

MASTERSTROKES

Richard Meier, master architect and a recipient of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, is noted for his modernist style. Richard Meier has designed and executed iconic public and private spaces worldwide, including the Perry West and On Prospect Park residential developments. Amongst his best known works are the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Jubilee Church in Rome. A champion of the evolution of the modern discipline, Richard Meier, through his five decades of architectural practice, has explored architecture that transcends fashion and seeks to build an aesthetic argument that stands the test of time. In conversation with Sarita Vijayan, Editor & Brand Director, Indian Architect & Builder Magazine, the celebrated master expresses his thoughts on architecture and India.

SV. Essar Steel Masterstrokes, The Icon Exhibition exhibited twelve of your most prolific works for the first time ever in India in Feb 2010. Please share with us your experience on presenting your work in India.

RM. It was a privilege to exhibit my work for the first time in India and to be able to add to the collective conscious of what modern architecture is and can be. I so wish I could have been there. I understand the exhibit was enthusiastically received.

SV. India is among the booming economies of the world. The architectural and design reference of the east diverges to that of the west. What would be your approach while designing in India?

RM. My approach in India would be no different than my approach to designing anywhere in the world. It would be a unique response to the client, program, site, and the natural light of the place. India is a large and very diverse country. I believe that a project in Mumbai would have very different design opportunities and challenges than a project in Bangalore or Delhi.

SV. Your designs have great interactions with the public space. The flow between the private and public space is continuous, while availability of space is a luxury in India. How would your design philosophy adopt to the constraint of space?

RM. I would celebrate public space and the sequence of public to private. Current architecture in India is unique because often the exterior and interiors are expressed

in very different ways. I would look to take the design qualities of the interior public spaces and express them throughout the entire project.

SV. Most of your buildings have been tagged as Modernist Classics. How do you express modernism in architecture?

RM. I view architecture as an art form, a sculpture that interacts with natural light that is inhabited by people who experience the architecture on a human scale. I am also very interested in exploring new ideas about materials, building technology and sustainability. This approach in combination with the qualities of the individual project creates a unique design that is of the time and of the place. I see this as a modern and classic approach to architecture.

SV. How do you see your structures in India working in its surroundings, interacting with near and more distant aspects of the country's development?

RM. We do not yet have a project in India. I would like nothing more than to explore the answer to that question by designing my first building there.

SV. Your advice to young architects and designers who want to create meaningful architecture.

RM. Start by visiting the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri and Chandigarh. Study the unique qualities of scale and light of these places. Travel to other countries in search of great architecture. And start with the basics. Sketch and draw by hand before using the computer. ■

let's talk

