



better

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interiors

IDEAS AND DESIGN FOR BETTER LIVING

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WOOD WIZARDS

Their furniture design celebrates wood and incorporates an aesthetic that is both raw and refined. A tete-a-tete with the boys of Mumbai-based Solli Concepts reveals their love for combining functional design with traditional handcrafted woodworking techniques.

TEXT: DEEPA NAIR; PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY SOLLI CONCEPTS



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT
The dashing Walnut Sideboard is handmade from a single block of solid walnut wood and sports rustic drawer handles which complement the natural finish of the material.

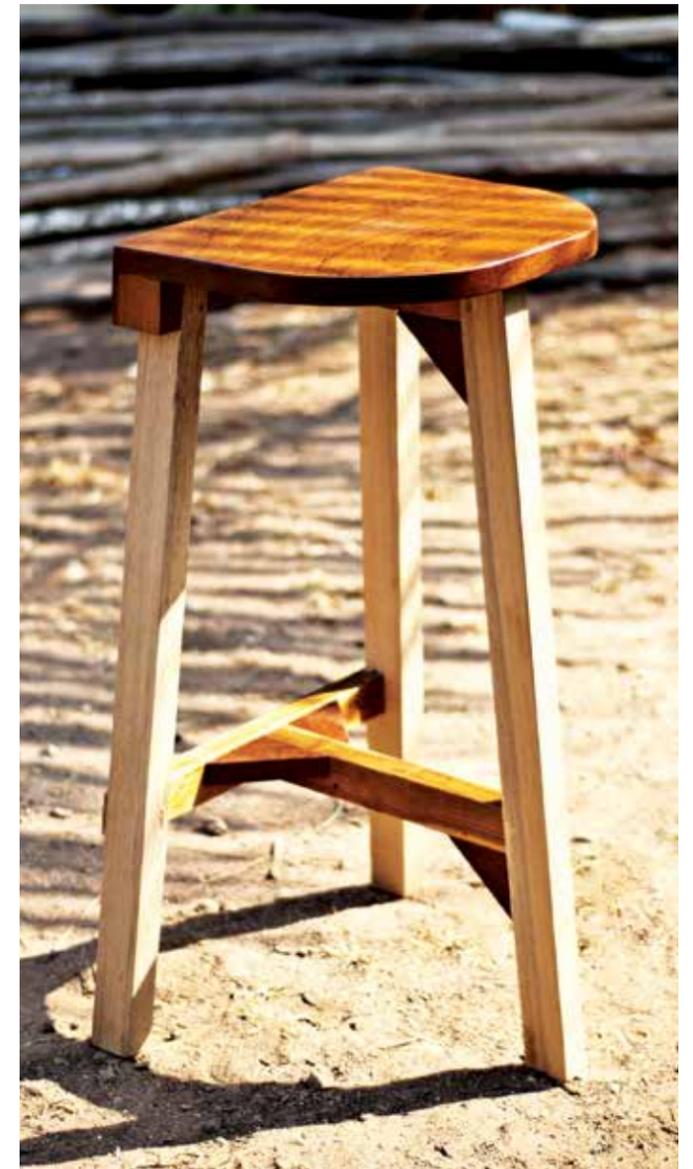
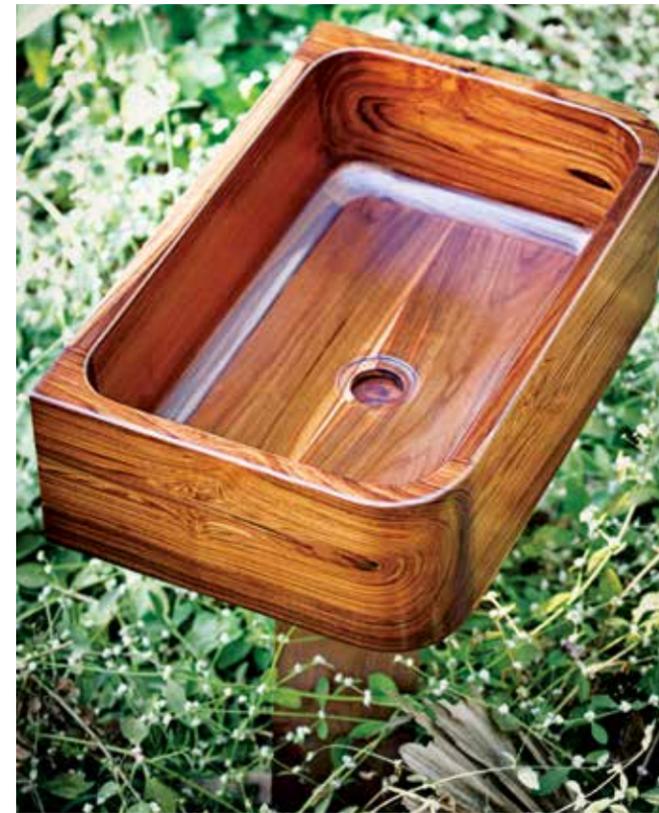
Straight-lined and gorgeous, the Coachella Console is handcrafted from 100 per cent repurposed teak and sees a combination of glass and wood in its making.

The newest addition to their range is the Claremont Bar which hides away two stools in its construction. It's a boon to space-crunched places like Mumbai. Crafted in plywood and covered in polyester resin, the bar sports a rainwood shutter and stainless steel stools.



PARTNERS
Sohel Contractor and
Lynden Zuzarte

Product Design



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT The Claremont Cabinet is made from teak, painted white on one side. The shutter is made by a tedious process of joining pieces of wood together.

The famed Grande Arche of Paris is the inspiration for this stunning piece of teak showcase which hides away a bar in its wings.

The Ott'ee serves dual purpose... it's a coffee table cum ottoman and uses teak and rosewood in its making.

Combining the talent of furniture designer Sohel Contractor with the entrepreneurial abilities of Lynden Zuzarte, Solli Concepts was born nine months ago. However young this furniture studio is, the friendship between the two Bandra (a Mumbai suburb) boys is as old as any good wine... it dates back to almost two decades ago. This is how the story goes: they met at Bandra's St Andrews college and went on to pursue different careers paths. While Lynden became a banker with HSBC and shifted to San Francisco; Sohel dabbled in a variety of things. He studied engineering then went to New Zealand to work with a builder, returned home and pursued furniture design as a hobby first and eventually started taking orders for close friends and family. "My heart was always in crafting furniture and some of my friends really encouraged me by giving [me] work," reveals Sohel, who's been known to spoil his friends rotten with handcrafted gifts ever since he was a young boy. The designer's sole advertising technique was word of mouth; until the day Lynden, on a three-month visit to India saw the pictures of some big furniture pieces Sohel had created. The magic intensified when Lynden saw the actual products. "I was blown away by the craftsmanship of these furniture... the picture

didn't do justice at all," he recalls. In this day and age of distorted product visions, this quality was certainly a big plus.

But, it was only after Lynden's move back to India did Solli Concepts start taking shape — catalogues were made, a website was designed and a clear marketing plan was devised. Lynden who handles the business part of Solli Concepts is very clear about the gap they are trying to fill in this highly competitive furniture industry. "The market is ruled by high-end imported furniture, some Indian brands like Urban Ladder and of course, the local carpenter. There is a huge gap for superior quality bespoke furniture which is made to specifications, is at a reasonable price, and bears a 'made in India' tag. And that's exactly where we come into the picture," he explains.

All the passion, the creativity and the life of the brand is Sohel who worships wood (mostly teak). He is very conscious about using recycled or sustainably sourced wood which has little or no environmental impact. Sohel tells me that since wood is an organic material and has a distinct character, no one is similar to the other, each has a different grain pattern and that by itself makes each furniture piece

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT Teak legs and a toughened glass top makes the Tenon dining table. It is constructed using traditional joinery with no trace of nails or screws.

The three-legged Vallejo Bar Stool is made from babul wood and sports simple long lines.

The teak washbasin is most definitely a head-turner. Part of the washroom products (eight designs in all), soon to be launched, this basin is not only hard-wearing and waterproof, but is also stain- and chemical-resistant.

Product Design



TOP The traditional joinery bench has a teak frame, maple supports and shesham top with a body inspired by traditional Japanese joinery. It borrows heavily from the work of George Nakashima, a reflection of which can be seen on the butterfly keys used on the seat.

ABOVE Crafted using traditional joinery with storage area in the back for convenience, the Tuscan Lounger is crafted in teak. The teak table on the side perfectly complements the lounger.

stand out from the other. It's a mammoth task to figure out which part of the wood trunk would be apt for a particular part of the furniture. "Some part would be good for the legs, some for the front or the top... but once you have figured that out; it is most thrilling to see how the piece shapes up eventually," quips Sohel. It's important to mention here that all the wood used is seasoned (moisture checked and dried) for months (up three months or even more if required) to ensure that it is sturdy and lasts for years.

This brings us to the most striking feature of all Solli Concept's furniture... its technique and style. All the products explore both modern and traditional wood working methods, mostly Japanese and some European and rely on Scandinavian or art deco aesthetics. And each has a strong conceptual foundation. There's another highlight: Solli Concepts almost always only uses interlocking joints for more aesthetic value.

With solid roots and clear intention Solli Concepts is making headway in the furniture market. Though their forte is bespoke furniture, 'made to order' pieces are also available. The difference is as simple as designing an exclusive piece or buying one off the shelf, which might not be to your specifications. They are in the process of launching their stunning range of teak wood washbasins in stores like Turquoise and C Bhogilal Fort in Mumbai and Style Box in Bangalore. Very soon, you'll see some of the furniture in select lifestyle stores too in various cities. Till then, if you want furniture which combines a clean and refined look with an air of experimentation and unusual forms... log on to www.solliconcepts.in 