



NOSHIR TALATI

Long before the city of Bombay was re-christened and called Mumbai, a young boy would walk the streets with his head looking up towards the sky. Admiring the beauty and grandeur of buildings like the then Victoria Terminus, he would never tire of strolling around in fascination. Spending his time around this railway station and the streets of Ballard Pier, he would ardently sketch the vistas of such striking buildings and study the details that set them apart. "I was always absorbed with the way people were dependent on this iconic structure (Victoria Terminus) for their daily lives, and I realised very early on that architecture has the power to influence the lives of millions," he says. Today, Noshir Talati, that very same young boy, is an architect of great repute.

Talati believes that the love for architecture came to him almost naturally. He found much inspiration in the urban environment, and his instinctive love for beauty drew him towards architectural design. After initial studies at Rachna Sansad and a master's degree in architecture from the University of Michigan, the humble beginnings of a practice in an 80sqft office in Mumbai followed. He then went on to become the founder and chairman of Talati & Panthaky Associated (TPA), a firm that has been in very successful practice for more than four decades now. Along with his partner, Nozer Panthaky, Talati has designed and handled projects of various magnitudes for commercial, residential, medical, institutional and recreational purposes. He has been a gold medal recipient for excellence in designing buildings and interiors and has also received several distinguishing awards over time — the American Alumni Association - AAA Leadership Award, a Lifetime Achievement Award, Rashtriya Udyog

Award for outstanding achievements and a 'Hind Rattan' award for outstanding service, achievements and contributions to society.

The driving force and inspiration behind the company, Talati is famed for his immaculate designing and perfection in aesthetics. He has built a heritage of buildings that stand testimony to his talent. His approach to design has always been very simple and straightforward: always let the function of a space determine its form. His policy has led him to look at design from the inside out. So, his adherence to simple lines and attention to the smallest detail has created his signature style that is original and well recognised all over Mumbai. Those who he considers to have influenced him were the modernists and master builders of the 20thC: Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier. Their emphasis on clarity and simplicity spoke volumes to him. Talati is known to reject short-lived trends, unnecessary frills and ornamentations, and has stuck to his beliefs.

In retrospection of his early years as an architect, Talati recalls, "I have really seen this city grow and change immensely over the years, and feel very fortunate to have been a part of it and to have been able to contribute to the skyline." Though each and every project has been a labour of love, Ceejay House and the upcoming magnum opus Palais Royale are those he considers close to his heart.

Completed in 2007, Ceejay House is located in central Mumbai. A building used by corporate giants that include the likes of Credit Suisse Group and Barclays Bank, this is a structure beyond the traditional office structures one usually experiences for

ALWAYS LET THE FUNCTION OF A SPACE DETERMINE ITS FORM.

I BELIEVE THAT YOUNG ARCHITECTS HAVE TO BE CAREFUL OF CHASING GIMMICKY TRENDS AND FORGETTING THE PRACTICAL REQUIREMENTS OF A BUILDING.

such purposes. It is also known to have been declared the most expensive office space in Asia in the year 2008. The design of Ceejay House incorporates an attractive glass atrium that brings natural light into the heart of the building. This light-filled lobby is visible from every floor, thus connecting the different spaces of the building into a cohesive whole. In addition, it serves to bring the soothing landscaping and greenery into the interior aspects of the building.

Facing the sea front, the exterior of the building is clad in grey and black granite, which makes it durable and keeps it free from maintenance hassles that occur due to exposure to saline air. An innovative design that provides practical amenities and column-free spaces allows maximum flexibility in planning. With imposing public spaces, Ceejay House has become one of the most desirable corporate addresses and a landmark structure in the Mumbai skyline.

Incidentally, it is in Ceejay House that TPA houses its own office — a sprawling one of 17,000sqft on the sixth floor. It's ultra modern and yet exudes a classic look. Marble, glass and rows of framed art greet the eye instantly. When one enters Talati's office, the symmetry and perfection that are his hallmarks are immediately apparent. He and his partner share a long desk; in between both their black chairs stands a white marble bust of Mussolini. Behind the two architects' tables are glass windows with split blinds and a row of green plants. Bookshelves on either side balance the large office, along with a classic long table with artefacts.

A single residential tower rising to an immense height of 300m, Palais Royale is TPA's upcoming residential project in Worli, Central Mumbai. An iconic project with about

100 exclusive apartments, the design is an engineering feat, incorporating an astounding 215m atrium — one of the tallest atriums in a residential building. It also uses the world's largest cast girder of 9m each. To be completely clad with Corian®, the façade will be weather resistant to humidity and tropical weather. Although the building offers unlimited state-of-the-art luxury, it is an environment-friendly project, being the first residential building in India with a LEED rating and with the possibility of being the first residential building in the world to get a Platinum evaluation. A proud Talati states, "I have been very involved in its construction and truly feel as though there will be no other building like it." Palais Royale is scheduled to be completed in the coming year.

Talati believes that India has opened up considerably in the fields of design, architecture and construction, what with the immense international exposure and interest. This new exposure can now be used to its maximum with a little bit of imagination and innovation, which is the designer's prerogative. He sees a change for the better, as young architects are now more exposed to avenues of expression. Yet, speaking from his immense experiential knowledge, he states, "I believe that young architects have to be careful of chasing gimmicky trends and forgetting the practical requirements of a building."