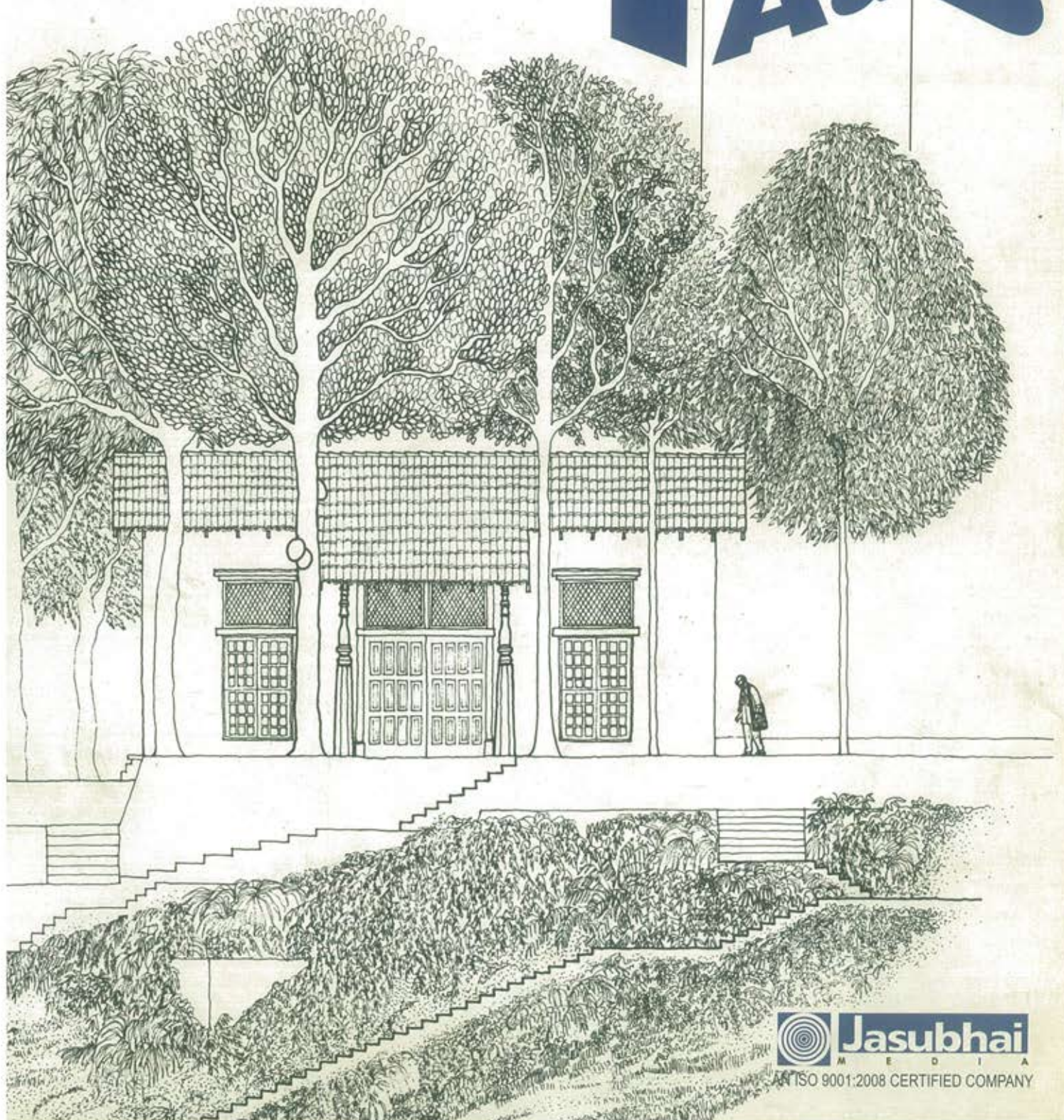


INDIAN ARCHITECT & BUILDER

EXPLORE

**A & B**



 **Jasubhai**  
M E D I A

AN ISO 9001:2008 CERTIFIED COMPANY



# The Immeasurable

The Cuncolim Freedom Fighters' Memorial and Valpoi Bus Stand & Community Hall in Goa by Rahul Deshpande and Associates form lines of inquiry into the spatial crux of temporal spaces and into a premise of whether architecture is an index of a further reality, or simply a means to an end.

*Text: Maanasi Hattangadi*

*Images & Drawings: courtesy Rahul Deshpande*



*The Cuncolim Freedom Fighters' Memorial - a symbolic link of the past and the future.*



As layered as architecture is, it has always been an intense intersection between intentionality and expression. But then, there is an idea of the immeasurable – the space of exchange between the two tangents. As Alvaro Siza said, "there are 'complexities and internal contradictions' – external, also, when a new structure is confronted with what preceded and what surrounds it, taking on a not necessarily predictable destiny. For this reason, the more character a building has and the clearer its form, the more flexible its vocation".

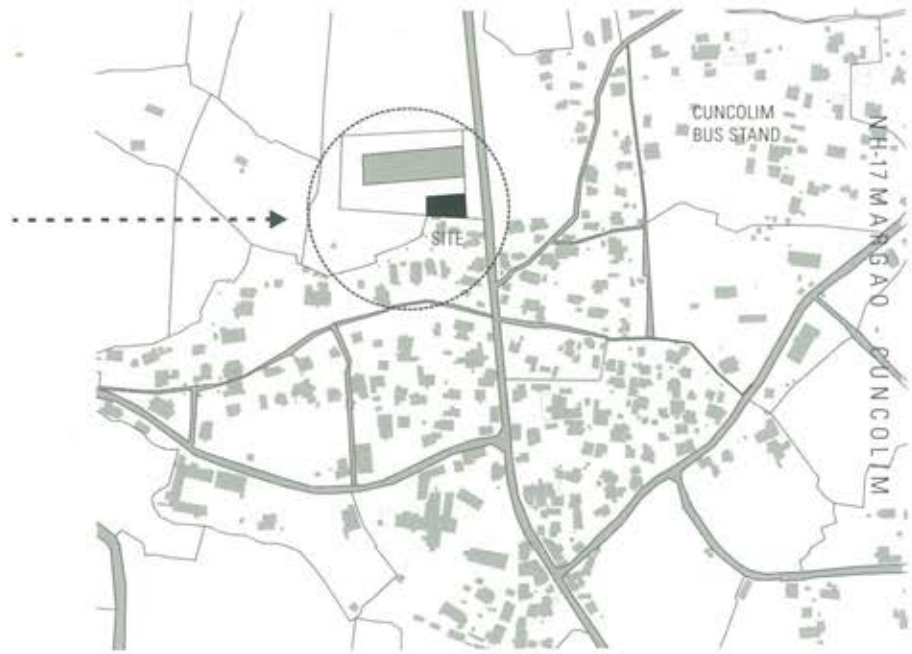
It is about curiosity, question, experiment. Goa-based architect Rahul Deshpande's two projects, the Cuncolim Freedom Fighters' Memorial and the Valpoi Bus Stand & Community Hall, cross the

boundaries of a singular discipline and exists in multiple modes. Each space is coextensive through the concept he creates; an open space, a space constantly seeking resolution, a space defined by the possibilities of achieving more than its purpose of existence.

Ways of interconnecting various possibilities then emerge and complexify systems of distribution with their own spatial and cultural mannerisms. The resonances, the responses that one seeks, present themselves already couched in the culture that generates them. Spaces upon spaces transpire. Newly-focused communities gather, fostered by newly-common interests. In a manner of speaking, in discussing and debating these issues, one can outline both these public spaces.







↑ LOCATION OF THE SITE

### Cuncolim Freedom Fighters' Memorial

When Rahul Deshpande was sought to commemorate the Cuncolim Freedom Fighters' memory as an architectural expression, it evolved into a similar node of celebration; a remnant of history that was pieced together as the future. The Cuncolim Freedom Fighters' Memorial speaks of a tragic and heroic tale of 'the brave and patriotic citizens of Cuncolim, who were the first to revolt against the Portuguese regime and were suppressed, tortured and brutally killed in their long war with them which eventually ended up liberating Goa on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1961.' In retrospect of this milieu, the approach deliberated more on authenticity and atmosphere.

Rahul Deshpande explains, "When the time had come for the people of Cuncolim to pay their tributes to their predecessors, they hoped for something that could relate to them on a personal level." This agenda doubled up with his strong assessment of war memorials which, as he believes "are embroiled in local ethnic and religious tensions, either reflecting the contribution

of particular groups to the conflict or being rejected entirely by others. Architecturally, war memorials are relatively conservative in design, aiming to produce a tragic but comforting, noble and enduring commemoration of the war dead generally through a lush green landscaped areas with a symbolic exemplification of their undying resolution, with either a tower or a flame."

With so many underpinnings to memorials – an obsession with the superficial over the fundamental, with image over content – being built today, it does seem that an expression that is predefined forces us to look at a concept in a certain way. Whereas here, the architecture attempts to suggest, or to invent other ways of looking at it; it is a structure that liberates one – to create new uses, newer limits, an audacity within a framework that is open to interpretation and re-appropriation. Here, one sees a cultural shift towards a more collaborative environment. The Memorial talks simultaneously of movement and monument, of instability and institution, a centre and its displacement.



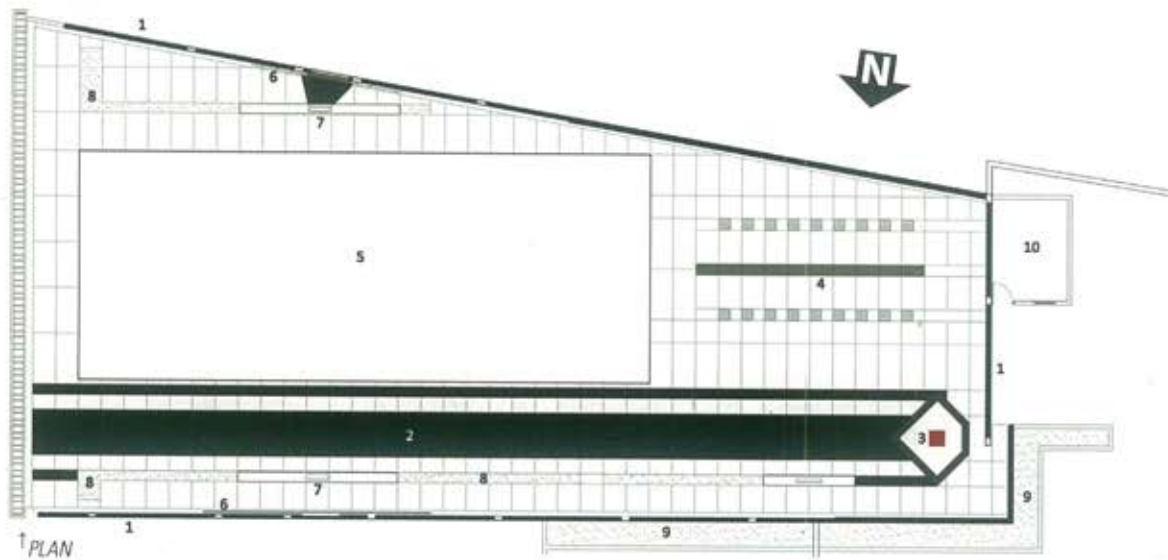
*Each element and view of the park is choreographed to evoke metaphorical allusions to the freedom movement.*





*The Memorial Tower, aloft at 15m height, is meant to emphasise the 'unwavering determination of the Sons of Concolim.'*



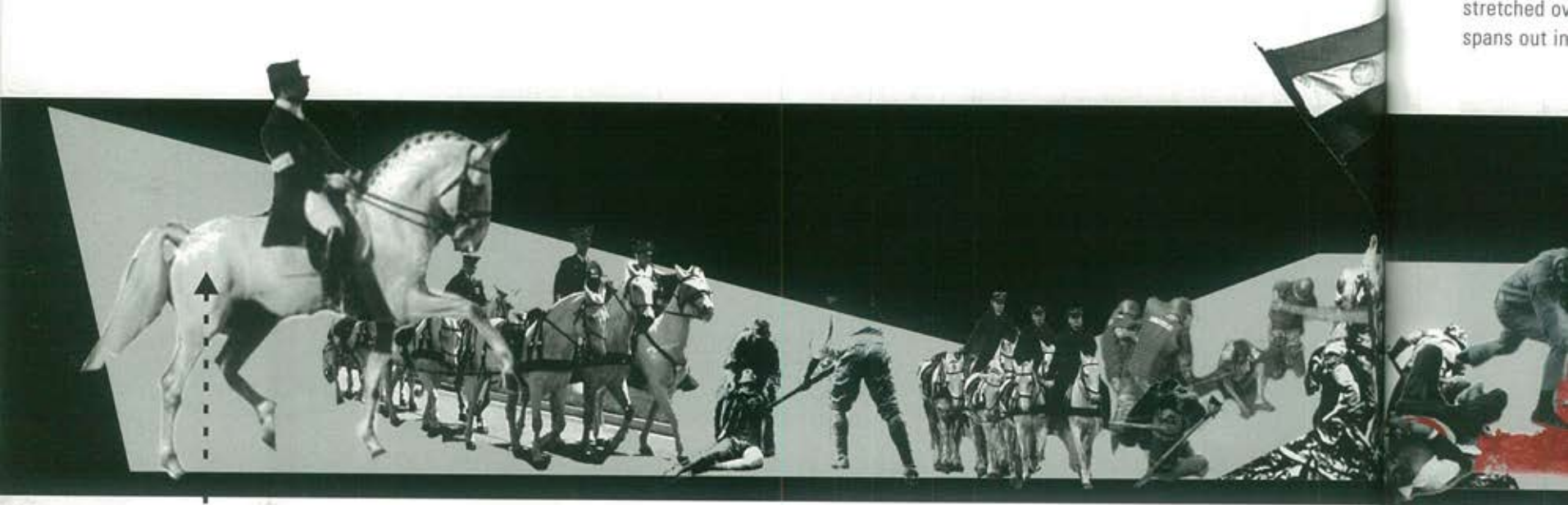


**LEGEND**

- 1 Concrete Walls
- 2 Black Granite Flooring
- 3 Glass-clad Tower of Triumph
- 4 Water Fountain
- 5 Sandpit Play area for children
- 6 Backlit Glass Name plate
- 7 Granite Seating
- 8 Planter
- 9 Bamboo Planter
- 10 Pump room and Filtration unit

The design  
- of both, n  
of truth, we  
ancestral a  
the Intimida  
Resolve and  
and eleme

The design  
articulating  
fairly ubiqui  
would exper  
it explodes  
architecture  
of the metap  
stretched ov  
spans out in

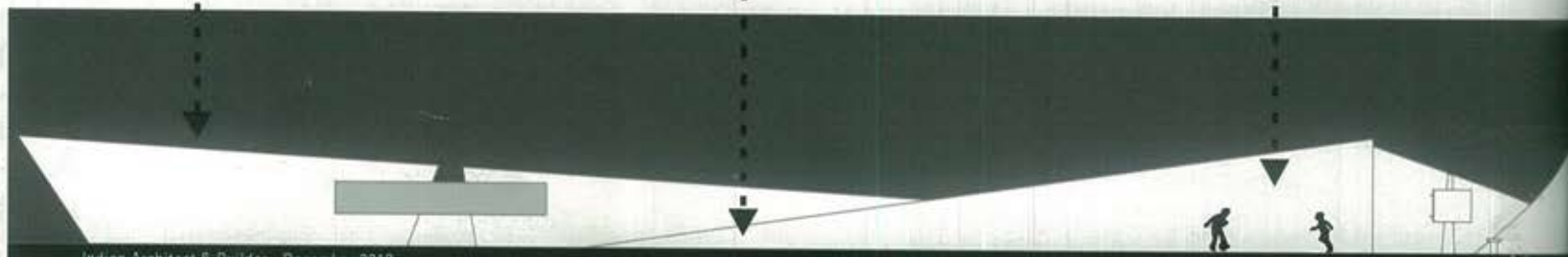


**MIGHTY WHITE WALLS**  
that surround and enclose the park depict the Powerful and Intimidating Portuguese. The White colour represents 'Pakhlo' or the white man, whereas their sharp edges represent the ruthless regime.

**BLACK GRANITE FLOOR**  
represents the suppressed dark-skinned native Goans, always at the feet of the high and mighty White-skinned Portuguese - 'Pakhlo'. The doom and sadness of those times is expressed by rough and shining Granite flooring.

**CHILDREN'S PARK**  
The carefree children playing in the park with enthusiasm, are the true and ultimate representation of liberation.

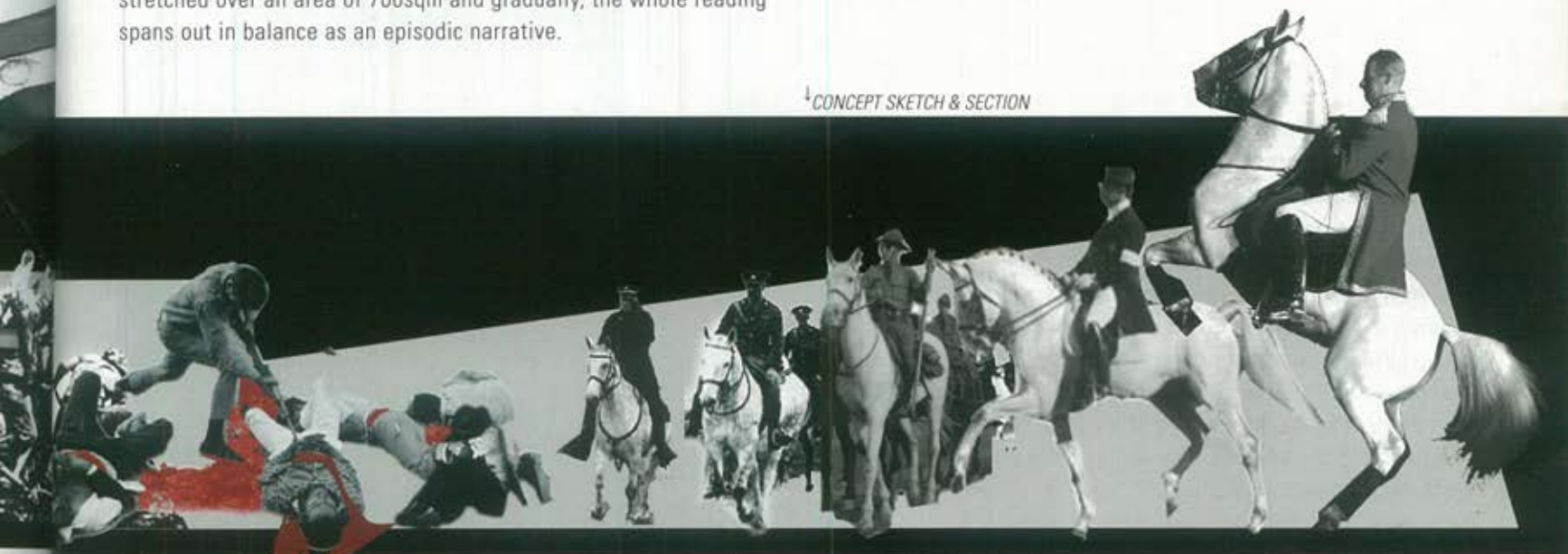
**THE BLACK MIRROR**  
The past and the future seem to interplay through the mirror reflecting the dark history and a promising bright future reflected by the fearless and happy children playing in the fountains.



The design stands to represent different forms of preservation – of both, meaning and memory. It comes together as a moment of truth, weaving together its scale, detail and texture upholding ancestral and metaphoric ideas representing the Spirit, the Power, the Intimidation, the Struggle, the Revolt, the Bloodshed, the Resolve and the Triumph of liberation through its scale and elements.

The design arranges these principles into a new language articulating a process wherein art becomes architecture. In a fairly ubiquitous setting, it catches one by surprise. Where one would expect a cloak of silence to descend on the city humdrum, it explodes into a cohesion of energy. Here onwards, the architecture plays out in distinctive roles, revelling in guidance of the metaphysical nuances attached to it. The facile planning is stretched over an area of 700sqm and gradually, the whole reading spans out in balance as an episodic narrative.

#### CONCEPT SKETCH & SECTION



#### THE BLACK MIRROR

The past and the future seem to interplay through the mirror reflecting the dark history and a promising bright future reflected by the fearless and happy children playing in the fountains.

#### BLOOD RED TOWER of TRIUMPH

The lean but straight tower reminds us of the strong resolve and firmness of the sons of Cuncolim, which culminated in the Triumphant Liberation of Goa.

#### NAMES OF MARTYRS in RED

The names of the freedom fighters etched in red transparent glass metaphorically represents the bloodshed and their sacrifice.



A simple enclosure is worked out within the suburban context, within dramatically domineering walls that angle in synchronicity. "The Mighty White Walls," the architect says, "that surround and enclose the park depict the powerful and intimidating Portuguese. The white colour represents 'Pakhlo' or the white man, whereas their sharp edges represent the ruthless regime." Periodically and symbolically raked as a low slung fence, the unassuming railing at the entrance is the first indication of the experience and owes more to typifying the crudity of prison bars that determined the languishing fate of the freedom fighters than to a stylistic agenda. A gate at its far end, expanding into the sudden smoothness of a gleaming granite path, leads one in. It is the notion of a journey that takes one forward. The linear motion on this pathway treads on a surface of a deliberate texture that is partly polished, partly rough, an interpretation of the oppressed dark-skinned native Goans, who slaved at the feet of the Portuguese. Dispelling this overwhelming sense of desolateness and imprinting the sky with one gash of mellowed red while resting in a black pentagonal base at the end of this axial route, is the memorial – The Tower of Triumph. The work of art gravitates the park, unfolding a seating along the way, anticipating the white walls, and simultaneously commanding a focal point in the park. It simplifies and complicates a space and its surrounds congruously merge into telling of the story of emancipation. The prescribed walkway approaching the Tower, pauses in a curatorial moment at the white glass panels impressed with names of the martyrs in red and an attenuate seating amidst flowering shrubbery, midway. A striking analogy to the sacrifice and bloodshed of the freedom fighters to their motherland, the crimson hues of the names are accentuated by the backlit panels in the night.

"The walk towards the Tower is very significant. Every view from the path has a well-etched role; a story to tell; a message to convey. The linear view in the direction of the pathway leads the eye to the reflection of the red tower on the granite floor, symbolising the resolve of the natives which made them emerge forcefully from the ground celebrating the victory and the freedom of their motherland," elaborates Rahul. Staged in an essence so intense, the Tower revels in an expression of converging mediums



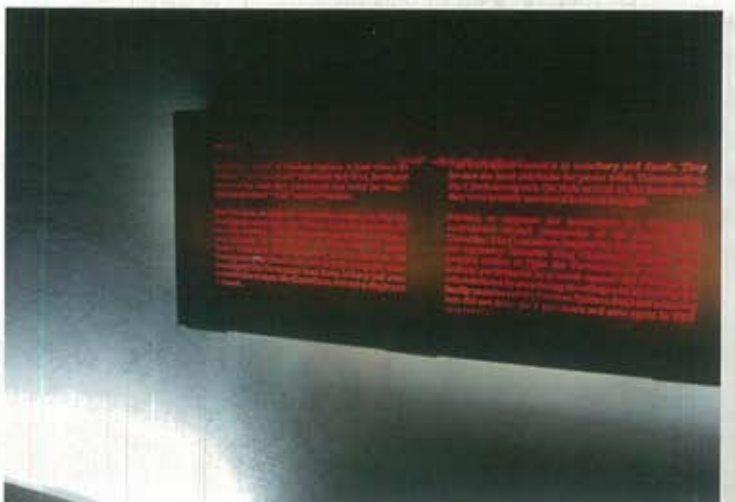
↑ The white angled walls depict the repressing Portuguese regime while the black granite flooring reference the suppressed dark-skinned native Goans.



↑ The Tower, being reflected on the polished granite walkway, epitomises the resolve of the natives to rebel for their freedom and emerge victorious.



↑ Vertical M S railing and gates mark the entrance, leading one to a path ringed with endemic Sadafuli flowers.



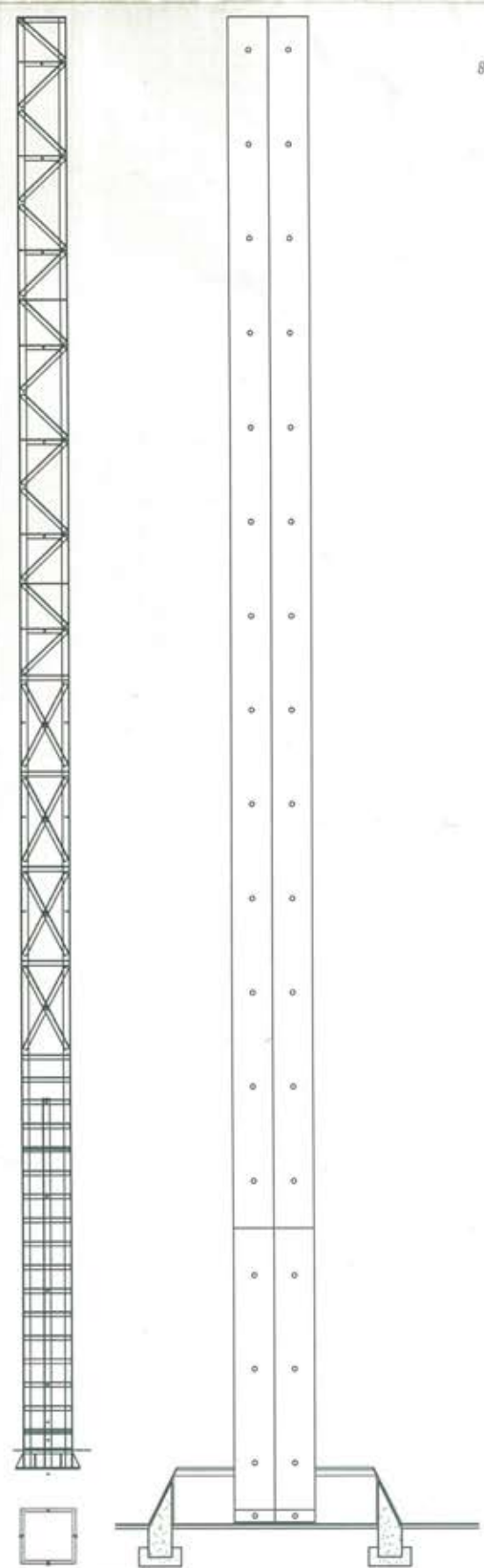
↑ Personifying the sacrifice and bloodshed, the etched names of the martyrs glint in red.





† The composite structure of the tower is a framework with M S at the core, clad with two layers of toughened glass in a carefully chosen shade of red.

of art, engineering and architecture. Soaring to the height of 15m, it is grounded against the cantilevered stretch and unexpected windloads. The potent intent and poetic of the inert volume relies on the precise shade of red, an exacting exercise that the architect undertook to ensure that the analogy to the sacrifice is established. As the sky darkens, a flush of light washes the tower from the base – its form gently dissolving into night. “The design of a war memorial encumbered in historical tensions



† TOWER: SECTION

and sentiments of both pride and loss along with the varied expectations of the families of the martyr's is easily one of the toughest challenge for a designer; and to get it right, perhaps the most fulfilling. The design of this war memorial proved to be an emotionally intense and challenging task as it had to pass on the message to the next generation and result in an engaging and distinctive public space which encourages interaction, attention, thought and question at the same time”, states Rahul.





In light of this perspective, the choreographed spaces move from being sculptural to the perception of a public space in the cultural landscape of Cuncolim. Across a median crossover as a parallel sequence of events, are white frames of play equipment in a huge pit of white sand levelled below to the left of the pulpit-like path, and just ahead, lies a silent corner by the day which comes to life at night as a fountain arena. Its adjacent angular walls bear plates signifying and detailing the history of the war. The site, thus halved and painted with a variant so dynamic, does not assume altogether a different fabric from the memorial. From its overlaps, a new and particular rhythm is enlivened wherein visitors have accepted the plurality in multiple juxtapositions. They have made it their own – as children who throng the play area and splash in the fountains, as parents who explain the history of the martyrdom to them from the plaques, as families of the freedom fighters who come to reminisce and introspect. "This happiness, the enthusiasm and the glee on the face on every child is the true and ultimate purpose of the memorial; to express liberation and freedom", says Rahul.

A filtration plant is set within the site which recycles the water for the fountains, for the shrubs and a bamboo planter in the northern corner beyond the walls and its voids. The wall framing the length of the site, and ultimately the Tower, is an expanse of black mirror amplifying the context. A reduct of the formal gesture, it reflects glimpses of a balance – of emotions, of two kinds of complexities, of a resonance between the past and the future, of a closed yet contextual, a reticent yet live space in the vicinity of the everyday.

In an approach so visceral, the Memorial makes one see that it is absurd to conform to the narrow possibilities of a programme. There is, of course, a theoretical basis and history to place-making as well, but complementing that, there are the other pedagogical parts and other disciplines that feed into it. And it is not necessarily about those disciplines; it is about the process and the possibilities one is rewarded with. Summing up his intent, Rahul Deshpande says, "The memorial itself holds the promise the countless have died protecting – a liberated future for the generations to come. It is liberation in the truest sense of the word."



<sup>1</sup> The children's play area inset a contrasting yet lively parallel sequence of events.



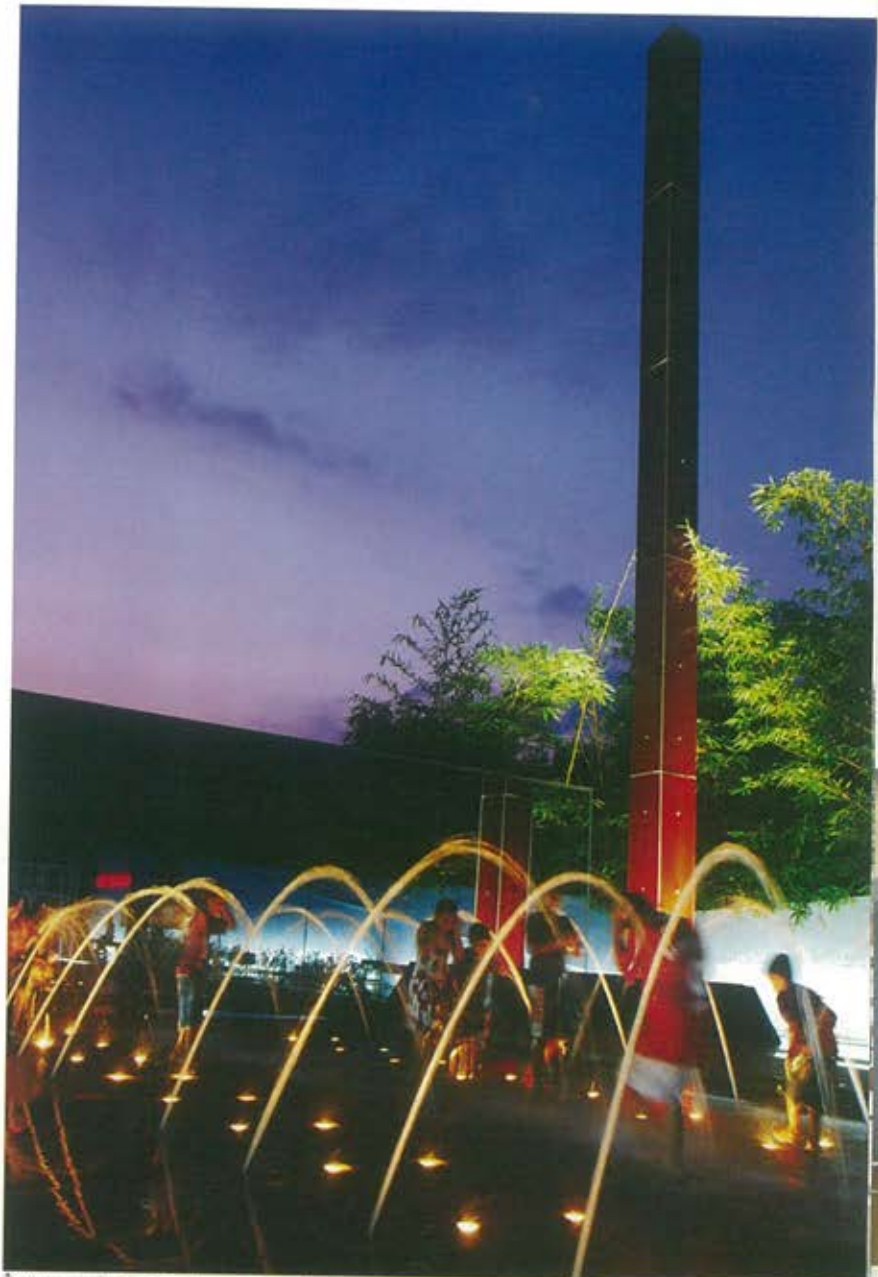


#### FACT FILE:

Project	: Cuncolim Freedom Fighters' Memorial
Location	: Goa
Architect	: Rahul Deshpande
Client	: Goa State Urban Development Corporation (GSUDA)
Structural Design Team	: Rahul Deshpande, Anil Palekar, Archana Mahambare Karpe and Nisarg Gaude
Project Management	
Consultancy	: Rahul Deshpande and Ranjeesh Gopal
Electrical Consultant	: Castellino Consultant
Prime Contractor	: Shrika Constructions
Area of Development	: 700sqm
Appx. Cost of Project	: ₹73 lakhs
Year of Completion	: June 2009
Construction Duration	: 9 months



† The background of the liberation movement is etched on a plaque on the southern set of white walls.



† Children playing in the fountain, emblematising the truest sense of liberation that the design seeks to manifest.





† The materiality and diaphanous form of the roof sculpturally identify with the rain-laden clouds surrounding the hills of the Western Ghat.



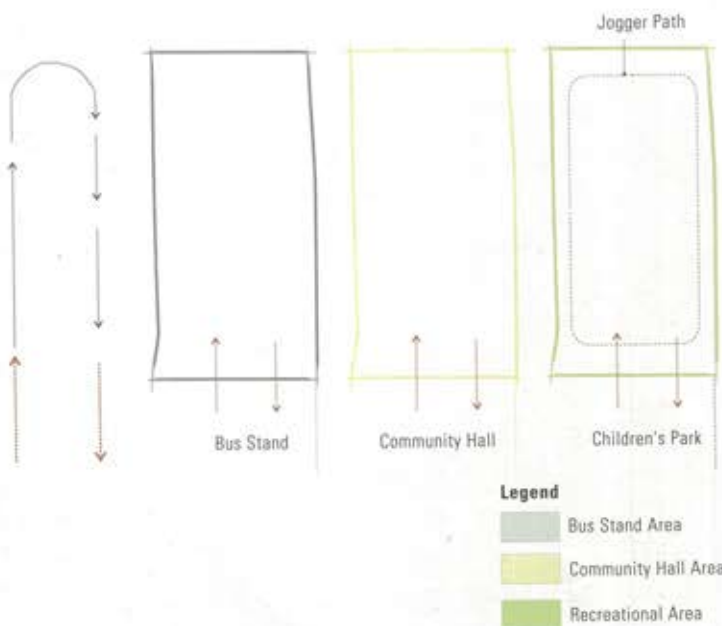
† LOCATION OF THE SITE

### Valpoi Bus Stand & Community Hall

The value of doing more is necessarily not esoteric. And in doing so, it seems as an idea of counteracting – architecture that is not subjugated by self-constructed conditions but as an active response to the realities. As a sacrosanct approach, the Valpoi Bus Stand & Community Hall arrives at a defining moment. Imbued with material consideration, like the Memorial, it is a microcosm that can be read in many ways. This totality is seldom concerned, in any crucial manner, with matters of form or analyses of allusions. This idea then takes architecture beyond its isolated being, deeper into the conditions of its existence.

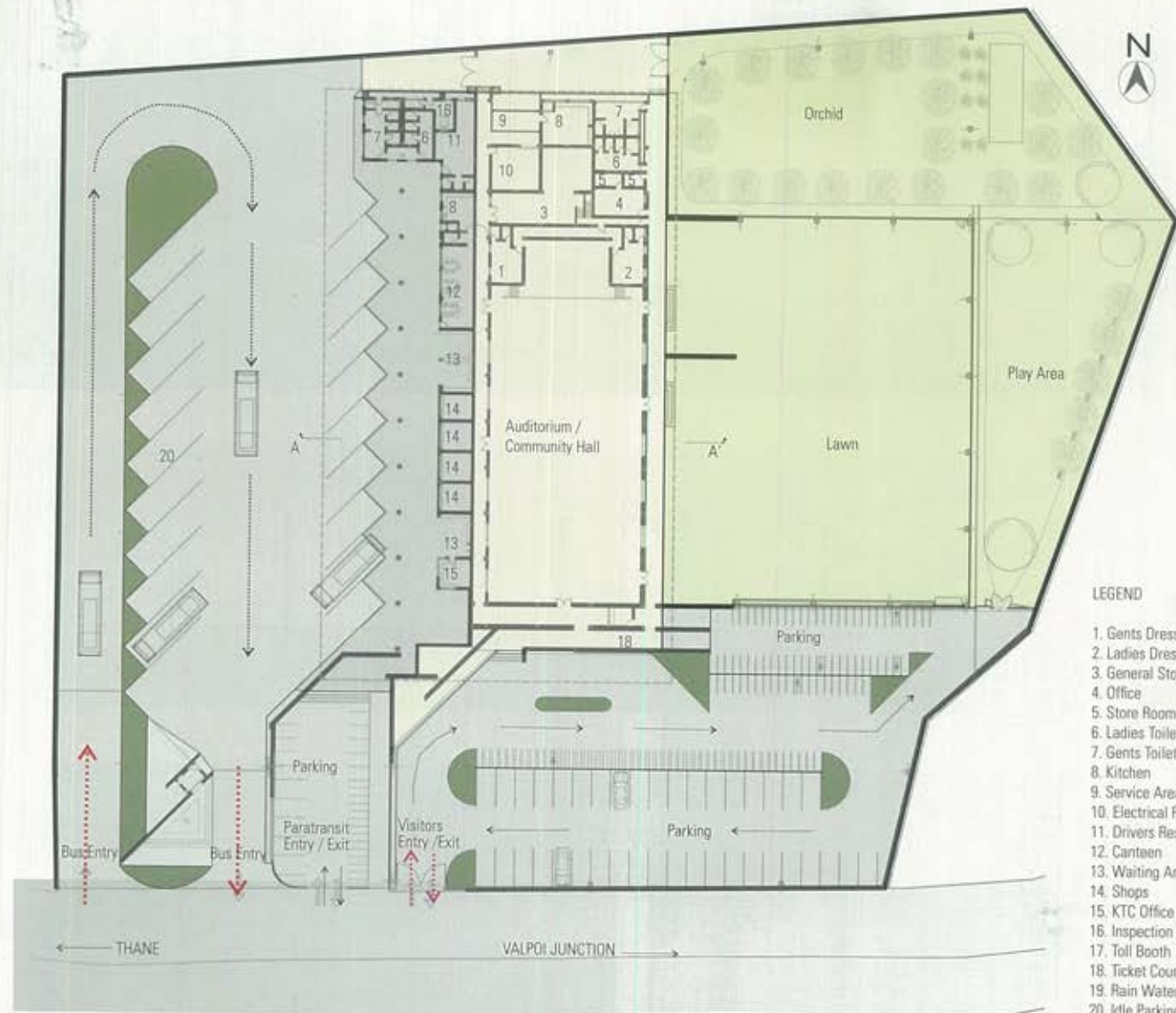
The narrow roads of the Western Ghats, lead to the town of Valpoi in Sattari Taluka of Goa. The enquiry was fundamental - the Government of Goa approached Rahul to design a multi-purposed communal space inclusive of a Bus Stand, a Community Hall, and a Children's Park with a Jogging Track. The design was thus proposed as a planimetric triptych, not to replace, but to generate an encounter of a building that is not only the core of a place but also its collective identity.

The scenic context of Valpoi receives an extensive 200 inches of rain annually and is frequently exposed to bouts of thunder and lightning. Against this idyllic backdrop, the Valpoi Bus Stand and the Community Hall, as an extension of it, emulates the sense of the wafting rain clouds against the mountain slopes. Externally, this is expressed as a seemingly afloat metal roof that is designed to crown the random rubble laterite stone walls in an allegorical symbolism. The austere composition of these angular planes of stark hues forms the imagery of the complex. In a serial and lineal organisation of built-up area of 2862 sqm and area of development over 17500sqm, the planning is a dichotomy of porosity and compactness. Functionally, it is connected in fragments of the three spatial activities – each co-opting a singular volume. As open and exploratory are the Parking, Lawns and the Play Area, the constructs of the Bus Stand and the Community Hall are as hermetic and closeted.



† ZONING PLAN





LEGEND

- 1. Gents Dress Room
- 2. Ladies Dress Room
- 3. General Store Room
- 4. Office
- 5. Store Room
- 6. Ladies Toilet
- 7. Gents Toilet
- 8. Kitchen
- 9. Service Area
- 10. Electrical Room
- 11. Drivers Rest Room
- 12. Canteen
- 13. Waiting Area
- 14. Shops
- 15. KTC Office
- 16. Inspection Officers' Room
- 17. Toll Booth
- 18. Ticket Counter Room
- 19. Rain Water Harvesting Tank
- 20. Idle Parking Bays

PLAN

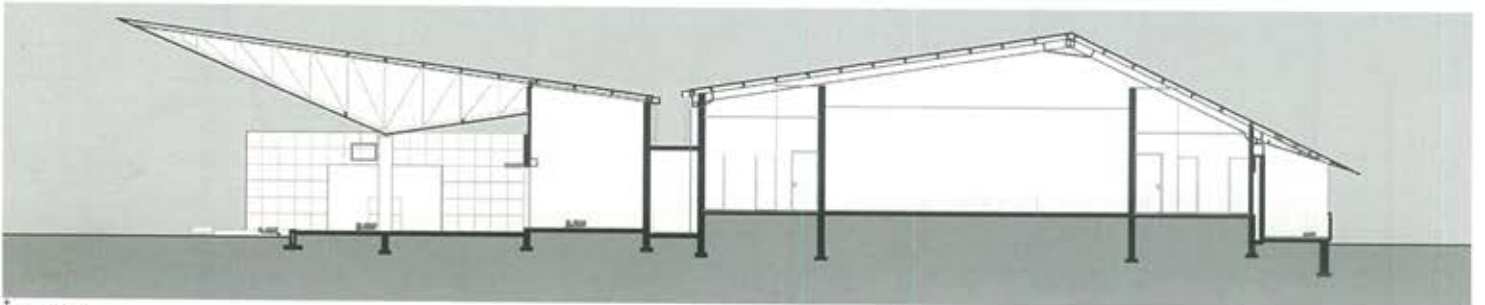


The westward portion of the site is allocated for the Bus Stand - accessibility for the buses, waiting areas, offices and its transient parking zones.





† The inconspicuous lighting enhances the roof's expression as a stroke of lighting.



† SECTION



† (L & R) The functionalities of the bus stand, such as the waiting areas and the security cabin are subtly manifested in the restrained texture of the design.

The westward edge of the site is positioned as the Bus Stand, with sleek and secure laterite walls retreated against a widespread clearing for the accessibility of the buses. In its radical angles, coherence is achieved. As an applique and rhetorical component, these walls slant and convolute to characterise profiles of entrances, the security cabin and supports the columnar grid waiting areas. Progressively, a concise zoning such as the waiting areas, shops, canteens, drivers' resting areas, unfolds wherein perambulation of the users and buses are carefully separated.

The entrance of the Community Hall opens out into its individual parking. A rush of small steps ushers one inside through the latent entry. Lightly scaled in a rectangular disposition, the plan of the Hall is composed of the auditorium and generalised services such as the offices, storage, kitchen area and electrical room. Sombre laterite-clad funnel-shaped corridors within the Complex, flow from

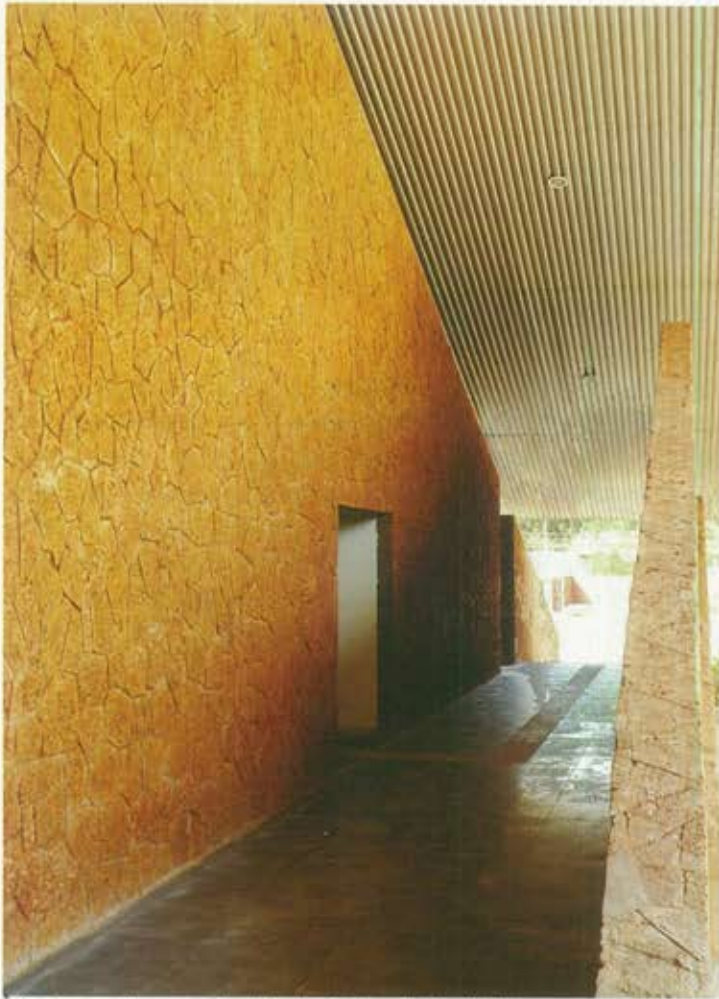
the Bus Stand into the stillness of the auditorium. Amidst the bold use of white majorly, earthen hues and a variance of blue, the elementary aesthetic of the interiors can be manifested into any usage. Staggered planes trace the outline of the roof, concealing the lights and air conditioning ventilators. A layering of space is constructed hereon – openings of doors and windows pan out to the grassy lawns outside, and the threshold between the two spaces is ambiguously defined. With flexibility and duality infused into the space, it emerges as a physical environment that can adapt to the diversity of the community.

As a continuous extension to this green landscape, the Children's park to the east and the Orchid to the north assert their presence congenial to the humility of the place. Slightly recessed, the triangular sanded Children's Park deviates from the monastic quality of the rest of the design. Detailed to retain its evident tactility





The exposed laterite walls, defining the spaces, provide a sense of direction to the visitor.



Spacious corridors encased within the laterite walls lead to the community hall.



Simply curated, the interior materiality is flexible so as to transform as required.



The auditorium of the Community Hall





† The roof surges higher to mark a sense of arrival for commuters in the Bus Stand while acting as an insulation against the weather.



† In faultless proportions, the roof is equivocal in investigation of form, expression, material and detailing.

Is it about the evocative, the reminiscent or the expressive? Within the multiplicity of its nature, it emphasises on the importance of thinking of all three fundamentals at a holistic scale, including social and cultural dimensions. While Rahul Deshpande's interest lies in this shift in approach, his concern has catalysed and extracted prolific meaning for public spaces or a more pronounced scale of urbanity. At outset, if one looks past the metaphors, the connection between the idealised order of architecture and of its venturing beyond its responsibility reveals the process of its own becoming. It stems from the architect's own ongoing crusade, for public transport and more, not just in delineating project requirements. With the crises that accompanies the hollowness and ineffectuality of the conventional system of 'problem solving' practice as a whole, the design of the Memorial and Bus Stand & Community Hall, brings into play a conversation for generating architecture not just as a response but as a subject that begets one. Can we conjure a whole landscape out of a single physical process? How does one recover meaning from that landscape? Somewhere in between the answers to these concerns, lies the architecture of the two projects, as a fulfilment of a philosophical quest – of a remembrance and of a transition. ■



† The scale, sensitivity to its context and composition are co-mingled and reshaped to refine a new architectural language.





↑ The Community Hall opens out into lush green lawns.



↑ The Children's Park and trail for the joggers.



through restraint of material palette in paved walkways and raised plinths inside the play zone, it celebrates an interplay of colours and liveliness. A winding walkway of around half a kilometre, in dialogue with the play area and the orchid, doubles up as a Jogger's Park. The existing site terrain had a hundred mango trees and in a votive gesture, the Orchid's trees are planted as a guerdon.

Rooted in an extraordinary sense of ordinariness, the architectural ethic of the Complex identifies ineffably to the place. With referential adherences to the site being a mining quarry previously, the mounds of laterite are translated to the walls, and the roof enveloping the construct, closely in spirit to its lightning-sparked sky especially in the figurative lighting at night, shapes a language of synergetic and intricate spatial forms. The sectional stacking of the conventional trussed roof framed from galvanised metal sheets is oriented to induce rainwater harvesting towards the middle. Conservation of this rainwater enables supply to the Orchid and for other utilities. Sculptural and suspended, the roof is illustrative of sensitivity of a making and materiality coupled with a scalar objective.

The artistic motility of the roof, the intimacy of spaces and sociability of the programme mediates this quest of changing the perception of a subject and its relationship to an architectural object. It negotiates continuity, drawn from a response from the users to propagate a situational building to a reciprocal one, to allow their way of life to personify a space. For them, architecture becomes a spontaneous process and receptive to their familiar surroundings. When talking about this, Rahul mentions how the children are intrigued by the Community Hall and want to play in the locked places. "The journey is more important than the destination" quotes Rahul Deshpande as he explains the concept behind the design. He says, "This was made possible by offering its users the scope of visual anticipation at the possibility that the next will be better than the last; by indulging the concept of variety into the design and while going to the place one can really sink into the feeling it imparts on them." And thus, grows the architecture of Valpoi Bus Stand perceptually in an incremental way – from a transient infrastructure, to a participation in public life, to a journey.

#### FACT FILE:

Project	: Valpoi Bus Stand & Community Hall
Location	: Goa
Architect	: Rahul Deshpande
Client	: Goa State Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (GSIDC)
Structural Design Team	: Rahul Deshpande, Anil Palekar, Bipin Chanekar, Archana Mahambare Karpe & Nisarg Gaude
Project Management Consultancy	: Rahul Deshpande & Ranjeesh Gopal
Prime Contractor	: Shilpi Constructions (Civil & Electrical Works), R S Lawande (Acoustic Works), Aprant Motors Pvt Ltd (HVAC), Ohm Engineers & Electricals Pvt Ltd (External Electrical work)
Approx Estimate of Project	: ₹7 crores
Year of Completion	: November 2012