

26th Anniversary Edition

INDIAN ARCHITECT & BUILDER

EXPLORE

MUMBAI

₹ 200

OCT 2012

VOL 26 (2)

GDK Designs
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DCOOP

Manifestation of Fluid Architecture
Design Combine
Architecture BRIO

PRACTICES OF CONSEQUENCE

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Opolis
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architectureRED
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Indigo Architects



DCOOP

MUMBAI

Founded by Quaid Doongerwala and Shilpa Ranade in 2003, DCOOP is a design studio with a portfolio of projects that range from lamps to institutional architecture.

Our approach to design is motivated by a curiosity about the context we practice in, and a desire to grapple with its specificities. We enjoy the process of engaging with the complexities of the times we live in, and at the same time look back at history as a great repertoire of knowledge that we can refer back to anytime – for inspiration and moorings. Keeping these as our starting points, we try to begin projects without preconceived ideas about what architecture should be. We try to plug-in to and inhabit/enhance/exaggerate the idiosyncrasies of the project and the context we practice in.

The process of working on every project is a deeply engaged exercise as multiple possibilities are explored, designs developed, model studies made, and material studies undertaken to arrive at design solutions. These are then taken through the construction process with as much commitment on-site.

The apparently academic nature of our process is often interpreted as the strength of our practice, but for us the challenge and achievement lies, not just in the beginnings or the conceptualisation, but in the delicate process of translating the ephemeral wisps of thought into the powerful tangibles of the built form. It is in summoning all the tools in hand – structure, materials, form, light, space and details – to communicate the idea to its best. For us, architecture is fundamentally an embodied art and building is critical to the manifestation of its intent.

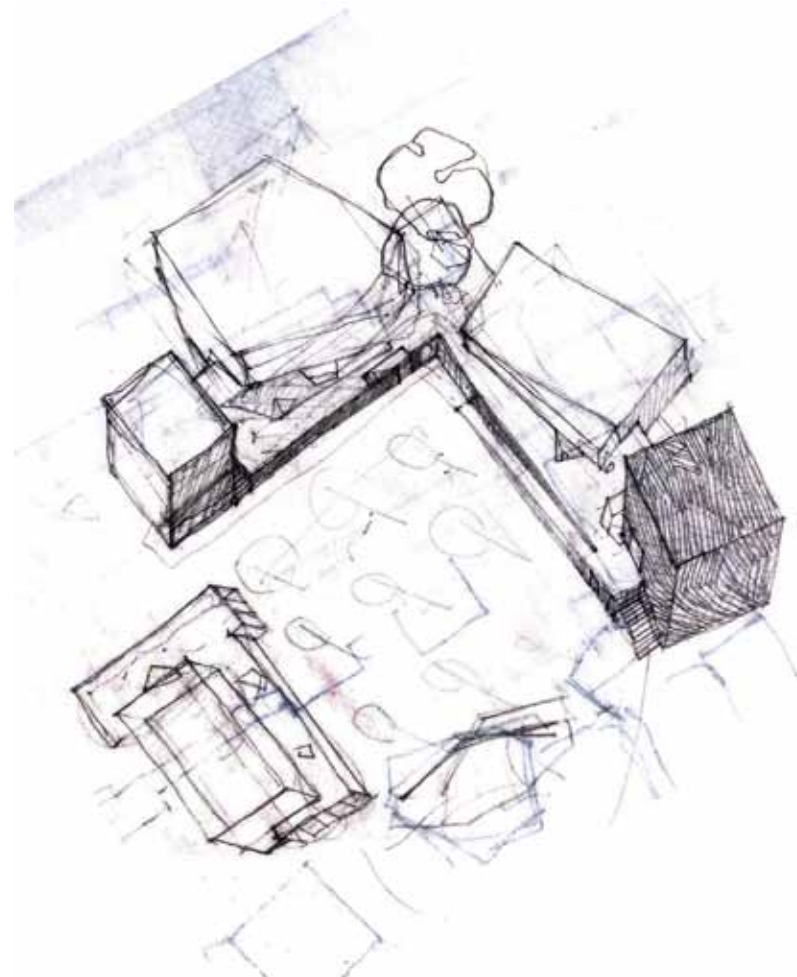
Tectonic articulation and refinement are aspects we aim to achieve in all our work. The spiritual joy of creating spaces, orchestrating light and manipulating materials drives us from one project into another. Detail and coming-together of things has been one of the quests one is constantly working towards. The act of achieving refinement and balance is meditative.

As a professional practice, DCOOP aims at bridging the gap that exists between concerns of ‘pure’ design, the contingencies of construction, and sensitivity to the requirements of the user. At the core of the work is the belief that architecture should be constructed well, it should function well and it should look and feel beautiful.

- Quaid Doongerwala + Shilpa Ranade

Images and Writings: courtesy DCOOP; Photographs by: Rajesh Vora, Nirmal Masurekar, Sebastian Zachariah, Mahesh Hiremath





Conceptual Sketch: Y V University



School of Sciences at Y V University

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School of Sciences

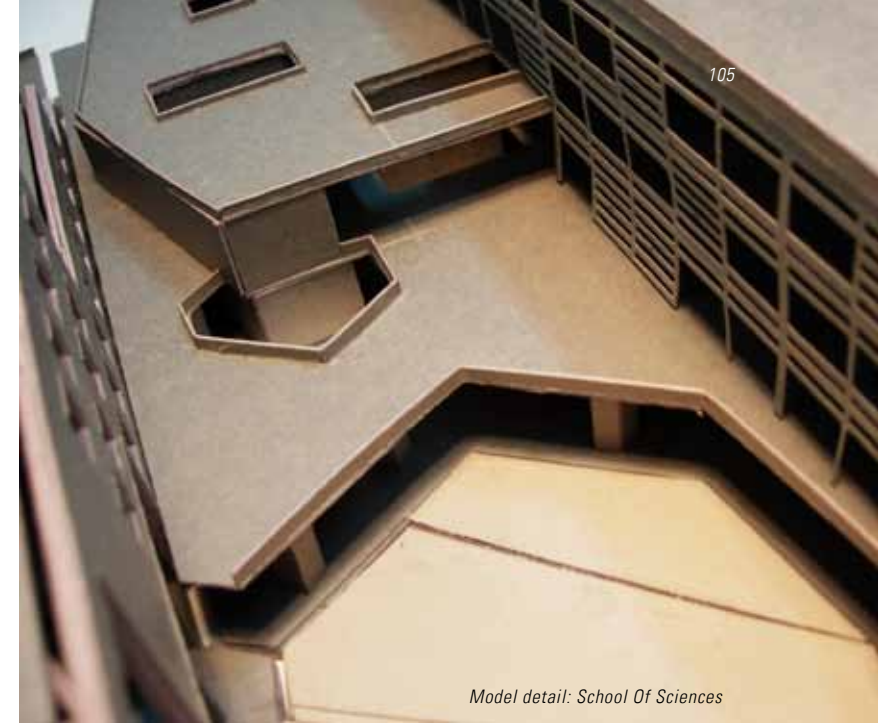
DCOOP: Design Cooperative

Since 2003, DCOOP has designed for a diverse range of programmes – from compact interior spaces to institutions and invited competitions. As a 'Design Cooperative', what can we recognise as the idea of its practice?

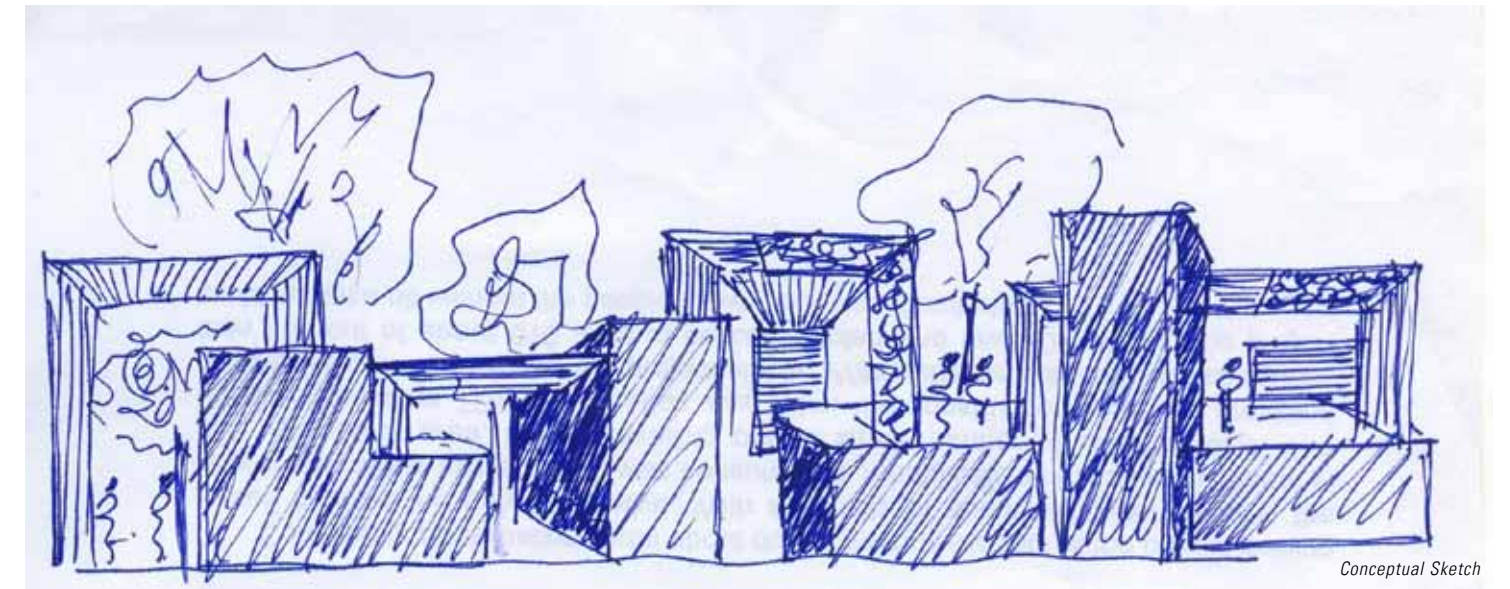
DCOOP: DCOOP is the design studio and "Design Cooperative" is the name which we use for administration purpose. The idea of our practice is to create quality architecture, keeping the contingencies and realities of our context in mind.

Its approach towards work has been very pragmatic and yet has an element of research. Is there an identifiable constant in the way they approach their projects?

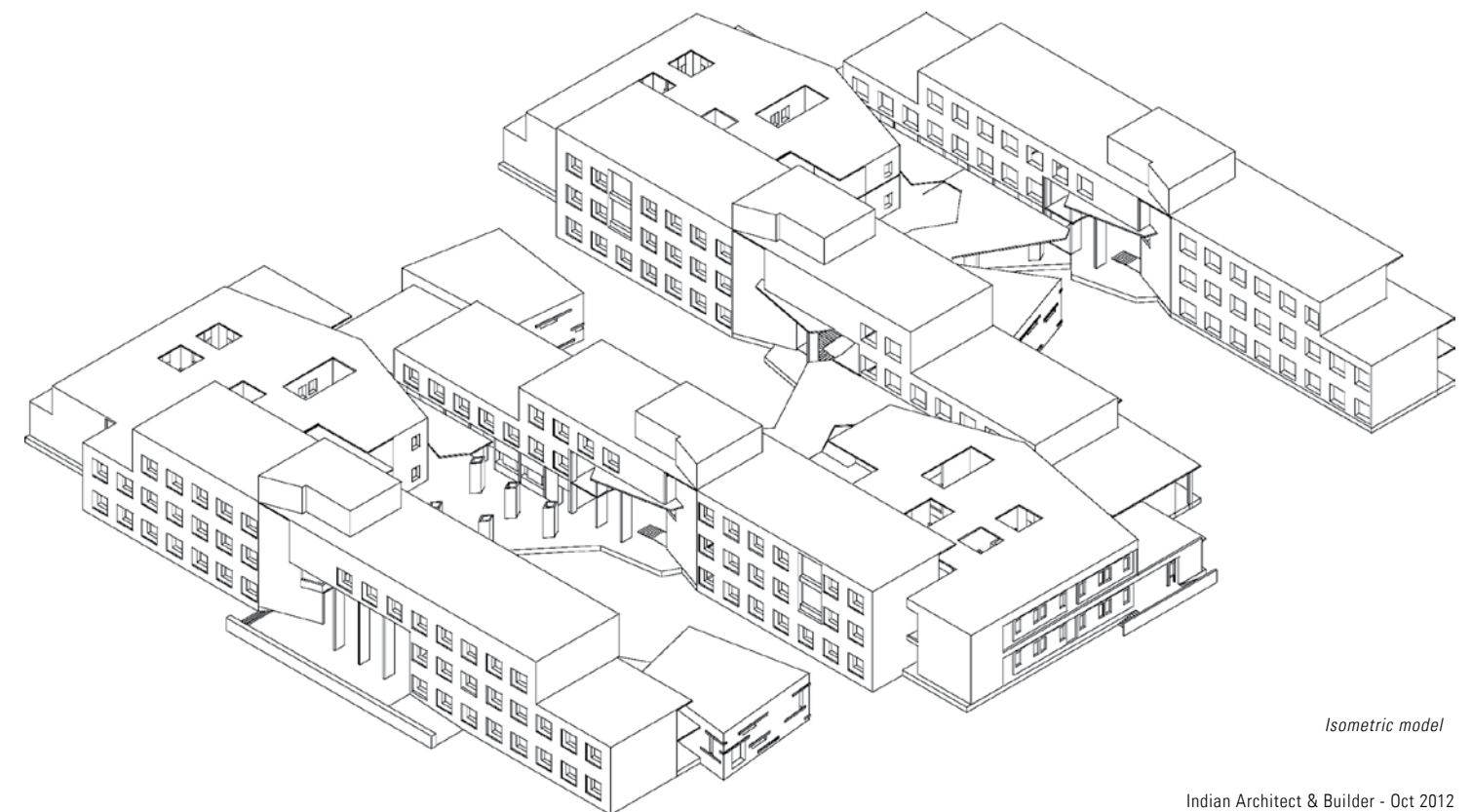
DCOOP: In a design project, the 'research' is usually done in the stage when we are defining the parameters for the project - understanding its context, physical and intangible, identifying the limitations, possibilities and implications. After this point there is a shift in thinking. The pragmatic and analytical becomes a sub-text in what is primarily an intuitive process from then on.



Model detail: School Of Sciences



Conceptual Sketch



Isometric model



Y.V. University: Students' Hostel Exterior



Students' Hostel: Quality of interior space



Students' Hostel: Light in the corridor



Asymmetry and composition: Students' Hostel



Generator House: Composition of forms

The portfolio of their executed work is experimental, evocative and yet grounded in the realities of site and situation. The original idea is not lost in translation and there are identifiable constants to their approach. Which, according to them, are their most significant projects?

DCOOP: Seen in context of the practice and our evolution as architects, for us significant projects are those that challenge our comfort zones and push us to think outside the box. Projects which have allowed us this opportunity include the Ensemble office, Indigo I, School of Sciences, the Hostel blocks and the Guesthouse in Kadapa, the competition for SPA Delhi and Kenbridge Schools, to name a few.

There is a certain academic inclination in all DCOOP's work — a recognisable discipline. How does this inform the practice?

DCOOP: In addition to individual teaching and writing engagements, Quaid has been interested in the visual and spatial experience of Mumbai's urbanity, while Shilpa is absorbed by the socio-spatial dynamics of the everyday, which she has worked on extensively as part of the Gender & Space project in PUKAR. Both these research trajectories have been explored by us through various media and methods, individually and in collaboration with others.

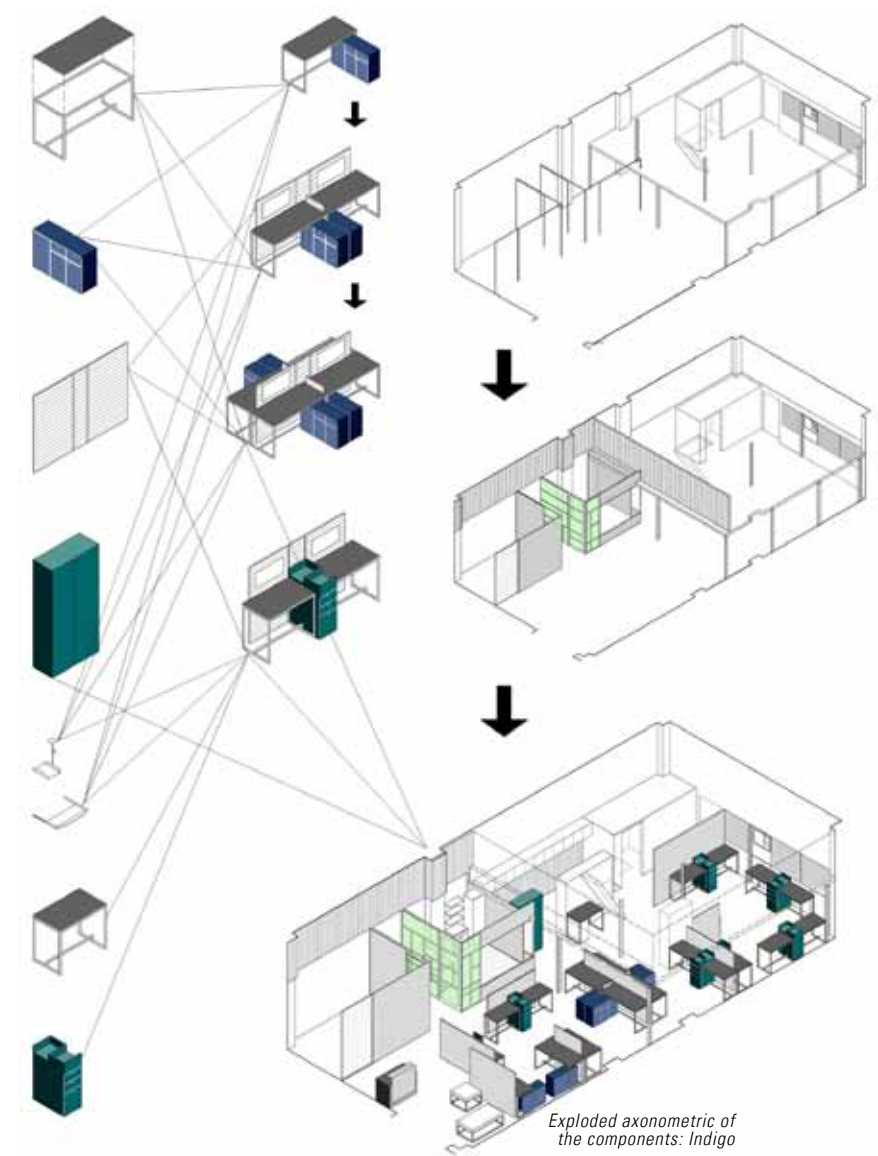
For one, the academic discipline enables us to approach a project from a certain distance and locate it appropriately in its context, focussing on those issues which drive it. But other than that, it is hard to point out tangible signs of how our academic interests inform the practice, but it is undeniable that they do so.



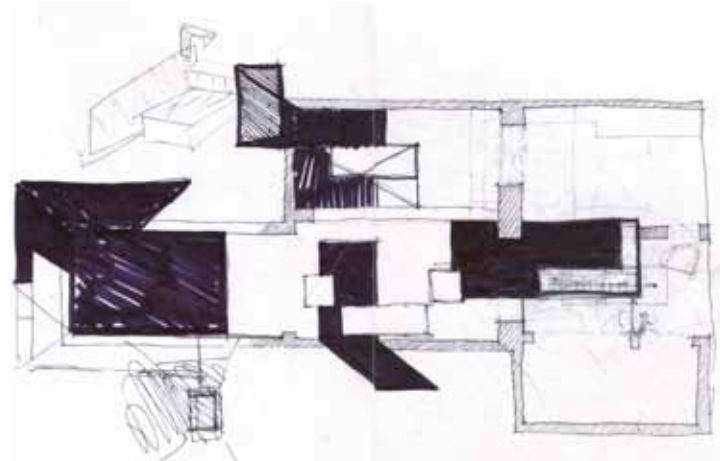
Interior Space: Indigo



Workstations: Indigo Office Space



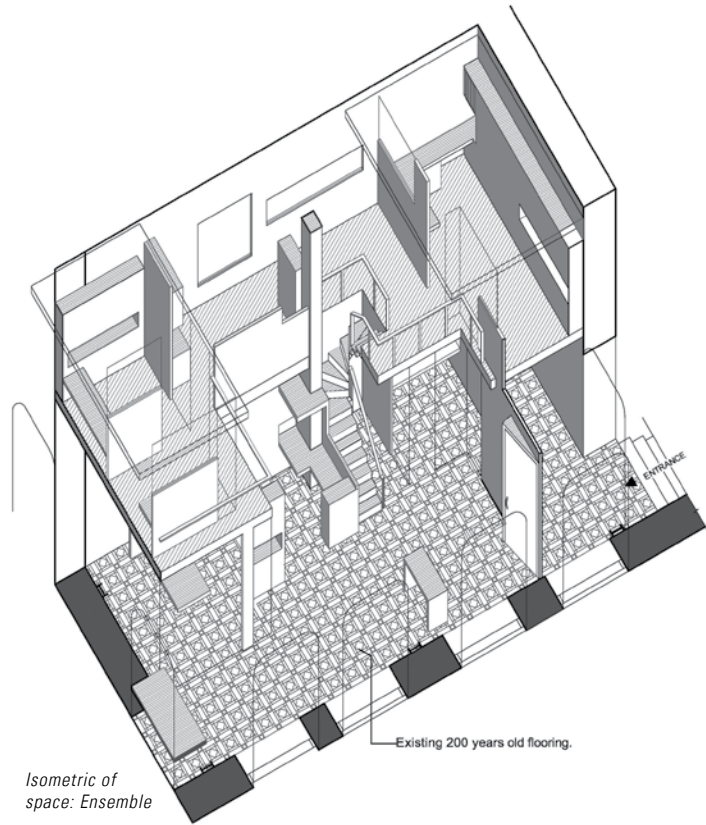
Exploded axonometric of the components: Indigo



Process sketch: Radhika Naik Couture

In the past decade, DCOOP has endeavoured to diversify into designing for many types and contexts. As a 'niche' practice focussed on certain ideology, how do they intend to evolve? What is the future for DCOOP?

DCOOP: Like most other architects probably, our ultimate aim is to create a context that will enable us to do projects that we find meaningful and to foster clients who will support our ideas unto their logical conclusions. DCOOP has so far evolved organically and we would be happy to let it continue doing so, as long as it supports our quest for architectural nirvana!



Isometric of space: Ensemble

Existing 200 years old flooring.



Model detail: SCL Gatehouse



Interior space: Mehta Group Offices



Interior space: Ensemble



Interior space: Mahesh Studio



Interior space: Tarun Tahiliani Boutique

"In a design project, the 'research' is usually done in the stage when we are defining the parameters for the project - understanding its context, physical and intangible, identifying the limitations, possibilities and implications."



Process model: Private Gym



Competition: Kenbridge Schools



Kenbridge Schools: View of scheme

As a studio, DCOOP's work is multi-layered and complex. Anchored in their readings of programme and context, their designs have an affinity towards the interface between form and content. Led by Quaid Doongerwala and Shilpa Ranade, the studio invests in taking the brief beyond the concerns of space and function by focussing — with equal rigour — on design and detail.

The projects of DCOOP go through a systematic deliberation as drawings, models, material studies and concerns of usability are constantly negotiated. Their buildings have an element of discovery and accident of tactile features — light, materials, intimacy and access. A sense of control on scales, interactions, movements, visual elements, construction methodologies and experimentation characterises their built work. Their architecture is responsive to reality. ■