



PAVILION OF CANOPIES

Written and Contributed by

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The Pavilion of Canopies was designed to celebrate tribal life, rituals and the symbiotic relationship with the forest. An earnest attempt has been made to raise awareness about the enrichment and conservation of forestlands and the communities residing within them by highlighting their lives within the forest.

What is the project about?

The 2015 *Kartik Puja* Festival was theme to celebrate 50 years of inclusion of indigenous Forest Tribes into the community. Because of the notable *Pandal* done previously, Abin Design Studio was asked to commemorate the celebration with a temporary pavilion designed in keeping with the theme.

The Pavilion of Canopies was designed to celebrate tribal life, rituals and the symbiotic relationship with the forest. An earnest attempt has been made to raise awareness about the enrichment and conservation of forestlands and the communities residing within them by highlighting their lives within the forest. The design experience was to abstract the journey through a lush forest of canopies and arrive at the sight of glorious divinity. This was

similar to the ancient Indian ritual of undertaking a pilgrimage through the forest to seek divine enlightenment. Since the site is also surrounded by dense greenery the design seeks to formally reflect this contextual characteristic.

A mandala-like plan of nineteen discs, each measuring diametrically 10 feet was laid out within a 60 feet dia. circular periphery. Each disc was raised to a height of twenty feet supported by a structure of composite bamboo posts centered at each disc. However, this grid like symmetry of was contrasted by the introduction of 38 planes of undulating fabric that created the diverse canopies within the pavilion. Each fabric plane was bound by a grade of parameters of varying width and height that resulted in a parametric canopy that surged like the tangled vegetation of a forest.

Witnessing shooting stars through the canopy of trees is one of the many cherished memories of growing up in the Bengali countryside. The design seeks to subtly echo that spectacle by placing LED drop lights within the spaces of the fabric panels. The placement of handcrafted birds from local artisans perched on the fabric canopies not only evokes the spirit of the forest but also provides them with a source of additional income and a platform to showcase local art. The construction is sustainable since the primary building materials of fabric and bamboo would be re-used in future community events.

What is the impact?

As an exercise in abstracting tradition, the plan was a contemporary update of the classical temple pavilion. The idea was to circumnavigate through the forest of canopies and arrive at the shrine that housed the deity. The cascading drapes of the fabric planes were lifted in places to create almost a forest pathway for the devotees to trace their steps to the shrine. Formally, the fabric canopy can also be thought of as an inverted temple Shikhara. The Indian temple is a classical example of designing a devotional community space. The conceptualization of the Pavilion of Canopies is in its essence, a contemporary attempt at re-imagining this ancient tradition.

The pavilion was received with much appreciation by the visitors along with specific observations referencing the play of volumes, the effect of lighting, and the abstracted adherence to the theme. There was a certain influence on the perceptions of the audience this time around and a marked paradigm shift in the approach of the community members towards understanding the concept behind the design, not just the physical installation itself.

Project Funded by

Kishor Sangha Community

Stakeholders Involved

Architect: Abin Design Studio

Project Design Team: Abin Chaudhuri, Sayantan Chakraborty, Debkishor Das, Toton K. Mondal

Carpentry Consultants: Bilash Das

Sculptor: Debotosh Kar

About Abin Design Studio:

Abin Chaudhuri founded Abin Design Studio, which is exploring the 'unknown' journey, experimentation with materials and technology, and the engaging art and culture, aiming to provide a 'soul in the shell'.

The studio is engaging design in the urban fabric and peri-urban edge, as a catalyst for deliberate change. His work focuses on the idea of holistic design, not just limiting to ideas, but also physical manifestation through multi-disciplinary collaboration. His explorations intend to push the boundaries of thought, prevalent socio-cultural landscape and spatial construct, challenging the role of architecture in the society, by being unafraid of unfamiliar explorations. The studio is also the recipient of several national and international accolades.

Links to read more:

[A link to the project.](#)