

Nature goes hi-tech

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Slopes of a hill, colours of a jelly fish, effects of sound...spectacular building designs now inculcate all these and captivate your eyes. A look by NANDHINI SUNDAR



Inspiration can come from anywhere. It could be something totally mundane or one that is breath-taking in its natural beauty. Transferring this inspiration into a building in the form of a replicated design can be a challenge. Yet, the type of technology currently available to transform any inspiration into a tangible form is mindboggling. This opens up a vast avenue of designs in architecture, each more spectacular than the other, bringing a new meaning to structures.

Drawing inspiration from nature and translating the same into a physical form that is functional as well as habitable, without sacrificing aesthetics, is the firm BplusU. The firm's Principal Architect and Co-founder, Herwig Baumgartner, in his recent presentation at the INCITE Gallery, showcased projects where the inspiration and concept came predominantly from nature, ranging from the effects of sound to slopes of a hill and the colours of a jelly fish.

Stating that the primitive huts and dwellings started with the use of branches and trees, bringing in the abstract concept into construction, Baumgartner insists that design is not just about focus on techniques and technologies but to get a larger sense of life.

Be it his Sound Cloud project where the sound waves manifest as a design through intricate geometric patterns or the Cohen Residence built amidst a dense set of trees or the set of 16 villas built for the royal family in the UAE, the Tall Emblem structure in Dubai, the Performance Arts Centre in Germany, the Concert Hall in Taipei or the Pedestrian Bridge in Amsterdam, his projects unanimously incorporate an extensive use of technology to replicate nature.

For instance, while the Taipei Performing Art Centre packs in a majestic complexity of design, where each side looks different yet there is no back or front portion for the building, the Frank and Kim Residence brings brilliant colours into the structure as an inspiration from the jelly fish. The colours reflect in the form of light filtering through the pre-fabricated roof.

Similar manifestation of colour is seen in his Sunset Junction which, coming up in a crowded neighbourhood, stands out with its exotic shape and colours to serve as an arresting focal point. His Pedestrian Bridge too packs in colours to enhance the complex steel and fabric structure that covers the bridge, lending the element of exotica to the project.

Says Baumgartner, "The focus is not just on drawing inspiration from nature and using technology to give it a tangible form, the accent is on ensuring the buildings are functional and the interiors connect."

His projects address that effectively, whether it is a replication of a sloping hill with the rough rocky slope depicted as a series of windows and skylights on the extensive green roof, or the complex futuristic design that aggregates the changing scale in structure.