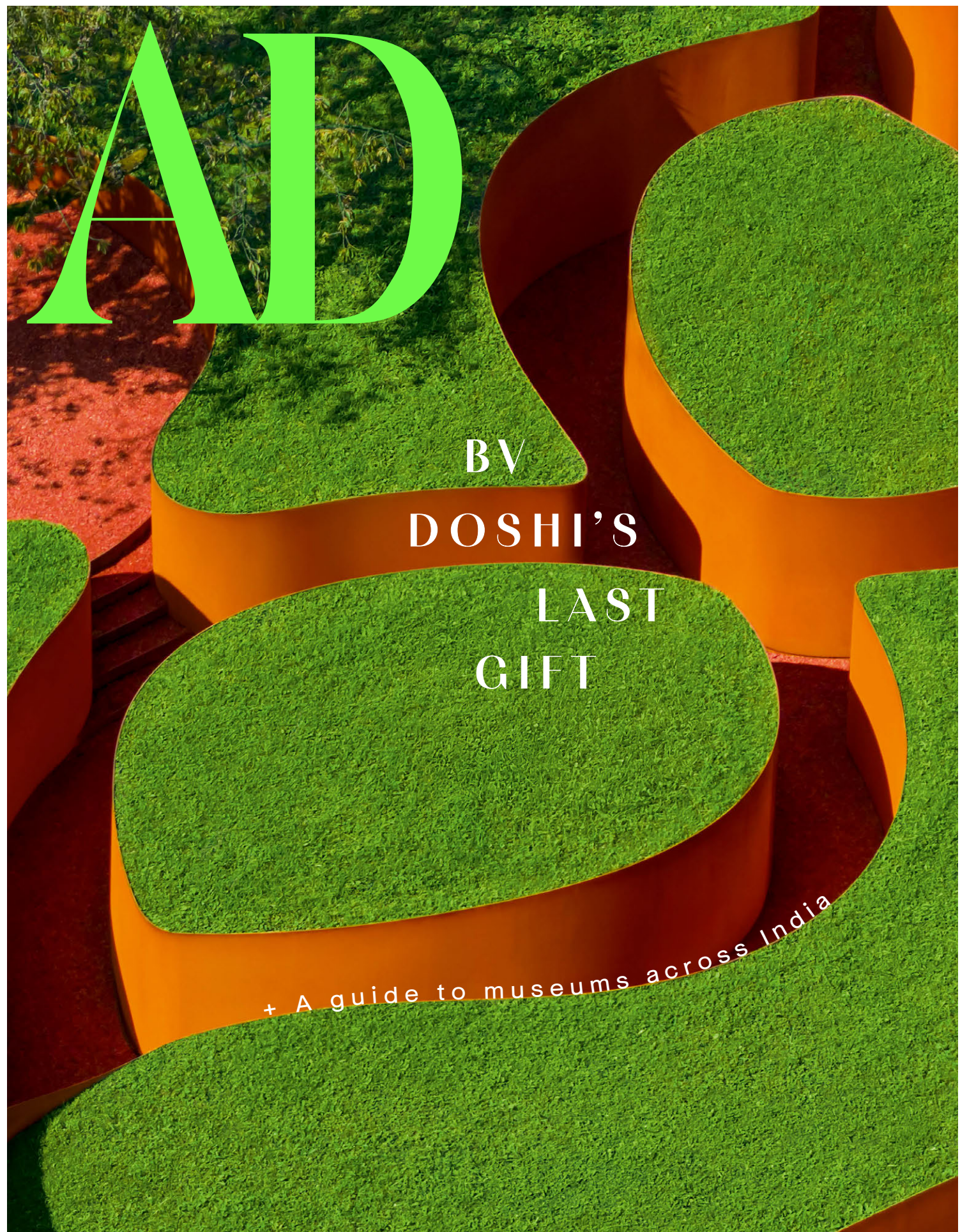




AD

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DOSHI'S

LAST
GIFT

+ A guide to museums across India



← NIPUN PRABHAKAR

PHOTOGRAPHER An independent photographer whose work explores how buildings are made, used and remembered, Prabhakar's images and writing have been featured in major publications, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. He photographs various museums across India (pg 46) for this issue. "For my first contribution to AD, the process was a delightful excavation of my archives."



↑ AATISH NATH

WRITER Mumbai-based Nath enjoys writing about food, travel and design. In this issue, he writes about the various developments underway at Jaipur's City Palace complex (pg 38). "A trip to Jaipur isn't complete without a tour of the City Palace. Now, there are more reasons to return as it continues to evolve."

→ KIRTHANA DEVDAS

PHOTOGRAPHER A Chennai-based photographer, Devdas captures the DakshinaChitra Museum near the city for this issue (pg 44). "Walking through the heritage houses and watching light breathe in these spaces took me back to my own ancestral home. The museum reminds you of your roots and nudges you to use sustainable design sensibilities that are inherent in our traditional homes."



→ DILPREET BHULLAR

WRITER An editor and researcher, Bhullar's writings lie at the intersection of visual culture, decolonisation and curation. Currently managing editor of *Take on Art* magazine dedicated to South Asian contemporary arts, Bhullar shuttles between New Delhi and Mumbai. In this issue, she writes about artist Seher Shah's practice (pg 18).



↑ USHA BALAKRISHNAN

HISTORIAN In this issue, art historian Balakrishnan writes about the seminal Museum of Meenakari Heritage in Jaipur which she conceptualised and curated (pg 46). "Contributing to AD's museum issue was meaningful because this museum bridges scholarship and craft, honouring meenakari as both a historical art and a living practice."



← VAISHNAVI NAYEL TALAWADEKAR

WRITER In this issue, Talawadekar writes about Sabha, a new cultural space in Bengaluru (pg 28). "Writing this was like tracing the heartbeat of a 150-year-old landmark brought back to life. Each corner revealed a fragment of time, and I felt I was piecing together a living, breathing story of our city's heritage."



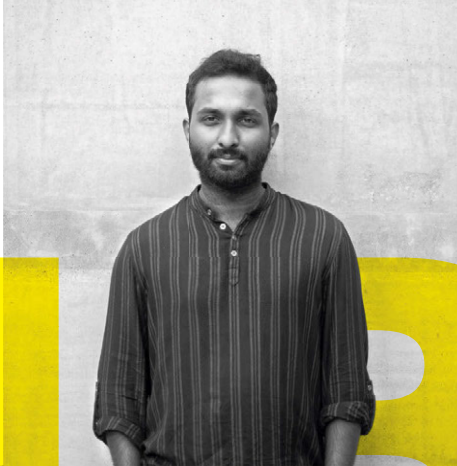
← RADHIKA IYENGAR

WRITER Mumbai-based Iyengar's work has been published in *Al Jazeera*, *Atlas Obscura*, *Hyperallergic*, *Vogue*, *Condé Nast Traveller* and several other platforms. In this issue, she writes about a new museum dedicated to MF Husain in Doha (pg 14) as well as the curatorial practices of Puja Vaish and Deepika Sorabjee (pg 54).



↑ ARJUN KRISHNA

PHOTOGRAPHER A Bengaluru-based architecture and interior photographer, Krishna photographs Sabha, a new art and culture space in the city (pg 28) for this issue. "Light is my pen and space is my page. Shooting Sabha felt poetic, its light became my ink, its walls my words and together they told a story only light could write."



→ SYAM SREESYLAM

PHOTOGRAPHER In this issue, photographer Sreesylam captures the Fort Kochi home of hotelier Edgar Pinto and his wife, Bree (pg 98). "A well-curated living space that places equally emphasis on the space and the artworks that are framed on blank walls opposite large openings to allow natural light to illuminate them. Every room offers a unique perspective, fostering an environment tailored to the appreciation and exhibition of art."



→ CHANDNI MEHTA

ART DIRECTOR After nearly six years, AD's beloved art director bids adieu. "It's with sweet sorrow that I say goodbye to these pages. Pages that have filled with colour and comfort, my time at AD."



← AASTHA D

WRITER An essayist, critic and educator, Aastha has a background in architecture and training in history, theory and criticism. Their work examines how design influences human interaction and societal structures. In this issue, they write about Meghalaya's Twah Longwar museum (pg 46) and Mayank Mansingh Kaul's curatorial practice (pg 54).

↑ RAJASHREE BALARAM

WRITER Balaram is a journalist and screenplay writer based in Mumbai. In this issue, she writes about the Fort Kochi home of hotelier and gallerist Edgar Pinto and his wife, Bree (pg 98). "Their all-open home seems to stand like a symbolic representation of what the world needs now: a deep respect for nature."



HUNDREDHANDS BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO A 150-YEAR-OLD ERSTWHILE SCHOOL WITH SABHA, A NEW ART AND CULTURE SPACE IN THE HEART OF BENGALURU.

TEXT: VAISHNAVI NAYEL TALAWADEKAR
PHOTOS: ARJUN KRISHNA



THE BUILDINGS WEAR THE SAME FAÇADE THEY DID 150 YEARS AGO, COURTESY OF A MATERIAL PALETTE OF LIME PLASTER, RECLAIMED TIMBER, GRANITE, KADAPA AND EXPOSED BRICKWORK THAT ECHOES HISTORY. BELOW: SUNITHA KONDIR AND BIJOY RAMACHANDRAN OF HUNDREDHANDS BASK IN THE AFTERNOON SUN INSIDE THE NEWLY RESTORED SPACE.

Buildings that have reverberated with the voices of multiple generations carry a quiet magic—a magic that lingers long after those voices have faded. Architect Bijoy Ramachandran, of multidisciplinary design practice Hundredhands, knows this to be true, as he also knows that it can take time to uncover this magic. “We had to look deep,” he says of Sabha, the studio’s maiden conservation and adaptive reuse project. The initiative was helmed by civic evangelist and former honorary director of the Bangalore International Centre, V Ravichandar. “He and his wife, Hema, had started a family trust, and were interested in restoring a colonial-era school in Bengaluru’s Cantonment [area] and reimagining it as a hub for artistic expression,” explains Ramachandran, who worked closely with cultural strategist Raghu Tenkayala. “He [Tenkayala] played an instrumental role in bringing together the RBANM’s Educational Charities—to

which the school once belonged—and Ravi’s [Ravichandar’s] family trust.”

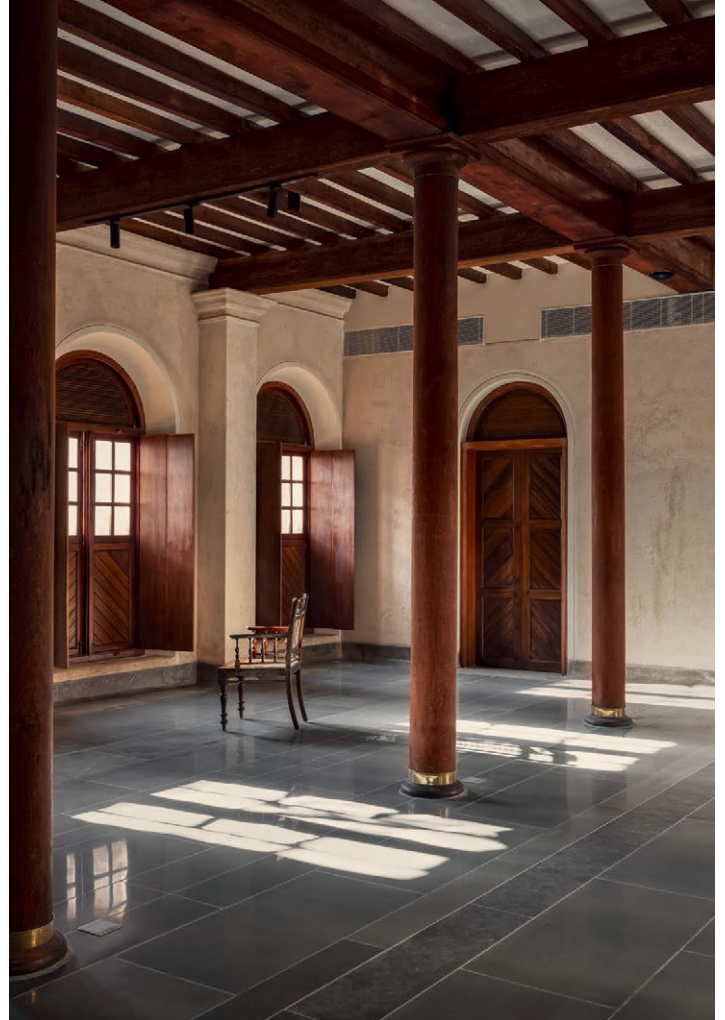
Despite its rich architectural heritage, the 150-year-old school’s two structures were a shadow of their former selves. The roofs were compromised, masonry riddled with cracks, and doors and windows damaged beyond repair. Finding a path forward was no small feat. But Ravichandar was resolute. “As donors, we realised that a conservation project would be significantly costlier than building anew, but we felt driven by the desire to serve as an example to others of what is possible,” he says.

If they had existed, historical photographs might have served as their natural point of departure. “But we had nothing,” Ramachandran reflects, “and our only option was to emulate other buildings of similar vintage from within this area.” Additionally, the few remaining vestiges on the property were carefully catalogued: ornate cornices, Madras terrace roofing, composite trusses with Mangalore tile overlays, timber post-and-beam





ABOVE: THE CENTRAL COURTYARD, CAREFULLY RESTORED TO ITS FORMER GLORY, HUMS WITH LIFE AS A PLACE OF GATHERING. THE MENDED BRIDGE BETWEEN THE BUILDINGS AND THE NEW WINDOWS TO THE RIGHT LEND THE GARDEN NEW LAYERS OF TEXTURE, LIGHT AND QUIET GRACE. ABOVE RIGHT: THE INTERIOR ESTABLISHES A DIALOGUE WITH THE GARDENS BEYOND WHILE KEEPING ONE FOOT IN THE PAST THROUGH NEW TIMBER WINDOWS, KOTA FLOORING AND A RESTORED MADRAS TERRACE ROOF, ADDITIONALLY REINFORCED WITH TRADITIONAL WATERPROOFING.



construction and more—ensuring that anything brought in looked as though it belonged. “The biggest challenge was our own limited knowledge of the processes and protocols of working on a conservation project,” he admits. To address the structural issues in both buildings, he and his team—which included architects Sanjana Pande, Amritheshwari Arun, Ganga Menon, Shantanu Mude and Riya Raikar—worked with a group of experts. Chief among them were Niles Thakkar and Prajakta Chaugule of Jeernodhar Conservators and SC Shaju of Shilpi Wood Craft, a veteran roofing contractor.

For a first-time observer, it may be difficult to discern where the old architecture ends and the new begins. “The additions are imperceptible,” notes Ramachandran, adding that Tenkayala helped coordinate the larger vision of the space. “We saw ourselves as facilitators, treading lightly to have these wonderful buildings be seen again.” By the same token, the design team approached the project with sensitivity and restraint, rehabilitating the Madras terrace roof without disturbing the original brickwork

and reinforcing the sloping roof with new timber supports. Kadapa and granite salvaged from other areas of the property were repurposed for the verandah flooring, while previously sealed openings were transformed into bright, welcoming windows made with timber salvaged from broken roofing members. A small café and restrooms were woven into the design, as were state-of-the-art audiovisual systems and performance lighting—features that reinforce Sabha’s role as a performance and exhibition venue.

If any aspect of history needed to be reversed, it was the area’s high water table, which had damaged the foundation over time. To mitigate its effects, the team introduced underground relief wells and French drains in the flooring. “We need to observe how the measures hold up in the heavy monsoon,” shares Ravichandar. For now, Sabha holds year-round promise. From indoor nooks to shaded outdoor spaces, it invites visitors to engage with the arts that breathe life into its restored walls. “It’s a space that connects the past with the present while offering calm in the city’s chaos,” Ramachandran adds. ▀