

Blueprints of a Nation: Exploring The Bauhaus Legacy in India's Modern Architecture with Avid Learning's Motifs, Materials, and Makers Series

In the early 20th century, amid the wreckage of war and the search for a new social order, German architect Walter Gropius proposed a radical idea: that design should bring together art, craft, and industry to shape a better world. With the founding of the Bauhaus school in 1919, he launched a movement that stripped design to its essence, purposeful, pared-down, and socially engaged. What began as a European experiment soon evolved into a global architectural language, defined by clarity of form, honesty of material, and an unwavering commitment to function.

These ideas would later find deep resonance in India. As the country transitioned to self-rule, modernist design offered more than just a new aesthetic, it offered a blueprint for building a young nation. Indian architects like Achyut Kanvinde and Habib Rahman, trained in the intellectual lineage of Gropius, returned home to design public buildings, scientific institutions, and cultural spaces that expressed both technical precision and democratic intent. Their structures, often composed of raw concrete, steel, and open space, articulated an architecture of ambition — one that was modern yet grounded in its context.

Avid Learning, in collaboration with the **National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai**, and **INTACH Greater Mumbai Chapter**, presents **Motifs, Materials, and Makers of Bauhaus Architecture**. The panel with *Executive Director, Godrej Enterprises Group* **Nyrika Holkar**; *Architect and Urban Designer* **Sanjay Kanvinde**; and *Interior Architect, Curator, and Design Entrepreneur* **Divya Thakur** will critically examine the trajectory of Indian modernist architecture from the late 1940s to the early 1980s, a time shaped by industrialisation, institutional growth, and the ideals of a newly democratic nation. The conversation will be moderated by *Assistant Professor, Architectural and Urban Conservation Programme, KRVI* **Sanaeya Vandrewala (Moderator)**.

This discussion will delve into how post-independence cities became a crucible for modernist experimentation in architecture and urban planning. Through the lens of government-led infrastructure, public institutions, corporate patronage, and private practices, the panel will examine how Bauhaus was mobilised to express ideals of efficiency, egalitarianism, and progress. Themes such as architectural language and material innovation, the role of key architects and practices, and the interplay between state vision and professional autonomy will be explored. The conversation will also address how modernist urban planning shaped the city's evolving identity, and how these structures pose pressing questions of conservation, memory, and relevance in contemporary India.

This is the second episode in **Avid Learning's 'Motifs, Materials, and Makers'** series that explores distinctive architectural styles and their afterlives. Each episode delves into the distinctive motifs that define a style, the materials that ground it, and the known and unsung makers who brought these spaces to life. Bringing together voices from across disciplines of history, conservation, architecture, and design, engaging discussions will tell the story of Bombay and beyond in brick, stone, and steel.

When: Thursday, 21st August 2025 | 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM

Where: National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), Mumbai

Register: www.avidlearning.in

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Speakers' Bios:

Nyrika Holkar is the Executive Director of Godrej Enterprises Group ('GEG'). She leads Brand Marketing and Strategic Insights for GEG and its subsidiaries. In this capacity, she drives a company-wide strategy on enhancing customer experience and insight driven interventions by building ecosystems and partnerships

to help improve collaborative innovation within the organization and externally. She works closely with the Sustainability, Marketing and Product Development teams across GEG with a focus on building a future forward brand. Currently she is working with the furniture and furnishings team on the turnaround of the Godrej Interio retail business focusing on product development, retail experience and omnichannel strategy. She graduated summa cum laude with a BA in Philosophy and Economics from Colorado College, USA and obtained LL.B and LL.M degrees from University College London, UK. She is a member of the Bar Association of India and is a qualified Solicitor in the United Kingdom. Nyrika is an ardent supporter of the environment. As Chairperson of the GEG CSR Committee, she is actively involved in GEG's community development efforts including education, skilling and the protection of wetlands in India.

Sanjay Kanvinde, an Architect and Urban Designer by training, is presently a senior partner with Kanvinde Rai & Chowdhury. He has an experience of over 50 years in the field of Architecture, with a degree in Architecture from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi and a Masters in Urban Design from Rice University, Houston. With a rich and varied experience in the field of architecture and urban design, he has been associated in the design and execution of various educational institutions all over the country and has participated successfully in several architectural competitions with his work published in several architectural journals. Some of the recent major projects handled by him include several award winning competitions namely inStem - Stem Cell Research Centre at Bengaluru (2019), Research Park at IIT Gandhinagar (2021), Master Plan and Academic Complex for IIT Bhilai (2023) and the ongoing Research Lab Complex at IIT Kanpur. Other projects include the 1200cap Girls Hostel & extension of the existing Aiyar hostel at Banaras Hindu University, Housing at IIT Gandhinagar and Hall of Residence 15 at IIT Kanpur. He was actively involved in teaching as a visiting professor in the Dept. of Urban Design, School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi since 1980 as well as visiting critic and thesis/dissertation guide at several Schools of Architecture besides being on their advisory boards. He recently co-authored a monograph 'Achyut Kanvinde – Akar' on the legendary Indian Architect A.P. Kanvinde, whose extensive body of work is presently being researched and archived by him.

Divya Thakur is a multidisciplinary designer and cultural visionary whose practice spans over 20 years and multiple mediums. As founder of Design Temple, a pioneering luxury home-accessories brand rooted in Indian aesthetics, and MoDE a digital design museum created in collaboration with Google Arts & Culture, Divya has shaped new narratives around Indian design heritage. Her work is characterized by a seamless fusion of traditional Indian intelligence with contemporary global sensibilities, translating complex ideas with simplicity. Celebrated for her innovative thinking and refined aesthetic, her projects have been featured in Vogue, Architectural Digest, Wallpaper, Elle Décor, and The New York Times. With an eye for detail and a commitment to storytelling through design, Divya Thakur continues to redefine modern Indian design on the world stage.

Sanaeya is a conservation architect, academician, and researcher specializing in architectural conservation, urban design, and heritage management. She holds an MA in Conservation Studies from the University of York, UK, and a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Mumbai. With over 19 years of experience in India and the UK, she has worked on prestigious projects, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites like Ajanta Caves, Mahabodhi Temple, and the Victorian & Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai, and most recently the CSMT (Victoria Terminus). Currently an Assistant Professor and Programme Coordinator at KRVI for the master's programme in Urban Design and Urban Conservation, India, she plays a key role in curriculum development, research integration, and conservation studies. Her research focuses on urban heritage conservation, sustainability, and energy efficiency in historic buildings, with publications on topics like policy-practice gaps, the role of historic buildings in the circular economy, and heritage resilience. She actively presents at international conferences and contributes to academic discourse through journals and editorial roles. Through active engagement in both fields, she bridges academia and practice, advocating the preservation of cultural heritage through policy, education, and architectural interventions.