

PLURAL VOICES : SINGULAR PLACE

A Review of The Making of a Campus: IIM Bangalore
by Kiran Keswani

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Not all architecture is spoken through blueprints—some reside in the voices of those who have passed through, paused within, and peopled the place. This is the spirit that animates Kiran Keswani’s *The Making of a Campus: IIM Bangalore*. At its core, the book is a compelling and meticulously researched account of the inception and evolution of one of India’s most iconic educational institutions.



Narrative : Metanarrative

Keswani brings out the complexities of the IIMB campus design by employing a metanarrative structure coupled with a reflective tone. The campus is presented not merely as a physical environment but as a living philosophy—an embodiment of intellectual and cultural aspiration shaped by openness, continuity, and inward reflection. The book weaves together history, design intent, and evolving outcomes, framing the campus’s identity across time —past, present, and imagined futures.

At its inception, B.V. Doshi, does emerge as a visionary who intuited the kind of learning environment India needed. With many prominent architects such as Achyut Kanvinde, Sanjay Mohe, P N Medappa contributing to the design of the evolving campus, the narrative is not singular and not that of the architect(s) alone. Keswani layers the voices of stakeholders, faculty, students, administrators, architects, and other users, that recognizes how lived experiences often evolve from original design intent. In doing so, she disrupts the conventional architect-as-author paradigm, offering a

more democratic and participatory reading of architecture.

While most institutional architecture books focus on master planning, typologies, iconic design, and technical innovation, Keswani foregrounds how spaces are lived and felt—how corridors become social condensers, how silence and light shape behavior, how stone floors register footsteps as memory. This human-centered lens restores user agency and repositions architecture as an experiential, responsive practice.

The book frames the campus not only as built form but as a cultural artifact—deeply embedded in pedagogical values, institutional philosophy, urban ecology, material choices, and socio-spatial patterns.

The Campus as Urban Subculture

One of the compelling inquiries that this book invites, is whether the IIMB campus functions as a subculture within the fabric of urban Bangalore. With its meditative silences, stone colonnades, and deliberate openness to nature, the

campus stands in stark contrast to the city's fast-paced, vertical chaos. This way, does it become a counter-space—slow, inward, and contemplative?

Keswani portrays the campus as a dialogic space, where institutional mandates, architectural visions, and personal experiences intersect. This spatial ethos fosters a culture of reflection, discourse, and community-making—qualities rarely afforded by conventional urban space. The campus cultivates a shared language and identity among its users, forming a bounded *cultural microcosm* within the metropolis.⁶⁷

Each chapter suggests that the campus enacts an alternate urban imaginary—one that prioritizes slowness, meaning-making, and human connection. In this sense, IIMB becomes both a cultural enclave and a quiet critique of mainstream urbanism.

In Context with Other Institutional Narratives

Compared to other architectural monographs on institutional campuses, *The Making of a Campus* is notably subversive. *Building Ideas: An Architectural Guide to the University of Chicago* by Jay Pridmore takes a conventional chronological and

project-based approach, focusing on stylistic and planning aspects. *Learning from Harvard*, written by faculty, offers a more critical, comparative narrative focused on pedagogy and form-function. *Making of a Campus*, however, stands apart through its ethnographic and narrative-driven structure. Authored by a researcher and urban designer rather than an architect, it centers user agency, lived experience, and evolving meaning—resulting in a compelling reimagining of architectural storytelling.

A Quiet Subversion

Keswani's work is quietly radical. The use of the gerund “Making” in the title suggests an ongoing process—reflections in continuum. The book resists dominant architectural narratives of authorship, fixedness, and visual spectacle. Instead, it offers a participatory, pluralistic, and open-ended view of institutional architecture—as a framework for learning, cultural life, and collective memory.

In an age of hyper-aestheticized architectural culture, *The Making of a Campus* reclaims architecture as a practice of listening, care, and adaptation. This, perhaps, is its most powerful—and necessary—subversion.

Megala Gurumurthi is an architect, academician, and writer whose practice extends beyond the visual, to explorations through wordplay and poetry. Her work aims to contribute to the broader discourse on architecture through teaching, research, and interdisciplinary collaboration—situating design within a larger cultural and intellectual framework.

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