

# A daily dose of design

Four digital fixes for the latest news from the world of design

BY NITIN SREEDHAR  
nitin.s@htlive.com

From a podcast that features episodes on design elements in different categories to a Twitter handle on little-known design facts, here are four social media sites that have the latest scoops on what’s trending in the world of design.

**DEXIGNER (WEBSITE)**

A leading portal for all things design, Dexioner has been publishing content on design news, events, books and resources for 16 years. The portal’s best feature is Design Directory, a comprehensive database on trends and concepts ranging from urban and textile design to futuristic concepts like 3D design. The portal also has an index of design resources, firms, studios, museums and other organizations from across the world. A local search option lists design-related resources in the user’s vicinity.

Go to: Dexioner.com

**99% INVISIBLE (PODCAST)**

It’s not common to find curated podcasts on the intricacies of design and architecture but 99% Invisible is an exclusive radio show on the designs that shape life around us. The website features articles and podcasts in eight categories: architecture, infrastructure, cities, objects, sounds, visuals, technology, and history with a focus on the elements of design. The podcast generally features Roman Mars, its creator and host, and experts in different categories.

Go to: 99percentinvisible.org; also available via RSS

**DESIGN MILK (INSTAGRAM)**

An online news portal dedicated to modern design and future concepts, Design Milk looks at what is trending in the fields of art, architecture, interior design, furniture and decor, fashion and technology. Design Milk has an interesting blend of columns that feature exclusive one-on-ones with designers, features on design shops, food design and minimalist design concepts, etc. It also offers a guide (Design Milk Travels) for modern design enthusiasts and a separate page (Design Milk Everyday) for users to discover cool and affordable modern design objects.

Go to: @designmilk, @designmilkeveryday and @designmilk-travels on Instagram

**DESIGN FACTS (TWITTER)**

Design Facts is a platform that shares nuggets of information and trivia on design. These facts could be from a variety of design topics: branding, typography, illustrations and so on. Here are two from the branding section, for instance: The 2010 Fifa World Cup identity was designed by a Johannesburg-based design company, Switch Design. And in 1979, McDonald’s hired American graphic designer Seymour Chwast to design the packaging for their new product—the Happy Meal.

Go to: @DesignFacts or designfacts.org

ON THE COVER: A sample of a material created with recycled plastic at the Godrej DesignLab, Mumbai. **ANIRUDDHA CHOWDHURY/MINT**

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

## An ode to the ‘Homo faber’

Latin for “man the maker”, *Homo faber* stands for the idea that creativity is an inherent human trait that leads us to make tools, and that we use these to control our environment. In the early 20th century, evolutionary philosopher Henri Bergson associated the *Homo faber* with “the faculty of making artificial objects”. In the 1950s, radical political theorist Hannah Arendt, in her book *The Human Condition*, described the *Homo faber* as “the fabricator of the world” whose ideals lie in creating “permanence, stability, and durability”.

In this Design Special edition of *Lounge*, we were keen to deal with the “fabricators” of our world. These are the people who embody the same creative spirit, and wholeheartedly exploit it to try and solve the commonplace everyday problems as well as those deeply impactful ones that determine our long-term life choices. We hope to bring alive the role of the *Homo faber* not as a theoretical concept, but as a thinking, living person of the modern world.

However old the idea of the *Homo faber* may be, we decided to look to the future. Under the overarching theme of design, we bring you essays and features on architecture, interiors, textiles, technology, fashion and beyond—the creative yet functional aspects of our lives. Each essay asks a question, and the ensuing answer—often riddled with dualities—gives us an impression of what the future might look like. Do architects need to adopt a more political voice? How will the textiles industry resolve the tug-of-war between handmade and machine-made processes? Is androgyny in fashion an expression of identity that is becoming increasingly relevant to chang-

ing gender roles? How will smart technology change the way we live and communicate? We dwell on what we lose as we gain the wonderfully sleek and unobtrusive conveniences that technology offers.

We also bring the best of the contemporary design world into your homes and offices with our picks from the latest edition of the Salone del Mobile (4-9 April) and the Milan Design Week. The world’s biggest annual interior design trade fair-cum-exhibition is both the global design fraternity’s biggest party and its most critical year-end exam. This year alone, over 343,600 visitors, largely comprising design professionals and media, descended on Milan to study collections that will set the stage for what’s trending and cutting-edge over the next year. We pick 12 stand-out designers from this year’s edition.

Closer home, we visit the Godrej DesignLab in Mumbai, a small outfit that runs like an open-source, mentor-led start-up under the Godrej & Boyce company. Talking to the people who lead the Godrej DesignLab, it becomes clear why it is important for established, traditional companies to look outside their business empires for fresh talent and to stay in touch with the changing world.

Design, as the concept of the *Homo faber* exemplifies, is not outside of us, or apart from us. It’s an innate human tendency. The future of design, then, is also the future of how we live, the spaces we inhabit, the objects we surround ourselves with, the materials we choose to express ourselves with, and the values we fight for and aspire towards. The future of design is pretty much the future of us.

Komal Sharma  
Issue editor



ISTOCKPHOTO

## Preview | ‘Tracing Narratives’ Turning the lens on landscape

An exhibition in Mumbai dwells upon gardens and the art of landscaping



BY UDITA JHUNJHUNWALA

Landscape architects don’t just design gardens. They also consider fragile ecosystems and sustainability, natural-resource management and urban development, and design green spaces, parks and ponds. The travelling exhibition, *Tracing Narratives: Indian Landscape Design*, an initiative of the Landscape Environment Advancement Foundation (LEAF), Ahmedabad (which focuses on research in landscape design and environmental planning), makes a stop in Mumbai. The fortnight-long exhibition, which began on Friday, puts the spotlight on the significance of landscape design in mapping culture.

The exhibition explores Mughal gardens, Hindu palaces, fort and city gardens, the importance of landscaping and plant life, as well as narratives of individual landscape architects. The Mumbai launch and panel discussions have been organized in partnership with *Spade* magazine. Samira Rathod, *Spade*’s editor, says: “Our lecture series aims to find professionals from other walks of life to see what they have to share with us. Besides the opening event with architects Rahul Mehrotra and Riyaz Tayyibji, we have a panel discussion on ‘Landscape, Art And People’ with Aniket Bhagwat, Jitish Kallat, Leandre D’Souza and Sidharth Bhatia.”

Mehrotra, an architect, urbanist and educator, says: “One of the problems in India is that landscape has not been taken seriously, or has only been addressed in terms of gardens. With this exhibition, Aniket has managed to define a framework to look at landscape in a number of ways—through historical narrative, through practitioners and an ecological understanding of landscape.”

In megacities where infrastructure development is pitted against natural systems, landscape architecture and gardens require a refreshed paradigm for discussion. Mehrotra says, “Human settlements of the future will necessarily have to allow nature and its ecological operation to stay intact and make man-made settlements in the interstitial space.”

In *Tracing Narratives*, photographs, drawings and paintings divided into nine sections capture Mughal gardens, graveyards, parks, step wells and curated spaces like the Vrindavan Gardens and the pavilions and lakes of Mandu. The exhibition will continue with shows in Puducherry, Hyderabad and Ahmedabad.

Tracing Narratives: Indian Landscape Design is on show till 27 May, 11am-7pm, at Chemould Prescott Road, Fort, Mumbai.

✉ lounge@livemint.com

# The new rules of plating food

Forget foam, smoke and dry ice; the new art of plating demands respect for ingredients and balance as well as the diner’s senses

BY ROSHNI BAJAJ SANGHVI

Foams begone. The world’s best chefs are giving the side-eye to plating techniques that were considered revolutionary just five years ago. No more dry ice, no more smoke, no more swooshes of sauce. Spheres made with sodium alginate and calcium lactate have lost their novelty value. The new art of plating demands respect for ingredients, balance, and the diner’s senses. Few other everyday rituals involve all our five senses as deeply as the act of eating.

A Wired.co.uk story in March 2015 described how chefs at the Crossmodal Research Laboratory—a sensory research centre at Oxford University—studied how orientation in plating can change how much we enjoy a meal and how much we would be willing to pay for it. They found that when the same ingredients in a salad were arranged in three different ways—one arrangement was inspired by Wassily Kandinsky’s *Painting Number 201*—and served to 60 people, everyone agreed that the Kandinsky was the tastiest, and said they would pay twice as much for it.

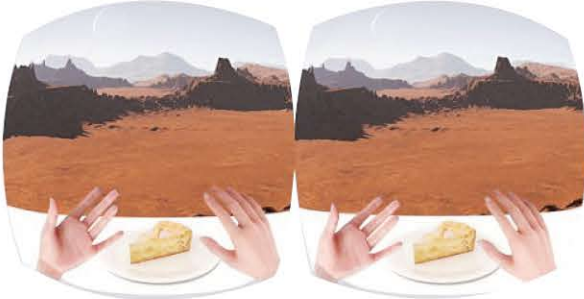
“Plating depends on the style of restaurant, and the dish,” says Gresham Fernandes, culinary director at Impresario Entertainment and Hospitality, which runs the popular Smoke House Deli restaurants and the Social chain of bars and cafés. Fernandes serves up elaborately constructed dinners at The St Jude Project (TSJP) and simple old-school French-style plates at the Salt Water Café (SWC) in Mumbai. “At restaurants (like SWC), where people are likely to share, we think about how well the food travels to everybody. At TSJP, I spend three days planning a one-bite appetizer.” And, now, there are Instagram followers to impress. Here are five styles that forward-looking chefs are drawing from right now.

✉ lounge@livemint.com



**DECEPTION**

It started with chef Heston Blumenthal’s meat fruit at The Fat Duck. What looks exactly like a mandarin is in fact mandarin-shaped chicken liver and foie gras parfait double dipped in mandarin jelly, with a ruscus stem stuck to it. When diners cut it open, it reveals its true nature. “It’s about building a surprise element,” says Fernandes, who employs this style at TSJP. He ferments mushrooms over a week, cooks them down, blends with cream and fresh mushrooms and flutes the mousse into a cannoli made of toasted flour. Diners don’t know what to expect. Chocolate truffles are dusted with earthy porcini dust and served on leaves and twigs. Deception that turns into a happy surprise.



**VIRTUAL REALITY AND PROJECTION MAPPING**

A couple of years ago, a video called *Le Petit Chef In The Footsteps Of Marco Polo* (designed by the Belgian artistic collective Skullmapping) went viral. It showed, among other things, a little chef climbing out of a hole in a white tablecloth-covered dinner table and preparing a steak, swatting a fly, and setting his jacket on fire before scurrying back into the hole. As the video, projected on diner’s plates, ended, a real steak meal would show up.

New technology makes dinner a show. Project Nourished, “a gastronomical virtual-reality experience” put together by 30 tech geeks in Los Angeles, is the latest in hi-tech eating. Diners wear a virtual-reality headset to experience other worlds, a diffuser releases aromas, and a “bone conduction transducer” replicates chewing sounds.



**MAXIMALISM**

Here at home, we have always had the epitome of maximalism: the *thali*, a fine example of plating which has action, drama, intrigue, excess. Maximalism finds multiple forms—it can be orderly and layered, as it is with chef Peter Gilmore’s Quay in Sydney, or wild, rustic and comforting, as it is with chef Kelvin Cheung’s loaded plates at Bastian in Bandra, Mumbai. “At Bastian, you get a pile of crab, a mountain of crab,” says Cheung. “That’s what you’re paying for. And at brunch, all the plates are homey comfort food loaded up with textures, temperatures, colours and fun. We try to keep it rustic, simple, honest. There is none of the frou-frou garnishes.”

Plates with 10-15 elements (two proteins, three carbs, three sauces, five garnishes, seared, roasted, fried, puréed, artfully scattered), this style is most commonly found in the US, where large portions, and the indulgence of excess, are simply normal.



**A NEW MINIMALISM**

In January 2016, a *New York Times* article spoke about how Eleven Madison Park—which topped the *Restaurant* magazine’s World’s 50 Best Restaurants list in 2017—is moving “back to simplicity”, labelling the style “A New Minimalism”. Chef Daniel Humm has been presenting dishes that have one beautifully prepared ingredient. Minimalism draws our focus to that one intense ephemeral bite. “At One Street Over, we serve modern simple food with garnishes that make sense and are needed on the dish,” says Cheung. “You won’t see 15 components on a dish (so as) to make it pretty.” For the truest expression of contemporary minimalism, we only need to look at the work of chef Andoni Luis Aduriz at his restaurant Mugaritz in Renteria, Spain. As well as the plates at Geist in Denmark, and at Favaken in Sweden.

**COPENHAGEN**

Noma has sparked off a global movement. Food is edible art, dishes look like paintings, like seascapes, like floral wreaths. On The Art of Plating, a website devoted to the exhibition of gastronomy, one gallery shows off how food at the Danish capital’s most feted restaurants—Noma, its casual cousin 108, Amass, AOC-Aaro & Co., STU!D!O, Geranium—can be surreal, stunning, sensorial, and still spare and simple. It’s food inspired by nature, and it inspires chefs the world over. At Central Restaurante in Lima—rated the fourth-best restaurant in the world in 2016 by The World’s 50 Best Restaurants—chef Virgilio Martínez Véliz creates settings, scenes, even mini ecosystems on plates. A plate can be a garden, or a beach. Copenhagen-inspired plating is also transportive.

