
67th Year - NASA India

Insider, Architecture BRIO, Mumbai

THE INSIDER EDITION 9

26th and 27th December 2024 - Architecture Brio, Mumbai

The Insider Edition 9 was held at Architecture Brio, Mumbai on 26th and 27th December 2024. Vaidehi Mancharkar from 2nd year of Dr. Bhanuben Nanavati College of Architecture attended this program on being selected, representing our unit Z310

On December 24th, I received an exciting phone call that marked a defining moment in my academic journey. It was a call that informed me I had been selected as one of the ten students for a prestigious program—a moment that truly made my holiday season memorable. The process leading up to this was intense, as I had to submit my Statement of Purpose (SOP) under tight deadlines. Despite the time constraints, I approached the task with deliberate focus, carefully considering how my involvement in the program would not only benefit my personal growth but also enhance my college's representation. The rush of writing, however, didn't overshadow my commitment to conveying a genuine and strategic vision of the role I could play if chosen.

We had the privilege of visiting **Architecture Brio**, founded by **Ar. Robert Verrijt** and **Ar. Shefali Balwani**. The firm is renowned for its innovative and sustainable design approach, creating spaces that harmoniously integrate with their natural surroundings.

The INSIDER program offers a unique opportunity to engage with industry leaders while exploring their iconic projects. The much-anticipated day arrived, and we found ourselves in Mumbai, ready to immerse in this enriching experience. Fellow students joined from across the country, including Bhopal, Trichy, Delhi, Indore, Gujarat, and Mumbai itself. The excitement was tangible, setting the tone for an unforgettable journey.

Ar. Robert Verrijt, Ar. Shefali Balwani, Ar. Rohit Mankar, and the talented team of architects at Architecture Brio warmly interacted with us, addressing our questions with remarkable insight. They shared details about their completed and ongoing projects, offering a glimpse into their creative and technical processes.

During our discussions, they provided invaluable lessons on critical aspects of the profession—client management, budgeting, networking, and collaborating with vendors and stakeholders. Most importantly, they gave us a comprehensive understanding of how an architectural firm operates in the real world.

On the **first day**, December 26th, we were warmly welcomed by the architects, with Ar. Robert Verrijt joining us as though he were one of our own. He, along with his team, provided us with an in-depth overview of one of their notable projects in Alibaug, the **DUA VILLA**. This getaway home, located far from the hustle and bustle of city life, was characterized by arches throughout the structure, reflecting a sense of minimalism and tranquility. The primary objective behind the design was to create a structure that felt as though it had always been a part of its natural surroundings. As the architects explained, "once the

Material selection, particularly stone, plays a pivotal role in this design philosophy. We were introduced to various materials, learning where and how they should be used to achieve the desired aesthetic and functional outcomes. Skylights and their strategic placement were also discussed in detail.

A particularly interesting topic was **Vastu Shastra**, a traditional Indian architectural system that many people are influenced by. The architects emphasized the importance of finding a balance between Vastu Shastra principles and the more modern considerations of light, shade, and shadow. Additionally, they shared insights into the alternative materials they used to reduce costs without compromising on quality.

One of the most memorable aspects of the day was the sense of camaraderie among the group. Even though I was meeting fellow architecture students for the first time, it felt like we had known each other for much longer. Everyone was friendly and open, sharing their experiences and insights from their respective colleges.

The **second day** focused on understanding the operations of an architectural firm and the various roles involved in ensuring its success. We were introduced to the processes of budgeting, finance, and effective communication with workers to ensure that the intricate details of a project were properly understood and executed. The importance of clear, direct communication with the labor force was emphasized, as it is crucial for translating complex design intentions into reality.

We also delved into a project in Hyderabad, the **Cascading Villa**, which was still in the planning stages. The junior architects had already contributed significantly to the project, and it was now time for the main architects to review and refine the design. Alongside them, we discussed potential changes and examined how the project had evolved to its current stage.

One of the key lessons of the day was learning how to design spaces that could accommodate three different families within the same house while maintaining the highest levels of privacy. Additionally, we were introduced to the concept of rammed earth construction and the various tests performed, before it can be used in building projects. Sustainability was a central theme in the design of the Cascading Villa, with a strong emphasis on environmentally conscious materials and methods.

Following these discussions, we were given a tour of the office, where we had the opportunity to capture photos, preserving the experience as a lasting memory.

The two days flew by like mere moments, leaving us enriched with knowledge and inspiration to embark on a new chapter in our journeys. A heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to making this experience so impactful and memorable.



Team of Architects at Architecture Brio with Architecture students and National Treasurer Shikha Kamad.



Ar. Shefali Balwani and Ar. Robert Verrijt explaining the students about their on going project.



Photographs showcasing both the interior and exterior of Architecture Brio.

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Insiders Program, Ahmedabad

Report on Visit to HCP Design, Planning & Management, Ahmedabad

On 11th December 2024, we visited HCP Design, Planning & Management, a renowned architecture and urban planning firm in Ahmedabad. The visit aimed to understand their design philosophy, project management approach, and contribution to urban development, like the riverfront development project for the Sabarmati River.

Established in 1960 by Hasmukh C. Patel, it has played a pivotal role in shaping Ahmedabad's urban landscape and has implemented significant projects across India. Notable projects include the Central Vista Redevelopment Project (New Delhi), IIM Ahmedabad New Campus, and the Gujarat High Court Building, Ahmedabad, to name a few.

Firstly, we visited their gallery, which was only designed to showcase their new parliament house design, which is located in New Delhi. There, we were explained their strategy to build such a massive project, its spaces and its purpose. We got a very informative insight through actual photos, models and plans. Following that, we got an understanding of how architectural firms preserve their drawings by a combination of physical and digital preservation methods to store and protect their drawing. Large-format drawers or flat files were used to store original prints safely. They also stored it digitally to ensure remote access and backup.

Next in line was observing the workspace and their projects, and we also talked with the architects working there. They educated us about the future of architecture in India and also gave us a brief knowledge on when and where to find a suitable firm and what should be our approach. We witnessed some uncommon and wonderful projects.

Lastly, a session was arranged for the students in their conference room. MS Swaminarayan conducted the session. Sir briefly spoke about the Sabarmati Riverfront development project. We were introduced to the history of Gujarat and the formation of the riverfront development. The entire project was divided into three parts, where the construction of two parts was completed and in use for the public. He had been working on this project from the beginning to the completion phase.

This information was very insightful for us as we could relate this riverfront development project to our city, Pune's, riverfront development project. We understood the finance and investment of capital that goes behind constructing a big-scale public infrastructure project. The session ended with a set of questions from the students, particularly inquiring about the third phase of this project. The Insider's event came to an end with a group picture of the various students across the country and the staff working at HCP. Our key takeaway from this visit was understanding the work culture of an architectural firm.



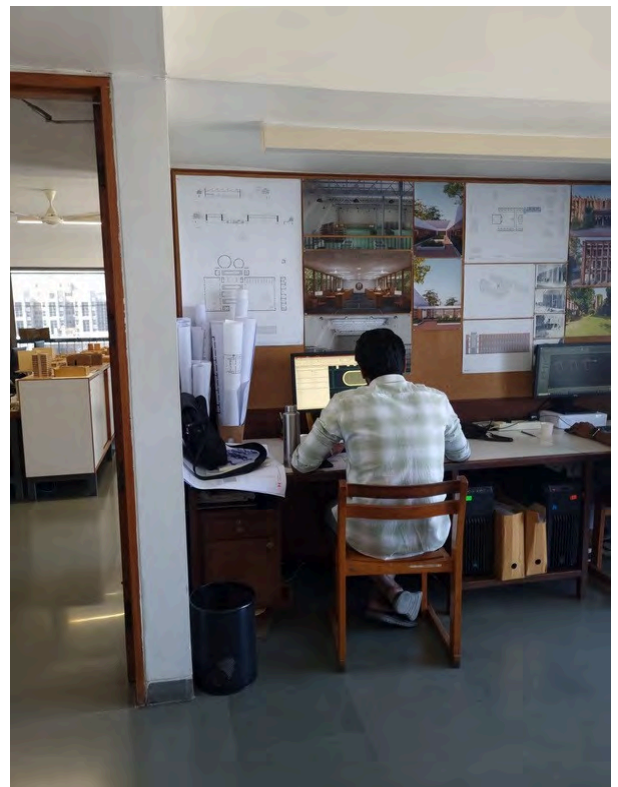
ARCHIVES



MODEL MAKING



PARITOSH GALLERY



WORKING STUDIO

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Insiders Program
A for Architecture, Nashik

Report on the visit to A For Architecture, Nashik

On 29th March 2025, we visited A For Architecture, a renowned firm in Nashik.

The tenth edition of The Insider—a platform designed to bridge architectural education and professional practice—was conducted at the architectural office of A for Architecture (AFA) in Nashik. This initiative, led by Ar. Ajay Sonar and Ar. Monali Patil continues to inspire architectural students by offering a close and practical understanding of how real-world practices are run, designed, and shaped. The two-day immersive workshop was not merely about viewing architectural drawings or completed projects—it delved deep into the philosophy and ethos that guide AFA's design process. Through interactive sessions, discussions, studio visits, and on-site insights, participants were exposed to the intricacies of architectural office management, physical model-making, and the socio-spatial responsibilities an architect must balance in a rapidly urbanizing India.

Day 1: Understanding Practice & Engaging with Site

- We began the day with a warm introduction to AFA's philosophy and practice. The architects shared their thoughts on contextual relevance, cultural sensitivity, and the role of an architect in a changing city like Nashik.
- This was followed by an interactive discussion, where we were encouraged to share our thoughts and ask questions about various architectural issues. The conversation touched on topics such as office management, the importance of physical models, navigating client demands, and maintaining creativity in real-world practice.
- Later, we headed out for a live site visit, where a design brief was shared with us. Upon arriving, we carefully observed the CSEB (Compressed Stabilized Earth Block) plant located on the site. This helped us understand not just the material but also its relevance to local, sustainable construction practices.
- After the visit to the plant, we conducted a detailed site analysis, taking into account site norms, topography, and environmental considerations that would later inform our design proposals.

Day 2: Designing & Dialogue

- On the second day, we were tasked with designing a farmhouse on the site we had visited. Using our observations and understanding from Day 1, we worked on conceptualizing our own architectural responses to the brief.
- The process involved brainstorming, sketching, and refining ideas, followed by an intensive session of discussions with mentors and fellow participants.
- The day concluded with a jury session, where each of us presented our design ideas. The jury turned into a rich dialogue, with thoughtful critiques and in-depth conversations on each proposal. We appreciated the constructive feedback and the opportunity to learn from each other's interpretations of the site and brief.

The workshop was an eye-opener in many ways. It emphasized the need for thoughtful, contextual architecture and gave us a platform to express and challenge our ideas. We are grateful for the opportunity to learn directly from practicing architects and look forward to applying these insights in our own academic and professional paths.



Introduction and common discussion



CSEB Plant Visit



Site Visit



Design Discussion

