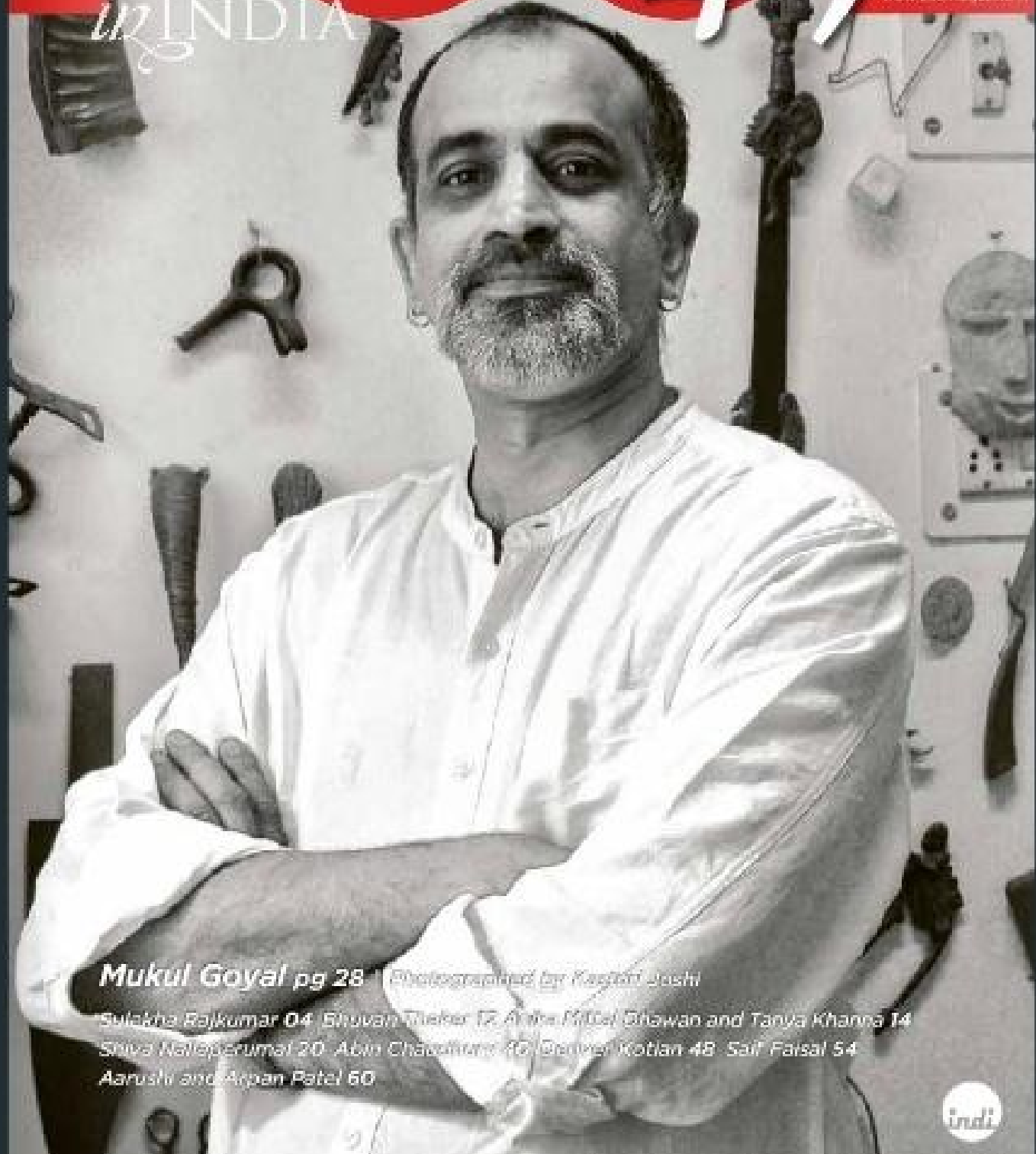


DESIGN INDIA

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DESIGNED IN INDIA

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Mukul Goyal pg 28 *Photographed by Karim Joshi*
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RARING TO GO!

Industrial designer **Saif Faisal** has interests ranging from car racing to gastronomy and anthropology, all of which impact his design process



How would you define design?

SF: Quite simply, anything we do in a deliberate manner, we are 'designing'. Often design is mistaken for 'decoration'. There is a clean and clear distinction; design has substance and decoration is just superfluous. Decoration need not be necessarily in space, it can even be decoration of ideas and expressions. Design is always honest, sensible, legible, and expressive. Design performs and looks beautiful.

What inspired you to become a designer? Tell us a little about your design journey.

SF: I think it was there from the beginning, it stems from my hobbies as a child. At a very early age at my grandparent's home in a small town, I used to make miniature houses and farms irrigated with dams. I was always making things and admired the skills of local carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, etc. The ruins of the fort, palaces and tombs in Bidar

(in Karnataka), amidst which I played, made me curious to know more about architecture and design history.

I studied architecture at R V School of Architecture in Bangalore, after which I worked for D+A Architects. It was a very good experience and my boss and mentor, Ar. Ananth Swamy, always insisted on keeping design good and honest, with none of the pastiche. Among other projects here I worked on a very expressive design - a fire station on Sarjapur Road in Bangalore. I also went on to learn cabinet making and joinery. I have been part of Ashwa Racing (a university Formula student racing team) through my degree from 2006-2010, and I still serve as an advisor.

When did you decide to start 'SAIF FAISAL design workshop'?

SF: While in college I had started developing some designs of my own and always felt the need to mass produce them. Realizing that I would not have the freedom to work across different fields if I was working in a typical design firm, I decided to establish SAIF FAISAL design workshop in 2012. We believe in a hands-on approach to design. We work extensively with physical models along with CAD.

What kind of projects do you undertake?

SF: We are a multidisciplinary studio, working across architecture, furniture, lighting, and



automotive design. Lately we have been consulted for art direction for some European lighting resellers for their collection.

Do you follow a specific design process?

SF: Honestly speaking I have no particular style. I strictly stay away from 'happening' trends. In essence we keep the project true to its brief. The stress is on the 'needs' of the user, not the 'wants'. The legibility in terms of social and physical environment of a design is an early motivation. Different projects demand different approaches; almost half of our work constitutes self-initiated projects. Our design motivations are usually out of a social concern, a beautiful form, a practical need, a curiosity...

We believe the designer plays a very conscious and responsible role for the whole



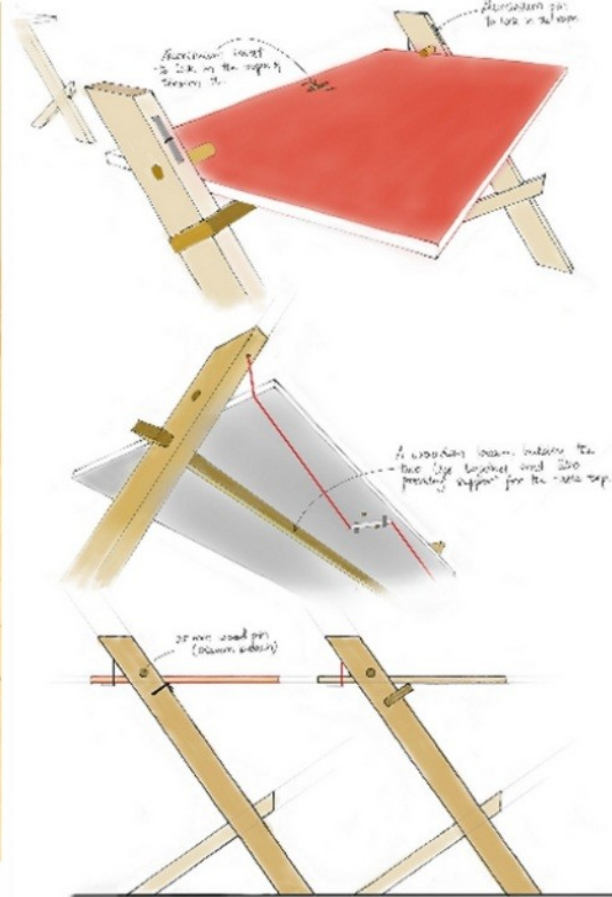
ALHAZEN TASK LAMP

life cycle of a project, from its conception to production, and use to after-use. Our designs draw heavily from the appreciation of technology, processes and our understanding of the cultural psychology. Our designs have always been characterized by strong geometry in space that renders the formal strictness to visual and functional attributes.

Is there a project that particularly speaks to you?

SF: The 'Flexible and Adaptable Urban Habitat' project aims at addressing the need for urban housing for the rising urban-nomadic population, expected to be about 70% by 2050. Half of humanity is now living in cities - we can't continue to 'develop' the way we are going with our limited energy and resources. In future we need to be sharing and reusing what we already have, and for that, architecture needs to be flexible. The

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habitat in response to the occupants must also shift and evolve and change in time and space to be virtuous.

The project has been exhibited at 100% Design, London, and has been nominated for the BE OPEN Award London 2012. In this project the design responds easily to change throughout the lifetime of the users. This architecture has the greater potential to remain relevant to cultural and social developments. The building remains in use longer, fits its purpose better, and is more economically and ecologically viable. The main structure (armature) and the sub structures which make up the 'space module' form a very loose-fit configuration that can be fitted out as required by different users. Future changes can easily be accommodated within the fixed block. For day to day needs there are kinetic elements that expand and collapse the spaces.

How are you associated with Formula SAE racing?

SF: I used to sketch cars and bikes from my school days and was a motor racing enthusiast. I joined Ashwa Racing in the first year of college as a stylist. Having had a flair for design and technology I then went on to work on ergonomics, safety, chassis brakes and suspension as well. Being involved with F-SAE Racing and graduating as an architect has exposed me to diverse experiences. I have been part of the Formula SAE team which represented India in Australia, Germany and Italy. For 2014 we have a hybrid racing car for Formula Student Italy.

What was the inspiration for the 'VastuCar' you designed?

SF: This work is the result of an interesting dialogue with an automobile designer about



FLEXIBLE & ADAPTABLE URBAN HABITAT - Design Development



(L) FLEXIBLE & ADAPTABLE URBAN HABITAT SINGLE UNIT - Liberating ground for play area and parking

(R) FLEXIBLE & ADAPTABLE URBAN HABITAT BLOCK with expandable volumes

applying vastu principles in Contemporary Architecture. It then moved on to how it would affect automotive design if anything like vastu were to be applied. In recent decades vastu has become pretty much ubiquitous in architecture. The supposedly most expensive home in the world, estimated at about \$1 billion, lies unused, because vastu consultants deemed it non-compliant with the guidelines. Now some architects are digging into vastu for application in areas of public architecture and car parks.

That's the inspiration for this satirical sculpture. Don't you think it's ironic that the hindi term for an architect is 'vastukar'?

What have been the guiding influences in your life?

SF: Many things actually - the little things, the big things. Firstly, spending the formative

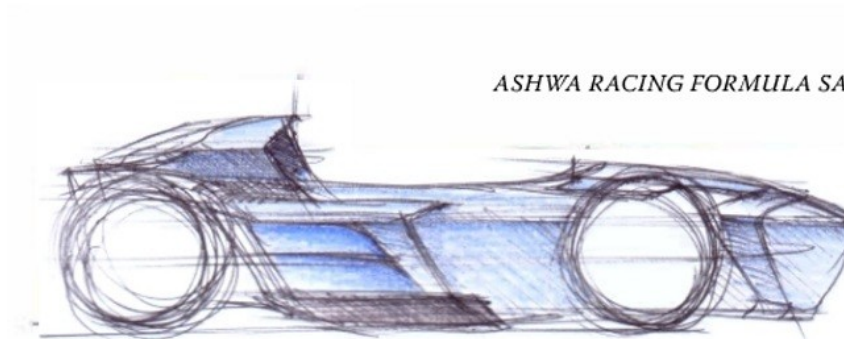
part of my childhood close to nature and experiencing the simple ways of country life taught me the value of resources and the harmony in which man can live with nature. Like the Italian Maestro Renzo Piano says, "You only grow till seven years."

Another influence was my great grandfather's library, which housed some very intriguing and unique books. I discovered the works of medieval Iberian and Persian polymaths that drove me away from the misconception that you must follow a single faculty and excel. This gave me the guts to pursue my interest in different fields.

Since I was a teenager, motorsports has been a huge influence...the sophistication, the human will and endeavor in what seems otherwise like a thing for the 'crazies'. The honesty, pure and essential nature of racing has shaped my



'VASTUCAR'



ASHWA RACING FORMULA SAE



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design thought, and also inspires me in my personal life.

The design movements of De Stijl and Bauhaus, and Nordic, Japanese and Scandinavian design cultures inspire me. The people in my life also inspire me - my parents and family, mentors and my wife Ayesha who is an architect and my best critic.

What plans do you have for the future?

SF: To develop furniture and lighting for international producers and continue the interdisciplinary design practice. I would like to get into academics; I have been part of certain design workshops for design schools and high schools.

Is there anything you would tell youngsters on the verge of stepping into a design career?

SF: Don't follow anything just because you are 'taught' to do so. Try exploring the true and honest way, an appropriate way. Never compromise on quality of thought in design; if you feel you are weak in some aspect, work on it rather than trying to 'make-do'. Always try to get the feel of the medium you are working with by getting in touch with the crafts and technology. I feel design is a very responsible profession; designers are culture generators as much as philosophers and artists. Learn from tradition and look beyond for a more forward and fresh approach to your work, with a global outlook and much freer perspective.

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