

# ARCHITECT and INTERIORS INDIA

Inspiration and insight for architects and interior designers

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## Looking Back

## LOOKING FORWARD

SALUTING THE NAMES THAT MATTER WHILE TAKING STOCK OF LANDMARK PROJECTS  
IN THE WORLD OF INDIAN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN



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## Sumesh Menon

### SUMESSH MENON ASSOCIATES

“Right from the beginning and even today, my team and I have aspired to continuously reinvent our design and make a conscious effort to keep design and monetary aspects of a project exclusive from each other,” says Sumesh Menon, of the aspiration with which he started Sumesh Menon Associates (SMA). He’s thankful that he was blessed enough to start off with international projects — which gave him insights into the importance of discipline and work norms. “Another key design lesson was to understand the importance of customisation and bespoke design,” says Menon, who has honed his innate creativity with a course at New York’s NYIT School of Architecture and Design.

Menon calls the journey so far both challenging and fruitful, and is pleased that he has carved a niche for himself in the industry with a unique style, “to an extent that when potential clients approach us, they expect us to dish out bespoke homes and signature-style hospitality projects,” says the designer whose aim has always been to strive towards cutting-edge, innovative design, with each project enjoying a distinct identity. “Each project must have...a timeless characteristic that retains its novelty for a good five to six years, and this design viewpoint remains constant for our practice.”

While the environments they create may be distinctive, bespoke and luxurious, SMA also takes sustainability seriously. “Clients are being more open to the positive impacts of sustainable designs— which makes our work easier. Convincing clients to go in for sustainable design used to be difficult,” he reveals, citing an upcoming private villa in Pawna, near Mumbai, which incorporates a lot of natural light and ventilation, and is designed along the existing land contours.

The learning of the principal and his 15-year-old studio continues even today, with each project adding incrementally to the way they work, their understanding of a client’s requirements and their design sensibility. “Designing is always a challenging path and comes with equal measures of experience and complications. Through the hard way, we have learnt that it’s not just enough to adhere to regulations — but to see to it that clients do not take them lightly either,” says Menon. In fact, he can’t stress the latter point enough. “We also need to make sure that they are implemented thoroughly even long after we have moved out of the project. Accepting client’s demands without questioning them or the legal aspects of it, is also a major tendency to avoid.” **A&I**

#### LOOKING BACK

From his firm’s many landmarks, Menon picks out Koko as a game changer. “This was some years ago when I had just completed one of my first international hospitality projects in Manhattan, New York. It was a visit by one of the Tham brothers to this restaurant that set things rolling, and the result was Koko,” he reveals.

#### LOOKING FORWARD

An ongoing project called Dragonfly located in Aerocity, one of Delhi’s most upscale localities, is something Menon is looking forward to with great interest. The project’s most unique aspect is that the existing site is a theatre, complete with a magnificent 40ft-high ceiling, that’s being converted into a high-energy bar.