Welcome Address

TRANSCEND 2020, the first virtual NATCON came to a start as scheduled at 10am, with the Presidential address by Ar. Divya Kush. The President welcomed and acknowledged our Vice President Shri. Venkaiah Naidu, the dignitaries present who have come together across Nations to show their solidarity with the IIA in its endeavour to think beyond the normal way of doing things and discuss topics of transcending, resilience, innovation, inclusiveness and self-reliance. On the NATCON platform were the President of UIA, Ar. Thomas Vonier, President of ARCASIA, Ar. Rita Soh, President of SAARCH, Ar. Kishore Thapa. The President welcomed the dignitaries, speakers, panellists, fellow architects and students, and spoke of the contribution of the IIA members towards overcoming the current crises through fund raising, providing food for stranded migrant workers, engaging with the architectural community through knowledge sharing webinars, talent hunting sketching and photography competitions, ideas and essay competitions.

To conclude in his message to our Vice President, he expressed that as a responsible Institution of the Nation, the IIA at this troubled juncture will stand shoulder to shoulder with the government and ask only what the Institute can do for the Country.

Address by Convenor

The Convenor of TRANSCEND 2020, Ar. C.R. Raju expressed his gratitude to the Council, the Organising Team and the Core Committee of NATCON 2020, for their tireless work and zeal in putting together this first virtual NATCON. It was a huge challenge, being the first being conducted on a platform that is still nascent. The topic for the conference was concluded after much debate and deliberation to finally culminate in the theme TRANSCEND. He wished all the participant an enriching experience through the 2 days of the conference. He opined that real change and moving ahead would come from unifying people, thoughts, actions, with a new frame work of being self-reliant, resilient, and sustainable. The Pandemic has awakened a realisation to explore new horizons. Towards this idea TRANSCEND 2020 came to being.

Ar. Raju introduced our Chief Guest, The Vice President of India, Shri. Venkaiah Naidu. A distinguished citizen, a student leader, a voracious reader, an inspiring orator, a tireless worker for the poor and down-trodden, for rural development and reforms, amongst many other in-numerical achievements and talents. We, the IIA, have been extremely honoured to have the Hon’ble Vice President of India, Shri. Venkaiah Naidu, inaugurate the NATCON 2020, and set a tone to the forthcoming 2 days.
The eminent Vice President and Chairman of the Rajya Sabha virtually addressed the attendees of IIA’s NATCON 2020 today. While paying homage to India’s rich architectural history spanning millennia, Shri. Naidu spoke about the key aspects towards designing for the future – including resilience and inclusivity – especially in the aftermath of a pandemic that has severely affected many sectors, including construction.

Shri. Naidu’s call to architects going forward is to not only look towards aesthetic, but sustainability, basic comfort, among other aspects of design. He called upon architects to prioritise protecting nature, and preserving culture and our heritage while designing. Balance is key – to build structures that offer shelter, security, comfort and safety, while maintaining sustainability and aesthetics.

Shri. Naidu urged the community to develop smart cities and realise PM Modi’s dream of housing for all, while preserving the heritage and local sensibilities of each area, and engaging immensely talented local craftsman and artisans who are struggling to keep our culture alive. He mentioned that it would be useful to seek the views of the locals while designing new projects, to maintain the inclusivity and uniqueness of the area.

Prime Minister Modi’s call is to reform, perform, and transform, while transcending to self-reliant, resilient and inclusive architecture. Shri. Naidu emphasised greatly the need to take inspiration from the drivers of Indian architecture, and adopt concepts that are environmentally friendly – a major challenge before the current generation. Urban centres have long since faced issues of flooding and water logging – precipitating the need for an effective drainage system, while also focusing on rainwater harvesting.

Shri. Naidu’s address concluded with a call for the IIA to work together with national and local authorities to pave the way forward, while reiterating a call to take note of comfort over fashion while designing. He reminded everyone concerned to keep soundaryamma soukaryama – beauty, hope and comfort – in mind as they move forward.
Launch of IIA CAD

An initiative of the IIA for its members, driven by Ar. Lalichan Zacharias, was launched today by President Ar. Divya Kush.

Ar. Lalichan Zacharias announced its launch, making it a very special day for more reasons than one, as the first virtual NATCON, hosted by the IIA, almost 103 years of the institute formation, and the day we have our own 2D & 3D software. Indeed, a day of pride, when the Institute has leaped forward and transcended into a new thinking.

This made-in India software, which will be available to IIA members and colleges affiliated to the IIA, will liberate fellow architects from the dependency on multi-national CAD companies, by offering the choice of an indigenous software at reasonable costs. After a lot of hard work and beta testing of the software by members of the institute, the IIA CAD will be in the market shortly, in about 2 months, for members. The logo was designed by Ar. Ritesh Gurukar, and the launch marked a milestone in the history of the Institute.

Felicitation

Ar. Thomas Vonier, President of the UIA, present at NATCON 2020, expressed his compliments to the IIA for hosting a virtual conference on a theme and platform that is most appropriate to the current times. He recalled the previous UIA Council meeting in Lucknow in 2018, and invited the members of the IIA to the next UIA World Congress re-scheduled to 18-22 July 2021 at Rio De Janerio.
Rahul Mehrotra, Founder of RMA Architects, Mumbai and Professor of Urban Design and Planning at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design was the first speaker of IIA Natcon 2020, ‘Transcend’.

Mehrotra began by expressing his delight at the topic as an especially important one during these times. As the Council of Architecture (CoA) has its own legislative role of guarding our interests in the broader realm of the practice, the IIA plays the role of building fraternity, and Mehrotra expressed his appreciation to the IIA for continuing to do so in new ways, with different challenges. He believes the most important question to be addressed today pertains to how architects must re-embed themselves in society. He addressed this question in two parts- the first being a reflection of the issues that surround us and the second being a presentation of three of his projects. The world took ‘normal’ life for granted. But when we place ourselves in the present condition and context, three things come to mind- the value of the home, the state and the economy.

Mehrotra quoted Martha Chen, who states that what we need is a hybrid economy- a system that allows the least powerful, smallest players to operate alongside the most powerful, largest players. How do we through architecture, soften these boundaries? Mehrotra then quoted HomiBhabha, his colleague and professor of the humanities at Harvard University, who in the context of governance flipped the question, by asking if this is a crisis, or a result of unpreparedness. He believes the idea of unpreparedness is something the profession needs to look at. How do we anticipate? How do we get back our agency?

Preparedness is also a matter of scale. There has been much discussion on solutions at the city level, but we must also begin to look at the middle scale. Unpreparedness results in tension among unequal groups. Mehrotra believes we must, as professionals who are part of civil society, build bridges between the different scales - between people, the state and the centre. For this, he believes we need social trust and solidarity, and this is where he calls upon organisations like the IIA to reinvent their own roles, to give back to society, what society invests in us.

The Covid19 migrant crisis was unquestionably inhumane, which is evidence that the biggest design challenge going forward will be to design for ‘flux’. We are fixated on images from Singapore and Shanghai - the city of impatient capital, constructed very quickly, irrelevant and represents modernisation. In order to create relevant, self-reliant habitats once again, we must debunk this myth. Mehrotra argues that in our cities, the ‘kinetic’ cities, the festivals are the greatest spectacle, much more than architecture can ever be. Yet, cities in the West are studied, for no relevance. Mehrotra presented studies done on the KumbhMela, the ephemeral megacity, which he believes should be our precedents for our urban design.

Mehrotra talked about ‘The State of Architecture’ exhibition that he worked on along with Kaiwan Mehta, editor of Domus India, and Ranjit Hoskote, author. With Independence, post-independence and then liberalisation, the number of architectural schools directly grew in proportion to real estate, and continues to do so. However, this relationship is inversely proportionate. He calls for the number of schools to be regulated, as there is a complete mismatch of supply and demand - students are unable to find offices for even their internships. Mehrotra also talks about boutique homes and the ‘architecture of indulgence’ being a part of the default mainstream, another learning from the exhibition. However, he believes we must change the mainstream, to focus more on institutions, corporates, governments and buildings of faith. If we have to change the landscape in our country, we must shift the mainstream, he argued.
Mehrotra then showcased three of RMA’s projects.

1: Lilavati Lalbhai Library, CEPT, Ahmedabad
This was a project of tectonics and also of conservation. The brief resulted in a six-storey building, but as a sign of respect, the building stayed below Prof. B. V. Doshi’s buildings, and went three floors underground instead. The inner building has its own logic, as though it comprises buildings within buildings. It has a modern aesthetic and materials, while keeping transparency, the climate, ventilation and light in mind, to the extent that the lowermost basement also receives natural light from above.

2 - KMC Corporate Office, Hyderabad
The architecture of most corporate buildings is a result of impatient capital, which mimics images of the West, that signify modernity. RMA however, created a different sensibility from what they may have envisioned for themselves. Inspired by the evaporative cooling that takes place on a straw hut, RMA designed a building with a performative screen of plants, which performs passive cooling, but also performs as gentle transgression. The gardeners are highly valued and work on the same floor as their bosses do, thus allowing some amount of blurring societal boundaries.

3 - Hathigaon, a low-cost housing project for the Tourism Department, Rajasthan
Hathigaon is a project for mahouts and their elephants, who are put to the service of tourism in Jaipur, but would suffer in the heat because of its desert climate. RMA treated this project as a landscape project, and transformed the site from an arid piece of land, into a green oasis. Landscape was thought of as the solution and architecture, the problem. Water bodies were created to harvest the rain, after which extensive tree plantation was carried out. It also serendipitously resulted in providing a bonding experience between the mahouts and their elephants when they are bathed.

Mehrotra believes that the greatest responsibility of architects is to build for the next generation and not our peers. Before ending his talk, he once again reiterated that we do not have the luxury of being unprepared, if we have to keep our agency of architecture in society.
The first session on Day 1 of IIA NATCON 2020 saw an enthralling panel discussion moderated by Ar. Bijoy Ramachandran of Hundredhands. The panellists spoke on the connect between the built and unbuilt spaces, the pandemic playing a role on how the future of architecture needs to shape up and focus, its response to the unbuilt environment as well as the health impact of the built spaces on the user.

Ar. Jelle Therry of Ramboll Studio Dreiseitl, spoke on the importance of both nature and the user of the spaces flourishing, where the built space is sensitive to local environment and local materials. The pandemic has made us reside longer in the residence and when there is a dip in both health and mind, it is natural for the attention to be drawn to lush green spaces, he opined. He drew aenon to his project Kampung Admiralty, built for the elderly, where the landscape is productve, with vegetables and flowers while the complex offers all the amenies the residents would seek, creating a comprehensive habitat. His project Jurong lakeside gardens likewise comes with a narrave in the landscape that offers an identity as well as transforms the same to something new, where a rich habitat is created for flora and fauna to flourish. “It serves as a rejuvenang space for all age groups”, he points.

Ar. Debatosh Sahu of Espace stressed on the need to be responsive to the climate in our design. While stang that we can prepare and alter to suit future needs, what about the already exisng areas, how can we use public spaces where they cater to the changing social fabric, he asked. On social distancing, Sahu pointed that isolation can affect mental health and create the sick building syndrome. To keep mental health posive, he insisted on green spaces and the role of balconies and terraces to usher in this green. Since currently balconies come within the FSI and most try to bring balconies into the built living areas, he contended that they should not be part of the FSI.

Ar. Sanjay Mohe of MindSpace Architects presented his project Titan Integrity Campus to explain the seamless connect between the exterior landscape and the interior spaces, the terraced greens in the complex serving as outdoor workspaces if the employee chooses to. The large presence of waterbodies along with the fish, birds and butterflies, further accentuates the rejuvenating aura of the spaces. The building experiments with the concept of evaporative cooling which is done for the first me on such a large scale. The cooling system is built-in two/three stage air-condioning which minimises energy consumption by 30 per cent compared to convenonal ACs.

Given the current pandemic, what does it foretell for architecture, what is the future direcon for architecture, Ar. Bijoy Ramachandran queried.

Ar. Rita Soh of ARCASIA referred to the pandemic as a wakeup call. Climate change is a major global concern and this raises the question on how do we build, integrate to the existing habitat, do we have to knock down something existing in order to build, but more importantly, do we really need to build so much, Rita queried in return. The pandemic has made us to rethink our spaces, the typologies, creating possibilities of repurposing many existing buildings, converting them into multi-purpose spaces, merging more with nature, she added. With working from home likely to become an increasing norm, the residences will need to adapt and also plan to keep this in perspective, she contended.
Ar. Suresh Babu made a presentation on ‘Inclusive Exclusive’. He expressed the social inequalities of citizens where most of the resources are being used by a few, and very little of the resources being used by most. A change in attitude towards a more equinamous society can be facilitated only through a change in the methodology of education, and this has now become an urgent need. The political will to effect social change is also a critical. The idea of the family as a nuclear unit has created an indifferent society, as has been apparent in the recent pandemic, with citizens unwilling to help the affected. This attitude requires a change to view society as a family, and social movements are required. The appropriate use of technology, where it is available to everyone, and not just the elite, in an important aspect of an inclusive society.

Ar. Rekha Desai stressed that ownership is the key to a responsive city. And if we have to renew our public spaces to overcome flooding, a man-made disaster due to ill conceived storm water management systems, the ownership of those spaces should belong to the people. With reference to Mumbai, a city that has reduced its green cover by 80%, a lot needs to be done to look at the water drainage systems, the Mithi river that is a crucial contributor to storm water drainage, its revival and maintenance. Rekha Desai has proposed a workable and detailed study of mitigating floods, climate change, head island effect through the simple idea of connect, collaborate and create, to make the design a workable proposition.
The panel discussion moderated by **Ar. Naresh Narasimhan**, veered around resilience and the unpredictability that the pandemic has brought about. **Architect Mitesh Dixit of Domain** averred that architecture is no longer valued by what is done or whom it addresses but what drives it is the profit it offers. He pointed that large federal projects or the market dictates here, where it is concerned with lifestyle and viewed more as a commodity or investment. Resilience connects with the culture, the social fabric, it questions the nature, the root of the problem rather than the application of the problem, he pointed.

**Ar. Parul Zaveri** of **Abhikram** stated that we have a culture that has survived thousands of years and yet today we are forced to talk about resilience. Our culture connects inseparably with nature as well as the social, economic structure and the built spaces reflect this. The traditional spaces are designed to be in tune with the cultural fabric as well as the local environment, connecting with the nature where it adapts to the ever changing needs. The interiors are climatically comfortable, the built spaces merging with the unbuilt. She referred to her conservation projects which re-establish the relevance of traditional materials and processes in contemporary context.

**Ar. Jit Kumar Gupta** referred to the pandemic as a wakeup call and added that this should prompt us to make the city resilient, healthy and sustainable, where people are welcomed and not merely used for their functions and thrown aside when the use evaporates. His remark was pointed to the way the migrant labourers were left without support and thousands trekked their way back to their villages.

**Ar. Vivek Bhole** of **Neo Modern Arch** drew attention to the country being extremely diverse, culturally, socially as well as economically, with each city, village having their own unique issues due to which a uniform rule across the board may not be practical. He also added that our core cities are extremely tolerant and resilient, given that the problems they face are repetitive and without having a solution. He referred to the scenario in Chennai which alternates with floods in one season and dry wells and people queuing up for water in the next season. Yet, in places like Surat, the pneumonic plague radically altered the city, altering it to become one of the cleanest cities in the country from earlier being one of the dirtiest. This phenomenon is nothing but resilience and the capacity to adapt and alter to the emerging changes, he added.
Presentation by Master Speaker's

Indeed A School of Thought in the Design world - A Resonating and Vibrant Design Experience in all its Relevance

Architecture blending with the landscape and vice-versa, finally creating a master piece set within a larger frame work, very much part of the Urban-Scape, seemed a narrative in all their projects. Drawing inspiration and inculcating the essence from the design of the earth itself, that of interdependence, one for all and all for one, Architect Marion Weiss and Architect Michael Manfredi have truly elevated themselves to being Global Citizens as contributors to the eco-habitat, to this dynamic un-predictable world, by their holistic approach towards design with a panoramic vision.

Not just limiting to water conservation, the world acclaimed Architects have walked many steps ahead bringing-in efficient ways of harnessing and managing water, which has been interestingly a predominant focus in their design approach. Their dialogue based designing seems to be a conversation of the built and the un-built forms, that of co-existence, that of using technology for a larger purpose in creating the best, with energy efficiency, is evident in all their projects.

While complimenting nature, rather than challenging it, weaving-in their designs around the topography of the land, regional climate, with conscious efforts towards water conserving and distribution, they have also been contextually relevant to the past and present. An architecture that is not a destination, but a part of the whole is what they have showcased brilliantly in their works.

The use of trellis, creating geo-thermal wells, green roofs to gently collect and distribute water, use of water terraces, choice of region relevant plants for their projects, have all complimented each other, truly encompassing the aspect of sustainability in the right sense. Be it in any of their projects, Brooklyn Botanic Garden Visitor Center, Museum of the Earth, Tata Innovation Centre, Singh Centre for Nano technology, Olympic Sculpture Park or their newly assigned project, The US Embassy, New Delhi waterfunctions as protagonist and is a narrative all through in all their projects, containing it and promoting hydroponic planting as well. More or less a piece of Art set in the city, yet disturbing nothing but, present in all humbleness bowing down, respecting the Earth’s Bio-Cosmos.

The designers by their passive design practices, have made even their hard-core projects like that of labs and research centres to be participative and having a very human touch capable of leading to a world of co-existence and inclusiveness. Art and science so beautifully woven together engaging themselves bringing-about an incredibly wonderful participative architecture, so meaningful, organic, sculpted and so very well engineered creating a breathing habitat relevant today and for all times to come.
The panel discussion saw the idea of innovation through four women architects, moderated by Ar. Jaisim, Ar. Sheila Sri Prakash began by stating that O-Dash which is the platform for this conference is a fabulous innovation that is made in India. There is nothing new to the idea of innovation. As architects, when we begin to design, we first study all the requirements of the designs and then begin the process of design. By virtue of design being a process that responds to a given situation, we are always innovating. The current pandemic seems to have revealed that this is a time when nature is repairing itself. Nature is sending out a loud message that we need to reinvent and redefine our priorities. In the past humanity resonated with nature, and continued to a situation where humanity takes nature for granted and eventually abuses it. This led to climate change, the vanishing of the several spices of nature, forest depletion, storms, floods, and now pandemics. This is a repercussion of our own actions. Its time for us to understand the situation and redefine, redesign, and rethink our design principals. Technology today is innovating and galloping forward with 3-D printing, AI, IOT, to name a few, many of which reduce the carbon footprint. This conference itself is the result of IOT.

Ar. Azmi Wadia covered for four areas where societies have grown and evolved over time – profession, academic, institutions, family. Profession – The profession of architecture upto twenty years ago had the architect as the sole responsible individual in the designing of a building. As time went on with new technology evolving, the duration for the construction of buildings became shorter and more specialised, involving a collaborative effort to deliver. The profession has accepted the change and continued with the process of innovating. In the academic field references and research was only through the medium of writing. Next came the innovation of photocopying which made research easier. Following this came the technology of computers and research engines which change drastically the method of teaching and learning. Institutions were small in its beginning and now grown to be large. The Family structure has changed to have both partners working. Mankind as always innovated to survive.

Ar. Monolita Chatterjee spoke of the difference in decision making between men and women. Men being individual decision makers, women being more transparent and collaborative in their decision making. In the recent past architecture has been an exercise in iconic imagery making. Architecture has now changed to an exercise in using less energy and sustainable materials. Women use spaces very differently and with the absence of the women architects there is no diversity in design. Ar. Monolita Chatterjee then took us through several projects of hers on community design, urban renewal, public spaces, social works.

Ar. Vaissnavi Shukl, a recent graduate from Harvard University, came directly into the world of the pandemic. This led her to create new discussions that the pandemic has necessitated. She has worked with the government on changing management strategies. She believes in the importance of critical narratives in the design of public spaces that impact the environment. To her, innovation also means creating opportunities for ourselves and others through the various phases of life. To conclude the moderator Ar. Jaisim expressed faith in the youth of today for a better tomorrow. He advised to not let fear impede bold decisions.
TRANSCEND Question Hour was an online quiz for members of the Indian Institute of Architects.

Online prelims were conducted between 1-7th July, basis of which the top 7 teams that qualified were invited for the live finale conducted as part of NATCON on 11th July.

The Quiz was organised by Ethos and Ethos Founder, Ar. Gita Balakrishnan, who was the Quizmaster for the live finale.

The Finals had four rounds of quizzing, with a mix of question types and themes. Abhishek Dutta & Kunal Rakshit representing the IIA West Bengal chapter emerged as the champions, beating the Punjab team (Kamal Passi and Sanyam Bahga) by 15 points.

Many of the finalists have been quizzing pros, having taken part in Archumen and Archumen Pro earlier. Archumen is an annual architecture quiz that is conducted by Ethos.

Champions

Abhishek Dutta & Kunal Rakshit
IIA West Bengal chapter

Runner-Up

Kamal Passi & Sanyam Bahga
IIA Punjab chapter
Annoucement of Sketching Competition

Co-ordinators

Ar. Satish Mane
Ar. Sandeep Bawdekar

Jury Members

Ar. Ravi Gadre
Ar. Hemant Lele
Ar. Kaushal Shah

Sumit Bose
Winner-Pencil Category (Culture)

Sunil Stanlay
1st Runner Up-Pencil Category (Culture)

Chandar Seetharaman
Winner-Pencil Category (Place)

Prasanna Pandian
Winner-Pencil Category (Architecture)

Ruchira Bhanawat
1st Runner Up-Pencil Category (Architecture)

Nitin Kurve
Winner-Charcoal Category (Architecture)
Annoucement of Photography Competition

Co-ordinators

Ar. Akshay Beuria
Ar. Ashutosh Agarwal

Jury Members

Ar. Kavi Jain
Ar. Sugat Mohanty
Mr. Mayank Singh

Muzakkir G. M. Bijli
Winner

Sakthi Murugan R
1st Runner Up

ANKAN GHOSH
1st Runner Up

Ayyappan G
2nd Runner Up

Linas Fathima,
Is The Special Mention By Jury For

Sribalaji Venkatesan,
Is The Special Mention By Jury For