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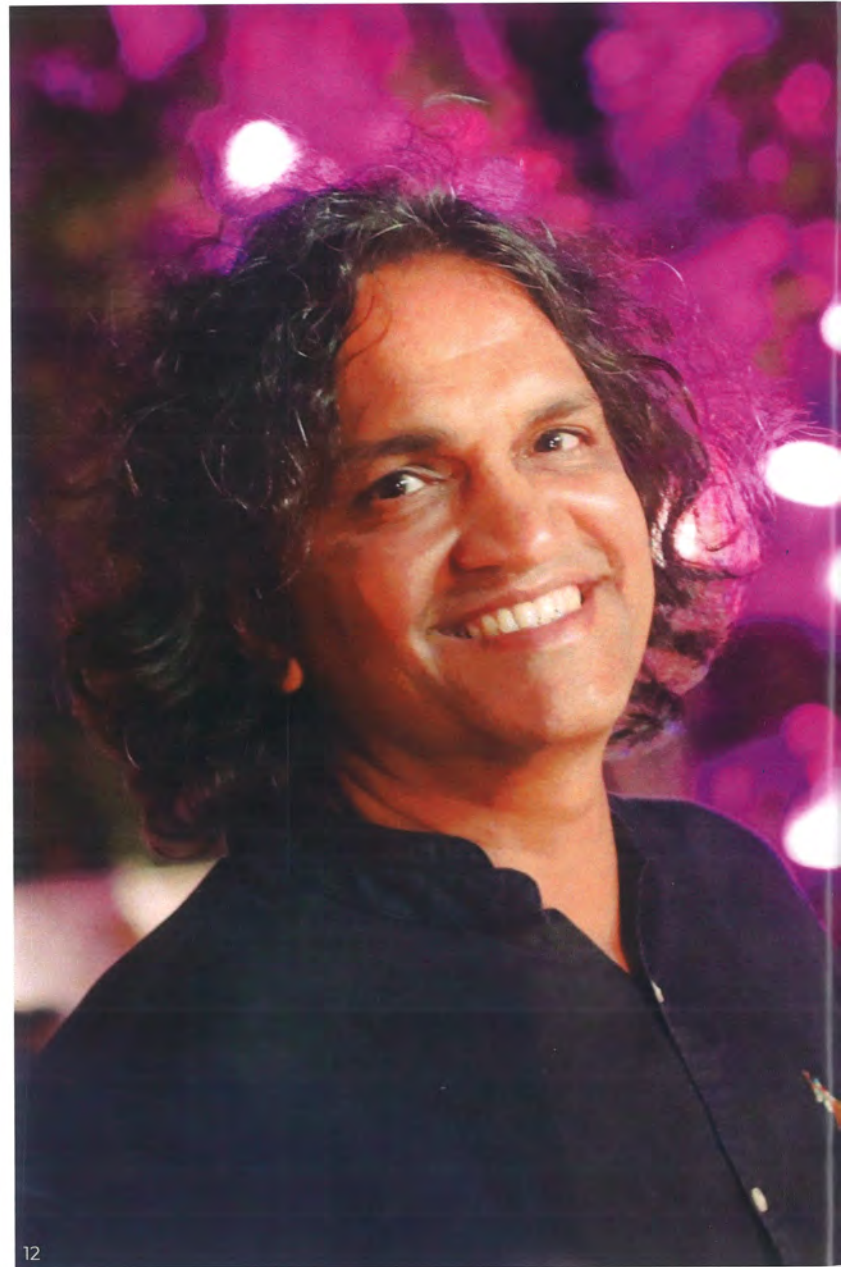
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IMMERSIVE EDUTAINMENT @ BHUJ

Regional Science Centre by INI Design Studio, Ahmedabad



AR. JAYESH HARIYANI

Founded by Ar. Jayesh Hariyani, INI Design Studio is an Ahmedabad-based global design practice centred on collaboration and guided by research, sustainability and integrated design delivery process. Featured here is INI's design of the Regional Science Centre at Bhuj, an initiative that represents Gujarat government's goal of bringing science closer to the people.

Text: Mamta Dewan Jadhvani (Research, Publication & Sustainability Cell, INI Design Studio)

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The convergence of scientific innovation and socio-economic progress is a global pursuit, with nations leveraging Science and Technology for comprehensive development. In 1986, Gujarat established the Council of Science and Technology (GUJCOST) to address regional challenges within an international context.

Dedicated to mitigating backwardness, rural unemployment, and poverty, GUJCOST is establishing community science centers across the state through public-private partnerships. The goal is to 'Bring Science to People's Doorstep,' creating top-notch facilities that educate, entertain, and integrate modernity with cultural heritage, embodying the state's forward-looking approach to science, education and community engagement.

The Regional Science Centre in Bhuj city, in the Kutch region of Gujarat, is one of the projects towards that goal. The site chosen for this is a 10-acre plot north of a hillock known locally as Bhujiyo Dungar, and close to Smritivan, a memorial and earthquake museum

built as a tribute to the devastating earthquake of 2001.

The design of the Science Centre draws inspiration from the traditional mud-plastered, bamboo-framed cylindrical Bhunga houses that are suited to the climate of the desert and have proved to be structurally stable in the earthquake-prone zone. The North-South axis acts as a pedestrian path and connects with the East-West axis along which all the galleries are located. The exhibition galleries are designed as cylindrical envelopes. Clustered around common spaces, they allow for fluid transition for visitors, offering a dynamic and interconnected journey through the exhibits. Elliptical in plan, each of these six galleries rise up six-eight meters, casting cooling shadows.

Landscaped spaces for outdoor exhibits and step-down courtyards get carved out of the curved intermittent niches. The dry-clad system using locally available stone, harmonizes with the regional context and reduces cooling loads. Seismic resilience is optimized, and economic viability influences



exhibit planning, functionality, and long-term operational sustainability.

The Centre's programmatic arrangement aligns the galleries based on their themes – broadly divided into 'science' and 'culture'. Galleries dedicated to Space, Nanotechnology, Energy, and Marine Navigation are along the east-west 'science' axis; while the Admin and library/workshop blocks, along with Noble/Bonsai galleries and a central plaza courtyard, align with a north-south 'culture'

axis. Technological aids such as a 5D theatre, interactive media, and application pods complement the immersive edutainment approach.

The design of the Centre captures the rich heritage of Kutch, while offering an immersive and interactive space for cutting-edge science and technology. This symbolizes Gujarat's commitment to bringing science closer to the people in an engaging and culturally resonant manner that is accessible and inclusive even for remote and rural areas.