

Architecture Alumni Association of BUET ARCAAB

A R C A A B Q U A R T E R L Y

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2019-2020

9th EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE

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9th EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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EDITOR'S note



Dear Alumni,

It may need a few years, or decades, to identify what lasting impacts Covid-19 pandemic will have on architectural design, practice and pedagogy. Few may be already in the process and could well be visible in the short term. It is said that the 'Powder Room' - a space very near to the entrance where one cleans [read, disinfects] oneself upon coming in from outside - was added to residential designs only after the Spanish Flu epidemic. Almost a hundred years after he designed it, Le Corbusier's very prominently positioned wash basin at the entry hall of Villa Savoye appears almost clairvoyant. In Paimio Sanitorium, Alvar Aalto built spaces that let in sunlight and air in abundance to help heal patients suffering from respiratory diseases like tuberculosis. Approaches that are more elementary or fundamental appear to be more impactful and enduring than ones that are based on elaborate, intricate probes.

Realizing that the task of identifying shifts in architect's designs may be too early now, our editorial team decided to explore a more tangible issue – the impact of the pandemic at architect's workplace. This issue of ArcAAB Quarterly features the unique experiences and extrapolations of some of our alumni that you will find engaging. Our editorial intent was to interview architects with varied profiles and across different generations.

Speaking of generations, this issue features the welcome ceremony organized by ArcAAB for the new graduates, where our foremost architectural academician Prof. Shamsul Wares delivered a spellbinding talk to the youngest of architects. 2020 has been a year of great achievements by the ArcAAB alumni in the annual JK Cement Awards of India. We highlight the winners and their projects in the News section, along with other noteworthy accomplishments of our alumni. We also publish the conversations with Richard Lepastrier - an equally captivating event that was held online in December 2020. The length of this feature should not deter a reader from delving into it, as the spontaneous responses of the revered Australian architect to questions from our alumni contain extraordinary insights about issues concerning architecture and beyond.

This third issue of ArcAAB Quarterly is the final one to be published during the tenure of 9th Executive Committee. In a normal time, these would have been printed - hard copies to hold, touch, flip, bend and read. In the online clickable version, the experience is mostly visual and details that were once extremely important like tone, texture and thickness of the paper are not even peripheral. As it happened with tracing papers and parallel bars, necessity and convenience has won over.

Will virtual be perpetual? Only time, and the next Editorial Board, can tell :-)

On behalf of the outgoing one, we wish you good health, better days and great architecture.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mamnoon Murshed Chowdhury'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large loop at the end.

Ar. Mamnoon Murshed Chowdhury
Editor

ArcAAB Documentation and Publication Committee
Alumni of '86 batch

PRESIDENT'S message



Dear respected members of ArcAAB,

As the President, let me greet you all on behalf of the 8th EC of the ArcAAB. Now it's a challenging situation for architect's community during this ongoing Lockdown. Even in such a crisis we are glad to inform you that ArcAAB publication committee, against all odds, continued its work for the third edition of our newsletter, to bring ArcAAB activities, news and views to you.

I feel privileged to share the good news, that during this time many of our members were recognized at the international arena for the excellence of their works. Three projects by our alumni received JK Cement award. Other accolades are Academy awards and Uni Portfolio Awards (UPA). One of our BUET student's thesis received Arcasia Students Award. More over Arch daily recognized two of our alumni's projects by publishing them on their platform. Recently we had two significant online events. The latest one was for welcoming the two recent graduating batches of -2013 and 2014 in virtual platform. The other one was the screening of Ar. Richard Laprestrier's film and interview. In addition to that we featured interview of Ar. Mahbuba haque, Ar Nahas Khalil and Ar Farhana Rashid Tonu from Bhumijo as well.

I convey my sincere gratitude to the members who were recognized or received awards in the recent times. The details of activities and news are presented in the newsletter. The newsletter team and the 8th EC members deserve my full support and appreciation for their hard work.

This is the last issue of our term. I believe, in the last two years, even during the Covid-19 situation, the 8th EC of ArcAAB tried relentlessly to serve their members to the best of their capacity. Your involvement and participation in our activities has created a stronger bonding among the members of ArcAAB family. With your support, the ArcAAB team will come back again with renewed commitments and deliverables.

Thank you for believing us for the last two years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, flowing lines that form the name 'Ar. Ishtiaque Zahir Titas'.

Ar. Ishtiaque Zahir Titas. Hon FAIA
President , ArcAAB
Alumni of '83 batch

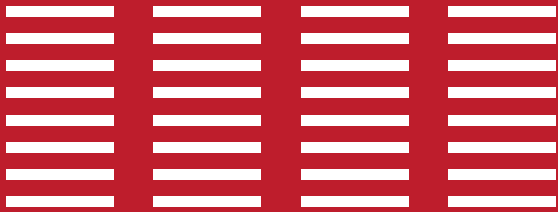




photo courtesy : Asif Salman

'Shikor' by Spatial Architects gets international prominence as one of the Most Viewed Projects in ArchDaily

Archdaily has remained the world's most viewed architectural website, since its foundation. Initially, Bangladeshi students and architects would visit the website to explore international projects. Whereas now, not only Bangladeshi projects get featured in Archdaily, one project made its place amongst three of the Most Viewed Projects on its publishing week on this international platform. Shikor, a country house by Spatial Architects, has been featured in almost 12 international news platforms including Elle Decor, Arch20, Design Essentia Magazine, Stir World etc. and reached a new height with its unique achievement.

DoA, BUET alumni Arch. Mohammad Naimul Ahsan Khan and Arch. Farzana Rahman founded Spatial Architects in 2009. Since then they have achieved several national and international recognitions for their works. 'Shikor' is one of the newest additions in their portfolio and has already become famous for its remarkable approach.

Shikor is a 446 square meters farmhouse, situated at Banshkhali Upazila in Chattogram, Bangladesh. It showcases the handcrafted workmanship of local artisans, making the most of all the natural resources granted by the landscape. The experiences of the spaces inside the house vary from sunrise to sunset, from summer to winter.





photo courtesy : Rizvi Hassan

Architecture for Humanity - Ar. Rizvi Hassan's projects receive international accolade

Alumnus Rizvi Hassan completed his graduation from DOA, BUET in 2017 and has been working in the Rohingya Refugee camp in collaboration with BRAC, UN and UNICEF Charity. He has designed an integrated community center for the Hindupara community, a minority group amongst the Rohingya refugees, and a center that is a safe space for Rohingya refugee women. His works have had a deep impact on the lives of the refugees and have gained worldwide recognition. Rizvi Hassan's works have been featured in various national and international platforms; Arch daily, Design Boom, Context.BD, and UNICEF are some of them. Rethinking the Future (RTF) has listed him as one amongst the 15 prominent architects/ architectural firms who are doing revolutionary works in rural areas.

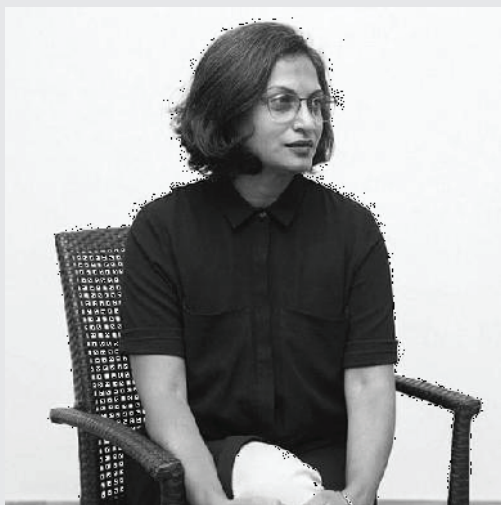
Hindupara Integrated Community Center

Hindupara community is the minority group among Rohingya refugees who are now living in the world's largest refugee camp in Kutupalong. Host communities in Bangladesh have been sharing their resources, land & everyday life for more than two years now. As the host communities are very nearby, Hindupara Integrated Community Center was designed to build a sharing platform that will try to create aspiration for the surrounding, and be a catalyst for better communication between refugees and host community as well as majority and minority groups.

A safe space for Rohingya women and girls

UN agencies, Bangladesh Govt. and other organizations like BRAC and Unicef are supporting them in this difficult time so that in the future they become less of a burden rather than healthier minds that are ready to contribute. The center offers adolescent girls and women from the surrounding camp area- a place to have a good bath a day, a place to complain about abuse and violence, and a place where they can learn to create and share, thus a safe home.





Marina Tabassum awarded Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize, 2021 by the American Academy of Arts and Letters

The American Academy of Arts and Letters announced the recipients of its 2021 architecture awards on April 15, 2021, New York. This year, the Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize was awarded to Ar. Marina Tabassum, who is an architect of international repute and an ArcAAB alumni. The winners were chosen from a group of 32 individuals and practices nominated by the members of the Academy. The jurors were Annabelle Selldorf (chair), Kenneth Frampton, Steven Holl, Thom Mayne, Richard Meier, Toshiko Mori, Robert A. M. Stern, Billie Tsien, and Tod Williams.

The Academy's annual architecture awards program began in 1955 with the inauguration of the Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize and has since expanded to include four Arts and Letters Awards. Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize is awarded to an architect of any nationality who has made a significant contribution to architecture as an art and a grant of 20,000\$ is awarded too for this achievement.

Architect Marina Tabassum completed her B.Arch from Department of Architecture, BUET in 1994. She founded MTA in 2005 after her 10 year partnership as the founder partner of Urbana. As described in her website, MTA started its journey in the quest to establish a language of architecture that is contemporary to the world yet rooted to the place.

Marina Tabassum has been awarded numerous prestigious national and international awards over various phases of her career. One of the most prestigious awards she received till date is the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2016 for designing the Baitur Rouf Mosque in Dhaka. She has also worked as an educator in various universities and institutions in many countries, i.e. Australia, Bangladesh, Netherlands, to name a few. She is also the Vice-President 2 in the current Executive Council of ArcAAB.

The ARCAAB family wishes her more success and all the best in her future endeavours.



Nurur Rahman Khan's lecture at Cornell University

ArcAAB alumni Dr. Nurur Rahman Khan presented a lecture titled "An Uncharted Modernity : The Architecture of Muzharul Islam" on 12 April 2021 at an event hosted by Cornell University. The event was held online. As a part of a lecture series arranged by Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, Asian Studies, South Asia Program, Architecture, the exclusive lecture on the works of Muzharul Islam was hosted by Cornell University.

The following introduction text about the lecture and the speaker was mentioned in the web page of the university.

"As a witness to the famine caused by the British in India, Partition and the bloody aftermath, the futile East-West Pakistan relationship, the language movement, and the inevitable Liberation War, Muzharul Islam was not contained by the typical "postcolonial" hangover and neither was he an advocate of the "regional". Islam saw "modernity" as a "politics" of nation-building and was therefore able to hold three otherwise opposed positions, without any conflict with each other: Marxist politics, the progressive attitude of the west, and the need for a strong a cultural identity. His architecture not only laid the foundation of modern architecture in the region but also set on to voice a perception of "modernity" that would fuse a solidarity of the thinkers, artist, writers and even politicians of his time. "An Uncharted Modernity" is journey of the works of Muzharul Islam, seen beyond the typical "gaze" of modern architecture. Muzharul Islam is considered one of the greatest architects of the Indian subcontinent and his work till date remains not only as a source for understanding "modernity" in Bengal, but also to look beyond the confinement of "regionalism" and charters a path in architecture where architecture is able to recalibrate its role.

Dr Nurur Rahman Khan is a partner of the renowned architectural practice of Tanya Karim N R Khan and Associates. He graduated from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, and completed his Masters from the same institution with the honor of Ahsanur Rahman Gold Medal. He went on to do this Doctoral Degree at IUAV University of Venice. He is an educator who has taught and lectured in many universities and seminars and currently a Professor at Bangladesh University and adjunct faculty of Stamford University Dhaka, and visiting faculty at North South University. He also was a Masters Studio guide at IUAV. He is a scholar on Muzharul Islam and Louis I Kahn's work in the subcontinent and the critique of Modern Architecture in the region. He is the author of The Assembly Building, a book published on the occasion of the birth centennial of Louis I Kahn, and Muzharul Islam: Selected Drawings, the first book to be published on Muzharul Islam.

Ar. Nurur Rahman Khan is also the Vice-President 1 in the current Executive Council of ArcAAB.



BUET student Taorem Rahul Singha wins Bronze Medal at ARCASIA Students Architectural Design Competition 2020

Taorem Rahul Singha, a student of Level 5 Term 1 at the Department of Architecture, Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology has been awarded the Bronze Medal in the ARCASIA Students Architectural Design Competition 2020. This year the theme of the competition was to design a public space thinking about resilience during the pandemic. Taorem Singha's entry was among the three projects selected by Institute of Architects Bangladesh for submission in the competition.

ARCASIA (Architects Regional Council Asia) is a council of the presidents of the national institutes of architects of 21 Asian countries. Due to the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic situation, ARCASIA decided to organize an Online Design Competition among the individual students of ARCASIA member countries.

Taorem Singha's project titled 'Isolation as Resilience?' was placed among the top five entries and was awarded the bronze medal. The awarded project provides a critical lens around resilience by designing an extremely 'resilient' public place that ensures the highest social distance and by juxtaposing it with an already existing, abandoned prison complex in Sylhet, Bangladesh. The objective of this project was not to design a 'successful' public space but to create discomfort, uncertainty, detachments, through which we can revisit the concept of resilience from a new perspective.

The new narrative of resilient public space is proposed in a site, which resembles the stories of imprisonment, isolation and confinement for more than 200 years. The heritage structure, Sylhet Central Jail, was never exposed to the public as it was serving prisoners, where their lives were confined within a massive boundary wall. In 2019, the central jail was shifted from Sylhet city to a newly constructed place. So, the design approach initiates with a proposal of portraying this heritage realm as a public space and providing a new dimension of experiencing the old one.

The new installation adjacent to the heritage conservation complex demonstrates to the public the conformity of movement by depicting the story of prisoners through spatial experience. Many confined cells are proposed and aligned with the existing complex, which provides social distancing, isolation and a new definition of the architectural vocabulary of gallery space breaking the traditional one.



photo courtesy : VITTI Sthapati Brindo Ltd.

Ar. Iqbal Habib, Ar. Ishtiaque Zahir & Ar. Shahnaz Parveen awarded “Architect of the Year Award” in the Foreign Country category in the 30th JK Architects of Year Awards, 2020 by JK Cement Ltd, India.

Ar. Iqbal Habib and Ar. Ishtiaque Zahir (VITTI Sthapati Brindo Ltd.) and Ar Shahnaz Parveen (Mrinmoy Consultants) have been jointly awarded as the Architect of the Year Award in the Foreign Country category in the 30th JK Architects of Year Awards, 2020 by JK Cement Ltd, India for the project Ekmattra DBBL Academy at Haluaghat, Mymensingh.

The journey of this project started in 2001 when a Japanese student Hiroki Watanabe, with some like-minded friends, founded the Ekmattra Foundation, with a motto to provide education and safe shelter for destitute street children. Watanbe and his friends took an initiative to build an academy in Haluaghat, Mymensingh, in 2010 and the architects took the opportunity to serve this noble cause by designing it as a pro-bono project.

The idea of the project was to create a place to learn, rest, and play within natural settings of lush green encircled by seasonal water channels. The project commenced in a home-grown manner and in phases. Cost efficiency and sustainability was emphasized throughout the whole process. Eventually built brick by brick, the Academy accommodates more than 160 children with teachers and support personnel and is now a ‘Home for Learning, Hope & Freedom’ while beholding the nature around.





photo courtesy : Maruf Raihan

Ar. Lutfullahil Majid awarded “Commendation Award” in the Foreign Country category in the 30th JK Architects of Year Awards, 2020 by JK Cement Ltd, India.

Architect Lutfullahil Majid Reaz, principal architect of Archeground Ltd. received the “Commendation Award” in the Foreign Country category in the 30th JK Architects of Year Awards, 2020 By JK Cement Ltd, India for the project ‘A Khanqah for a Fakir’ at Datter Bazar in Gafargaon, Mymensingh. The project was completed in 2019. He led his team to design the project covering a total space of 6,000 square feet. Ar. Reaz is an ArcAAB alumni who graduated in 2006. He has received a number of prestigious awards in the past including Berger and IAB awards along with his partners Ar. Jubair Hasan and Ar. Nabi Newaz Khan Shomin from Archeground Ltd.

In the design of the award winning project, the brick-crafted arch enhanced with metal, the brick ‘jali’ (perforated) walls, the Islamic pattern calligraphy in brick details, and crafted wood – all amalgamate to convey a fine Islamic semblance. The interior is decorated with minimal furniture made of metal frames and mahogany wood. The final layout is divided into three conceptual axes – ‘Live’, ‘Pray’ and ‘Leave’. ‘Live’ denotes the entrance of the home; ‘Pray’ signifies the prayer space, and ‘Leave’ symbolizes the grave.

Ar. Reaz’s experiences and design are shared here in his own words - “I engaged local masons and workers with the project so that they could feel the place as their own. When designing the project, I thought about making use of materials that would gently blend in with the environment. Brick flooring was given in circulation areas with neat cement finishing for all the rooms and prayer space. It is a low budget project, though the design is unique. The project follows traditional Bangladeshi architecture where the viewers will experience diverse experiments with bricks. I designed the Khanqah taking both the religious and the social perspectives into account; as people might come here for social meetings and for taking advice and blessings from the spiritual leader. So, I blended the Islamic architectural styles with conventional Bangladeshi architecture, which is called ‘Courtyard Architecture’. It looks like a semi-covered kachari ghar (sitting house). As a Khanqah, considering the rural context, we tried to make a simple traditional village house which would not dominate the surrounding nature and other villagers’ houses. The plan was to design a place of retreat.”





photo courtesy - Noujel Sharif Sojal

Ar. Rashed Hassan Chowdhury awarded “Young Architect Award” in the Foreign Country category in the 30th JK Architects of Year Awards, 2020 by JK Cement Ltd, India.

When Blues Communication Ltd. approached architect Rashed Hassan Chowdhury to design its headquarters, he aspired to do something out of the box. The ArcAAB alumnus has received international recognition for the design when he received the Young Architect Award in the Foreign Country category in the 30th JK Architects of the Year Awards 2020. The prestigious award is sponsored by JK Cement Ltd., India. Ar. Rashed Chowdhury graduated from BUET and is the founder of Dehsar Works. In addition to building and interior design, he is also equally involved in graphic and product designs. His works have received multiple awards including Berger and IAB awards.

The concept of the Blues office was to build a creative and playful office with multiple playful spaces which can be used for meetings, conferences, meet up etc. Blues employees’ working hours are not stereotypically nine to five. The spaces have been designed keeping this in mind by creating open, free flowing spaces for office and other activities. All services were designed in a compact manner and this helped to shape lofty space for work and group tasks. This also ensured efficient service management, cost reduction and ease of maintenance. The intent to reduce cost and maintain the original footprint of an existing concrete foundation was utilized by fabricating a metal structure over it. The high ceiling and large transparent glass façade allows natural light to the core of the building that undergoes constant changes as light reflections alter over the course of the day. At night, the Blues Communication Limited office is lit by white LED lights, resembling a giant luminaire, while making the building shimmer in dialogue with the surrounding the vibrant neighborhood. Landscape has ample greenery and plants to create a better workplace.





photo courtesy : DoA, BUET

Md. Shariful Alam and Asif Hasan Zeshan win international awards for their portfolios

Two of our alumni, Md. Shariful Alam and Asif Hasan Zeshan have received important international awards recently. Md. Shariful Alam was awarded the 'Uni Portfolio Award 2021' combinedly with another participant and Asif Hasan Zeshan was awarded the 'Editor's Choice' recognition for his Portfolio in an international portfolio design competition.

Established in 2017, Uni is a place for design ideas in the field of architecture online and this community has grown beyond 150,000 members and has new enthusiasts joining every day. Known for launching a vast variety of design opportunities for architects and creatives world over - Uni is reputed for launching unparalleled competitions in collaboration with various curators from the world over. Uni Portfolio Awards (UPA) is launched in the same spirit of awarding creators from the globe on their holistic experiences. The awards create a unique place for its participants on the web, to increase their portfolio's reach globally and in front of the design community of Uni. This also creates a room for constructive feedback, where people can learn trends, academic exercises and presentation techniques from each other globally.

The portfolio of Md. Shariful Alam encompasses his works mostly related to computational and interactive architecture. A complete brief of his skills, experiences and achievements are portrayed through his graphical presentation.

On the other hand, Asif Hasan Zeshan's works reflect his interest in data based simulation-driven design and technology integration in architecture and urban design. With an avid interest in IR4.0 technologies, visual communication and UX design, his portfolio is a tribute to the multidisciplinary nature of work of an architecture student.



Dr Md Nawrose Fatemi, named as the new Head of the Department of University of Asia Pacific (UAP).

Dr. Md Nawrose Fatemi, an ArcAAB alumnus and educator of the Department of Architecture, University of Asia Pacific (UAP), was appointed as the Head of the Department on 22 November 2020. Dr. Fatemi, known as Munim to his friends, graduated from BUET in January 2008 and joined UAP in April 2008. Presently, he is serving the Department of Architecture, University of Asia Pacific (UAP) as an Associate Professor.

Dr. Fatemi completed his masters from BUET in 2012 and his master research was conducted as a part of the project, "Promoting Green Architecture Concept in Bangladesh", initiated jointly by the Department of Architecture, BUET and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH-Bangladesh. He holds a PhD in Engineering with emphasis on Urban Development Planning from Osaka University where he started his doctoral research as a Monbukagakusho (MEXT) Scholar.

His research interests and experiences focus on interdisciplinary discourses around Sustainable Urban Development and Policy, Climate Change and Vulnerability, Urban Resilience, and Disaster Management.

ArcAAB wishes Associate Professor Dr. Fatemi good luck and godspeed.



Ar. Sheikh Muhammad Rezwan takes over as the new Head of the Department, DoA, Daffodil International University (DIU)

Assistant Professor Ar. Sheikh Muhammad Rezwan, an ArcAAB alumnus and educator of Department of Architecture, Daffodil International University, was named as the new Head of the Department on June 2021.

Ar. Sheikh Muhammad Rezwan graduated from BUET in 2012 and completed masters from the same institution in 2020. In 2017, he went to Karabuk University, Turkey as an exchange faculty under Mevlana Teaching Mobility for two weeks.

For the last four years (2017-2020,) he has been working on mobility issues of Dhaka with FNF. Organizing seminars, exhibiting research works and submitting proposals to the government organizations for consideration are a part of his work. His area of interest includes urban design, community space design (urban and rural). Besides working for the urban development, he is the founder of the initiative 'Grammo' a residential workshop program with university students and experts focusing on participatory rural development and documenting traditional homestead as a cultural heritage. He is working on writing a book on the initiative 'Grammo'. He is searching for a sustainable coherence between the city and the village through his practice and research.

ArcAAB wishes Assistant Professor Ar. Sheikh Muhammad Rezwan every success during his tenure.



'Shikor' by Spatial Architects



Architecture for Humanity - Ar. Rizvi Hassan



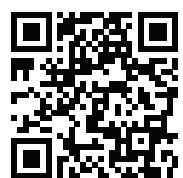
Marina Tabassum awarded
Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize,
2021



Nurur Rahman Khan's
lecture



Taorem Rahul Singha wins
Bronze Medal at ARCASIA
Students Architectural Design
Competition



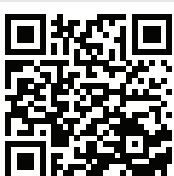
"Architect of the Year Award"
in the Foreign Country category
in the 30th JK Architects of Year Awards
2020



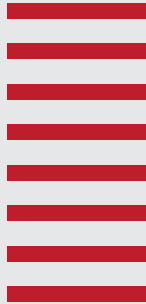
"Commendation Award"
in the Foreign Country category in
the 30th JK Architects of Year
Awards, 2020



"Young Architect Award"
in the Foreign Country category in
the 30th JK Architects of Year
Awards



Md. Shariful Alam and Asif Hasan
Zeshan



WELCOME TO THE ARCAAB FAMILY

ARCHITECTURE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF BUET

29
MAY
TWENTY21 **SATURDAY**

BATCH 2013 & BATCH 2014 started their journey as an architect in between the year of 2019-2021!

ARCAAB FAMILY WISHES THEM ALL THE BEST!

GEN ERG ARCAAB invites ALUMNI to participate in the event live on Facebook/ Zoom.

ZOOM MEETING INFO
ID: 880 2986 4252
PASSCODE: 295015

08:00 – 08:05 PM
CHORUS SONG
BY JUNIOR ALUMNI

08:06 – 08:10 PM
WELCOME SPEECH
BY THE ARCAAB PRESIDENT
AR. ISHTIAQUE ZAHIR TITAS

08:11 – 08:25 PM
INTRODUCTION
OF THE NEW MEMBERS

08:26 – 09:05 PM
KEYNOTE SPEECH BY
PROF. SHAMSUL WARES

09:06 – 09:20 PM
FRESHERS' THOUGHTS

09:21 – 09:25 PM
CONCLUDING REMARKS
BY AR. MAHMUDUL ANWAR RIYAAD

Welcoming batches of 2013 & 2014 to the ArcAAB Family

An architect learns throughout the lifetime in a sense that she is her own teacher.

Alumni Professor Shamsul Wares began with that message while he was addressing the youngest bunch of alumni, with his unique and very familiar style, during the online program arranged to welcome the batches of 2013 and 2014 to the ArcAAB family on 29 May, 2021. Professor Wares's speech, toned as a sermon from the 'guru', was the main attraction of the event, a rare opportunity for the young architects to get direction and advice from the veteran professional and a legendary teacher.

The program started with the welcome address by ArcAAB president, Ishtiaque Zahir Titas followed by the announcement of the names of all the new alumni. The introductory session ended with slide presentations created by 'Obboy'- batch 2013 and 'Orho'- batch 2014 depicting their student-life experiences and achievements. Before the keynote speech, ArcAAB Vice President Dr. Nurur Rahman Khan made a short introduction about Professor Shamsul Wares's professional life and described him as the 'architect of the architects' of Bangladesh as he had taught all of those who are now considered the role model architects for the young generation. 'Wares sir' is one of the best orators among the architects of Bangladesh, his free flowing speech centered around four anchoring aspects;



Image courtesy : Nazmul Hoque Nayeem

The way to approach the life of a professional

Architecture is all-encompassing and complex. Learning from history, embracing the new and cultivating for progress is the duty of a professional architect. To become a professional teacher in architecture, one must practice empathy and strive to inspire and nurture individuals' unique creative potentials by acting as a catalyst.

Fundamental pursuit of an architect

It is a life-time endeavor without ever being satisfied. An architect needs to have the desire for continuous self-improvement. Pursuing the goal of universal good through architecture without being distracted with vested interests and easy so-called successes, an architect should identify and take his own position through developing a consistent vocabulary. Asking oneself over and over again 'why' before doing something can enrich an architect to ultimately create something worthy. Research and assimilation exclusively cannot create architecture, intuitive creativity of the designer can. Every 'ism' is a requirement of a particular time, every architecture is created for a particular situation. Nevertheless an architect can create a 'model of the world' she aspires for through the architecture she creates and thus have her say.

Social responsibility of an architect

Young architects should believe that designs should be based on 'need' not on 'greed'. Ethical position of committing to the greater good is the social responsibility of an architect. In today's context, an architect should play the role of an eco-cultural articulator.

Fighting frustration and finding closure

Frustrations and disappointments are integral parts of all creative pursuits. Patience and integrity is the only way for an architect who wishes to stay true to the spirit of architecture and that can be more satisfying than any amount of wealth or fame. It is important to believe that architecture deserves unconditional devotion once someone recognizes it as the call of her life.

After the keynote speech of Professor Shamsul Wares, representatives from the new alumni have spoken on behalf of their batch, and shared their unforeseen experiences of online thesis jury, internship phase and employment hunt during the pandemic situation. While vowing for their commitments to the association they expressed specific expectations of guidance from the seniors for their future journey as professionals.

The program ended with the vote of thanks from the Joint Secretary of ArcAAB 9th EC, Md. Didarul Islam Bhuiyan followed by a chorus medley of Rabindra-sangeet composed and performed by the alumni from batch '10, '11 and '12, Banik Sancharee Stishy, Abdullah Al Jaber, Irfan Muhammad and Nazifa Tabassum Puly. It was a successful online event at the end considering the hundred plus alumni participation and that it was the first of its kind as alumni welcoming ceremonies have always been staged at the 'plinth' of the department of Architecture at BUET.



Conversation with Richard Leplastrier

Being a seminal figure in Australian architecture and architectural education, Richard Leplastrier was invited to a face to face question answer session by the "Academic Cooperation Committee" of ArcAAB. He eschews publicity and his built works are secret treasures to the architects around the world. The online session was arranged on 18th December, 2021. The session is presented here in brief for everyone.

Richard Leplastrier is a seminal figure in architecture and architectural education. He eschews publicity and his built works are secret treasures to be discovered only by those privileged enough to be introduced to them. His sensitivity to issues of culture and place and his accumulated wisdom in the design and making of architecture is gently revealed through his tutorial sessions in the design studio. He was awarded the Australian Institute of Architects Gold Medal in 1999, he was recipient of the 2009 Dreyer Foundation 'Prize of Honour' in Denmark and he was recipient of the 2004 'Spirit of Nature Wood Architecture Award' in Finland. In 2009 Richard was elected an Honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, in 2011 he received the Australian National Honour 'Order of Australia' for distinguished service to architecture and as 'an educator and mentor', and he received an Honorary International Fellowship of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 2015. Richard Leplastrier is a Professor at the University of Newcastle Australia and is one of the principle 'masters' on the Architecture Foundation Australia master classes.

Marina Tabassum: Once we've seen the film after that there was a pause. Everybody became very thoughtful, perhaps reflecting back on our own way living thinking and practicing architecture. As I was asking you first, what was your reaction after you saw the film

Richard Leplastrier: Its quiet difficult to answer..... It is very hard to have displacement about your life when you know it so well and you suddenly see it in a film. But I felt that anna was very sensitive in the way that she portrayed our family, and the way we collectively live as a small family without too much fuss and I got some laugh/ love from the kids. She took 15 years to make that film so it was made over a long period of time and we watched our kids in that film when they were young and that was very nice that you have a document from that point of view but I think probably it was about life and not so much about objects or 'works in architecture' It was more about life or the seed that gets planted that gets planted in the very beginning that grows from an idea and I think that is relevant to all architecture. and even the way we live very simple and relatively uncomplicated lives, I think that attitude can applied to all works of architecture. It begins with life itself and if it doesn't begin with that, what does it begin with? It's difficult to answer I think. There are lots of theories about things and that doesn't mean very much to me but how to live appropriately and ethically I think is an important issue today for everybody. Although it's much harder in a society like yours where things are really tuff and you are living from hand to mouth in some cases very hard life and I really respect your continuing values in that. That's a life in that village where we stayed, in that beautiful series of houses which you made was extraordinary for us and we took away from that more than we put in, we took right lessons from that time spent with you down there. We didn't see that much of Dhaka but we saw a lot of the way that a village work. I wonder how you stop to reapply to your city in some way. May not so really difficult issue, isn't it? You have a good climate, I mean in a warm climate, you are not faced with the cold like Europeans.so may be it is possible to live more simply in a garden somehow... It's very difficult for me to say about that. To get back to the film, how did you feel about it?

MT: Well I though she did a really good job. One can tell that it has been done in a long period of time. I felt she really was able to capture what is essentially Richard. Your life, your philosophy of your living and the way you practice architecture, everything was so beautifully crafted and the overall film, the way I know you, I think it is very well put together.

RL: I have a friend here who is a very severe critic of film. He told me that he thought it was a good sketch design. And I said it wasn't really a film about architecture, it was a film about living.

Ishtiaque Zahir Titas: I know you through my friends' eyes, through your works and also through the film. I run a practice which is 30 years old, we have a quite sizable office and we try to relate our climate and values through our practice. But just what you have just mentioned that those houses, ponds, and the environment in Panigram could have been transformed into the new landscape in our cities. But our cities actually followed the conventional modern cities that are nowadays being questioned. Big questions in terms of the sustainability issues in the cities, livelihood of the people,... these cities are not inclusive. Since 2015 all the governments/all the countries have tried to turn/term cities with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). I myself am volunteering to work with human habitat and I found that those systems have existed long before in this world, and now they have been termed in a different way. I found the way you are living your life, your architecture, it relates with the eradication of poverty, affordable clean energy, responsible consumption of material, responsible use of public place and also the climate action, all these are included in your work. How would you want to send this message, because you have been practicing this since last 40 years may be, since 80s, and this world is trying to recognize those last four or five years. So what should be your message to this world on the sustainability issues, which you are already practicing.

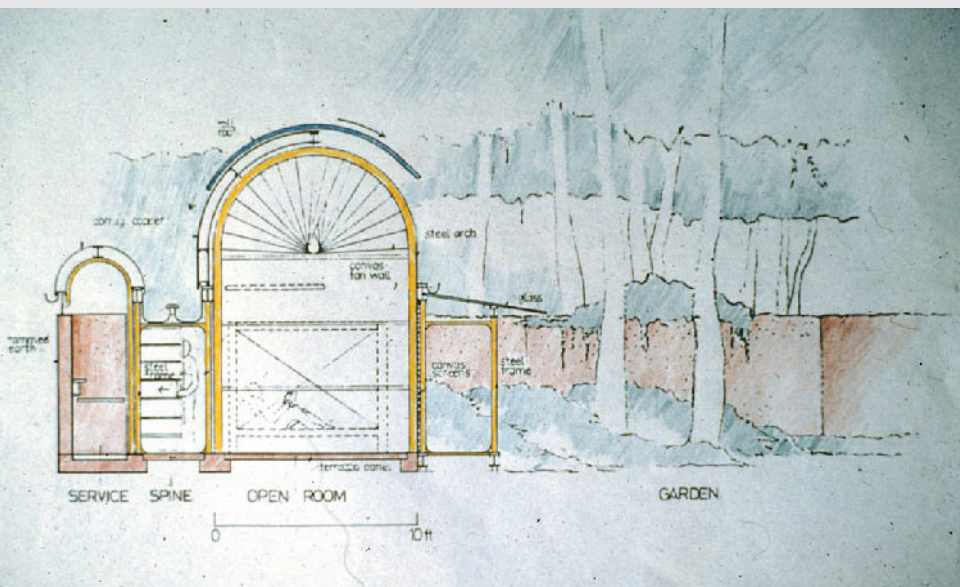
RL: Yes. You know, I think a great responsibility lies with us who come from more affluent cultures. Because it's these cultures that are consuming most of the materials. The very simple cultures of the world like I travelled through like Africa and right the way through the middle east and India... I have travelled in a lot of places just with a simple pack on my back and living very simply in that travel and I found that the people in those cultures have incredible kindness, and I think they have extraordinary set of simple values, that many of your cultures already know the answers to that. It's the more affluent cultures that are using so much of the materials and who are living so extravagantly that I think that the message should be going to them to ask and if there is any value in the way that my family and other architect friends are working and thinking then it's actually to our own cultures that those messages should be given. I think you already have known the answers where you are. And how you go about making the cities more equitable, more fair, more just to your people who are less privileged, is a great question and that's almost a political, social question. But I think that the village we visited had a very good old kind of power on their bicycles, they had very simple lives in their buildings, they had very simple ways of making the buildings, they were beautiful and they were very impressive to us. So I think that if anything comes from the values that we are holding here in a very small way its more directed towards politicians and the wealthy people who are I think not taking the issues on and our country in particular is very poor with climate issues and its because we are controlled by the big minings and the mining companies, although that's changing I think now. We are working quite hard on that. Most of the ordinary people here are against the mining and it's the carbon in the air that's the problem. And our elder son is a marine scientist and I asked him about the barrier reef and he said there are lots of problems with it but he pointed that the problem is up there. You know the carbon dioxide is the problem, and that's a worldwide problem. So we as a culture here cant say to our population who are concerned about it that, 'oh it's okay, we are shipping the coal out somewhere else'... what sort of answer is that because it all goes up into the sky in the end. So we are really shirking the problem here. And I don't know about the United states, and another places, I know that Europe is much better balanced, specially Scandinavia. But the cultures that I saw in Africa, right the way through the Sahara down to sub-Sahara, right into Nigeria, they are brilliant, you know, and we call them third world countries! That is a joke. They are in many ways, in terms of value, first world country. They are brilliant in the way that they do things. So I certainly don't think that the values that we have in us more collective here are that important for you there but more important for us. Does that make any sense to you or not? We are the ones who use all the energy. Hundred times more than the simple cultures. What do you think about that?

IZT: This is obviously a cultural issue. And I think, as you mentioned about Africa, I think modernity has failed in Africa actually. I mean the modern theories of economy, governance.... And the conventional ways have to be reshaped, reviewed.... It has to be linked with the politics of the people's livelihood. I mean globalization is a big failure. We can't think of one word, in terms of people, cultures there has to be different ways in different places. Place is very important. Every place has got its value and that has to make the difference. And the world is one globe, obviously our climate, our culture is different, people are different, food is different, our heritage is different. But people's minds... everybody laughs, everybody has got sorrow, everybody has got pain. So that is the value as you mentioned. The politicians have to understand. Don't make all the cities look alike. Every city has got values and that has to be put forward and that has to be nourished. That's my understanding.

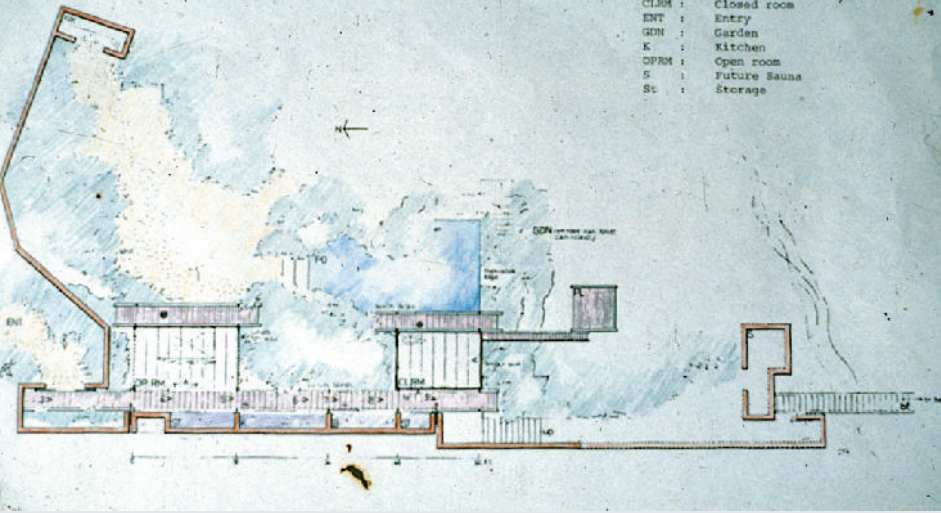
Nurur Rahman Khan: We have seen this Richard wonderfully connected to nature and the world, but is there a Richard that connects with the city? Or, if Richard hadn't given up on the city, what would be his message for the city?

RL: Well, I haven't given up on the city and I think if the film lacked anything, it is the lack of showing what work has been done by my friend and I for the city. We have been working for fifteen to twenty years, to get all the industrial sites on city harbor turned into small towns using all the old buildings and getting them regenerated, but nothing of that came through. But, you know, cities are amazing places. Cities are about connections, the crossing of things. My wonderful landscape teacher once said an interesting thing, he said "what else is a city if it is not a collection or gallery of beautiful buildings". We had a long discussion about that after that the word 'gallery' is the key word, because it is the connection between places in the city, that makes for its life. And of course, the buildings should be wonderful and beautiful, but more often than that, they aren't. But some of them are. But one can make the connections between places and the people as they move through the city, moving in a really beautiful and pleasant way. There's a wonderful essay written by Utzon about that, and he said "People in the city are like the leaves in a stream that come down with the flowing water and they go pass the rock and they turn around the lake, linger there a little bit and the water kicks and washes them on to the next place. They linger and move on to the next place, that's how the city works." Now that's a very beautiful way of looking at it. I personally don't think people should live in anything more than six to eight stories maximum, because from the street and from the sixth or eighth story, you should be able to see almost the color of somebody's eyes down there on the street. Or to be able to tell your friend that you would be down in 10 minutes or you are sorry to be running late. Or to the person who is going to steal your bicycle, say please leave my bicycle alone. I think that the connection between the buildings and the streets is the most important thing. How our buildings don't work that way, they make people sick because they move slowly. I am so against buildings that are more than eight storied. With buildings of six to eight stories and with gardens in between and connections between rooftops of those buildings, you can make a loft that exists in the whole series of different levels up to the eighth floor. The big buildings that we have built, maybe we should take some of the middle floors out there and make gardens and re-humanize them in a certain way. And I can't stand buildings whose walls don't open; I mean what are we thinking about! People say, the wind blows high up there and when it rains, they leak. But what do you say to the people who design a building to leak! You take the water that comes in and do something with it. Like there are boats that have their gutters inside for the leak. We just have to be cleverer in the way we think about things and the heart of it all is the human condition. Always! So, cities are wonderful places particularly, the really good ones and one celebrates them. I think of cities like Kiyoto, Tokyo, Osaka in Japan, they are absolutely so lively with good food and live with mixing of people. And then I look at the cities that are here and think how dull and ordinary they are.

NRK: Since you have mentioned Utzon, in the film it spoke about your connection with Utzon and how you were in the terrace of the Sydney Opera House and you spoke about how he had placed it, so it overlooks the city in a particular way. I'd like to bring out one particular work, the Georges Head Lookout. I feel the connection in a way you remember Utzon, can you please tell a little bit about it.



Key :	B	:	Bathroom
	Br	:	Bridge
	CLRM	:	Closed room
	ENT	:	Entry
	GDN	:	Garden
	K	:	Kitchen
	OPRM	:	Open room
	S	:	Future sauna
	St	:	Storage



RL: Well you know, my friend Rob Simson and I have worked on the issue of Sydney harbor for a long time. We met with the politicians and we showed them images and we had a big exhibition in the city. We built the Hall of Sydney Harbor in the exhibition plaza, so all the pieces of land that we dealt with were there. People were walking on the water surface, on the floor of course. But they were walking on the bays and they could see how the industrial areas can become livelier. This thing went on for a long time and we had two meetings with the planning minister, and out of 48 industrial sites which were brilliant in their own way, which we wanted to save in the village port, we could save four. Maybe that's the story of the city. Then the people who are dealing with military lands in Sydney Harbor, contacted Rob and I and said come and work with us. Because there was land of the military that was going to be returned to people and they were. That was one of the victories of the city and that is one of the points of land where the Georges Head Lookout is, the big circle. But the indigenous people were there a long time before us. Like 60 thousand years before us. They know this country very well. They used to meet on that point of land. And so we made the lookout as a big circle because that was always there in the making and we made it in an old gallant place where we colonists built this gunning place because we were afraid of the Russians coming. We transformed something from war-like to peace-like.

NRK: My last question to you Richard is from an academic point of view. The so-called modern academic curriculum that we have in most universities, teaching architecture, what two things you would ask us, teachers, to be careful about, when you look at our education system?

RL: Well you know, I am like you, I have always practiced and I have always taught. I think the two things go hand in hand. I think it's like two hands together, education and practice. Architecture is a practicing art. Me and my friend Peter Stutchbury have taught one day a week for almost 40 years. We taught at Newcastle university, we worked with the final year students there. We gave them one day a week entirely for them. We'd sit upstairs where they could come and talk with us, about anything they chose. Whether it was family issues or about the nature of the library. And as you will understand, teaching goes both ways. We have the privilege of working with young creative minds, and they are so fantastic. So you take as much you give, that's the way it works. So in terms of education, what happened in NewCastle University is there were six practicing architects there, Peter Stutchbury, me and four others, we all were gold medalists in this country and they fired us all. We had one professorship's money and cut it into six pieces and we took th each, which was enough to pay our rent. So they had six professors at the cost of one. I am deeply disturbed about the role of architecture at universities. I don't think it can be taught online, and I think universities will now take this pandemic as an excuse for taking a lot of their classes online. And save money by doing that. As you know, universities have become co-operations to corporations and the VC now has big fat cigars and sunglasses, a big apartment and a flashy car and they are not thinking about the students at all. I think in architecture, students should start their own school. And they will get all of us as teachers who are working on practical problems at the same time. So if you go to history, and if you go to AA School in London, that was started 100 years ago, and it wasn't started by architects, it was started by students. That's what should happen now and if they took that step, we would absolutely be behind them.

NRK: Thank you Richard for your wonderful thoughts and I am glad that I had this conversation with you.

Mahmudul Islam Forhad: I was a student of your Panigram Masterclass Program. I would like to have advice from you on certain aspects of my work. I used to draw by hand regularly on different kinds of occasions. While watching the film last night, I realized that there is a gap in me with any engagement to any craft work. As a practicing architect, I have a realization that if I had an engagement with carpentry or any kind of crafts work, it would clear my understanding. Can you give me some advice on this?

RL: Have you heard of a great Danish Architect called Peder Jensen-Klint?

MIF: No, I haven't heard of him, sorry.

RL: His son was Architect Kaare Klint. Peder Jensen-Klint was an architect back in the 1890' and his son also became an architect and influencer. Peder Jensen-Klint made an architecture called Grundtvig's church in Copenhagen. It is absolutely magnificent. And he controlled the laying of every brick and his bricklayers built the whole building. So, Peder Jensen-Klint died and the building was not finished. His son completed the project with the same team of bricklayers. Peder Peder Jensen-Klint changed the whole direction of Danish Architecture and Furniture making by changing the course of education. So that every person that graduated as architect, also graduated with a trade. Be it carpenter, making ceramic pots, marble worker. So every Danish architect graduated with a craft, and even if it was a small craft, each of them knew the process of making something. Making something is a verb, as is Architecture, housing, living. And each student graduated with that understanding. So, I don't think it matters if you are learning to make some small thing, as long as you are concerned about the making of it. and before the making is the drawing. And the drawing can be done in pencil, charcoal. Charcoal draws by itself, it's fantastic. There's no reason you can't start drawing again now and keep on doing that. The best aboriginal artist in this country is a woman called Emily Kame Kngwarreye, she started painting when she was 75. And she passed away when she was 85 but she made the best paintings of all. So it's not about age, it's about intent and love. Our old drawing teacher, who said the city was a gallery of beautiful buildings, taught us to draw for 5 years in university. And he didn't teach us to draw in the classic old way. He taught us to love to draw and we did the rest. So my advice would be, to keep it going and start the making, which can start anytime. Timber is such a beautiful material, it doesn't take the body heat away. It's always warmed up to the touch. Steel is interesting stuff but it rusts. You can carve timber using small tools made by men. Take it up again and do it and love it. I appreciate your lovely honesty and passion. It's the issue of architects and I don't think we architects can't help ourselves that we are actually driven by that.

Fawad Hyder: Hello Richard, nice to hear from you. I enjoyed the film very much and I got very much interested about you. Later on I watched a few videos about you on you tube. By seeing the film, I thought that you enjoy life and that is reflected in your houses. I saw extreme simplicity and sensitivity in your work. What I understand from watching the film is that you celebrate life. My question is, what do you suggest us architects deal with each project, big or small, how do you approach the design of a project?

RL: It is a beautiful question, I think we all have our different way of operating perhaps. But for me I spend time in the place, even if it's in the city. The houses that we have made on the edges of the city which was quite a dense place, like I camped there and I lived in that building while it was being done, with my drawing board. And somehow rather the place really tells you a lot if you look under the surface of it. Even in the cities, cities were in that place because of what it was there originally. It would be very interesting to go and just study Dhaka, and the meaning of the word, where did it come from. Was there any dissection of water waves or crossing of water waves that began Dhaka right in the very beginning. And sometimes in the city you can see, there are building places there. If you can understand what's underneath them, you are in a good position to make changes around them. It's like trying to work in the city with its existing fabric, it's like trying to have a beautiful carpet made in Afghanistan. And over time it has worn out some patches in it and you're trying to repair them. Then for you to repair that carpet in a way that celebrates how it began, you have to understand the whisk and the weave. Once you've understood that, you can make changes to that carpet, and make it better than it was before. So spending time in a place is a really important thing for me to do. And overtime you can go to a place and pick it up much more easily than when you were young. You develop an intuition about things. Spend time with the place, peel back all the layers that were underneath that place. If it's outside of the city, which way there's a water run off in the site, which way the sun comes in there. Which way the animals live, which way is the exhaust of that place. What is the circumstance of the place? If we can understand that, then we can make things fit within it, make the place better than it was before. If you look at the work we have done in this country since colonization, we have destroyed a lot of the most brilliant places in the country, like a giant god. I personally don't know what we can ever do about that. The aboriginal people can understand that very well and our politicians don't. So that goes somewhat answering that question, start with the place, not with the object, start with the subject. How you feel about that, how it affects you or other people. All of those things can help you make your first marks. And then you have the issue of not losing that.



Naim Ahmed Kibria: Hello Richard ! We have met before in GMMC and then in Ireland and in Dhaka. I enjoyed the film last night. I hope that many of us, especially those who have met you, have a lot more to say about you. You always talked about drawing, to draw something in and to deliver. Drawing has always been an important part for you. I am an observer and often when I am observing something and trying to draw it, there always remains a big gap in the observed thing and in my drawing. How can this gap be minimized? How drawing can help understanding the whole place?

RL: That's a lovely question! I have got a quote here in my sketch book about drawing by a great writer, who was a potter and he started off as a Bulgarian Jewish and went to England and his family was grain merchants. Now he is a ceramicist or a potter. Edmund de Waal is his name and he's talking about drawing and he says " A great drawing celebrates the moment of apprehension and the fugitive moment of response. Its a beautiful description, is it not! A good drawing happens right from the heart. What he is talking about is the calligraphic response to a moment in time and you respond with a fine pen or a charcoal. Once you responded, you'll never touch it again. Thats what I find. Because its that magical moment. Then the drawing can be something that is much more study. You know all the veins in the leaves of the tree. And it's an excellent study of the reticulation of moisture through the tree. That is very different from what Edward Devau was talking about. Then there's the architectural drawing, shows the way the building comes into being and how we make it and that's another sort of a drawing. And then once the building is finished, Then that is the final moment when the architectural drawing can be done. The end of the job, when its finish. Because if its a live work, then its changing all the time. But the real drawing is at the end. So, drawing means to pull from it... so you draw a conclusion for example, you draw water from the well or you draw a landscape... pull from it as if it has something it wants to say. I think the computers are brilliant for many things, but I don't think they can draw like charcoal. I am old fashioned in that respect.

NAK: I never thought to be an architect, I never dreamt to be an architect, I always wanted to be a sculptor since my childhood. Somehow my family build my interest on architecture. One of my favorite quote from my favorite philosopher Confucius is " if you love the thing that you do, then you'll never have to do anything in your life. Can you suggest how can this dilemma or how can this trouble of this type of frustration be erased ?

RL: That's a really difficult question! You see, perhaps that's why I have always chosen to work in a very very small way. Now when you start to do really big work, then the complications are exponential. And you have to have somebody you are dealing with within the work , who is sympathetic towards your heart. If it's a cold committee, who do not understand anything, it becomes a very very difficult issue to come across with. I'd love to know how Kahn managed to do that so well. He couldn't control the politicians. Just working on very big important buildings for the plans of this country. Fantastic things. But we weren't running the job, Project managers were running the job! And they didn't understand anything about architecture and the builders who were sending commands to the project managers, were only interested in the profit margin. So we are third or fourth down the line when we come to improve the design which we are always doing in architecture, we never stop.



They didn't understand it at all. So, it's hard when it's on that sort of level, I don't have any answer for you. But it's in the small level and it's important the people you are working with, who have dreams. And then the people who are doing the work, they are usually wonderful as I find. They have a great sense of the design. So it is important to do smaller things I think, if you have that sort of part. And it is important that you have a good overlap of sensibilities with whom you are working with.

José Luis Cortés: Hi Richard, I am Jose from Mexico. I would like to ask you, how would you approach a family that wants to make a house, small house, how is the process of design that you follow. Did you begin analysing the family first or look at the site? Do you go about the program or stick up with what the site demands?

RL: Well, you know, I think it's all of those things, isn't it? And quite often I have camped on the land with the people, for a week or two weeks. And that's always a very good thing to do, then you see how the place works. And you can point it out to them, because their sensibilities and our sensibilities are different or more finely tuned, sometimes. It's very important to spend time with them but this is when it's an exclusive situation, when you are making a house for somebody. Now if it's a question for making housing for people, who have very little money, then it's a completely different pattern. I am always deeply moved by Doshi and his works in Ahmedabad, about the way he put in the services for them and the materials and very little else. And somehow or other with their own ingenuity they carry out the work. That's an interesting way of looking at it. That's for people who don't have very much at all. I spend a lot of time with people. Some people say, I want three bathrooms, 3 garages, I have to say to them I am really sorry but I am just not interested in making your home like that. But I know someone who can and I'll introduce them to somebody who can look after them in a way they want to deal it. But I think it is important to have that overlap with the people and I think it's important that they respond to the place as it develops, with the time. And it can develop through rough models on the side, you can camp on the side with the people you can make a rough model, it doesn't matter how you do it but it gets them to start to think about it. And then take them to a whole lot of places, they might not be your places, that has done much better. But you show them places which are different from what they have thought of before. I think that's important too. So I think back about it, because now maybe 30 different places over 45 years of practice, and they are all different. I think some are better than others but you do the best. I think you develop as you go.

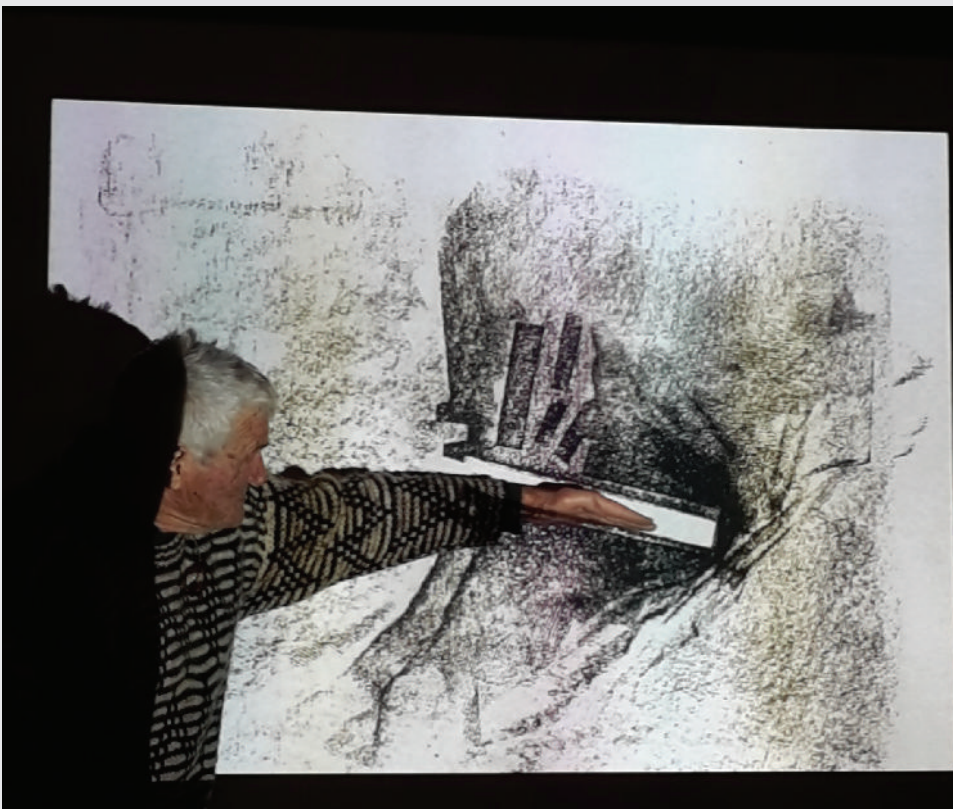
JLC: Richard, I think I agree with you.

Mahmudul Anwar Riyaad: Hello Richard! We met in 2005 or 06 when the making of the film started. You showed us around some mud houses back then. You said in the film that it's not about perfect calculation but more about approximate calculation. In architecture, we use this sniffing or gut feeling a lot, not really going into precise calculation. Sometimes it is what designers do a lot and I value it a lot, this sniffing has a lot to do with the schemes. The knowledge world of architecture is growing and there is kind of a divide and from one point of view, this sort of thing is seen as a very naive and elementary work which people are not paying a lot of attention to. So when a young mind comes, he can be really distracted, he may not really value it. Can you elaborate on that from your point of view?

RL: It's a very interesting question. I have a very good friend with whom I work, he's an engineer. And he's a brilliant man and a very creative man. He has a great sense for structure and in the end in working with him, he does two calculations. But I found that a lot of the time it's not necessary. We have an affinity together, very strong. But in my own case, which is a very simple case, really, I've always been involved since I was a young child, aged 9-10-11, I've been involved in boats and making things. When you are involved in making boats, which are not only for seating and for pleasure but boats for racing which have to be paired back as much as possible, because we want to be alive, as the wind pushes you along more easily. One good yacht designer said, weight can only be good in a steamroller. And overtime, you get to understand how much something can bend, how much the branch on the tree, what size it is, where it starts and where it tapers, and one it breaks you say, Ahh wasn't strong enough in the end.

You make something for the boat and it breaks, so you remake it a little bit stronger. You don't start with the calculation that protects your backside against the authorities, because then it will be over-designed. And a lot of engineers are working that way. But my friend Max, doesn't work that way, he puts his backside on the line. And I think since you get a sense of proportion through One, making things and learning how the material works and difference in different materials. And Two, you just develop a sense of proportion and proportion is such an important thing in architecture. It is to do with what is fitting and right in terms of dimensions and scale and relationship to the human being and all of those things. And usually we architects have a pretty good sense of proportions. But the more you draw, the more you make things, the more you get involved in the building process, the better that sense of proportion becomes. And I think that's important for the architect. Calculations can always come later. Now if you pick up a skeleton of a bird, that's washed away in the seashore, it lost all its feathers and it only has its carcass and its chest bone, you see how things are joined in there. The structure of the bird and our structure, is not a fixed rigid structure like engineers normally design. But it's flexible and connected through gristle and it's like a big basket and can take a lot of beating. And the bird takes great stress in its flying and pulling out and gliding. It's a flexible structure. Each part contributes to the next. I think as architects, it's really important to understand that. It's not a fixed thing of calculation. It's an intuition developed overtime through a sense of proportion and the study of nature and the natural world.

MAR: I am also emphasising on that. Now we talk about intuition, we talk about geometry, we talk about proportions, they often seem to be dated back. In my mind, even after a thousand years, it will be as relevant as it was thousand years before.



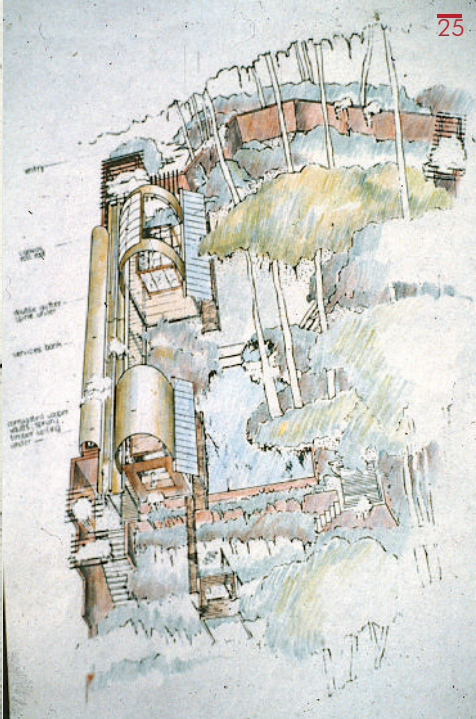
Mohammed Emran Hossain: It was a pleasure meeting you. I am sure you hear this a lot how inspirational you can be, I am not gonna repeat that, You are truly inspirational figure. I usually follow this scientist, he is an astro-physicist, he once said that there is about six thousand astro-physicists in this world and there are like six billion people and so if you divide, you can encounter or you can have an opportunity to meet one astro-physicist out of a million people. So I think this is one of a rare moments for me to meet you here and I had like so many questions, but because of the time limitations, I will narrow it down. First of all I would like to request you to elaborate in one segment of the movie you were saying like 'relentless pursuit of purpose' and I found that really really deep and intriguing. One architect I should mention, I was reading one of his texts, Stanley Saitowitz, a South African architect, practicing in the west coast of the United States, he said 'understanding involves purpose, and purpose involves reason, reason involves cause, cause involves creation, creation involves familiarity and relatedness to power among us'. So I would like to request you to elaborate your understanding of purpose. How do you define, what are the aspects you meant by saying purpose, existential purpose or any other purpose.

RL: The line actually came from my old teacher in Japan. He was the man who said that. Unfortunately we can't ask him about it any longer because he is finished out. But he talked about the relentless pursuit of pure purpose. Just focusing down and focusing down until you got that absolutely right. Now it depends on what are these you are talking about. If you look at tools for example that you are using for wood work and other things. They are usually made over a long period of time, and slowly but surely anything that doesn't work with them gets eroded away or taken away and you are left with the tool that works in the hand and it works but it works beautifully. I think the architecture is like that. I think it should work brilliantly, but it should work beautifully. So in another words, the way your hand hits the edge of the table, then this is profile of the table because when you lean against it, suddenly it fits your hand and it belongs in there, right? And I think that's the sort of thing that he was talking about. He was talking about the beautiful instrument..... (01:23:40) that are made with bamboo. But then you have other purpose which also has an aesthetic side to it. So if you take more equipment unfortunately for its savage, unhuman purpose, you can't help looking at some of those fighter planes, and saying 'My heavens! What an extraordinary bit of an equipment it is!' like these is nothing that's gone to waste, but unfortunate thing is the purpose is the wrong purpose. But even then they are an example of pursuit of pure purpose. And that's what he was talking about. Not that I have learnt from him... we can't always get it right. But look, it's interesting like here on my table, this is a weight, it's a lead weight, it's very heavy. Now I have twelve of them. I have made them in the fire place, in a proper mold with a casting thing. And they are made to sit on a draw ring with a bent baton to hold the baton in place in this curve and then you draw around it. It's smart because it got the most weight where you need it, where it lands on the baton, and the least weight on this end so you can hold it, right? And it tapers as well (01:25:30). It's a nice thing. It has got leather on it so that you don't get the lead on your hands. So when you are moving it you can put it onto that you don't smudge your beautiful pencil drawing with the lead from the weight. And if you look here there's lots of other things, you know it happens all the time. Like here's the key of my old car, which is a beautiful old car. Pure purpose again and fantastic art. I think architecture belongs there but at the same time it has memories and it's social art and it might become the manifestation of the dreams of a family and it might stay with the family for four generations. What does that give it? That's somehow outside the issue of pure purpose. It is something about life is reported in it and through it and cities are the same. I am not sure if there is a definite answer to that issue.

MEH: I understand. I just wanted a sort of elaboration on that.

RL: Well its very nice thing to think about, isn't it?





MEH: Absolutely.... Richard, I would like to know how you evolve from your first project to the last project. Do you record all those evolutions that you went through all your exercises? Can you give us a little bit of example where you went through an initial stage of an idea and you refined it, whether it can be sort of a detail or it can be a planning principle or it can be any sort? I am just curious to know how you evolve. Now we are seeing a crystallized form of a Richard, and I am curious to know....

RL: It's an interesting question because you start when you are young and you start when you have not so much experience and it was Utzon who said our architects shouldn't make their first work until they arrive at forty because it's a measure of their life experience. Anyway(01:28:17) when he was about 22..... But when you are young you take risk that's a time when sometimes you might do your most exciting and may be your most foolish work. Because you don't have that measure of experiences to how things really work at the time and we have just rebuild, when I say 'we', my builder friends and I. and the lovely woman that bought my first house ever. In 1963 it was built when I as 22 years of age and a student. And she has bought it after three or four owners have trashed it. She saw inside of it and she said that's I will kind of fix this house. So we did it together and I changed things in it because when I did it I didn't understand the theater of approach, you know, you just don't go straight in a door, you actually go up a certain way and you come up onto a platform and then you behold everything. You know I learnt that from Japan. I didn't know it before. So you find that as you get older you see things in a more simple way, I think and your work should become less complicated. I think that happened with me, it's not as adventurous but that house in the film that you saw progressively filmed with the rammed earth wall and the client who very wisely kept a whole lot of money back didn't tell me and that's a measure of a lot of life experience. And I think that house works beautifully. Very different from the first work. And each of the work is different because the place was different the people are different. So how do you keep your age? Well that's something, I am not sure about that, but I think it's a question of love actually, how do you keep your love and passion for something and if you keep that alive, your works stay alive. If the purpose isn't right and ethical, I think they have some problems although they are really interesting to study. For example as an architect if someone asked ant of us to design a jail that makes people incarcerated and keeps them out of society can that be a work of architecture? Yes or no? May be if you question the whole issue of rehabilitation and how that can work for society then you can make a good place as an architect for that sort of purpose. But if it's a place that's set up for punishment then I don't think you can. And yet in our city we have an old jail made of stone which was the most feared place in the city back in colonial days and now it is the local art school and it is beautiful as an art school. The only difference is the door is open. So I don't know what to think. Sure you all have ideas about that would make a nice workshop to think about that wouldn't it. The door is open, the door is unlocked and it let us to walk inside.



Saiqa Iqbal Meghna: What is your understanding of beauty in architecture?

RL: I don't know how to answer it, you know? But look this cup in my mind is almost perfect. So how does one recognize that? How do you develop the right eye for things? I think Marina would probably answer that question better than I, but... I think my eye has developed through nature particularly and curiosity, being curious about things and asking why they are what they are? How do they work? How do you make a mouse trap from a flat shit of tin? In an African market that works brilliantly. So you get that mouse trap and you look at it and then you do a drawing of it, you work it all out how it actually works. How does the loom work that they make their beautiful, how does that loom work and the body puts the tension on the threads? I think the sense of beauty and the keenness of eye comes from a curiosity like that and sometimes things are really puzzling to you because you can't see why they work like they do. and again some airplanes are like that. If you look at some of these bombers, these airplanes which are made to evade radar, you look at them and they look like some sort of sea creature, and you look at them and they work and you ask yourself the question, 'are they beautiful or are they not?' I think it's a lot to do with the purpose.

Marina Tabassum: So the purpose can change.

RL: Yes the purpose can change but what you do initially?

MT: So we bring it to an end. It was really wonderful. Absolutely fascinating. And you can imagine that you are quite popular here and people have so many questions, so many things to learn from you. You have to come back.

RL: It was so nice to be in Dhaka with you. I have some questions also. So let's go to the mangrove and find 'Bagh'.

MT: We'll do that. Once this pandemic is over, we'll bring you here, we go to the Sundarbans, and that part of the Bangladesh you must see.

RL: And how can we clean the Ganges, the Ganga, what a question that is and how important that is.

MT: Well thank you so much Richard! It was absolutely wonderful and engaging. I had a lot of questions but may be later on, Some other day. I really wanted to ask you about the explicit and the implicit that you talk about but may be some other time. We should continue.

Richard Leplastrier: Well that would be wonderful Marina. And our, collectively our family here, and stutch and all our out of work architecture professors here all send their best wishes to you. Love and best wishes to you there in Bangladesh.

Ar. Saiqa Iqbal Meghna, an alumna of Glenn Murcutt Masterclass and Richard's friend and student, contributed to this event in multiple degrees. The ARCAAB Documentation and Publication team is grateful to Ar. Saiqa, for providing us with many of Richard's photographs and Drawings. The conversation with Richard Laplastier took place online in Zoom and was written jointly by Ar. Saiqa Iqbal Meghna and Ar. Fawzia Bhuiyan. Our heartfelt gratitude for there contribution.



Welcome Chorus from the ArcAAB
family for the new alumni of
Batch 2013 & Batch 2014



Interview with Ar. Richard Lepplastrier
arranged by ArcAAB, 2020-21



Pandemic and the Profession

Conversations with Alumni on the Impact of
the Pandemic at the Workplace

The national and global impacts of covid-19 pandemic have been dominating the headlines during the past fifteen months. But the personal experiences, battles and aftermaths may be too many and too diverse to be accommodated in the media anywhere. The impact of the crisis on architects and their work are also very unique – each with its own context and consequences.

We approached some among our alumni to share their experiences and responses to this sudden and unprecedented phenomenon. They were also asked about how the future is likely to be according to their anticipation. It was our editorial intent that the interviewed alumni have varied profiles, represent different age groups and that the interviews can be



Ar. Rejaul Karim Khokon
[Batch 1982]
Partner, Horizon Architects

What was the immediate impact on your work and workplace after Covid19 pandemic started in March 2020 in Bangladesh?

We tried to keep working till the last week of March 2020. Then it became apparently too dangerous to continue. Our project sites were also shutting down one by one. Probably it was on 25 March when we decided to close. We paid the salary that was supposed to become due on 1 April and asked everyone to go home until further notice. Ours was not a Work From Home arrangement – it was a shut down.

Things remained paused for the next two months. In May, it was around the third week of Ramadan when a couple of clients started calling for drawings as they were thinking about resuming in a limited way after Eid. As the Principals, we would go to the office on some days to work on these projects. We had to opt for a salary cut and could not afford paying Eid bonus.

Over the last 14 months, how have you been managing to cope up with the impacts of the pandemic in your work?

From August 2020, I started to attend office for limited hours each day. Initially, we had to revise the salary amount. But we came to learn about the hardships that some of our colleagues were having to go through and decided that we would go back to regular salary. The attitude is to continue this as long as possible and if we have to go down, we would all go down together. The payments from the clients have been irregular and unpredictable. We are having to manage the operating costs with great difficulty. I must say that our colleagues have been very understanding and are fully aware of the ground realities.

At this moment, we are operating in a hybrid manner. A few employees, especially the ones who live far off, work from home and attend office when needed – this would be once every two weeks. Persons who have their own transport or live within walking distance, work at the office.

What are your predictions about the overall status of your work and workplace over the next one year?

I am an optimist by nature and tend to believe that this phase will be over in two years, if not within one. However, projects have become uncertain and are being delayed continuously. In normal times, we do a lot of projects in the industrial sector – mostly pharmaceuticals. Even during the pandemic, this sector has seen considerable growth. But entrepreneurs are hesitant to go for expansion or open new units. So little new work is generated. A better status for office will be one where we can foresee having enough resources to sustain for next six months. In the event where it gets to as close as two months, there will be no other option but to consider reducing the overheads drastically.



Ar. Selim Ataf Biplob
[Batch 1989]
Partner, In Quest Design Studio

What was the immediate impact on your work and workplace after Covid19 pandemic started in March 2020 in Bangladesh?

At the onset of the pandemic, we hardly had any idea about its graveness and extent. We did not anticipate a Work From Home situation and wished to continue physical office. But soon a lot many people among our known ones and some at the office contracted the virus. We had no choice but to opt for WFH as a lockdown was imposed. WFH was an entirely new experience and was initially met with enthusiasm – a discovery that one's workplace could be at one's home and it provided a great deal of flexibility in terms of time. However, this feeling was short-lived. For most colleagues, lack of a proper working environment, space and proper furniture became challenging issues. We were used to reviewing drawings in print, but most did not have printers at home. Collaborative tasks that would have taken an hour at the office often needed a day from remote locations.

Most of our projects at initial and finishing stages stopped. Some have not resumed till now and a few may not resume at all. Among these, were a few projects that were very important for our office. We suffered financial hardships from the beginning of the pandemic. We had to slash salaries by 30%. There were no Eid bonuses and increments. We had to reduce the workforce. Overall, we went through a very hard time in the first few months of the pandemic.

Over the last 14 months, how have you been managing to cope up with the impacts of the pandemic in your work?

We returned to the physical office in August 2020. Everyone was exhausted and was eager to get back. Considering stress, we have reduced working hours and have a two day weekend now. Reduction in the number of physical meetings and site visits has allowed us the opportunity to have more concentrated time and to focus on much needed re-organization. With a lesser number of projects, we do not have the mad rush of deadlines. If there has been any positive side amidst the crisis, it is probably the discovery of a breathing space that we now utilize to develop ourselves.

During the WFH period, our team enrolled in an online Archicad learning course. We have completed a significant part and plan to implement starting with a small project. We have started extensive use of Enscape and Sketch Up Layout. These have proved to be extremely time efficient design tools. We have invested in computer hardware to increase efficiency of the team, rather than focusing on increasing manpower.

What are your predictions about the overall status of your work and workplace over the next one year?

Things have started improving this year. Some of the stalled projects have revived and a few others are scheduled to start, although the dates remain uncertain. If this trend continues, in about a year we hope to be able to go back to where we were at the start of the pandemic. We have been able to increase the salary to 90% of the regular amount and have paid full bonus to employees this Eid. Increment is still on hold, but hope to resume it soon. We will be happy to have the minimum work that is required to sustain the office at its present size. We are mentally prepared for a continuation of the present situation for some more time, but overall remain positive.



Ar. Homaira Zaman
[Batch 1979]
Head of Department, DoA,
Bangladesh University

What was the immediate impact on your work and workplace after Covid19 pandemic started in March 2020 in Bangladesh?

The first impact was that my living space, especially my dining table, was converted into my workplace. Since all the paperwork related to the department was emailed for record and accessibility after I took charge, official work was not much of a problem. We started the online classes within a week via Google classroom, Google meet, Zoom and drawing tablets along with all the social media platforms. Personally, I had to go online shopping to set myself a proper small home office with all accessories required.

Over the last 14 months, how have you been managing to cope up with the impacts of the pandemic in your work?

This was, is a struggle. The most difficult thing that I faced is the dysconnectivity with my colleagues and administration. During the first term the engagement was more enthusiastic but as the pandemic continues, a fatigue is felt in both the students and us. Long hours of facetime have its toll. Good side is classes are taken more creatively and students are given one on one attention. The online teaching had also given us the opportunity to engage experts from outside the country in our studios as externals. I am like the Millennials/Gen Z constantly on cell phone and online. The worst hit was my stress coping mechanism, walking. Since the pandemic new recruitment has been on hold and the salary is still going through a pandemic cut which started with a 50% and continuing with a constant 20% cut for the last 8 months. The students were given a one time 10% waiver only.

What are your predictions about the overall status of your work and workplace over the next one year?

Predictions are difficult, the pandemic has taught us to accept and embrace "uncertainty". In future it will be a mix of both online and offline classes. The pandemic has added a new dimension to our education with the onset of online education and it has also opened the opportunity to connect with resources in different parts of the world.



Ar. Md. Tarek Haider
[Batch : 1992]
Asst. Professor, Department of Architecture,
BUET

What was the immediate impact on your work and workplace after Covid19 pandemic started in March 2020 in Bangladesh?

In my nineteen years' work experience as a teacher before the pandemic, if anything were taken for granted, that would be the intense and multi-layered direct communication with the students as the essential character of a studio environment. When the first semester of 2020 came to an abrupt halt due to campus shut down in March, at that moment, the online reality of internet-based classrooms which is now a normalcy to us, seemed far-fetched! While ensuring the logistical set-up for virtual classrooms for all was itself an unprecedented challenge, I was more skeptical about the effectiveness of the online mode of studio classes where the intrinsically humane processes of hands-on trials and errors and constant exchanges among mentors and learners had to happen through the barrier of indifferent digital screens!

Over the last 14 months, how have you been managing to cope up with the impacts of the pandemic in your work?

However, BUET took extensive preparations before starting the online mode of academic activities. Department of Architecture lead the process of a baseline survey on both students and teaching staff to find out existing capacity and requirements for that. After conducting rigorous training sessions, BUET arranged for tools and equipment for the teachers and launched online academic activities from August 2020. Department of Architecture arranged online collective counselling sessions for the students to help them deal with the tough times and the success of our efforts have been revealed through an overwhelming student participation in the classes since then.

What are your predictions about the overall status of your work and workplace over the next one year?

To me only online education without physical interactions with places and spaces specially in creative fields cannot be an option. If social distancing remains relevant next one year, we need to explore ways to bring education back to the campus sooner in keeping with all the new normal norms to ensure wholesome learning with intact mental health.



Ar. Monon-bin Yunus
[Batch 2003]
Partner, Roofliners Studio of Architecture

What was the immediate impact on your work and workplace after Covid19 pandemic started in March 2020 in Bangladesh?

During the time of lockdown in 2020, initially we faced few problems like management of team works and it affected the collaboration to continue the ongoing projects. Later after two weeks, it was streamlined and the team was working to the best of their ability from home. On the other hand most of the construction sites were stopped and therefore, the cash flow from the projects was close to nil. It took around 8 months to regain financial stability.

Over the last 14 months, how have you been managing to cope up with the impacts of the pandemic in your work?

Over the last 14 months, the work from home culture has been adapted quite efficiently. Though the initial work management was hampered, people in the office and all the other collaborators are handling it fine now. Work and document sharing is done via Slack app. Meetings with the team at regular intervals helped a lot to boost up morale and efficiency. Most of the client meetings are held via online platforms, which made the process more time balanced. Construction sites are also operating with precautions.

What are your predictions about the overall status of your work and workplace over the next one year?

I think more lockdowns may happen at times in future here in Bangladesh in the current year due to pandemic. Of course, working physically with the team in the office is the best, but this online working process can be easily adapted when needed with proper training for the team.



Ar. Shahida Sharmin Disha
[Batch : 2006]
Associate at ZGF Architects, USA

What was the immediate impact on your work and workplace after Covid19 pandemic started in March 2020 in Bangladesh?

As an initial response to the pandemic and lockdown, we had to focus on setting up proper home offices. There were stipends from the office for equipment and high-speed internet access to ensure availability of necessary tools and technologies at home. Access to the office and other project sites were limited with strict safety protocols. The admin and IT departments worked extremely hard to come up with creative ways of collaboration within the teams and with consultants, trade partners and clients. All new hiring was frozen; there were lay-offs and furloughs. We had to redesign our system and operate in a conservative mode. The initial days were really rough.

Over the last 14 months, how have you been managing to cope up with the impacts of the pandemic in your work?

In addition to financial and social challenges, the pandemic has pushed us to rethink our work-process and the way we communicate. We have stepped out of our comfort zone of face-to-face conversations and collaboration. We have started to explore and understand the potentials of digital/online pinups (and saving a LOT of paper); the curation of our presentations to the clients and leadership have transformed; the tools we used to use for reviewing the drawings and construction documents have changed. There has been a lot of new software and apps. In my opinion, the process we are using now is more collaborative and somewhat democratic since a virtual setup allows more people to be in a room and participate (and also to multitask, i.e. listening to the consultants while drawing). This online work-process has also been allowing us to form teams with people working in different states of the country.

On the downside, there are a draining number of online meetings and phone calls during the day which pushes me to work later at night as that's the only 'quiet time' I get. I also feel that the boundary between my work hours and personal time has blurred significantly. However, the office has become more considerate to flexible working hours, mental health and personal time offs. To ensure the feeling of connectedness, there have been regular one-on-one and team touch-bases, monthly all-office meetings, and even a virtual Christmas party!

What are your predictions about the overall status of your work and workplace over the next one year?

I feel extremely proud of our teams' overall adaptability and progress during this pandemic; which also makes me confident and hopeful about our future. Even though the office is currently working on setting up safety and behavioral protocols for 'return to office'; I don't think we'll go back to our offices full time ever and there will always be a hybrid approach. I believe there is an acknowledgment of the 'quiet time' we get working from home which allows us to focus and get things done; while we also value the teamwork we do at our offices. But again, everything is case-specific, and we recognize that too. We'll probably continue to have office and site visits as needed, but we have learned to be nimble and more efficient.

Pandemic and the Profession



Ar. Dewan Sabrina Sharmin
[Batch : 2007]
Assistant Architect, DoA,
Ministry of Housing & Public Works.

What was the immediate impact on your work and workplace after Covid19 pandemic started in March 2020 in Bangladesh?

As an immediate impact, my usually bustling and active office saw changes in terms of social distancing with significantly fewer site visits, next to zero off or on campus physical meetings with both company representatives and stakeholders, cancellation of long due public programs like seminars, exposiums etc. However, I did not experience any sudden shortage or cancellation of work/project. The employees, officers and staff alike, were provided with regular allowances and even bonuses, when and where applicable from the office. This was a relief for me to some extent as I literally saw the whole world falling into recession before my eyes.

Over the last 14 months, how have you been managing to cope up with the impacts of the pandemic in your work?

Soon after the initial getting used to, a schematic work process was formulated to cope with this never before seen social distancing/ isolation phenomenon. As part of that process, at the beginning the already ongoing project works were being executed online or over phone from the comfort of my home. Complete Work From Home mode however posed a little disadvantage as I did not have all the backup of the official documents at home to work with. As it is said with greater power comes greater responsibility, senior officers sometimes had to attend the office even in the lockdown from which I was initially spared as one of the most junior recruits. However shortly afterwards, a duty roster was introduced. The flexible work hours at that time and WFH combination work plan best suited me. Due to the duty roster, sometimes one essential member of the team would be unavailable and soon I had learned to coordinate even in absence of a member and make things work with the guidance of my supervising architects. However, the service provided by our office is considered one of the emergency state works and was at one point out of the purview of the countrywide lock down; thus regular official duty followed for a-less-enthusiast me, whereas most other offices I knew of still ran online.

What are your predictions about the overall status of your work and workplace over the next one year?

The pandemic had me rethinking my approach to everything and rethinking work undoubtedly comes at the top of my list, given the sudden and dramatic move to remote work or WFH. It has taught me to identify the essentials and cut back on the redundant. For such a team oriented profession like architecture, technology has become absolutely vital not for me but for all the people involved as to bring the whole team together. For the next one year, I personally feel a need of self-improvement in communication skills be it in the form of drawings, simulation or verbal communication as being able to express one's mind precisely despite being physically present seems a lot important lately.



Ar. Maruf Raihan
[Batch : 2011]
Architectural Photographer and
a Director of Corpovisuals ,
an office specialising in visual
documentation and website development

What was the immediate impact on your work and workplace after Covid19 pandemic started in March 2020 in Bangladesh?

The immediate impact was basically a panicked situation. I was locked down for 2 weeks at home. After that I had to go out to shoot. The frequency of work was reduced a lot. But there were some architectural shoots and a very few industrial shoots. Our graphics team and developers worked from home, but our shooting team had to start going out maintaining safety.

Over the last 14 months, how have you been managing to cope up with the impacts of the pandemic in your work?

Of course this has not been an ideal situation for us. Amount of work has reduced a lot. Schedule of payment has got delayed. Prices of our services had to be lowered to survive in the market. We had to tighten our expenses, start working with project based freelancers and redesign our productions. Due to the pandemic situation, we cannot shoot industrial and architectural projects as we used to do during regular times..

What are your predictions about the overall status of your work and workplace over the next one year?

People are already getting used to this new normal. But the situation will not be the same as before. This situation showed us we can do most of our work from home. This will create another dimension in our working process. But there will be a post pandemic situation. The overall financial situation will not come to a balance very soon. We have to suffer but keep fighting, keep working, keeping safety measures and keeping our people around us safe.



Ar. Humayra Anan
[Batch : 2013]
Fresh Alumna

What was the immediate impact on your work and workplace after Covid19 pandemic started in March 2020 in Bangladesh?

The immediate impact of the Covid 19 pandemic was entirely different for me. I graduated in February 2020 and within a month citywide lockdown was declared. So, when it was time for me to set foot in the professional world as an architect, the definition of workspace started to change. The impact wasn't unbearable but I realized that I may have to wait indefinitely before starting my professional career.

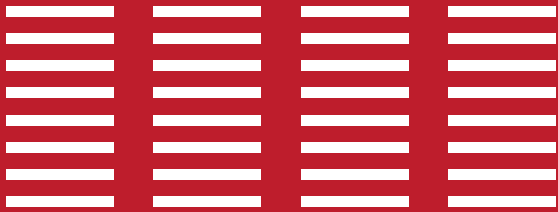
Over the last 14 months, how have you been managing to cope up with the impacts of the pandemic in your work?

Over the last 14 months, I spent a significant amount of time at home in my room where I set up a workstation. During this challenging period, I focused on my interests and skills, participated in various architectural competitions, workshops, seminars etc. and busied myself with remote volunteering works. I was working for myself. It brought me sanity, mental peace and eventually several achievements, such as winning the "KSRM Awards for Future Architects 2020".

I started looking for jobs when the situation improved slightly and in November 2020, finally started working. Although I was relieved and excited to begin my professional journey, I quickly realized that the prolonged pandemic will continue to change the way we work. We had to take precautions and follow safety protocols while working on site. Despite all the safety measures, the second wave of corona caught me and sent me back to my room where now I have been experiencing the work from home dynamic for the first time.

What are your predictions about the overall status of your work and workplace over the next one year?

We are living in very uncertain times. My optimist's heart believes that the situation will change. But realistically, it is safe to predict that we may have to work like this for a long time. Interestingly, the duration of corona and me being a graduate is almost the same. I have heard what used to be "normal", but only experienced the "new normal". So, over the next year, I will focus on learning from my experience to find an online-offline work balance that may help me to be much more efficient and active.



Inspiring Alumni

An interview with Ar. Mahbuba Haque



Ready to wind up the 'office' after a fulfilling and successful journey in the profession for almost three decades, Architect Mahbuba Haq fondly known as 'Shikha' or 'Shikha apa' to the followers and her many mentees, wants to set out to travel in search of food for her soul!

Famous for her straight forward personality and admired by clients and collaborators for her professionalism, Mahbuba Haq gained reputation by producing high quality interiors for large corporate houses of the country. Mentor to a good number of architects who are in their professional peak right now, Shikha apa has also been a role model to many female professionals of the younger generations. In the Inspiring Alumni segment of this issue, she talks about her path-breaking endeavors;

Ar. Mahbuba Haque

[Batch 1980]

AQ: You are one of the very few professional women in Architecture in our country who had started her own firm in the 90's and created remarkable works. How do you describe your journey as an architect so far?

MH: Right now I am content with my life's journey. My professional journey can be best described as an exhilarating roller coaster ride.

As a woman in a demanding professional field, I believe I had to face all the predicaments and challenges every woman has to face in any demanding profession.

I was not only an architect in a professional field, I was also a mother, a wife and a daughter who in the context of our society was forced to maintain a balance between all responsibilities.

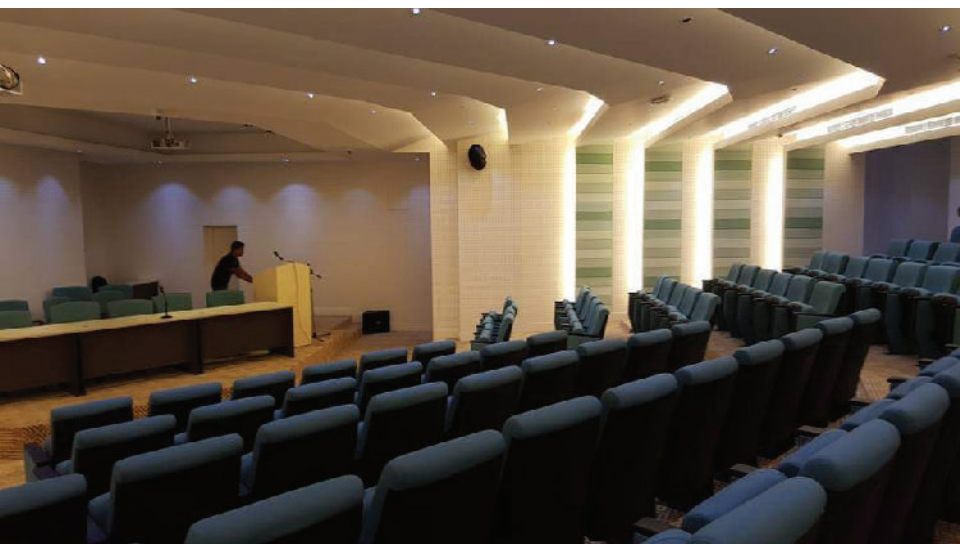


I admit it was not easy but I did manage to survive. I was determined, persistent hard working and sincere and my clients acknowledged my efforts. I also got a lot of support from my father, who gave me the ground floor of his house for running my operations and encouraged me in all my endeavors and mentored my son. He was my friend, philosopher and guide throughout my journey and never lost faith in me.

AQ: Tell us about your childhood and what inspired you to pursue arguably one of the most challenging professions later in your adulthood?

MH: I am the eldest among my three siblings. My brother Mahmudul Haq is an Associate Professor at BRAC University business school. My sister Dr. Ashfia Huq is a physicist who lives in San Francisco and is currently employed at Apple Computers in research and development.

My father was a very progressive human being and we were all equally encouraged by him to pursue our dreams. We were given total freedom to choose the subjects we thought we would be inclined to. I was always interested in art, architecture and anthropology and wanted to study Architecture.



AQ: As an inspirational alumna, we would like to hear from you about your days in the campus; who and what made lasting impressions on you as a student?

MH: In 1980, there were only 35 students being admitted in the department of Architecture and only BUET had a Department of Architecture. In my batch only 6 out of 35 were female students. I was lucky to have qualified in the admission test to BUET.

Many things made a lasting impression on me. The Faculty building was beautiful and the ground floor had almost no rooms. This was the place where all students intermingled and various exhibitions were held. Class rooms were lofty spacious and we all had huge individual tables. We were not familiar with computers then and had to do all our drawings manually. My eyesight has always been very badly impaired and I used to find the drafting work very difficult. We were blessed with wonderful friendly dedicated teachers. Our batch was especially lucky to have had Professor Shamsul Wares as our studio teacher in 2nd and 5th year. I have been maintaining liaison with many of my teachers to date.

AQ: You are a founding member of a renowned private university of Bangladesh and currently a member of the Board of Trustees. How do you evaluate the changes and growth occurred in architecture education since your alma mater initiated it here in the 60's? Is there any criticism from you and what is the way forward?

MH: I am a founding member and a lifelong member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Asia Pacific (UAP). In 1980, population of Bangladesh was 9 crores and 35 architects graduated from the one and only Institution every year. In 2020, there are now 26 Universities – public and private - from which approximately 1000 students graduate every year and the population of Bangladesh is 20 crores.



During our school days we were not familiar with the terms like green building, carbon emission, micro climates, high roof farms etc. Over the last 30 years, technology has grown exponentially and buildings can now be produced by 3D printers. Windows and roofs can be solar panels and buildings can be built with negative carbon footprints. Architects and their professional team members can now be globally linked via the web. It is therefore obvious, that the curriculum of Architectural education be addressed accordingly. Due to the GDP growth of Bangladesh and availability of private institutions there is a great influx of students in this field from rural areas. If the students are properly tutored, motivated and equipped with necessary tools (academic) there is a lot of development work that are being done in the district levels which may be addressed by these new generation of Architects with conscientiousness and apt sensitivity. There should also be an all-out effort by our Institute IAB to ensure the quality of curriculum of the universities and the quality of the graduates who shall be able to work in the profession.

AQ: Do you think being a woman in architecture profession have imparted any leverage or constraints on your carrier due to our socio-economic culture? On that note, how do you see the huge gap between the proportion of female students and the proportion of female architects in business?

MH: As I have mentioned previously, a woman in the professional field of Architecture has to face a multitude of predicaments and challenges that every woman has to face in any other demanding profession.





Specifically, in our socio economic context, young women also feel insecure and maybe harassed sexually and face bigotry. Women also face a lot more pressure at home in rearing up children and looking after the household work where most men remain less involved. I have often told my junior professional female colleagues that “to prove you are as good, you have to be three times as good”. There is no easy way out. I strongly feel that women in this profession will have a strong foothold only if they are inspired by other senior successful women who have succeeded before them.

AQ: Any message or comment for the young alumni?

MH: Never give up. When love goes into work, it will always show.

Ar. Mahbuba Haque [Batch 1979] was interviewed by Moushumi Ahmed for AQ

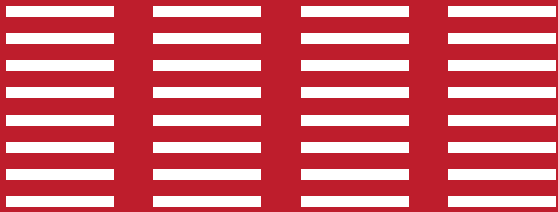




photo courtesy : tbs news

An Interview with

Ar. Nahas Ahmed Khalil

Reminiscing Plinth Life

Your favorite place or space from campus life

The most favourite, unfortunately, no longer exists. The “Plinth”, the open ground level of our building. The Canteen was just opposite on the ground floor of the Library Building. Ours was a very inclusive open all-embracing space – as if we were host to all the fellow students of our university and many…… many more young people coming from all over. It was a wonderful feeling!

Another favourite space – more of a wholesome architectural experience was the ground level walk through the Titumir Hall corridors. Going from the North block from where one enters, across the green on the right, an entrance space before the canteen, past the Common room block, spaced, just enough away, to make one feel like an invisible passer-by looking on into the sprightly lives of fellow young people. The balance of the right gaps, transitions, three dimensional architectural details of one corridor touching another, of the details of the building elements – all one huge living lesson for any architectural student who was attentive enough!

I cannot stop without mentioning the awe-inspiring mastery of layout and the “air-flow” in the section of our classrooms building. But most impressive of all, the perfect tropical section - a study of a tropical architecture for a building like

The person[s] from your student days who had influence on you to become the person you are

That is a difficult one. Architects have influenced the Architect I have become. But a person I have become is quite another matter. My father and Mother; my siblings; Art and artists; musicians; writings and writers’ thoughts; all add up and I am happily indebted to them all.

If you could travel back in time to your student days, would you live it differently?

It is remarkably interesting for me to reflect and discover the answer to that question which I pondered for the first time, perhaps.

NOT ONE THING – I can think of that I would do different !!!

We have had lots of very happy times. We must have had our share of not-so-happy moments too. But obviously they were never bad enough for me to remember with regret and want to change. Thank you for asking this question, which brought out these positive feelings in appreciation of the past.

Who were the persons you used to hang out with? Do you still hang out together?

I had two distinct spheres of people who dominate my memories of those days. My classmates and some friend-like Seniors and Juniors on the one hand and the group I played Basketball with. That was intense too. We probably played 360 days out of 365 days of each year – at least that is what it feels like.

While the people from my Basketball life have almost disappeared. Contacts with a very few remain. Contacts with my classmates, though infrequent, remain almost as fresh as the day we parted 38 years ago. We can almost pick up the threads like we had met yesterday. These were comrades, whom we mutually accepted whole-heartedly with all our respective faults.

Interestingly, however, it is one or two people with whom we may not have been very close at the time, but with whom now, I hang out much more. There is a quite different yearning for the quality of the company, perhaps, as we move on in life.

If you are given power to change/ introduce one thing to the department, what will it be?

Yes, there is. I have not the faintest idea of how to do it, but I wish that by the wave of some magic wand it would get done.

The Department of Architecture, BUET is an especially important part of my life. I just realised, as I mentioned above, I would not even want to change anything from those cherished times. Somehow, I do not feel any sense of ownership with the place - My Alma Mater. Perhaps this is Utopia, perhaps I am to blame. As I said I do not know.

Perks of the Profession

The weirdest request or comment from a client ever faced?

Nothing comes to mind.

I certainly have not been blessed enough, not to have faced my share of differences of opinions, from the many clients I have been fortunate enough to deal with. These differences came with their expected tensions, frustrations, and misgivings, sometimes even with damaging results.

But this is within the nature of our profession. This is not un-expected. The clash of two views, each trying hard to change the other. The views of the one who will inhabit the spaces, pay for and execute to get the views of the other to become a reality, cannot be expected to change without being inwardly convinced.

This clash does not always end with a win-win situation. This is also expected. There is nothing weird, here. That is what I feel and perhaps that is why I draw a blank when I try to bring something out.

Compared to the time when you graduated, is this a better or worse time for you personally as a creative professional?

Professionally, things are much rosier. No doubt. Quite easy for me to say, being one from our generation. We got into architectural studies knowing well there were no jobs, no prospects. We graduated in times when our building industry had not, yet, seen the frenetic activities brought about by the private development of apartments.

The volume of architectural work began to change – all almost overnight, within

Creativity rides on the amount of work and “practice” you get. Depending on one’s abilities and talents, one takes advantage to improve not only on one’s own mistakes but also on the cumulative mistakes and wisdom of others.

While I will not lay claim to be a talented professional, however, I would not like to concede to be a mediocre professional. So Yes, I am happy to say that I am extremely pleased to note that our prospects have improved vastly and progressively as I traversed through my professional life. Any fault and failing, unfortunately, can only borne by myself.

Were there any subjects in undergraduate curriculum that you found a little or no relevance in your professional life?

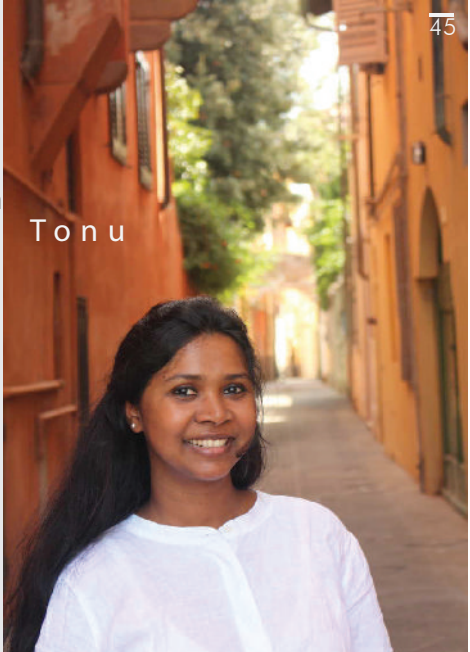
This is an interesting question to which I can comment with quite a bit of enthusiasm.

The number of subjects in our curriculum that I felt had no relevance or redundant has progressively grown fewer. As my professional years went by, I kept realizing with gratitude that we had been introduced to so many areas of knowledge. With that, also came the regret of not having paid enough attention to those subject and our sincere teachers at the time. Though my grades in these subjects were not bad at all, I rarely retained anything of the course-content past the time I had given up my exam paper. It was as if the job were done, and all content could be erased making way for new knowledge.

Now that is, perhaps, another area in which change could be of tremendous benefit to the students. The logic and relevance of the materials a student is being exposed to could be made more meaningful. If these courses could somehow be tied to the Design (sessional) Studio work, I feel, we would not have forgotten so easily – and then re-call during the professional careers would come much easier.

Ar. Nahas A Khalil [Batch 1985] was interviewed
by Mamnoon Murshed Chowdhury for AQ

In conversation with
Ar. Farhana Rashid Tonu



Reminiscing Plinth Life

A few words to describe plinth-life!

I was a bit of an introvert back in my University days. Initially I had some mixed feelings about plinth but later with time, plinth turned into a place of celebration. Now plinth means rain, adda, song, cricket, Pohela Boishakh or any other program to me. I have always enjoyed being the audience in plinth rather than participating. I get a sense of belongingness in plinth.

Favorite place or space from campus life!

After plinth, one of my most favorite places in the campus would be the Shahid Minar of BUET. Hall was like my home and Plinth was mostly confined to friends from our dept. But I had many other friends in other departments as well, and the Shahid Minar was a place where all of us could meet. Back then, we would sit on the steps of the Shahid Minar and there was a matter of inclusiveness. It was a very lively and active place with people singing, talking, eating jhalmuri, ice cream or other snacks. On my route from hall to plinth, or vice versa, I would always encounter one or two friends at the Shahid Minar.

One person whom you met on campus that molded you as the person today!

I would like to mention Rumki Apu as one such person. She was two years senior to us and was a very simple person with wonderful thoughts and philosophy. We used to have many brainstorming sessions on various ideas or while studying something. She used to say one thing - "Write down what you are thinking or just draw it, start working on your thoughts with passion". That was very inspiring for me.

I must mention Dr. Shabbir Sir, among many other inspiring teachers. He taught me a great deal about how to research thoroughly and the process of research to implementation. He was indeed very inspiring for a shy introvert person like me.

If you could travel back to your student days, would you live it differently?

I would like to take care of my health more seriously. I would drink more water,

Who were the people you used to hang out with? Do you still hang out together?

My circle was never limited inside the architecture department. While growing up, I studied in different schools, many of my school and college mates were in different departments, they were also a part of my circle. I still hang out with the same seniors/ juniors/ friends from our department and other departments.

If you are given the power to change or introduce one thing new to the department, what will it be?

A link should be established between the students and the industry. Although we have an internship process, students need to realize the difference between theory and implementation. Students can be involved with City Corporation or various other planning and development projects during their education period on a befitting scale. Many professionals visit our studios, but how many of the students can actually make a connection within that short period of time? So involvement in practical projects should be more encouraged.

Perks of the Profession

The weirdest request or comment from a client ever faced!

Once I was working with a High ranked government official and he was asking me about my career. When I told him about my work on public toilet design and maintenance, he asked me if I build any tall buildings. He was struggling to accept the fact that we only focus on public facilities and services and was utterly surprised.

When we were working in Noor Mansion, Gawsia Market, an elderly shop owner showed some interest in our work. He asked me about my education and then asked me with surprise, why I am working on a public toilet facility after returning from Sweden. It was very unusual for him.

Your favorite software or Tool to design?

My work includes design, development, operation and maintenance of public toilet facilities, so it is a vast process. I like to sketch or write it down at first - I can remember and sort everything easily that way. Then in terms of operation management, I feel comfortable working with Microsoft Excel. Although it is not a very popular software among architects, but it gets the job done when we have to coordinate the cleaning schedule, maintenance schedule of different projects at the same time.

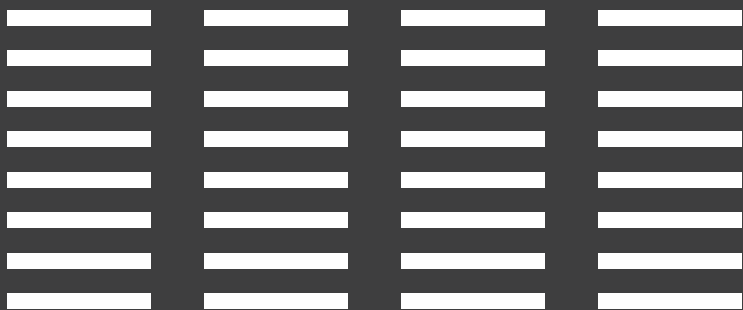
How do you define an Architect's job?

I think architecture is a subject where we have maximum scope to work with humans and nature, besides buildings. An architect has the training to work on a tiny homestead upto major city planning, so it is a field full of diversity. For me an architect's job takes him/her very close to human and nature.

From experience of your professional life can you think of any new course that should be included in the undergrad curriculum?

I always thought Business Development should be included in our curriculum. We learn a lot about architecture or office management by working with senior architects, but basic accounting, management needs to be taught to the students of architecture.

Farhana Rashid Tonu [Batch 2003]
was interviewed by Fawzia Bhuiyan



IN MEMORIAM



In memoriam of all the alumni we have lost since the birth of this premises,
we pay our deep respects.



Ar. Nilufa Akter Keya
(Batch 1985)
Departure : 26 May 2021



Ar. Ahsan Hbib
(Batch 1976-77)
Departure : 2 June 2021



Ar. Mohammed Tanweer karim
(Batch 1971)
Departure : 29 June 2021



EULOGY FOR A DEAR FRIEND

by

Ar. ASM Ismail

Architect Shah Altaf Hossain passed away on 7 April 2021 at a hospital in Dhaka after a difficult battle with Covid-19. He was 66 at the time of his death. He left behind his loving wife, our Sayeeda bhabi, and children Aleef and Shehereen, who are well settled in the UK with their own families. It is hard to believe that our ever-smiling, helpful dear friend is gone forever.

Altaf was my classmate at the Department of Architecture during my undergraduate years at BUET. We were a group of 30 girls and boys who were offered admission in May 1973, and consequently started our first-year classes in March 1974. We eventually graduated in March 1979. Among the 30 riders of our 1974 boat, Rezaul Karim, Yasmin Wazed, Taslim Chowdhury and AKM Iqbal sadly embarked on their eternal journeys well before Altaf.

Starting from 1974, as with all our classmates, our ever-growing friendship with Altaf was cemented for the last 47 years. During this long period of time due to multiple challenges posed by life, we were not always in close contact, but nevertheless our relationship was never compromised. We were always very connected, initially when we were single and afterwards when we were blessed with families. His sudden death has cut short our mortal friendship, but our dear friend will continue to live on in our hearts forever.

Unlike many of us Altaf had a very colourful career in life, venturing in diversified fields of interests. Beside his major engagements in the field of architecture and building industry, his dynamic entrepreneurial nature got him involved in areas like weaving using power looms, pioneering in establishing an export oriented latex industry, cultivation of agar wood and its scientific processing for extraction of precious agar oil and a myriad of other things. His head was always full of new and novel ideas.

After graduating from BUET in early 1979, he joined the Office of the Chief Architect [present day Department of Architecture], under the Ministry of Public Works and Urban Development of the Government of Bangladesh, along with a few of us. After working there for a little more than a year, he switched over to the Engineering Department of Bangladesh Bank and worked there for about two years. After that he decided to bid farewell to the public sector and chose to work in the private sector after establishing a consultancy firm. In no time he proved himself in the consultancy and construction arena - where he undertook small design-build projects like residential buildings and such. He constructed a good number of buildings in various parts of Dhaka and Sylhet at that time. Gradually he expanded his working horizon.

Altaf was a wonderful person with a clean and sincere heart and utmost devotion for humanity. During our student days in BUET between 1974 and 1978, he helped out on all possible occasions. Be it Architecture Department's annual picnic, freshers' reception or seniors' farewell upon graduation, university's centennial celebration ceremony 1976, Sthapotyō O Porikolpona Utshob 1978, or inter-department football tournament - Altaf was there to lend his hand for the successful completion of every event. An able sportsman, he was a member of the BUET football team. During our department picnics, he would take responsibility for almost everything - starting from finding a baburchi to buying all the necessities from firewood, rice, meat, chicken, spices etc. to arranging sweets and dessert from Thatari Bazar and Moronchad.

On a personal note, I fondly remember his active help at my wedding. I was posted in DIT [Dhaka Improvement Trust, now known as RAJUK] as Authorised Officer in 1985; in those days I was the lone officer in charge of approving drawings for construction of any building for all of Dhaka, Narayanganj and Tongi. Due to my official engagements, I had very little spare time for my personal commitments. So, I sought Altaf's assistance with arranging the Walima dinner. He just wanted to know the date, venue and the number of probable guests and told me - 'tui ekhon ghuma'! He meticulously managed the whole process from selecting the cook, the decorator to procuring all raw items and finally on the day of the function, he ensured that all guests were taken care of and well fed.

“..he was always there to make sure that they had a way to get home safely when working late hours in the department studio.”

During our BUET days we needed a lot of stationeries like modelling boards, x-ray plates, glue, etc. which had to be purchased from Naya Bazar in the Old Town, a place that was not very enjoyable to travel to. Every time Altaf went there to get his own supplies, would ask everyone, particularly our female class-mates if they needed help in buying anything from there. Like an elder brother to our ladies, he was always there to make sure that they had a way to get home safely when working late hours in the department studio.

In the early part of 1978, our batch went on a study tour to South India to see the various Hindu and Buddhist architectural sites there. The team comprised mostly of our classmates along with Ar. Abu H Imamuddin as our supervisor. Our teachers Ar. Shamsul Wares, Ar. Habibur Rahman and campus outsiders Ar. Rabiul Husain and Ar. Aminul H Khan joined the party of sight-seers as guest participants.

At the very first leg of our journey a mishap occurred. We were traveling on a night train from Kolkata to Puri in Orissa. At the dead hour of the night, one of our classmates Shahana Parvin found that her purse was missing after returning to her seat-cum-bed from the washroom.

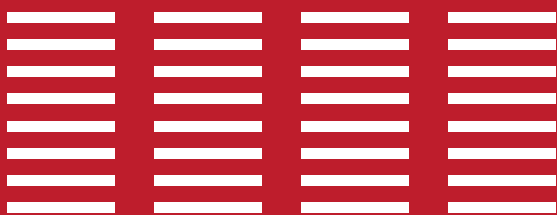
It was revealed that someone had stolen her purse, taking advantage of the fact that everybody was fast asleep in the compartment and the owner of the bag was not around. Hearing her screams, most of the passengers had woken up and the train was brought to a stop by pulling the emergency chain. Soon after, the train's guard appeared, followed by members of railway police. A quick search was made but to no luck. Her lost purse contained her passport along with other valuables. Since there was no sign of the purse, the railway police told us that the express train could not be stranded there for any longer and the victim would have to stay back to inform the case to the nearest police station. The officers would help to issue a temporary travel permit so that she could continue the trip, in the absence of her passport and visa. It was an unexpected situation, and we were in a time crunch. We decided to let Shahana stay back, but with a male member from the party to finish the required duties, they would later join us at Puri. Who else would volunteer for that if not our beloved friend Altaf! He came forward to accompany Shahana in the wee hours of the night in an unknown place in Orissa. Ar. Rabiul bhai also decided to stay back to accompany them and the three of them rejoined us in Puri about four hours after we reached. Caring for others was an inherent part of Altaf's nature.

A kind-hearted person, he was always there for everybody. Altaf will be remembered for his virtues as a human being and his affection and love for them alongside his professional accomplishments. A joyful and pleasant personality, Shah Altaf was a worldly man. We were fortunate to have him among us. He will be missed by all who had the chance to enjoy his friendship and acquaintance.

Rest in peace our dear friend.

ArcAAB alumnus Ar. ASM Ismail [Batch 1973] retired as Chief Architect, Department of Architecture, Ministry of Housing & Public Works, Bangladesh.

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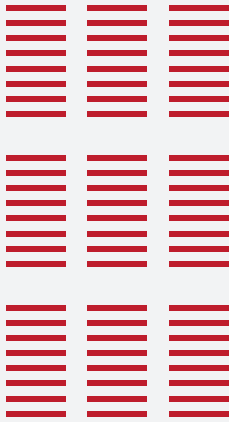
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