

PLATFORM

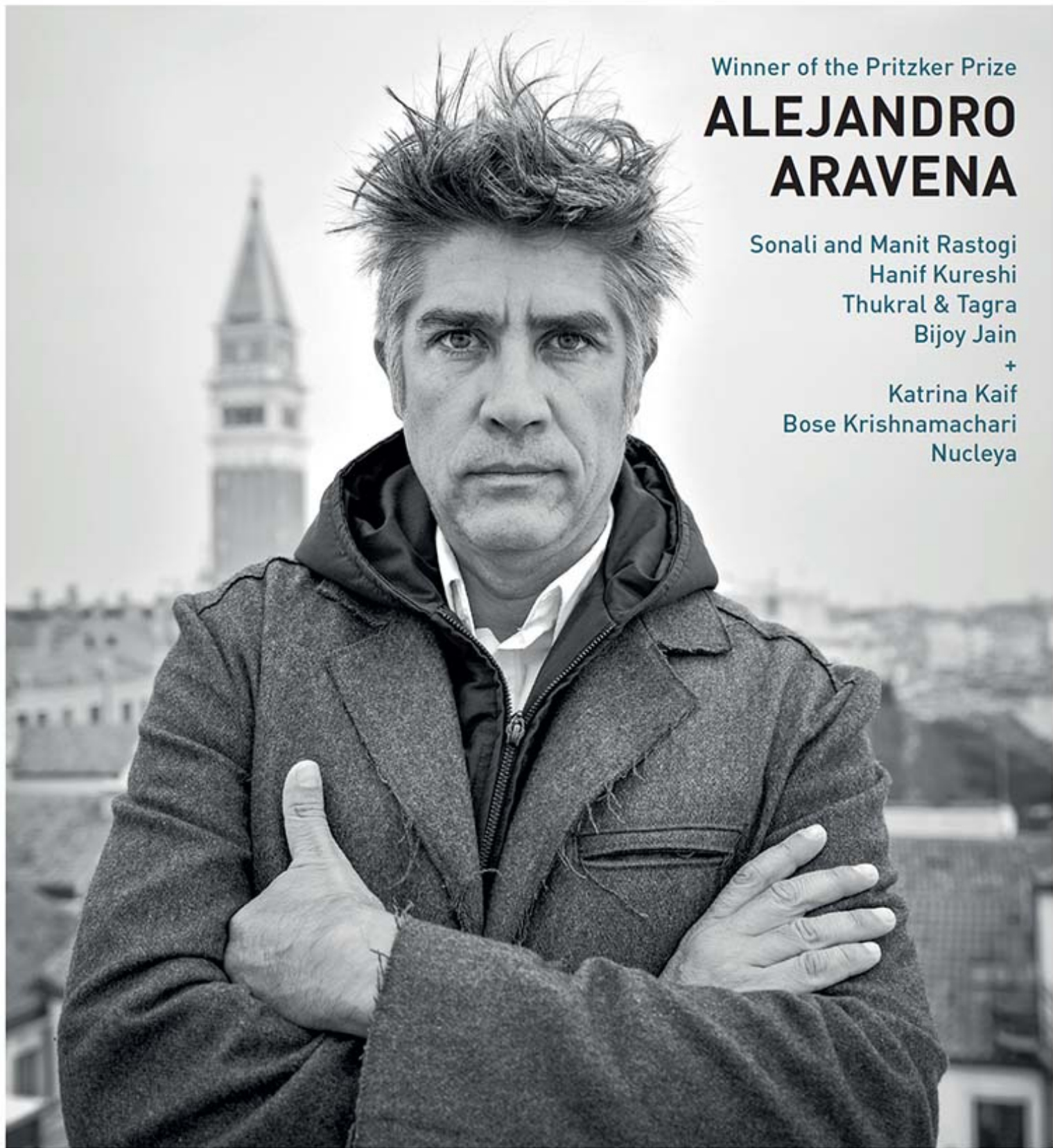
CREATIVE LIFESTYLE

Winner of the Pritzker Prize

ALEJANDRO ARAVENA

Sonali and Manit Rastogi
Hanif Kureshi
Thukral & Tagra
Bijoy Jain

+
Katrina Kaif
Bose Krishnamachari
Nucleya



[LISTED]

WHEN MAKERS TURN NEWSMAKERS

SONALI AND MANIT RASTOGI, HANIF KURESHI,
THUKRAL & TAGRA, BIJOY JAIN

Text Soumya Mukerji

INDIA HAS A LOT OF DESIGNS on the world this year. The *Le Corbusier Capitol Complex* in Chandigarh is now a World Heritage Site and British-Indian sculptor Anish Kapoor is among the recipients of this year's *Lennon Ono Grant For Peace*. The most powerful and iconic creators in the design space are hitting the headlines for some great projects that are underway, and each of them is doing it their own inimitable way. We explore some of these. While Bijoy Jain of *Studio Mumbai* takes handmade architecture and the craft of building at its most basic—bamboo, earth, stone and rope—to Melbourne at *MPavilion*, Thukral & Tagra breathe life and emotion into tiles at *Dubai Design Week* as curators of the India Pavilion. Meanwhile, *Morphogenesis* celebrates 20 years of leading contemporary Indian design and the original undergrounder, Hanif Kureshi comes of age as he creates a traffic jam on the walls of the *Facebook* office and unclogs the streets for participative art.

[LISTED]

Sonali and Manit Rastogi

Morphogenesis



Photography Sharad Shrivastav



How would you sum up the last 20 years of your practice?

We started *Morphogenesis* in 1996 as a two-person practice working out of a tiny garage, with no certainty of how the future would unravel, yet with complete clarity of purpose—to build a global discourse on contemporary Indian architecture and contribute to its definition.

We have always looked to the processes in nature—being responsive to context, maximum efficiency with minimum waste, closed loop—to define our work and organisational structure. At *Morphogenesis*, we feel most strongly about sustainability—sustainability not understood as purely energy, but environmental, social, cultural and financial sustainability. This has elicited varied architectural responses from us, which sit within the continuum of the history of the region as an investigation into sustainability through three pillars—passive design, resource optimisation and contextual identity.

It has been a fruitful, rewarding 20 years and *Morphogenesis* is now a collaborative of 130 people with our work spread across South Asia and Africa; the global recognition of our work cementing our faith in our vision. 'Learning' is *Morphogenesis*' strongest value, and each member learns and contributes to learning in equal measure.

How has your core philosophy and approach evolved over the years?

The vision stays the same yet the tools keep evolving, where experience adds to thought and the canvases grow larger. Also with all these years behind us, we shoulder a responsibility as thought leaders—it sits in a wider realm than the architecture that comes out of *Morphogenesis*. We push advocacy and education with our efforts on sustainable urbanism as in the case of the Nullahs of Delhi, contribution towards the formulation



[LISTED]



of GRIHA, India's own Green rating system and in improving Delhi's public spaces through work with the *Delhi Urban Arts Commission*.

Tell us about some of the most significant projects that have helped shape *Morphogenesis*.

Apollo Headquarters [1999] is memorable for being our first significant commission. It won us our first *Indian Institute of Architects'* award and gave us conviction in our chosen path. *Pearl Academy* [2008] won us India's first *World Architecture Festival Award*, as it caught the global imagination. Having to stretch resource optimisation to its limits due to budgetary constraints, especially through the use of using of regional ideas, it defined the direction of every project since. Ever since *Pearl*, we have also been able to rejuvenate and use traditional crafts to a contemporary format in almost all our work.

What are the projects you are currently working on and what's next?

We have a number of projects of great diversity going on at the moment. Particularly exciting are the ones exploring new geographies, hence new local contexts that push our understanding of sustainability, including a college in Bhutan and a residential township in Johannesburg. There is a public project under the umbrella of the *Namami Gange Yojana* where we have been commissioned to redesign the ghats and ancillary facilities along a significant stretch of the Ganga. We are also designing one of the world's largest office spaces for the *Surat Diamond Bourse*. We have been lucky to find patrons of the aesthetics of architecture who have allowed us to explore an architect's inherent sculptural inclination as in the case of the *Zydus Corporate Headquarters* currently being built in Ahmedabad.

