

Between the lines

WITH
KIRAN GALA

From early memories of rural Kutch to a prized Picasso mis-print, the Mumbai architect explains the ideas and objects that guide his four-decade practice

WORDS VARUNI MOHAN PHOTOS COURTESY KIRAN GALA ASSOCIATES



Kiran Gala, Principal Architect, Kiran Gala & Associates

Since founding Kiran Gala & Associates in 1986, architect and designer Kiran has steered more than 200 projects – homes, offices, even overseas fit-outs – by sticking to one rule: space planning first, finishes later. His mantra, “Innovation changes the face of living,” shows up in quietly integrated tech, thoughtful detailing and a client-led process that keeps every brief personal. The studio’s work is about reading each site, choosing honest materials and crafting rooms that feel useful from day one and graceful long after. A collector of art and antiques, Kiran balances pragmatism with a storyteller’s eye – qualities that come through in this insightful chat. kgadesign.in

If you weren’t an architect, what would you be doing?

I would most likely have become a photographer, capturing space through a different lens.

An early memory that shaped your love of buildings?

Our ancestral house near Mandvi in Kutch, with its sloping clay-tile roof, cow-dung floors and open courtyard that showed me how honest materials can root a building to its land.

A design trend you wish would vanish?

Any fashion that ignores climate and context; design thrives when professionals are trusted to do their work without interference.

First thing you notice on entering a room?

I immediately read the space plan and how well it supports movement and use.

Your most-cherished collectible?

A small original Picasso sketch, that’s personally signed by him. It’s rare because it was accidentally printed on both sides of the sheet – an imperfection that makes it unique.

Best way to unwind after work?

I recharge by spending time with my family and losing myself in a good book at home.

Most unexpected source of inspiration?

My daughter, who regularly reminds me to look beyond what is immediately visible.



Dream design collaborators?

Sir Norman Foster for his clarity of structure and Kengo Kuma for his poetic use of timber.

Your favourite room at home?

The kitchen with its island dining table – it brings food, conversation and warmth into one place.

Your design pet peeve?

Poor planning that leads to accidents, along with sloppy detailing that wastes good materials.

Best advice received?

My son once told me, “Learn to say no,” and I’ve discovered that setting boundaries is vital in practice and in life.

Describe your work in three phrases.

Plan the space well; choose the right material; focus on detail, detail and more detail!

What is the key to creating an emotional connection in a space?

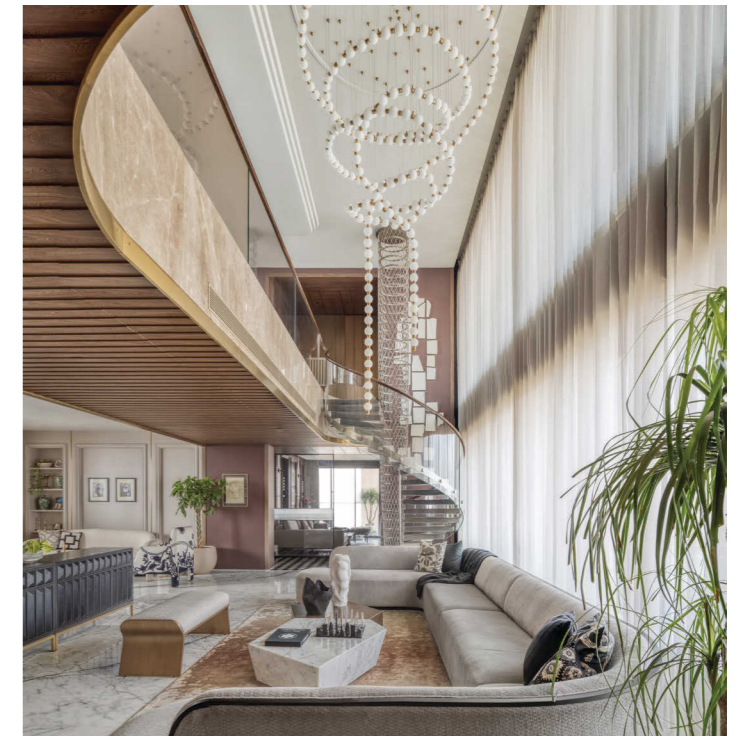
The moment the entire project comes together and the clients feel truly at home – that’s when the emotion lands.

Which are the cities that inspire you?

Puducherry for its old-world charm, Japan for its precise craft, and Dubai and Shanghai for their fearless experimentation.

Your guilty pleasure in design?

Watching sunlight track across a courtyard from dawn to dusk – nature doing the lighting plan for free. ♦



In these projects, Kiran Gala’s design signature shapes the flow, refines the geometry and keeps the clever details quietly unseen