

CIQUEL

THE CICO GROUP QUARTERLY

This first edition of CIQUEL was received with great enthusiasm by all of you. We are indeed grateful for that. We had a lot to be grateful for in 2020. It was a difficult year that shook the very foundation of life, as we knew it. But as they say, "it is darkest before dawn". And I do believe that 2021 will come with its own sunlight. Construction in this new world order will undergo a meaningful metamorphosis. The new paradigms will be about safety, living materials, remote technology and modular construction. We at CICO are both prepared and excited about this new form of future-proofing.

I am delighted that our guest writers for this issue of CIQUEL are both women of the world. As a lady, I find it wonderful to hear the voices of women resonate in our business and those associated with it.

I wish you all a year of furious fulfillment and ample accomplishment.

A professional portrait of Anasuya Gupta, Chairperson & Managing Director. She is seated at a desk in an office, wearing a blue and green saree, glasses, and a bindi. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. A silver laptop is open in front of her. The background shows office shelves and a desk with various items.

ANASUYA GUPTA

Chairperson &
Managing Director

THE CHALLENGES THAT FACE THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The year 2020 has been very challenging for a lot of industries and the construction industry both domestic and internationally has been no different. While a complete collapse of the construction industry seems unthinkable, the industry is embroiled under severe systemic stress from even before these COVID days. Of course the pandemic has only magnified these issues. Here are the 4 biggest challenges that the sector needs to overcome to see a brighter 2021.

Productivity Levels: Despite the vast improvements in productivity levels in almost all aspects of life, job site productivity levels have remained stagnant for almost eight decades. This is exceptionally worrying at a time when complexity in construction has exponentially increased. A large part of this can be attributed to poor planning and scheduling and even more to the lack of collaboration and communication between stakeholders. Democracy is probably the worst form of governance on a construction site. The public sector is well aware of this where mission critical and time sensitive structures such as border infrastructure is often constructed by the defense personnel themselves. Other factors that keep the productivity levels stagnant are grossly inefficient supply chains creating idle time for workers, inadequate pre construction planning leading to design complications and poor capital equipment maintenance leading to frequent breakdowns.

Adoption of technology: Countless studies and surveys have shown the massive underinvestment in technology by business owners in this space. A plethora of tech firms have provided solutions that have vowed to disrupt this space and that genuinely do bring benefits in running and managing construction projects. However the construction industry, as a whole, is notoriously slow at adopting new technology. Status quo is the only way to go when it comes to the construction ecosystem. Not only does this have a direct impact on productivity levels we spoke of earlier, but in fact creates a hinderance to the levels of transparency amongst stakeholders that is needed. A lack of trust and faith between owner and

contractor is a regular challenge faced in the world of construction and the habitual, old school way of working just adds to the complexity in an already complex environment.

Skilled Labour Shortage: Demand for further education in the field of construction related subjects is at an all time low. Baby boomers are retiring by the thousands and the requisite knowledge and skill gap vacuum that is left is unfulfilled. The hiring of quality managerial talent for construction is becoming a major challenge as the younger generation is being pushed toward college, and not vocational trades. The benefits of a career in construction are not being sold to millennials.

Safety: Construction safety pre 2020 was mostly related to physical job site safety. Even with sufficient SOPs in place, there was a significant amount of negligence on the part of contractors. The penalisation of such incidents has never been very strict, however COVID introduces a different form of safety challenges. Physical distancing and avoiding multiple touch points is almost impossible on a job site. With the growing urban infrastructure needs and the speeds of construction required, sites are often cramped and overflowing with construction workers making them a hotspot for an infection spread. Multiple construction sites post reopening have had to completely shut down multiple times due to large case loads.

With the world having to adapt and change their ways of working, the construction industry should be no different. A conscious effort to start addressing these basic problems will lead to exponential improvements for the entire ecosystem that still happens to be the largest contributor to a nations economic development.

ABHIROOP GUPTA
Director



Aparajita Jain is the executive director of Nature Morte - one of the leading contemporary art galleries in the world. That apart, she is also a founding/council member of Harvard University's South Asia Arts Council. She is also a patron of India's very first biennale, the Kochi-Muziris Biennale. She was listed as one of 50 iconic Indian gallerists by Platform magazine and, besides being featured, she played an active role in the Vogue Women's Empowerment Campaign. She was listed as one among eight influential women in the Indian art world by ARTSY, one of 30 influential women in the art



world by ELLE magazine and amongst the top 100 creatives by Harpers Bazaar. She was recently awarded Entrepreneur of the Year by FICCI FLO for her contribution to art and is currently on the advisory board of ICCR and has recently been inducted onto the board of an International Sculpture Foundation.

APARAJITA JAIN

Executive Director

THE ART OF THE PAUSE

COVID taught me many things (some of which I surely would like to unlearn). One of the learning's I want to keep - is pausing and willfully noticing everything around me. It led to a renewed importance of our homes, its architecture, interior spaces and most importantly art.

To allow the recognition of what I want to be surrounded by and why? It could be relationships, it could be the quality of air in the city but for the sake of this piece, it is my living spaces, my workspaces and the desire to see intentional beauty around me.

The ongoing pandemic re-organised our time and habitation of spaces, with more time being spent home than ever before. Many international companies are 'work from home', and many plan to continue that for the conceivable future. Which brings me to an obvious thought - how do I want my immediate environment to be? What kind of space do I wish to inhabit? What material speaks for me? What art do I want on my walls? We are always in silent conversations with our environment - so don't we want to

make them interesting? Often homes have been the barometer of wealth and status, over powering the barometer for self.

I've been lucky to see some splendid spaces in my career – most recently an outstanding home made by Viren Wakhloo, with concrete, glass windows and a bronze staircase. The choices were very deliberate and the art fit in seamlessly with the architecture. The walls are filled with a Zarina Hashmi, a Subodh Gupta watercolour, Arpita Singhs, and an Aditya Pande interspersed with stunning antiques. The space is quiet, thoughtful, raw and full of intent.

On the other hand, a magnificent Subodh adorns the main living wall of a glamorous home designed by Ashiesh Shah. The art and the interior spaces were the result of copious conversations between the client and the interior designer, to distil what they wanted their home to speak of – their personalities. Careful consideration was made in choosing objects, materials, volumes and finally art. But I think the success of these polar opposite homes is in the reflection of the client in their homes. And the fact that their everyday is the 'intentional beauty' they seek.

Art is a critical element of any home, and is an obvious result of intellect and learning. A home without art is just plain soul less. Art balances, evokes and provokes conversations. Nothing speaks of you more than your art. In fact, humanity is best represented by her arts - Music, theatre, poetry fine arts.

Some of the pointers that have helped me collect over the years are –

Read about art, and seeing as many shows as possible. While seeing that art keep in mind - The first emotive experience of any work, it could be hate or love, confusion or disgust, all are legitimate feelings. If it moved you in any way – positive or negative, it is perhaps a good moment to question its context. Ask about the artist and their practice - would this artwork be relevant 100 years from now and Is the artist consistent with their thought/practice. After all this, if you love it, buy it.

One of humanity's greatest luxury is the act of choice and hence its upon you to do so wisely!

IRAM SULTAN STUDIO has provided interior design solutions to luxury residential and boutique hospitality projects with over eighteen years of experience. Our design philosophy is always collaborative, empathetic and



completely client driven. Our spaces are elegant, timeless and thoughtful, with a keen understanding of design history and a passionate love of art underpinning our work. We design each project with a deep appreciation of the context and individuality. All our work is inherently bespoke with an obsession for details.

INTERVIEW WITH IRAM SULTAN

1. Has the pandemic brought any changes to interior design. We know that social distancing has impacted the design of working spaces, but what has changed with living spaces?

The biggest macro level change that we have seen is a sense of greater awareness and appreciation for our surroundings. Homes have even greater significance than they did before. They are our security blanket at an emotional level along with the physical. Living spaces have started to multi-task as working spaces as well. Fluidity and comfort would be two key words when it comes to living spaces.

2. How much is interior design about the person who commissions it and how much is it about the interior designer?

I think you will get different responses from different designers for this question. For me, personally, it is never about me but about the inhabitants of the space that I am working on. I am a storyteller but the stories I tell aren't mine. My clients, my patrons, are my biggest collaborators. I design spaces that reflect them intimately. This is one reason why a lot of our work is highly bespoke and tailored for each individual client.

3. What constitutes good design in your opinion?

Balance, timeless spaces with details that reflect the people they are designed for. That is good design. I am not a fan of trendy design. I love mixing vintage with modern. A little hint of history only imbues the space with greater elegance and connects the past and present. It is like writing the perfect novella with multiple characters that must all have a place in that well coalesced story line. Warm and cool, matte and gloss, interplay of textures, a few elements of surprise, a generous dose of art and detail upon detail - all the essential ingredients of a good design.

4. Charlotte Moss once said, "There are two things that make a room timeless: a sense of history and a piece of the future." Your views?

I think my views on good design reflect this perfectly. However, I like spaces that can evolve with the people who I've in them. This does not mean that they are left unfinished in any manner because that is the stuff of nightmares! What this means is that the spaces allow you the hint of whimsy that will make you flip art works, change fabrics, and gasp - maybe even a few pieces of furniture. Maybe light that corner with a floor lamp and remove the suspension.

5. You are known to have a unique eye for exquisite art. Do you think of art and create a house around it or do you create a house and then fill it with the art?

If this was a dream scape, I would build the art collection first and then build a home around it. But the other way round is exhilarating as well. All that thrill of discovery, of works that slide in smoothly into a space that was soulless and blank - a girl could not ask for more. I love it all. Just show me the art!

6. What is your design compass?

Good taste. In all forms.



®

Future-proofing what you build



IT WAS OUR WAY AND THE HIGHWAY.

Using our vast repertoire of products we have repaired some of this country's best known and heavily-used highways. And its very sensitive borders. CICO - We show the path to many roads.

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