

35 Under 35 2026: Indian Voices Across Design Disciplines

Executive Summary

The "35 Under 35 2026" selection identifies a cohort of emerging Indian designers, architects, and artists who are actively redefining the boundaries of their respective fields. Succeeding the previous "40 Under 40" initiative, this curation focuses on visionaries who prioritize meaningful change, cultural resonance, and innovation over conventional design practices.

The document outlines a landscape where design is no longer just about aesthetics but serves as a medium for storytelling, social connection, and environmental stewardship. Spanning disciplines from architecture and industrial design to visual arts and brand strategy, these 35 individuals are characterized by their "contextual modernism"—a philosophy that roots contemporary solutions in local culture, memory, and material honesty.

Analysis of Core Design Themes

1. Contextual Modernism and Cultural Rootedness

A dominant theme across the profiles is the rejection of a "fixed visual style" in favor of designs that respond to their specific environment. * **Architecture:** Practices like **Fictive Architects** and **Thidam Works** emphasize that architecture is most meaningful when it grows naturally from the site. This involves site-specific analysis of climate, light, and local routines. * **Visual Arts:** **Muhammed Sajid N** and

Mehak Malhotra draw directly from South Indian everyday life and traditional Indian textures (such as truck typography or matchboxes) to create contemporary narratives that remain culturally authentic.

2. Material Reimagination and Craft

The cohort demonstrates a deep commitment to exploring the "true nature" of materials, often blending traditional artisanal knowledge with modern technology. * **Concrete: Siddhant Borade (Cretekala)** challenges the "cold and industrial" stereotype of concrete, transforming it into a sculptural medium for bathware and furniture. * **Waste and Technology: Swetha Vegesana (Intent Made)** utilizes 3D scanning and robotic milling to turn naturally occurring tree forks into structural trusses, reimagining waste as a high-performance material. * **Traditional Innovation: Dhruv Agarwal and Arjun Govind (Koodu)** bridge the gap between handcraft (Channapatna lacquer, earth construction) and digital fabrication.

3. Interdisciplinary Convergence

The "35 Under 35" voices frequently blur the lines between historically separate disciplines to create more cohesive brand and spatial experiences. * **Architecture and Advertising: Parking Designers** (founded by **Prachi Suresh Gawand**) is noted as India's only agency merging advertising logic with architecture, treating spaces as "walkable expressions of the brand." * **Visual Systems: Kavya Bagga and Aravind Balaaji** argue that brand identity begins with the experience of space and strategy rather than just a logo. * **Interiors and Architecture:** Multiple practitioners, including **Chidambaram N** and **Saachi Rana**, treat interiors and architecture as one continuous craft, ensuring that every detail is part of a larger, unified narrative.

4. Human-Centricity and Design as Service

Design is repeatedly framed as a "remedy" or a "service" rather than a purely creative exercise. * **Empathy in Design: Rishab Manghwani (Pill Design Studio)** focuses on "people-centric" design, creating spaces that are intuitively functional and emotionally

comfortable. * **Experiential Infrastructure: Tanishq Bhatia** (SSB Architects) explores how large-scale infrastructure, such as wayside amenities, can be experiential and sustainable for travelers. * **Revealing vs. Reinventing: Purva Agrawal (Attirail)** focuses on "revelation," using styling to draw out the lived-in beauty and personal memories already present in a home.

Directory of Emerging Voices (35 Under 35)

Rank	Name	Studio	Location	Focus Area
1	Muhammed Sajid N	Independent	Bengaluru	Visual Art & Photography
2	Siddhant Borade	Cretekala Studio	Nashik	Product Design (Concrete)
3	Rahul Singh Yadav (Sage)	Floating Canvas Co.	Navi Mumbai	Public Art & Creative Direction
4	Ayush Singh Patel	Dotform	Gurugram	Industrial Design (Startups/Tech)
5	Shail B Iyer	Boult Audio	Gurugram	Industrial Design & Visualisation
6	Chidambaram N	Thidam Works LLP	Chennai	Architecture & Interiors
7	G. Elangannan & R. Ravisankar	Fictive Architects	Thanjavur	Contextual Architecture
8	Prachi Suresh Gawand	Parking Designers	Mumbai	Brand Design & Architecture
9	Mehek Malhotra	Giggling Monkey Studio	Dehradun	Creative Design & Installations
10	Oormi Rohra	Studio of Dawn and Dusk	Pune	Interior & Furniture Design
11	Purva Agrawal	Attirail	Mumbai	Styling-led Interior Design
12	Saachi Rana	Saachi Rana Design Studio	New Delhi	Interdisciplinary Interior Design
13	Kavya Bagga	Kavya Bagga Design	New Delhi	Graphic Design & Strategy
14	Sonal Vasave	Boomranng Studio	Mumbai	Illustration (Retrofuturism)
15	Arun Prabhu N G	Billboards	Chennai	Architecture & Material Research
16	Rishab Manghwani	Pill Design Studio	Mumbai	People-centric Interior Design
17	Aayushi Malik	Aayushi Malik Designs	New Delhi	Hospitality & Commercial Interiors
18	Swetha Vegesana	Intent Made	Hyderabad	Design-build Furniture
19	R. Bowen & P. Vaghasia	ERP Design Studio	Ahmedabad	Contemporary Furniture
20	Dhruv Agarwwal	Studio Dhruv Agarwwal	Noida	Collectible Design & Craft
21	Rohit & Puja			

Gupta | RN Deesign | Mumbai | Wellness-focused Interiors | | 22 |
Maneesha Krishna | Studio RPD | Bengaluru | Ethnic & Contextual
Interiors | | 23 | Jay Shah | DR&W | Mumbai | Design, Research &
Workshop | | 24 | Liz Tomy | Forge and Furnish | Kerala | Residential
Architecture | | 25 | Akanksha Gupta | Studio-a | New Delhi | Luxury
Interior Design | | 26 | Rutva Joshi | Rutva Joshi Design | Ahmedabad
| Site-responsive Art/Paintings | | 27 | Arjun Govind | Koodu
Architecture | Coimbatore | Traditional Craft & Computational Design |
| 28 | Rohit Sikri | RSAA Studio | Gurugram | Context-driven
Architecture | | 29 | Pooja Chaudhari | The Monochrome Studio |
Nagpur | Adaptive Reuse & Architecture | | 30 | Shlok Gagrani | Blue
Pebble Limited | Mumbai | Design & Build (Corporate/Retail) | | 31 | D.
Singhania & V. Agarwal | Henge Architects | Salem | Experiential
Architecture | | 32 | Akshita Sabarwal Shah | Echo Earth Designs |
Surat | Long-term Residential Architecture | | 33 | Ammaar Aziz
Chowdry | MAARS Design | Chennai | Institutional & Mixed-use
Architecture | | 34 | Tanishq Bhatia | SSB Architects | New Delhi |
Hospitality & Infrastructure | | 35 | Aravind Balaaji | Studio Atom |
Chennai | Visual Design & Brand Strategy |

Notable Quotes and Contextual Significance

"Architecture begins with the logo, ensuring every space becomes a walkable expression of the brand."

— *Prachi Suresh Gawand, Parking Designers*

Context: This highlights a shift in commercial design where brand identity and physical architecture are treated as a single, immersive marketing tool.

"Concrete doesn't have to stay grey, cold, and industrial."

— *Siddhant Borade, Cretekala Studio*

Context: Borade's work exemplifies the movement toward "Material Honesty," where industrial staples are

reimagined through the lens of artistry and high-performance engineering.

"A brand is remembered not just for how it looks, but for how it makes people feel."

— *Mehek Malhotra, Giggling Monkey Studio*

Context: This reflects the broader cohort's move toward experiential design, where emotional resonance is valued as much as visual impact.

"Anything created by hand carries a story, a soul, and an emotional permanence that cannot be replicated."

— *Saachi Rana, Saachi Rana Design Studio*

Context: This encapsulates the strong focus on craftsmanship and the artisanal tradition found throughout the 2026 voices.

"Drawing is not just a tool, it is a way of thinking."

— *Jay Shah, DR&W*

Context: This emphasizes the importance of the *process* of design—research and iteration—rather than just the finished product.

Actionable Insights for the Design Industry

- **Integrate Traditional Craft with Digital Tools:** The success of practices like **Koodu** and **Studio Dhruv Agarwal** suggests that the future of Indian design lies in the "hybridization" of artisanal knowledge (e.g., lacquerware, stone carving) with computational precision (3D scanning, robotic milling).
- **Prioritize Context Over Signature Style:** The document indicates that "meaningful architecture" emerges from site-specific inquiry. Industry practitioners should move away from imposing a "recognisable aesthetic" and instead let material, light, and local routines define the identity of a space.
- **Adopt Interdisciplinary Models:** As demonstrated by **Parking Designers** and **Floating Canvas Company**, there is significant

market demand for studios that can bridge the gap between architecture, technology, and branding.

- **Focus on Longevity and Maintenance of Quality:** **Akshita Sabarwal Shah** notes that architecture's real value is measured in its performance over time. Professionals should prioritize "refinement through restraint" and materials built to endure rather than chasing short-lived trends.
- **Design for Emotional Well-being:** With designers like **Rishab Manghwani** and **Rohit Gupta** focusing on empathy and well-being, the industry should increasingly view spatial design as a "remedy" that supports the emotional and functional health of its users.