

# BUILDO TECH

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Timeless Elegance  
**Stone  
Flooring**



Exclusive interview with  
**Arch. Reza Kabul**

# Designing with Stone

*Odyssey was founded in 2006, when NATCO Exports launched it to undertake turnkey projects, offering services such as exterior and interior stone flooring, wall cladding and stone restoration services along with made-to-order products. Ruchika Grover, Director of Odyssey briefs Buildotech on the techniques and elements of design that can result in a dynamic approach to the utility of natural stone versatility.*



Ruchika

#### Latest trend of using stone in buildings

Different stone applications merit different stones. Turkish, Spanish and Portuguese mines have recently opened up and there are a lot of new stone materials now available. Dimensional Stone, 3-dimensional Lattice, CNC Milling and Water-Jet cutting are the new technologies being used globally in creating stone art. They offer limitless possibilities and can be programmed to offer a very wide spectrum of finishes/textures and patterns.

A lot of limestone and sandstone is being used for facades in India. Stone artwork, be it in the form of sculptures, relief, lattice or water features too are designed to integrate with the building architecture. Stone is also an essential part of the landscape, with





more obvious forms being cobble driveways, feature walls, sculptures and jaalis.

The new trend is to incorporate stone art in unexpected places. For instance, we reinvented the grating of an outdoor pool in one of our projects. One expects a hackneyed PVC, or metal pool grating but we took it to an art form, carving solid stone to give it an appearance of ripples of water. Thus, grating design incorporates the necessary perforations and cutouts for maintenance but at the same time adds beauty.

Water Features are taking an art form as well. The old fountain designs with unsightly nozzles are now replaced with water outlets integrated with a sculpture on a reflective water body or as cascade on a wall mural.

#### **What are the stone designs & patterns being used in interiors?**

A lot of traditional stone patterns interpreted in a contemporary way are popular for interiors such as generative and parametric patterns and abstract forms. Permanent Persian carpets design in the form of elaborate inlay with semi-precious or shell-stone and stone art inspired from the nature and Islamic geometry add a whole new dimension to living spaces.

Stone Jaalis bring together decoration and practicality, style and function in perfect union. They

are being used as a feature in the house mounted on a wall with back-lit, as a partition to create an intimate area as well as to recreate elaborate puja areas. Besides, stone screens that were traditionally used to fill window spaces, to allow the passage of breeze and look outside are now utilized to screen away areas such as generators, compressors, pipes and servants quarters.

Odyssey is constantly developing new ways to incorporate stone art in the interiors without it appearing too heavy. In one of our projects, we have created stone wallpapers inspired by traditional Indian textiles. We have also experimented with progressive patterns as inlays on the floor to relief work on the walls as well as Jaalis.

#### **Are the stonework designers involved in the project at the inception of the design?**

Since most of the stonework is customized and requires a lot of sampling due to variations in stone, stone art designer needs to be involved from the beginning of a project. Also, stone being a heavy material, provisions for structural reinforcement, framework etc., need to be made at the construction stage of the project. For example Odyssey partners with architects, designers and contractors and is involved in all the projects right from the conceptual stage to bring innovation in design and to optimize the versatility of stone in conjunction with building design.

## LANDSCAPING

### Brief on Odyssey designs & execution process

The company has identified seven areas of specialization which includes, architectural masonry, bath design, building frontage, hardscape, stone mosaics & inlays, stone furniture and sculpture & relief work. We plan to develop customized solutions and collections in each of these segments for the discerning customer.

The CROSTA collection from Odyssey creates a play of shadows on the stone. The collection has been developed keeping in mind the Indian stone but not in the traditional way.

Another collection called Kinetic explores 'energy in motion', adding life to natural stone. Each panel of this collection appears to be moving and offers the opportunity to create a truly unique wall surface. Unlike the CROSTA, which is a modular repetitive format, each panel here is unique and customized to the dimensions of the particular project.

Breathing Surfaces takes inspiration from parametric design, nature (veins of leaves) and Islamic art. And our handcrafted Jaalis are an endeavor to keep up the old craft of hand carving and promote the skilled stonemasons which are few and far in between. We are also working on a series of Origami Inspired water features and gemstone chandeliers. Some of the other collections include wall & floor surfaces and sculptures using light, water and stone together to create art for internal and external spaces.

To combine the tactility of stone as a material with innovation in design, Odyssey production facility in NOIDA is equipped with advanced 3-axis & 5-axis interpolated CNC, Water Jet machines, operated by skilled artisans and design development team. Some



of our major hardscape projects include Pune's Hyatt Regency, The Ritz Carlton, Bangalore, The Indira Gandhi International Airport, Terminal 3, New Delhi, Kempinski, Shahdra and a 32-foot-high pylon for a bio-diversity park in Hyderabad etc.

### Some of the challenges in this segment

Natural Stone comes with its own sets of problems and opportunities. India has abundant reserves of stone but somehow Indian material is not given its due credit in India. Secondly, the construction industry in India is quite disorganized, and there aren't too many trained professionals in this niche segment. The machines we have imported from Italy are the first of their kind in the country but our workers are still to learn the full potential of these machines. . The learning curve has been very steep. Also hard is maintaining a balance between innovating and running a commercially viable business.

