DECOLONISING REPRESENTATIONS
The subcultures of drawing

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Every image drawn, rendered, or photographed should tell us a story—a story of its time, situation, culture, and spirit that engages the viewer in a captivating narrative. This narrative evokes emotions, memories, and experiences while remaining simple, aesthetic, and easy to understand. As a seminal approach, The style adopted by our Architectural Practice visualizations in context reflects an intentional shift away from conventional Western representational methods. It embraces a more democratized process, responding to the evolving subculture of architectural drawings and representations, which prioritizes inclusivity and contextual relevance and eventually emerges as a subculture of Drawing and Representation in the sub-continent. This ethos of visual democratization resonates

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Durgabari

with the works of architects such as B.V. Doshi and Charles Correa's architectural visualizations, which are deeply rooted in Indian knowledge systems, represent a departure from Western drawing conventions. Doshi's works, such as Sangath and Aranya Low-Cost Housing, reflect traditional Indian concepts of space, climate, and community. His sketches blend organic forms with regional construction techniques, capturing the fluid interaction between architecture and cultural practices. For instance, the layout of Aranya mimics Indian village clusters, emphasizing community living, while his sketches for IIM Bangalore channel ancient educational models like Nalanda, fostering open, collaborative spaces that integrate nature. These visualizations move away from photorealism, instead focusing on storytelling and the emotional connection between people and their environment, aligning with the subculture of architectural drawing that seeks to democratize representation by making it more inclusive and contextually resonant.

Similarly, Correa's drawings, such as those for Jawahar Kala Kendra

and Belapur Housing, incorporate Indian metaphysical principles like Vastu Shastra and cosmic geometry. His visualizations use diagrams and symbolic representations, as seen in Jawahar Kala Kendra, where the building's layout is based on the Navagraha mandala. His sketches prioritize cultural and environmental sensitivity, reflecting traditional Indian urban planning principles that emphasize organic growth. By integrating indigenous art forms and narratives into his designs, Correa's visualizations communicate cultural identity and spiritual symbolism. Both architects' methods reflect the ongoing evolution of architectural representation in India, aligning with a broader subculture that rejects conventional Western methods, embracing regional and vernacular forms that resonate with local contexts. In alignment with these principles, the technique as a practice, we employ—Hybrid Diagramming Montage— that combines traditional manual drawing with digital montage. Hybrid, because of the negotiation that exists in the image, within the sacrosanct of manual drawing and innovative digital montage. Hybrid, also because it juxtaposes modern

archviz trends with traditionalism as the technique is inspired by the minute details and characters of regional and vernacular representational art forms in India. It draws heavily in the form of style, palette, and aesthetics from the Mughal Miniature paintings and the Pichwai paintings of Maharashtra as it attempts to de-colonize and frame the time, space, and culture of the built and the unbuilt in picturesque imagery that aims to resolve the split between proponents of traditional forms of representations, architectural drawings, and immersive expressions. It attempts at becoming a negotiated image of the situation between line and color, between drawing and production, between manual and digital means of working in order to galvanise several methods and elements of architectural and artistic representation. Unlike hyper-realistic renderings, which focus on replicating and amplifying reality to the highest and sometimes an impossible degree of the overall, this hybrid technique however, serves as an antithesis to that, instead relying extensively on picturesque imagery of a situation, expressed as a collage, focusing on detail. Hence, with the images

in context, one can observe how the drawing combines elements and characters of what works best from the overlaps of intent, medium & methods. Through an exchange between these entities, emerges the process. This hybrid image is further digitally curated to capitalize on the qualities of multiple media.

The style adopted for the visualizations of the projects in context hence focuses on a technique that uses a hybrid system of simple humble drawing and collage as a means of conveyance. The simplicity of the technique focuses on framing the Architecture as a character in the middle of a conversation. The conversation being, its relationship with the context, time & Users. The first image is of Durgabari, a Durga temple for communities in a village town of Assam. The representational elements of the visualization hence attempt to freeze that spirit of celebration, the context of sub-urbanity, and the culture of the way the Temple converses with its situation and vice-versa using the technique. The temple is visualised as the central spatial protagonist in the story of a carnival in the site. Secondly, for Moortighor, Urban Revival of the Kumartuli Idol Maker's Colony, using the same Hybrid Diagramming Montage, the image intends to reflect and translate the core intent of

the design in one single frame : "To dignify the dwelling of the idol makers". Adopting a local stylistic approach inspired by character designs of the legendary Jamini Roy, the visualisation overlays these characters in an Architectural setting. The third image, imagines Smaarak, a multi-faith cemetery in Thane, located at the outskirts of the city on the banks of the Ulhas river. The imagery attempts to capture the project as a world of its own. It embodies the cemetery as a utopian vision, with its own language of form and aesthetic, that delivers a traditionally rooted futuristic speculation of death. The hybrid method emerges as a negotiation between line and color, manual and digital, and traditional and contemporary techniques. Unlike hyper-realistic renderings, which amplify reality to an often exaggerated degree, this technique relies on detailed, picturesque imagery expressed through collage. The result is an image that seamlessly integrates multiple media,framing architecture not just as an object but as a participant in a broader cultural and contextual conversation. Through this hybridization, our visualizations serve as a tool for democratizing architectural representation, offering a narrative that is accessible, culturally resonant, and evocative.

Ujjayant Bhattacharyya is an architect and educator. He is the co-founder of STHAAN, a design studio recognised for its research-led and contextually grounded approach to architecture. His academic journey spans Piloo Mody College of Architecture and Chandigarh College of Architecture, with further international studio experiences at the Vāstu Shilpā Foundation under B.V. Doshi and RCR Arquitectes in Barcelona. He has taught under Prof. Neelkanth Chhaya at the Avani Institute of Design, and currently tutors the Housing Studio at RV College of Architecture, Bengaluru. At STHAAN, Ujjayant has co-led projects that have been exhibited and awarded nationally and internationally — including A Flux in Ayodhya, selected by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India for the India Art Architecture & Design Biennale 2023. The studio was recently awarded the Ultratech Latitude Design Excellence Award for Drawing as Craft, and has previously won the IIA Best Young Practice Award, the World Architecture Award, and was featured in the DesignXDesign 20under35 showcase for emerging practices.

Priyanka Mukherjee is an architect and researcher. She is the co-founder of STHAAN, a design studio known for its thoughtful, research-driven work that bridges drawing, memory, and lived experience. A distinction graduate from Piloo Mody College of Architecture, her thesis on Linguistic Museums received national recognition and laid the foundation for her continued exploration of language and architecture. She has worked with ASG Associates and with CnT Architects under Ar. Prem Chandavarkar, contributing to a wide range of urban, residential, and institutional projects. At STHAAN, Priyanka co-leads projects that foreground community, storytelling, and the craft of drawing. She co-led A Flux in Ayodhya, which was officially selected by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India for the India Art Architecture & Design Biennale 2023. The studio's work has been widely celebrated — receiving the Ultratech Latitude Design Excellence Award for Drawing as Craft, the IIA Best Young Practice Award, the World Architecture Award, and inclusion in DesignXDesign 20under35, which highlights emerging voices in Indian architecture and design.

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Smaarak