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School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design
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Abstract


An unprecedented production of discourses on contemporary Indian architects and architecture occurred in the 1980s. Published in a period of political transition and conspicuous new cultural production and debate in many fields, four decades after India’s independence from colonial rule in 1947, these architectural discourses have become privileged references that have shaped but also limited perception of late-twentieth century architectural production in India. While subsequent writers have addressed some of these limitations, the small but growing critical literature in this field still exhibits many of the same problems of representation. Despite problematising the construction of ‘Indian architecture’ in colonial and postcolonial discourse, these critiques have nevertheless taken for granted (as in the more popular and professionally oriented discourses of the 1980s) the existence of a pan-Indian community of architects, united in their search for a collective identity. Such monolithic perceptions of contemporary ‘Indian architecture’ have yet to be interpreted with regard to the conspicuous contexts in which they were produced — that is, from an ‘Indian’ point of view.

Through a selective focus on a particularly productive site of discourse in 1980s India, I investigate complexities that have not yet been examined in the formation and reproduction of a dominant consensus on the identity of contemporary Indian architecture. The argument draws attention not only to the agency of particular contemporary Indian architects in the construction of this identity, but also the relativity of region in the architectural production of India during the 1980s. Specifically, I focus on an influential architectural magazine, Architecture + Design (A+D) that began publishing in 1984 from a dominant region of architectural production, Delhi. I provide an account of the manner in which history, context, agency and agents, came together at a point in time, within this architectural magazine, as a complex set of historically
constituted social relations, to authorise and sustain particular viewpoints about contemporary Indian architecture. Using the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the field of cultural production, I relate issues of dominance and marginalisation observable in the production of this particular discourse on contemporary Indian architecture to the space of the positions held by its producers. Despite its avowed agenda of viewing contemporary Indian architecture differently in the 1980s, I argue, the selection and judgement of exemplary contemporary work deemed worthy of discussion in A+D as ‘Indian Architecture’ functioned (and continues to function) through established categories of perception and appreciation.
**Declaration**

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give my consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the Barr Smith Library of The University of Adelaide, being available for loan and photocopying.

Signed: ______________ Shaji K. Panicker  
Date: ______________
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Dedicated to the loving memory of my grandfather,
Shri Velayat Kalarickal Balakrishna Panicker
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