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Works from India Design 2016 Pictures: Amit Mehra

Design Detour

An exhibition of architectural models by internationally acclaimed architects, at India Design 2016, has ideas with an edge on display

SHINY VARGHESE

SPAIN-BASED architect Fernando Menis was born in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands. An island that seems like it woke up from a long slumber under water to reveal its moss-green tropical freshness to the world. From succulent bush-ridden cliff tops to the ubiquitous pear and fig trees, Menis grew up as nature's child. His architectural exploring, which he calls "Hatching, The Origin of a City", claims its paradox as a giant black foam glass mass, away from the softness of nature. Yet hidden in its porous texture is a humidity captor, capable of creating micro climates. "It is an alliance between the structure and the environment, to make it work as a single unit," reads Menis's note.

His work is part of an exhibition titled "From Cities of Images to Transitory Nature of Reality", at the India Arch Dialogue, an initiative by luxury lifestyle brand FCML. Supported by Laufen, this exhibition is being showcased at the India Design 2016, NSIC Grounds, Okhla. For the first time at the design fair architectural models by international designers are being displayed, even as some of these leading architects will be sharing their ideas at the symposium.

Architect Werendra Wakhloo, also the curator of the exhibition, wants to present this play of contrasts in the show. "Menis works like an artist. While all over the world, architecture is becoming thinner and lighter, he uses mass in his work as a response to the environment. This exhibition is about letting people look at transitory spaces, a city of images. We finally chose projects that had an edge, so that we could take the conversation of architecture forward," says Wakhloo.

Set within a cave-like giant mesh, 10 models by 10 international architects (Bijoy Jain is the only Indian among them) are placed in the 90 metre space. Reinforced steel, used in con-



struction, gives that incomplete finish within which the models sit in a circle. Inside is a zinc-woven enclosure where talks and discussions will be held. The net-like effect of the steel frame creates an inside-outside space, reinforcing the transitory theme of the exhibition. The contemporary weave in metal is taken onto the seating stools as well, where thick black threads are handwoven for the event.

This exhibition is also the inaugural FCML Design Initiative. "We hope to create a dialogue between people in various fields such as art, architecture, interiors, fashion and visual arts. It will develop into a collaborative platform that will facilitate growth and create an environment of exchange," says Abhinav Khandelwal, Managing Director, FCML.

While Japanese architect Toyo Ito presents his National Taichung Theatre, Madrid-based Langarita Navarro Architects play with the organic side of architecture with Pelt and Medialab Prado. A collection of three models, the latter is an attempt to reveal the negative spaces, or the gaps between the space we live in and the universe we inhabit. "Often when

one thinks of a Japanese architect, automatically one thinks of Tadao Ando. His style of using concrete is what comes to mind. But Ito goes against the grain and shows you another Japan. He redefines architecture by throwing away style and looking at people. If he looks at a museum it is not only about the programmes and facilities that he fits in, but how he can make people and art interact that matters," says Wakhloo, of Ito's exploration.

The initial idea was to look at architects who have already worked in India, of them Moshe Safdie and Steven Holl have done projects in Anandpur and Mumbai, respectively. While Holl will present a model of his museum in Mumbai, Safdie showcases "The Habitat of the Future", a model with its undulating levels, presents public promenades and gardens on the roof. Others who have presented their work include US-based Greg Reaves; Japan's Kengo Kuma; Mario Bellini from Milan; and Robbrecht En Daem Architecten, architects from Belgium.

An Ogaan Initiative, India Design 2016 is on till February 14 at NSIC Grounds, Okhla



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