

BEING ECO-CHIC

WHO Bangalore-based Made in Earth is all about sustainable architecture and practices where they work with clay, line and natural resources. It is founded by Shruthi Ramakrishna, 32, Jeremie Gaudin, 34, Agnimitra Bachi, 27 and Ajinkya Unhale, 31 who were driven by building with natural materials.

WHEN “We believe that a sustainable approach to creating buildings is no longer an option but a necessity. Instead of seeing the use of local and natural materials, as a limitation to architecture, we look at it as an infinite realm of possibilities,” says Ramakrishna. They officially launched the studio in 2015.

TECHNIQUES USED “When we start drawing a new project, we ask ourselves a fundamental question: ‘What is the most ecological way to make this happen?’ And the design is a process of answering this question,” says Ramakrishna. They build with earth and mud using various techniques such as rammed earth (a load bearing technique where earth is compacted in successive layers within a framework, it is rammed by hand or with a pneumatic rammer between wood or steel shuttering); adobes (the tradition of making sun dried raw earth bricks that are generally made on site); CSEB (a mix that is similar to that used in rammed earth is filled into a press, which compresses the earth and produces a block); and wattle and daub (a composite wall building technique using tightly woven wooden sticks or split bamboo), to name a few.



THE NATURAL LOOK (clockwise from above) The four founders; Little Green Cafe in Bangalore uses lime and clay plasters along with chemical-free paints; images of the cafe and the materials used; The Bakehouse in Bangalore is a restoration of an old bungalow and uses natural clay plasters



The studio also uses natural plasters, which is a wall plaster made using natural or minimally processed materials such as clay, lime and stone dust. “Additives are added for colour and sometimes to enhance certain properties such as thermal mass, texture, water repellency, hardness, plasticity and glaze,” explains Ramakrishna.

CURRENT PROJECTS One of their biggest projects is the campus of Samvada Baduku Community College, Bangalore. Besides that they are working on commercial projects such as a brewery, an ayurvedic retreat, apartments, and an experience centre for a real estate developer. The firm is in the process of finalising a few private residences in Bangalore.

WAY FORWARD “Over the years of building with natural materials and alternative techniques, we have noticed that sources of basic materials such as lime or linseed oil are vanishing and the market is filled with more convenient, but more energy intensive, commercial replacements for each of these,” says Ramakrishna adding, “Additionally, as the years pass, the last generation of the masons who were traditionally trained in local building practices are retiring.” This is why the studio hosts a number of workshops to ensure suitability remains in the mainstream.

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