

# Making crafts future-ready with new-age tech, materials



Parth.Shastrri@timesgroup.com

What if the traditional lathe work is used, using resin mixed with wooden shavings or recycled timber instead of wood? What if the traditional hammered patterns mostly associated with copper utensils are used on stainless steel? What if Pichwai art is reimagined as laser-cut paper or glass figures?

These were some of the ideas explored by students of Cept University as part of the Craft+Future studio conducted by Rishav Jain and Alagappan Swaminathan. The studio explored the intersection of craft and interior architecture to identify the position of craft in contemporary practices.

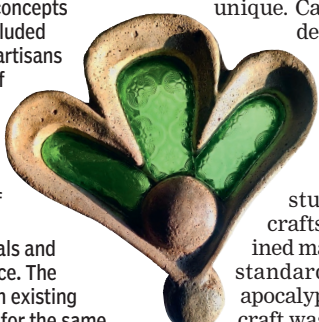
Jain, associate professor and program chair for the bachelor's degree course in design at the varsity, said that the students were first taken through different forms of handicraft and their history. "They first came up with some prototypes and then worked closely with artisans right at their workshop, understanding the process and materials they worked with. Next, they tried to break the mould and come up with something unique. Can one imagine embroidery associated with concrete or traditional warp and weft on acrylic surface? But they came up with the ideas and executed them," he said.

The highlight of the studio was the future of crafts where students imagined making a cooperative and standardizing practices to an apocalyptic world where art and craft was the only way in which

**EXPLORING MATERIALS:** The project by Chandni Tank explored Saadeli craft, veneer inlay in marble and bamboo with brass, whereas Palak Aggarwal used resin with different materials and CNC cutting of different grades of compressed plastic to generate jaali. She also used waste cloth to create screens by applique technique. Gunjan Bhaware amalgamated concrete with embroidery along with 3D clay printing and balsa wood with clay tile to create patterns.



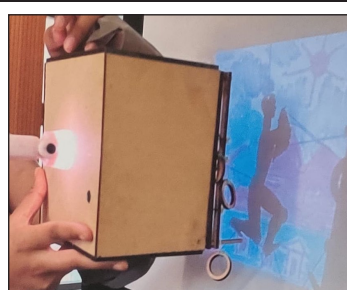
**NEW EXPRESSIONS:** The concepts explored by the students included creating a unique brand for artisans across India, collaboration of different styles of art and craft, activism by craftsmen, mass customization of crafts, making them integral part of modern home interiors, stressing on reuse of materials and crafts as a sensory experience. The students worked closely with existing concepts and new art forms for the same.



An imagination by Roshni Roy of future-safe archives of bygone crafts, as part of Cept University Summer Exhibition

people felt the tactile sense – be it waves or embossed surfaces. The students created visions, complete with architectural design and the art being promoted. Prof. Jain added that the studio unit is part of a four-year-long project – Threads of Innovation – with Norway-based Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Roshni Roy, one of the students and architect-artist by profession, said that the highlight of the course was interactions with artisans. "It taught us that they are equal partners in the journey of discovering new forms. It is not just us telling them what to do, they often come up with their own unique ideas or tell us how we can go about creating specific things. It was truly a discovery of our traditional arts and their custodians," she said.



## Reinventing storytelling

A project by Sriya Avantsa from the Faculty of Design employed a cardboard box with hand-drawn background and puppets for visual storytelling. Named 'Needa', the box uses glass plates with drawings as backdrop and a marionette which can be designed based on the story.

## A relook at spaces under flyovers

These spaces – often used to park vehicles – can be anything from art centres to markets dedicated to women, museums or cafes run by special communities. The studio, 'Urban Corridors: Intervention of Residual Space Under the Overpass' by Kruti V Shah and Harsh Chauhan explored this idea by taking students to various flyovers, assessing the site and size, engagement with local community and possible usages. While one project re-imagined the space under Pakwan flyover as an urban cave, another turned the space under Hebatpur flyover into a kids' play zone. Other projects explored ideas such as a pet recreation zone, eatery and recreation zone, improving pedestrian experience, and a crafts flea market. The overarching theme was to make the space come alive with activities and make it an integral part of citizen experience.



# Setting the stage for stunning reimagination

Parth.Shastrri@timesgroup.com

The character of Matsyagandha, the wife of Kuru king Shantanu, is pivotal to Mahabharata. Now, imagine a play or even a movie based on her perspective of the epic, but with aesthetics inspired by the Lord of the Rings! Here's what the set can look like. Ornatly carved columns and environs rich with foliage and birds. A pond in the middle that keeps Matsyagandha close to the water element and natural decor that reminds her of her roots. At the centerstage, a large mural of Lord Shiva dominates.

This set reimagination was among the nine projects under studio Fictional Spaces offered by the Cept University's Faculty of Design in the last semester, which took the form of an exhibition at the varsity's recently concluded Summer Exhibition.

The studio was conducted by Jay Thakkar and Kama Vyas and included Aarushi Agarwal, Angela Ghosh, Arunima Saxena, Hritvi Shah, Laasya Nandula, Maulik Dammor, Ridhi Sharma, Sanjana Jhaveri and Zoya Akhtar.

Thakkar, senior associate professor and head of exhibition at Cept University, said that they have revisited the theme of fictional spaces a few



## In Fictional Spaces, Students See Mahabharata Characters In Hollywood Backdrops

times in the past, and this time around they introduced several new concepts.

"For the first time, the panels were created in three-dimensional space akin to actual sets where different elements were arranged by students after 3D printing.

"We first introduced the students to different styles of movies and zeroed in on some of them such as The Matrix, Dune, Black Panther: Wakan-

da Forever, Lord of the Rings and The Grand Budapest Hotel to name a few," said Prof. Thakkar.

The students then chose characters from the Mahabharata, and created one scene or panel from the fiction, amalgamating the character with the visual style of a Hollywood blockbuster.

"While several of the alumni are working in performing arts such as theatre and movies, set design is an emerging discipline where students from such courses get an exposure in terms of overall theme, use of colours, elements, props, movement spaces, lighting etc. Use of characters gives an idea of a person inhabiting the specific set and what better for character-driven development than Mahabharata?" said Prof. Thakkar.

