.

I wish the production team all success and eagerly look forward to more Blab!

N.Devi Prasad

Director, V-SPARC

I am so happy to note that “Blab” is the voice of mostly the students of the School of Architecture (V-Sparc), to inspire and spur each other to maximize their learning potentials in their core domain of Architecture. When we were brain storming for a name for this newsletter of sorts, the student representatives of each batch chose “Blab” consensus. I was apprehensive of agreeing with the students choice of name, because of the negative connotations associated with the word blab. But Aditi Ajay gave me a brilliant perspective that helped me change my mind. Aditi explained “I suppose it is a fun informal version of chatting. The word blab and blabber are different, blabber has a more negative association of talking carelessly, whereas Blab is more of “revealing a secret”. It is also a fun sounding word, which makes it memorable. This is ideally why the word is a good idea for the newsletter, over much more formal options like Chronicle and so on. Blab is similar to chatter, gab, twitter etc., I think Twitter the social media organization is also a good example of the use of a similar successful name.”

Thus Blab will be the revelation of the secrets of students, not commonly shared by them. May Blab continue to reflect these sentiments of the students, and may all the voices of the different batches be heard, however feeble they may be.

I thank all those who have contributed and who have shared willingly. My sincere thanks to our Director N.Devi Prasad for waiting patiently and encouraging tirelessly our small effort. Above all our thanks VIT management who go beyond themselves in thought, word and deed, who put the students above all else and give a keen ear to the voice of the students always.

Wishing “BLAB” great success and long life,

Arlene Rajabooshanam

Associate Professor, V-SPARC

AR. SURESH RAMACHANDRAN

THE GLOBAL ARCHITECT

A THOUGHT

The Architect/Architecture education fraternity today faces the challenges of globalisation of the Architecture/Construction industry. We need get the architects future ready to compete globally by imparting them necessary knowledge and training them in the needed skillsets. The fields like Project/Construction Management, Contemporary Design/ New Construction Technologies, Digital Architecture, Finance/Infrastructure, Environmental issues like Climate Change, Water Conservation, Building Materials footprints (low energy) will play a very important role in shaping the future cities and countries and hopefully we leave a better world for future generations. V-SPARC offers interdisciplinary flexi credit courses in other schools to expose the students to various other disciplines which are related to Architecture and Environment and it is movement in the right direction.

Globalisation the motto seems to be “CHANGE AND ADAPT TO SURVIVE, OR PERISH” Nowadays Architecture/Engineering firms all over the world are competing with each other for the mega projects. This brings us to some basic issues which we need to address.

- Are A/E firms in India equipped to compete globally?
- Are they aware of the global competition?
- How many A/E firms have done projects abroad?

There is a constant need to update/upgrade syllabus/curriculum by the institutions to make it relevant in the present-day context to get architects future ready. V-SPARC collaborates with foreign universities but needs to transform it into semester abroad programs and make it workable where students get placed abroad for internships, jobs abroad and create global exposure. A/E firms need to collaborate with other foreign firms in order to stay competitive and survive. Some of the professional skillsets needed are

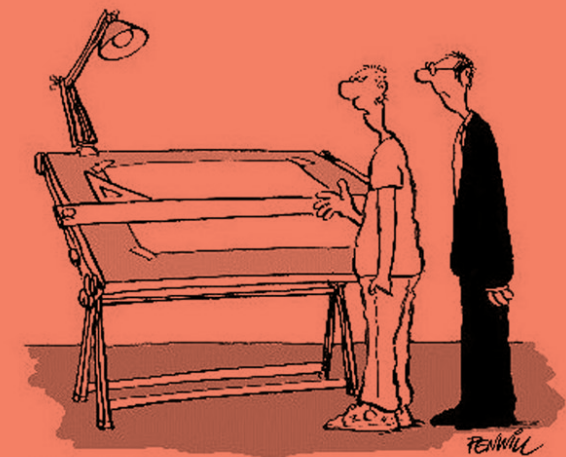
- Land use studies & Project feasibility studies, Building life cycle analysis
- Space utilisation and Economic modelling,
- Office management systems design and control,
- Retailing design and management,
- Real Estate Management,
- Project/Construction Management,
- Signage and Graphics,
- Event design and Management etc.
- Interior design and branding
- Landscape architecture and design
- Infrastructure Design (Airports, MRT, Metro) and Management

There is also a need for upgrading and adopting modern financial management systems for A/E firms. Gone are the days of having surplus employees as technology has taken over and the drawing boards are replaced with computers/plotters etc. with data sharing and real-time communication.

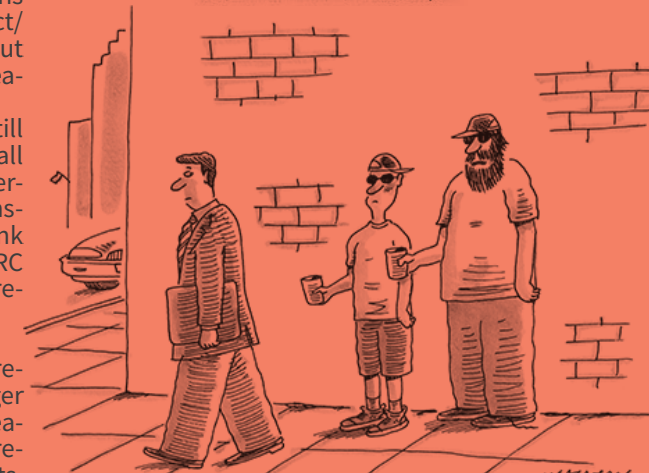
The real estate projects today need more inclusion of Architects from the profit pie by value addition to projects in the areas of Management, Marketing, Saleability, Graphics, Animation etc. Our schools produce some talented designers but are they providing opportunities for students whose interest and natural ability may lie outside design, and can make valuable contributions to real estate development and related areas. Specialisations like Project/Construction management help us move to control costs in projects without compromising design value adds to a project and provide better financial realisations from the project.

The world is focussing on Economics and growth, while architects are still focussing on design issues. No doubt design is important but it is a very small part of the client needs. If the future architects cannot provide additional services like Real Estate Management, Financial Project planning, Project/Construction Management etc these will be provided by others and sizeable chunk of the funds will be used by them leaving very less for the architects. V-SPARC aims to provide these courses to strengthen the employability and entrepreneurship of an Architect.

In conclusion the future architects need to be exposed to real estate and related fields for them to increase their financial inclusiveness and have a bigger financial share and control of projects. V-SPARC though a young school is headed in the right direction by offering these new courses and will soon be a premier world class school of architecture producing “FUTURE READY” Architects.



"I HAVEN'T MUCH EXPERIENCE OF SUCH AN EARLY VERSION OF AUTOCAD"



"Hey! How about a little something for the intern?"



There are constant concerts and preachings, this is Hollywood, baby! Studios have teachers in strange garb wearing contraptions (mics) trying to give their opinions over the deafening noise. Everybody is talking over each other and nobody is listening. Studies are investigating how these scenarios could have been how Twitter was founded.



Architects are miffed at the name of the building. After all, they are the real celebrities of the school. Sure, Mahatma Gandhi is the father of the nation. And sure, he led the country to freedom. But do you know who built India post-Independence? Corbusier. There is no use of being in Hollywood if you do not spot any stars. Our school has its own Beverly Hills hotel, where our resident George Clooney resides. It is said that the director frequents this place on three days of the week. You might find him working with the intensity of method acting, or charming all those who run into him. V-SPARC also boasts of Italians and Serbians, some have come from as far as New Delhi.

Holly-Veedu

Ek Yatra Katha

ADITI AJAY, PIYUSH PARIMAL, SANDRA SUSAN

Being part of an architecture school in India warrants travels to various parts of the country. A few fortunate students also get to travel to far off lands and experiences the cultures of Europe and Asia. At V-SPARC, the ones that do not travel are hardly complaining.

International tours are expensive, and schools cannot justify a trip to New York or Los Angeles. V-SPARC found a solution to this pressing problem. So what if you can't afford international travel?

Well, there's no need to fret, the new campus of the school of architecture at VIT is a splitting image of the city of stars, Los Angeles. Over the first week of being on campus, here are the quirks we have noticed - To reach the building is a stretch. Ask around the campus, and not one security guard will be able to guide you - if you are not okay with walking, you need to get on one of the VIT Darshan buses. Pay ₹15, and you will pass the admin blocks, food courts, hostels, railway tracks (all part of the campus) and get an all-round view of Californian Vellore.

Step into the building and one will walk directly VSPARC's very own walk of fame, where the first years have their names adorning the floors, just like Marilyn Monroe, or Kim Kardashian. Just that this time it is on paper. Perfectly instagrammable? We think yes.

Walk on further, and you will be herded like fans on a movie set. The construction workers here will shoo you away while you try and click pictures (of the said walk of fame). Every day is a new discovery, a new area out of bounds. We are in the land of the stars but not allowed to go anywhere.



Need something to drink? Move a level below ground and a quaint stall provides an organic infusion of frothed and boiled milk with the percolation brewing of finely ground coffee powder. Natives of the place

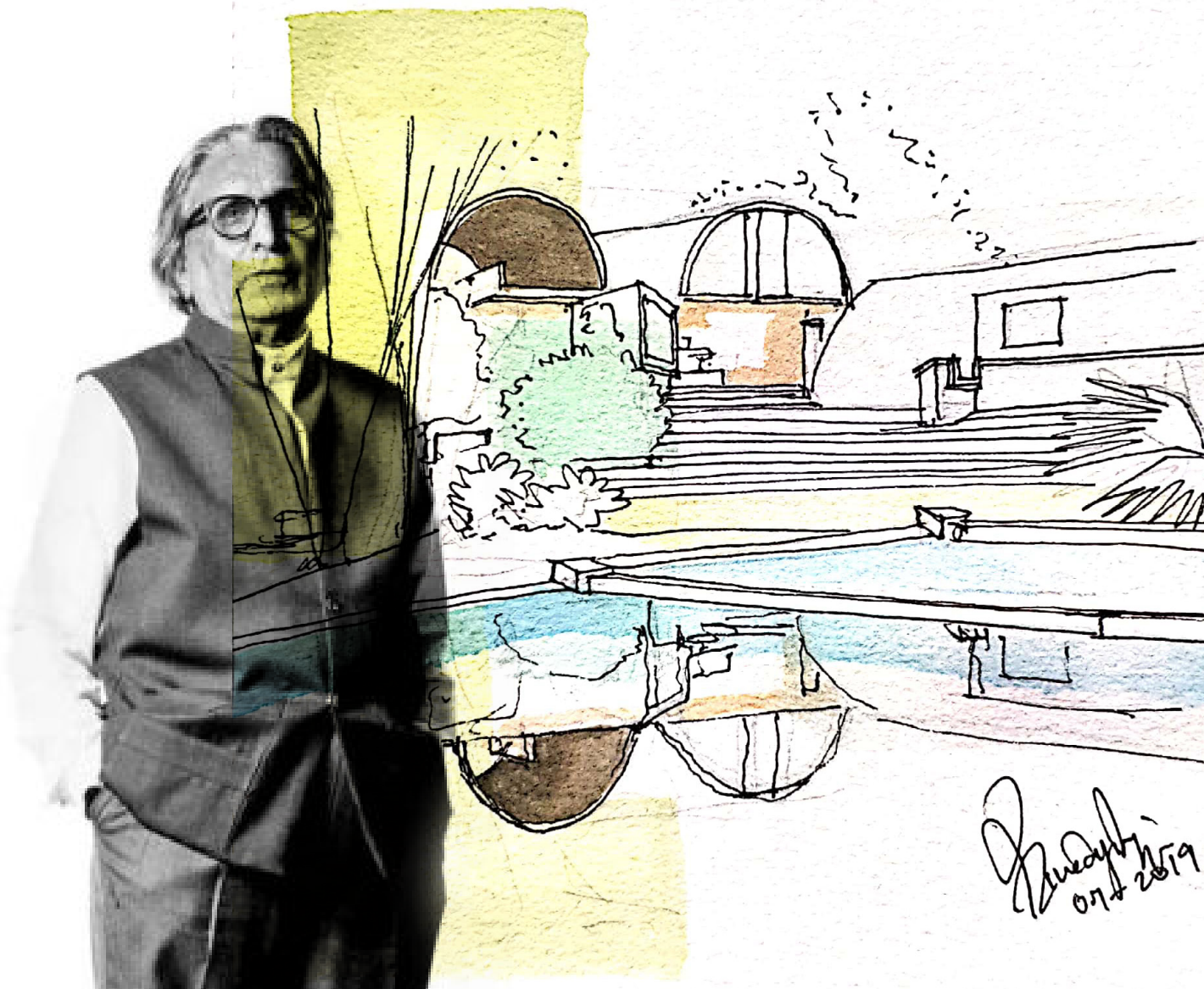


call this filter coffee. This is rumored to be better than Starbucks. When asked about the upcoming Riviera, a student from V-SPARC confusedly mentions, "Yes, I think we are voting for the French Riviera as our next study tour location. We'll have to see though." Sounds like LA to me. Time to go home? Getting out of VSPARC is not easy. To leave from here, one must collect masks from the front gate and wear them. You see, the real world should not recognise the real us. Students here move around the rest of the campus, unidentified until the paparazzi catches up with them. You will not hear the clicks of a camera, but a shrill whistle of the guards. Pack up!

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

RASA

NIVEDYA RAJ
VASTU SHILPA CONSULTANTS



The most important things are experiences, the rasa, which is the subtle experiences of the space that makes the space memorable." - B.V Doshi, Paths Uncharted.

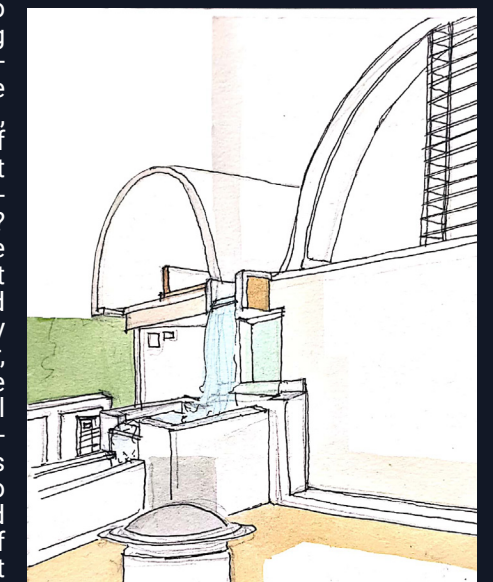
So, does it mean that rather than a well-defined territory, the inter-mining spaces of interactive dialogues attain rasa? But, how does one achieve an interactive dialogue in those spaces? Is there something that really hones us into the specifics, details and intentions of the architect when using the space? If so, what could that something be? Is it our curiosity that drives us to question the why, where and how's of the space? Or is it our intuition that guides us? This chain of thought was broken as I saw a bougainvillea flower fall into the pond. I walked over towards the three stepped water body to pick it up. The water was cold and you could see fish circling around the blooming lotus. Amidst all this natural beauty stood the reflection of Sangath. The white china mosaic tiles sheathing the sunken vaults sparkled as the Amdavadi light fell on it. I stood up and walked towards Sangath to get myself a cup of chai. I could hear the Carnatic tune playing in the background blending with the chirping of the birds flying around. But slowly the sound of the water flowing through the channels took over. As I reached out for the ceramic cup, a squirrel dashed across towards the pathway and onto the tree across the lawn. There was a bell hanging from that tree, and somehow, I was habituated to ringing it every time I passed by. As I poured chai, I realised the bougainvillea flower which I had just picked up. I noticed the thin papery bracts and bright heart-shaped leaves, wondering about the ways of nature. I could see a variety of colours as I glanced around the landscape, it had suddenly started to feel like a festival. Then I recalled one of Doshi's sessions with us, when he said "Nature is a mysterious being...it is always

replicating but never identically." As I walked towards the tree, I could see my friends coming over with their chai cups. Behind them was the skylight that bought light to his cabin. I could recollect that day when there was no electricity and he called us to the cabin for a dialogue. Taking us around Sangath, he asked us " ...why do you think I have created such a path? ...how does it make you feel as you stand at the entrance? ...where will you find such quality of light?" These are things we saw but never observed. So, what could the reason within us be, that we never made such observations? Are we not curious enough? Do we not want to explore? Do we not have a connection to things as of our own? Have we forgotten to ask questions? Are we not aware? Or are we all just shy? But he is right. How will we learn and grow if we don't start asking questions?

"...it communicates before it's understood..." is what T. S Elliot had once said. Maybe by being still and listening to our hearts as we are within a space, we see more. But it happens only if we allow ourselves to see. A couple of weeks ago Doshi had challenged us with his popular phrase 'celebrating life'. He asked us "How does one celebrate life?... Are you celebrating yours?" I tried finding the answer to that. It took quite a bit of reflecting upon, not only on my studies but myself before the phrase impacted the manner in which I thought in. You see, celebrating life brought a sense of unity and togetherness that was a bit beyond just mere elements. It incorporated more. But what was that 'more'? Looking at my hand I could see the bougainvillea flower. I stared back at the tree which it had fallen from and to the pond. This flower had a story to tell. It maybe because the flower, the pond, the lotus, the melodies, the squirrels, the birds and the people all are elements that gave subtle experiences to this space, the rasa. It was over the next few days that I came to understand that Doshi was concerned about even the smallest aspects of his design not because he had to, but

because if he were to hold true to his phrase, the enigma within his architecture would come to life. This 'enigma' is what brings our dreams to reality. But how does one dream? What triggers one to dream? Is it our experience or intuition? Or maybe a mere image or even both.

"You should have an image of who you are and what you want to do" This was one of the first things Doshi had told us when we joined. My hunt for that image still continues and has been a great exploration for me. I had walked into Vastu Shilpa with a fragmented view of not only myself but also architecture. It has imbibed such a spirit in me where I find myself saying "If I don't know I will find a way, If I'm not good then I want to be as good as they are, if not better." This has given me a solution in every situation, or difficulties as we call it only to not lose hope or ambition. But having constantly been challenged by these questions I have gained a more holistic and refined view of not only the work I'm doing but, on the reasons, why we do what we do as designers. Keeping in mind that 'Architecture is the developing of the design for a lifestyle.' But do we know what it is unless we experience it?



Art Deco, Heart Dekho

The persistent reclamation of reclaimed land – Colaba Causeway

ADITI AJAY

In the wake of cities planned in the past, from ports, to forts, to civil courts, lie a complex blend of urban centers that strive to develop their own identity. In the metropolis that is Mumbai, the identity is established and reestablished over and over again – by all those who dream of being in the city. Despite being one of the largest urban agglomerations in the world, to outsiders, only one part of Mumbai comes to mind; South Bombay with its colonial planning, wide roads and grandiose buildings.

Historically, the stretch from Colaba's cantonment to Fort, the business centre of Mumbai, was covered by a creek; one that in the high tide was rendered impassable by residents and in which overcrowded boats capsized into the muddy water. Today, this creek is now Shahid Bhagat Singh road, popularly referred to as Colaba Causeway, a bustling commercial street in the heart of colonial Mumbai. The street is iconic – the name itself conjures up vivid visuals of unique shops and expensive restaurants.

Over the years, the street has developed a unique tapestry of layers. The stratification ranges from the road – where kaali-peeli taxis and red buses run amok, to the romantic, dilapidated buildings. Two strata lie in between. One, the street pavement that is meant to be one sided, but has now been annexed by hawkers and the second, the colonnade of the building itself. In these two layers, the people thrive, sweated out by the heat and cooled down by the sea breeze, a dichotomy that mirrors the two layers themselves.

The place has always been at a crossroads. It is an integral part of an opportunistic city in the midst of a leap into the modern age, yet it clings to the past that it has always known - of the British. The old-world glamor of the area is credited to the colonials, and also to the deep com-

plex that exists in public minds, that all that is Anglo is ahead of our times.

The street is peppered with buildings built by the British – the Art Deco style of architecture evident to see. Mumbai has the second largest number of Deco buildings in the world, and at the beginning of Colaba Causeway reigns one of the most illustrious of them all – the 90 year old Regal Cinemas. It was designed by Charles Stevens, the son of F.W Stevens, the architect of Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. The charm of the old-world has not vanished, and the theatre runs to this day. It is a landmark to people, native or visiting, that orient themselves around this structure. The theatre today is dilapidated, regal in naught but name, but still people flock to watch iconic movies in this icon.

In the vicinity of Regal Cinema, are several other buildings that identify as part of the colonial era. The Electric

House and Majestic Hotel are famous examples. As an entire street, the identity of Colaba Causeway is largely anglophilic. A thought passes, whether today's Mumbaikars connect with this beautiful architecture born of a brutal past. But isn't that what being Indian is all about, to be able to contextualize everything to their culture.

The shopping precinct that has developed on the pavement of Colaba Causeway is the perfect justifier of this. The stalls sell everyday trinkets that appeal to the foreign tourists as well as to the cosmopolitan Indian. These thelas are all about bargaining, the sounds of people haggling for a good deal are all that one can hear. Quintessentially Indian, a tourist would exclaim.



In a way, the tourist is right, the area is Indian in every imaginable way. Urban India is driven by the community, by interactive, incidental spaces, and Colaba Causeway has all of these elements. The street stalls, with their rickety stands and tarpaulin, offer more than just enticing sells. They provide comfort to the walker, shading the entire pavement with their presence. A person walking through the narrow promenade experiences something surreal – a range of senses that overcomes them.

Visually, the Causeway is both distinct and memorable. In plain sight is the Art Deco style of tropical imagery – sunrays for example, are painted in the interior of regal cinema. The typography of the place is also distinctive to that time period, with cafes like Mondegar and Leopold carrying fonts like Pontiac even today. Notably, Café Mondegar has its interior painted by famous cartoonist Mario Miranda, who captures life in the road perfectly on the café's mural covered walls.

Electric House and Metro House, two buildings along the causeway add to the identity of the place. The name explains the role of the building in layman's terms – Electric House housed the electricity board headquarters. There was once a showroom too, that advised customers on electrical appliances. Today it remains as a memory of a place that once stood for the dawn of a new era.

The walker has no time to rest when in Colaba Causeway, all their senses are finely tuned to the sights, sounds and smells. They are overcome by a sense of place, and are brought back to reality only when they step out of this claustrophobia.

The privileged who walk out of the restaurants with a drink in their hands are in an instant grounded when accosted by the city's homeless. The squatters, so far unnoticed, make their presence felt. The design of the Causeway allows for hiding in plain sight. The street is a parody of itself, that in the material world; there are not only material girls.

Lurking in the underbelly of this overwhelming, bustling network is its recent tragic history. The incidents on the 26th of November 2008 were not only an attack on the city but also on the identity of the nation. The memory of this remains in the Causeway as well, instead of being a grim reminder of the sadness and violence that had gripped the area, bullet holes on the walls of Leopold café are shown with pride, the strength on display adding greater value to the establishment. Here it is a sign that is contradictory to the perception of the people – we condemn the attacks and praise the redevelopment of destroyed architecture. Here, these wounds are celebrated.

Mumbai and its pathways are comprehensive enough to elicit comment on the urbanity of all of contemporary India. And Colaba Causeway has a diverse range of activities, culture, and context. It is part of a legacy that the British have left behind, that we have adapted for our own. In an era where it is increasingly complex to define what it means to be Indian, one can always look to our illustrious cities, because here is where the Indian Heart lies.



LANDSCAPE OF WASTE

Following are the photographs captured around various locations near the dump at Pirana, Gujarat which were then fused to create graphic postcards to exaggerate and bring to light the strong, unsettling character of the place. They hope to demonstrate the effects the dump has or will have on the people inhabiting these localities, if not dealt with soon enough. These photomontages attempt to represent the texture and massive scale of the dump yard, presenting it as an ever-subjugating intruder to the habitat of the people, flora and fauna of the place. They bring out the horror that Pirana is, and become an amplification of the appalling conditions that exist presently, and also the darkness which may befall on Pirana.



Scenic Backdrop

A brick wall constructed 13 months earlier is the only separator between the garbage dump and the human settlement. But is it a strong enough boundary to hold back the smell of the dump, the heat of the burning garbage or the dust which blows into the households due to winds?

May 2019



Intrusion into Privacy

The residents of the Citizen Nagar settlement, which provides shelter to those displaced during the 2002 Gujarat Riots, often complain of skin and respiratory ailments caused by the 39-year old mountain of waste.

May 2019



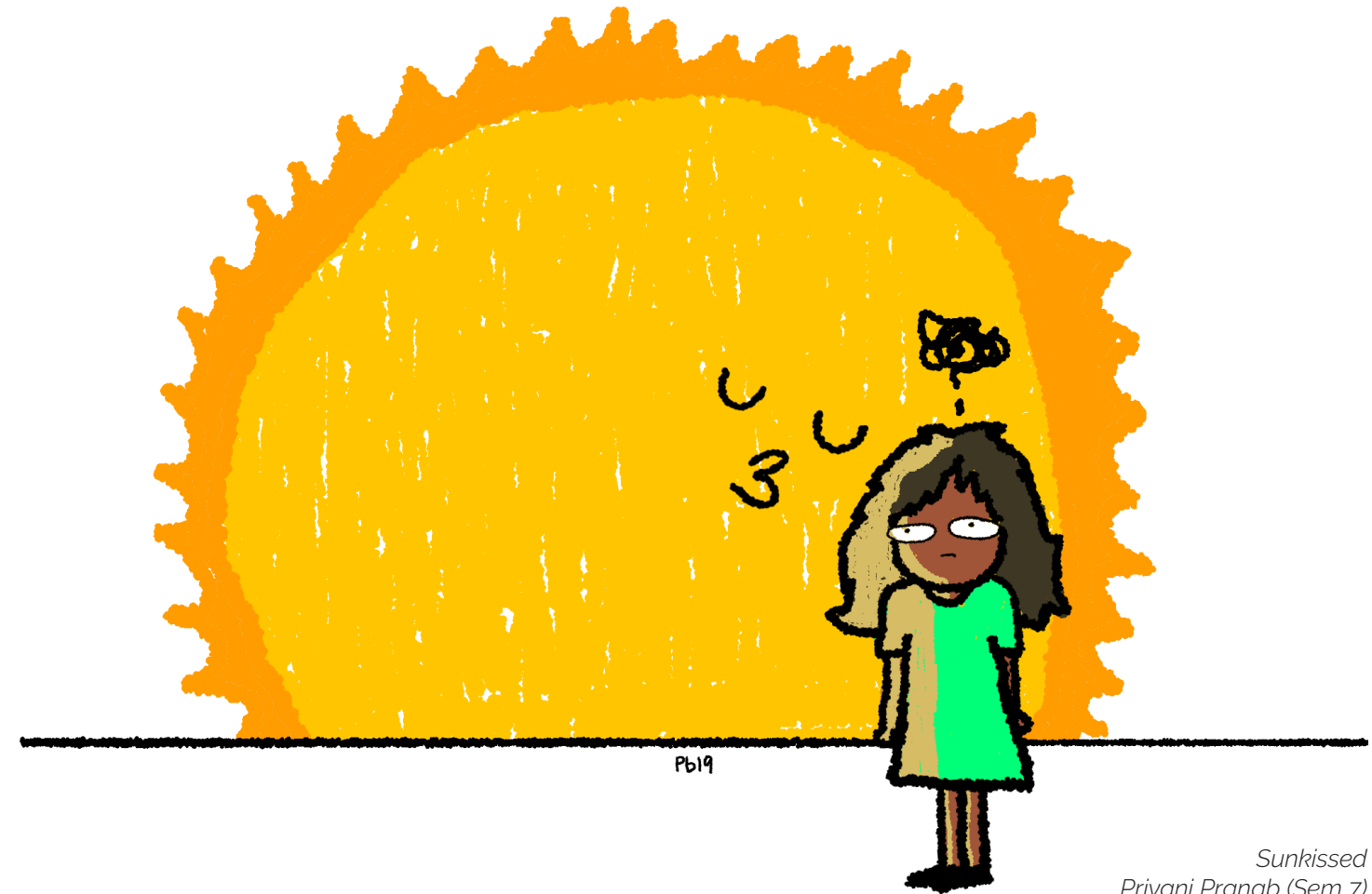
Holding back the Playing Field

The inner streets culminate into boundary walls, signaling a dead end, but with the omnipresent garbage mountain lying behind them. The main bifurcating street connects directly to one of the three open dumps, which is easily accessible to the children playing in the area.

May 2019

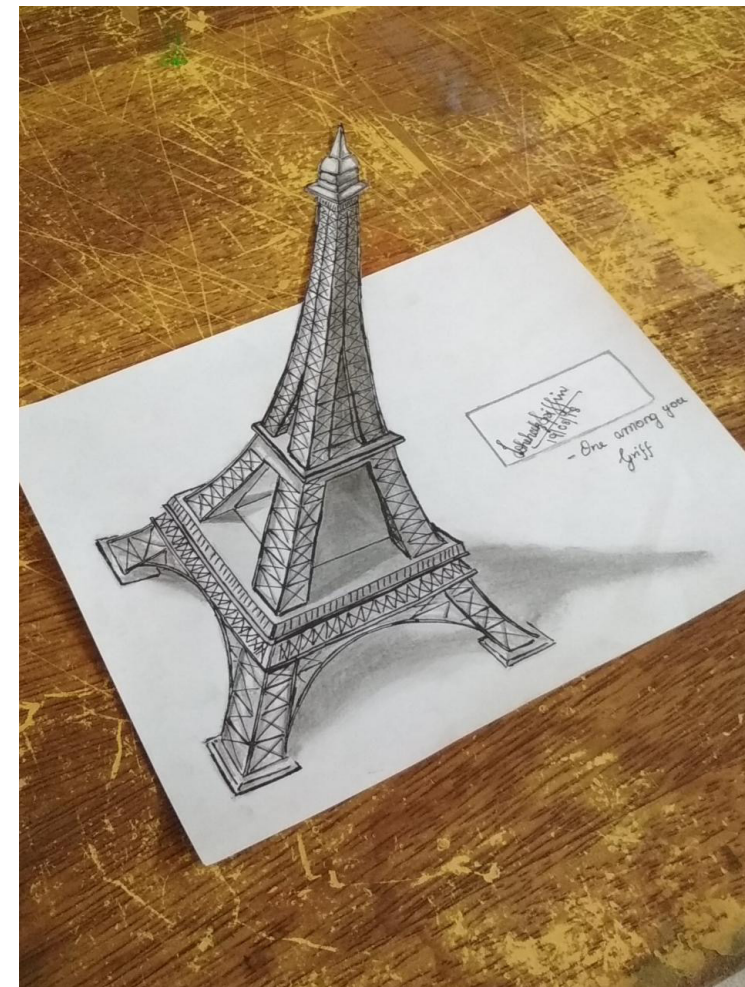


CANVAS

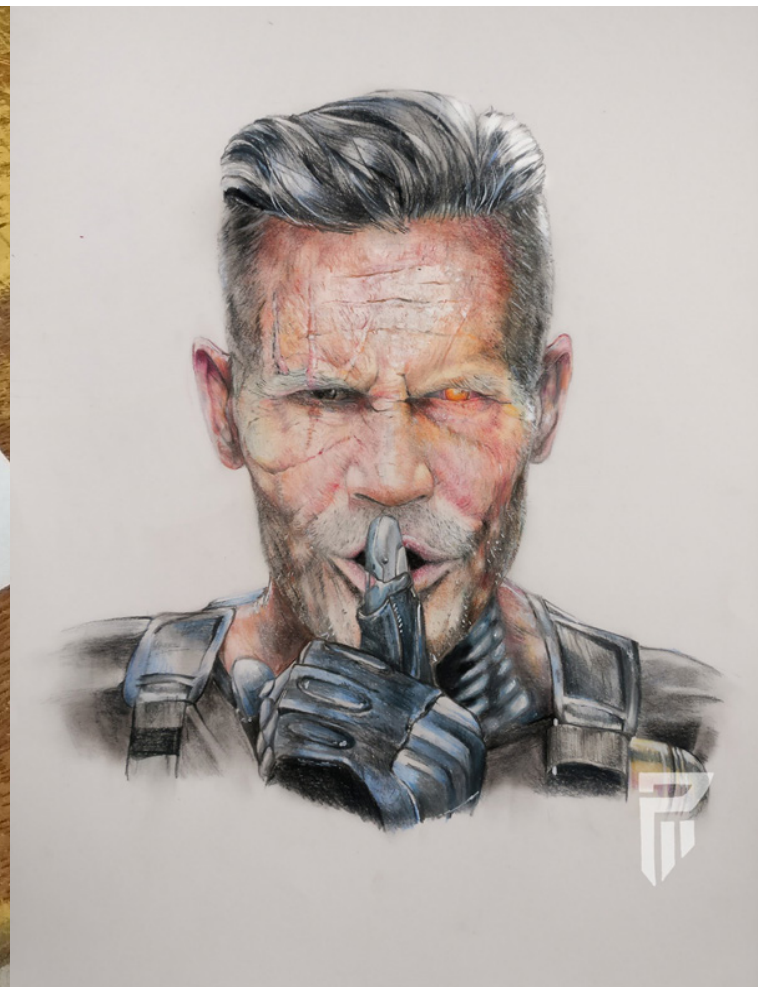


Pb19

Sunkissed
Priyani Pranab (Sem 7)



One Among You
Griffin J Dhehick (Sem 1)



Cable
Preethis Mukunthan (Sem 5)

ALL AROUND YOU

Whats new and helpful
Piyush Parimal

Abstract: The Art of Design

TV Series

Stranger Things and House of Cards are, known too well, brilliant shows. Here's a suggestion if you want to change lanes in an evening, or perhaps take a break from drama and look down the burrow that is pure creative inspiration.

Abstract: The Art of Design, created by Wired former editor-in-chief Scott Dadich is the place to rest. Each episode highlights a prolific designer in their particular field such as shoes, stages, automotive and interior design. There's enough here to appeal to those interested in the creative process behind some fairly esoteric career choices.

In episode 4, for instance, we get a riveting look into the ground-breaking, modernistic world of Bjarke Ingels — Inception style, thanks to his fun, opening BTS suggestion which the director runs with in entertaining fashion. At only 41, the renowned architect has already left an impressive artistic mark on the world. Starting in Copenhagen his daring and innovative, eco-friendly building designs transform otherwise bleak and predictable skylines. Such is his success that his work on high profile projects such as 2 World Trade Center, the new Google HQ and Washington Redskins stadium has already led the hopes high and are booming with pride.

Abstract enables us to get inside Ingels' mind set as he doodles and brainstorms with small teams. Seeing the idea develop is fascinating. When the physical result is unveiled, an in his words it "looks effortless" you realize not only the amount of labour intensive work required to build the structure, but also the unbounded enthusiasm and energy to break down the norms of traditional design. At once it boggles and inspires.

So far there's only one season of Abstract. I'm hoping for more, but can't seem to find information as to the future of the series.

Yes, Stranger Things, Ozark, Black Mirror, Jessica Jones, and most of their peers are of substantial quality. For a nice break, though, and an adrenaline rush of creative inspiration you should definitely check out Abstract: The Art of Design. My best guess: your new favourite binge watch.

ARCHICAD

Software

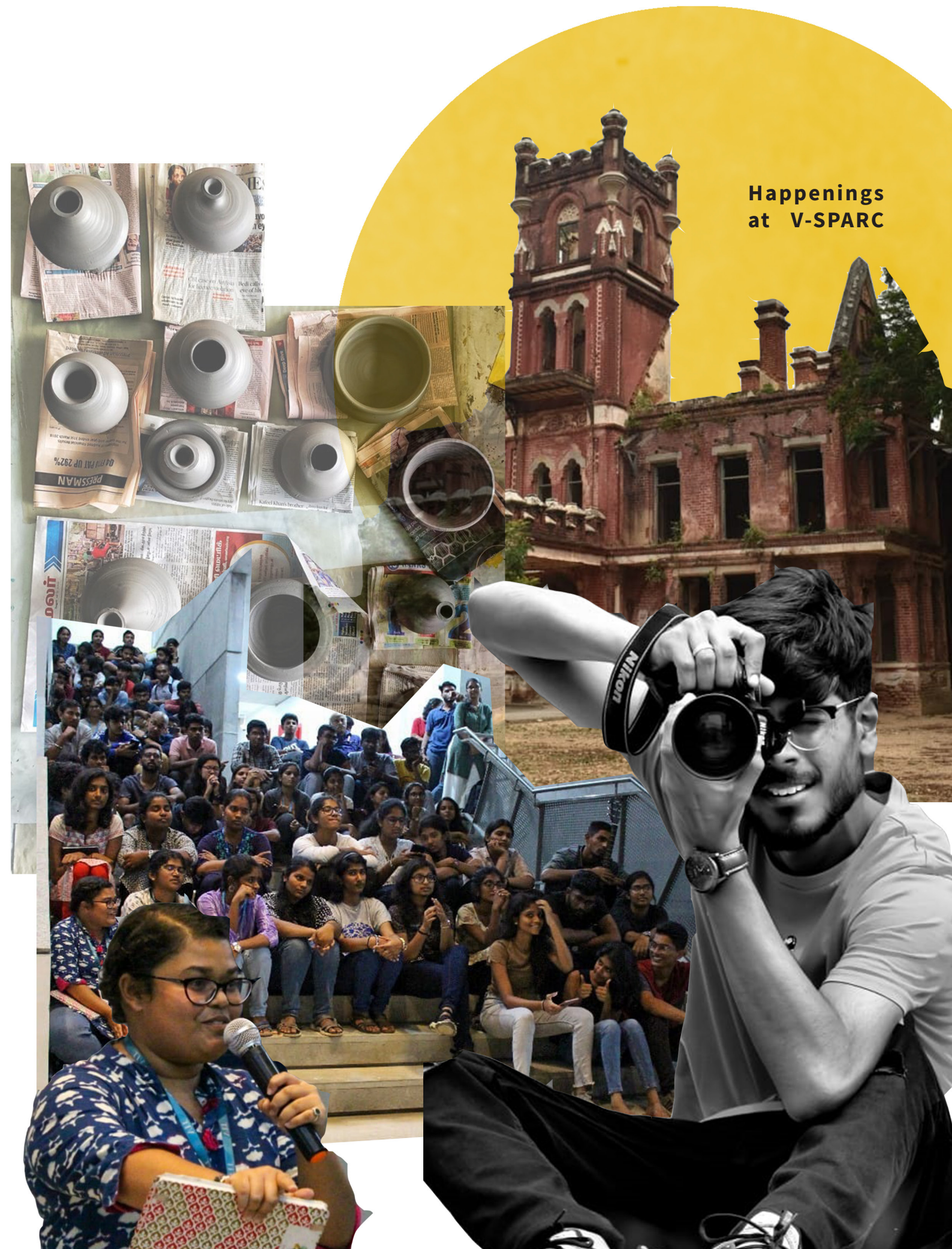
ArchiCAD by Graphisoft is a building information modelling (BIM) solution designed for architects, designers, interior designers and urban planners. The product caters to small and midsize businesses and is available both in cloud-based and on premise deployment options. It features conceptual design, which enables users to calculate floor area in a construction plan. The product also features a visualization module, which allows users to extract still images and animations for a building plan. The automatic drawing generation provides users the tools to extract standard documents such as building views, sections, elevations and 3D documents.

ArchiCAD is one of the most innovative platforms for BIM available in the market today. It is a powerful software that can cater to the design needs of architects, interior designers as well as landscape and urban planners. If a building is multi-storey, it is much easier to correct any minor deficiencies in drafting (that can be missed in the plan view) through the 3D viewer, which makes it perfect to use when trying to pinpoint any errors. The Solibri Model Checker in ArchiCAD is a feature that can accurately analyse the BIM model to accurately locate errors along with any possible faults in design, and identify areas, where the components used, are clashing.

ArchiCAD to be better than its counterparts, e.g. Revit mainly because it is uncomplicated to use, with the same functionality at an economical investment.



ARCHICAD





We hope you
enjoyed this
inside scoop.

