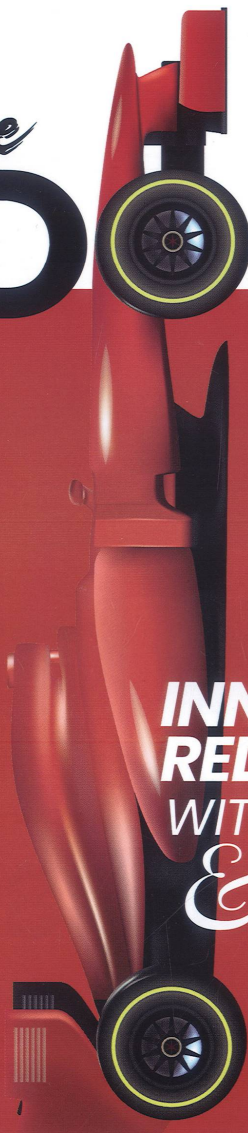


Volume 48, Jul-Sep 2025

The ADORNER



Facades and beyond from *AludecoR**

**INNOVATION
REDEFINED**
WITH *ALUDECOR*
& *TEAM KRATOS*

Discover Mason Mark,
a philosophy cast in panels

Reimagining school,
rooted in soul

Feature / *Space*
STORY / STORY

Reimagining school, *rooted in soul*

IN CONVERSATION WITH ARCHITECT AYAN SEN

What started as a simple vision turned into two years of hard work and creative thinking. With a lot of care, planning and effort, Architect Ayan Sen has transformed Birla High School into a warm, welcoming space for students. This is more than just a building – it's a lively and comfortable place to learn, built with heart and a strong belief in improving the future of education in Kolkata. In conversation with Architect Ayan Sen, we delve into the journey of turning bricks into dreams and design into destiny.

SPACE STORY

What were your first thoughts when you took up the Birla High School project? Did it feel nostalgic, like a responsibility, or an exciting challenge to reimagine childhood through architecture?

We hadn't done many school projects before, just a small one in the past, but having worked across a wide range of typologies like housing, resorts, convention centres and institutional buildings, I was particularly eager to take on this school. Birla High School has been a part of Kolkata for many years, but when I received the opportunity, its infrastructure and design felt quite dated.

I saw this not just as a renovation but as a chance to make a bold statement right in the heart of the city. The challenge with transformation is always about preserving the best of what exists while completely rethinking the rest. There's a strong sense of nostalgia attached to school life, and that emotional layer made this project even more special.

With the use of modern design principles and technology, we brought in more openness, introduced ample greenery and created spaces that offer a sense of freedom and flow. The design includes a beautiful courtyard, open corridors and a tropical palette that complements the environment.

What makes this project truly fulfilling is that the students, alumni, teachers and the school management, all of them – are genuinely happy with the result. **That, for me, is the greatest success of this transformation.**





With children at the heart of this space, how did you blend functionality, playfulness and purpose?

There is one place called the classroom where structured learning happens, but the real

learning, the kind that shapes personalities and memories, often takes place outside of it. Whether it's the corridor, the courtyard, the green patches or even the canteen, these informal spaces play a huge role in a student's life. The canteen, for instance, is where friendships are built and stories are shared. These non-programmed, recreational areas are not just add-ons; they are essential parts of a school's design.

The challenge with transformation is always about *preserving the best* of what exists while completely rethinking the rest.”

For me, it was important that the **architecture celebrated these in-between spaces**. That's why the corridors and courtyards were treated with as much care and attention as the classrooms. They form the true language of the school, connecting people and encouraging a sense of openness and interaction.

Another unique element we introduced was on the facade, we integrated subtle typographic elements in Hindi, one of our official languages. This included Sanskrit shlokas that resonate with the values and ethos of the institution. It wasn't overt or loud, but delicately done to create a sense of cultural grounding and identity. The aim was to honour tradition while designing a space that feels contemporary and inclusive.