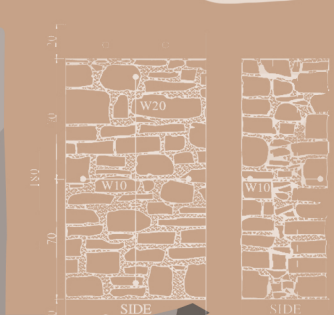


NOTE: USE EITHER THROUGH STONE OR WOODEN DOWEL.



# 10. Soldering Through Stone.

Conversation with **Sreeram Rohith.**

*Kalpa, Vol.04, 2023, pp. 66-68*

## **Intent :**

Sreeram Rohith, explores the use of stone in architecture, delving into its properties and aesthetic contributions. Advocating for tactile and expressive experiences, he emphasises the importance of selecting the appropriate type of stone based on its unique properties. As a stone ambassador, Mr. Rohith aims to raise awareness about the material's historical sustainability and its potential in art, architecture, and construction. With an engineer's insight and perspective, Rohith believes that he can be a catalyst to revolutionise the use of stone and its applications, through innovative technologies. The questionnaire inquired into the works of the acclaimed artist and stone as a timeless material in architecture.

## **How would you describe your understanding of stone as a unique artistic medium, and what attributes of stone do you find particularly captivating?**

From my understanding and exposure, there are many other factors connected to understanding this that go beyond architecture. It's about industrialization, market economics, and the significant role played by consumers and their purchasing choices. It also involves understanding where the craft of bamboo begins and ends and what it's precisely competing with. If we were to compare the use of plastic mugs and cups to bamboo, we need to consider the production of these materials. Plastic products are mass-produced thanks to industrialization, while bamboo hasn't seen a standardised method of reproducing products of the same quality in a mechanised way. So, we're comparing more than just the possibilities and properties of the material; we're comparing handcrafts to industrialised products, including factors like durability and cultural lifestyle.

The first big challenge arises because you can go to a market and purchase a steel section of a particular specification from a specific source, and you're very sure about getting exactly what you asked for. However, that's not the case with bamboo, which becomes the single most significant reason why it's not easy to start working with this material. For us, it was crucial to understand our sources and how we can treat bamboo to increase its longevity. Knowing the right species and the right source is a 50% game-changer; the rest lies in how we use it on-site. It depends on the approaches of the marketing cooperative. We allow for some intuitive changes, a different process of reading our buildings compared to standard drawings. There is room left for improvisation on-site based on the behaviour of the material. This process makes us feel more connected to the construction activity.

## **How would you describe your understanding of stone as a unique artistic medium, and what attributes of stone do you find particularly captivating?**

Stones are known for their variety and inherent ability to tell a story. They present a comprehensive image that is

not only visually appealing but can also be experienced through the sense of touch., which makes it more unique than other forms of art expression. Stone designing involves a lot of creativity at minute levels across different textures; I particularly find the colours, formations, and textures more captivating about stones and believe they contribute together to create a great design for any space.

## **From your perspective, how does the use of stone in architectural design contribute to the artistic expression and aesthetics of a space?**

Stone designing has been an active interest of modern designing techniques for quite some time now; people prefer having stone flooring or accent walls to make certain spaces stand out, and in terms of longevity, stones have to offer. Also, since stones are natural material, they age very well, and it becomes a lot easier to wither, carve, or work upon them in different styles.

You can often find accent walls made up of stones in office areas, lobbies, or living rooms, giving a more aesthetic look to the space due to the colours and formations on it. Stones quarried across various geography differ, and their texture and colour properties make them more aesthetic in terms of the architectural design for a space.

## **Could you explain the different types of stone you work with and what distinguishes one type from another in terms of composition and characteristics?**

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***How do modern designers perceive the revitalization of stone in today's world, considering its historical significance and the increasing recognition it's gaining, leading to mass production?***

Using stones in architectural space is not a new concept and dates long back with a historical significance. Ages ago, people used stones to create sustainable homes, temples, forts, and other structural arrangements that have withstood the test of time. To give the same artistry feel and appeal, modern designers have recalled the concept in a contemporary way to create aesthetic environments. In fact, even if you set apart stone designing, stones are widely used in kitchen platforms and stair flooring due to their durability and nature, which make them of wide use.

With more artistic opportunities in stones, the concepts of accent walls and the use of stones in architectural space have boomed with the acceptance of aesthetic trends, and people are more interested in giving a stand-out look to their space.

***In the context of stones' resurgence, how do designers balance preserving traditional techniques with embracing contemporary innovations to create unique and relevant art pieces?***

Using stone designing in architectural spaces is a clever idea, giving a more natural look through accent walls, whether interiors or exteriors, or around subjective spaces like pool areas, lobbies, and more.

Designers can constantly innovate traditional techniques by creating different structural formations and crafting at various levels. Recent designs include creating formations that make the subjective space directly or indirectly contrastingly, differing in appeal and appearance, while traditional usage of stone designing was to convey messages through art.

***How would you establish sustainable tenets of stone?***

Stones are largely overlooked when it comes to sustainability and eco-friendliness. We often come across videos that show green labelling of recycled plastic, wooden structures, and a palette of sustainable and eco-friendly materials, while stones qualify equally or more in terms of longevity and life. Take our heritage structures that are carved out of huge mountains or use certain stone materials quarried from the earth that still stand strong.

Stones also have a wide application in architectural design, ranging from beautiful interior walls to exterior cladding that leaves a statement in your space. The recent modern design trends also show the use of stones in designing interior items like furniture or more authentic-looking art pieces

***In light of changing consumer preferences and sustainable practices, have these challenges led to a re-evaluation of vernacular materials' position in contemporary design?***

Of course, the industry is changing rapidly, and there are challenges to vernacular architecture and techniques, considering the changing landscapes of Mother Nature. But if we are thinking of long-term sustenance, contemporary vernacular design is still one of the better options, where the consumer's preferences are dynamic and slightly leaning towards structures that give an aesthetic look and feel to their space while also closer to the natural elements of the earth over plasticity and toxins that certain ready material holds.

***How has stone managed to retain its relevance, and have there been any distinctive strategies employed to re-establish its significance?***

Stones have been used for a long period to create an architectural history that stands in front of us. But years before, consumers started using other building materials such as concrete and iron casting to give their homes a softer texture and easy-to-build application. While only the exteriors have been widely affected, consumers still prefer using stones in their kitchens, flooring, walls, and other areas where they need more durability and strength along with an appeal, which is also why it has managed to retain its relevance.

The more modern use of stone to create art pieces in interior and exterior cladding and other significant areas has increased its popularity and given a new perspective on using stones.

***Could you provide examples of instances where stone as a material has reasserted its dominance as a favoured medium, whether in art, design, or architecture, and how has this influenced perceptions of its value?***

More generically, stones have reasserted the dominance in certain architectural spaces where consumers want to relate to nature or create such an environment. Of course, there are stone-designed artefacts that are usually placed in libraries or reception areas, living rooms, or other areas where you want the space to feel more natural. One of the most popular instances of stones is on the wall, be it limestone, slate, or even carved granite or marble for both exterior and interior walls.

Practically speaking, using stone designing, stone art, or walls can leave a long-lasting visual impact on the one viewing it. In modern architecture it can be viewed as people considering a part of vernacular architecture as a part of their design rather than the whole due to bigger buildings and apartment-style systems. Consumers are relating back to nature by adding such small fragments in their modern design, be it in the form of art or a part of the design itself.

***In your opinion, what has been the role of technology as a discipline as well as an application in moulding better designs/products?***

Of course, with modernity, the use of technology has impacted the entire process of designing and moulding better products. With high-end software, designers can create guided 2D and 3D artwork and reduce the complexity. Also, such software provides you with simulations and helps in making the precise edges and knowing if such a design is possible with the designer's perception. For me, it becomes relatively easier to use the software to create such designs as I come from the same background as an engineer, and it gives an added advantage over most of the others who are new to the interface. Of course, there is a scope for changes, and others can adapt to the technology, but I can save that time through my given expertise, and the process becomes a lot easier.

In addition, not just the software but also technological advances in the manual inspection of the stones make it easier to decide the quality of the stone and its other characteristics before considering it in use. With the right pace and growing technology, the industry is rapidly changing, and experts like us are truthfully being catalysts.

***Lastly, how would you consider yourself an ambassador of change in the growing, ever-evolving field of stone in design?***

As one of the ambassadors for stone design, I believe I can be a catalyst for change and innovation in this field. My expertise can help in setting the right use of stones, not just for the appeal but also in more sustainable design frameworks. Every day, we spend hours together to bring more life out of the stones by working on new finishes, designs, and details over the medium. Our workshop is equipped with the right kind of machinery where the team works to achieve the best out of the stones.

For the past 12 years, we have been functioning on mastering multiple textures and finishes such as Riverbed, Leather, Blast 57, Rupture, Satin Leather, among other prominent finishes that we can now commonly find in the industry standards. Some of the other notable textures that we have worked on are Cypress, Stencil, Denim, Concave and Convex, and Flute with a groove.

I believe what is more important is to serve the right education and awareness of why one should be using such vernacular material in their everyday life and how consumers and designers can get innovative with its use, which requires a team like ours. It is also important to stick with the changing consumer trends with how the stones are put to use, and if there are more sustainable and appealing uses of stones, they should be made more adaptable to the global audience with the right kind of expertise promoting them.

***Interviewee's profile :***



***Sreeram Rohith***

*Sreeram Rohith is a skilled professional whose passion lies in crafting unique textures on various stones, turning them into works of art for homes, office and other spaces involving facade walls and landscaping projects, with a primary focus on outdoor stone finishes that exude luxury in design. Notable projects that showcase his mastership include Hospet Mane, an award-winning project known for its captivating design with intricate stonework and Amita Rasa, a breathtaking destination wedding venue nestled in the foothills of Nandi. With a unique blend of technical understanding and artistic sense derived from his passion and technical education, he aims to redefine the possibilities of stone design, one texture at a time.*

*Email: [Ingranitesblr@gmail.com](mailto:Ingranitesblr@gmail.com)*

*Social media handles: [@sreeram\\_\\_rohith](https://www.instagram.com/sreeram__rohith)*