

GRANDEUR LIFESTYLE

MINI

KRISHIKA
SHAH

Simple but
significant,
Less is more





Krishika Shah is the founder and director of Evolve Interiors and Exteriors Solutions LLP, a design studio that manufactures innovative surface decor solutions for modern contemporary spaces.

Having travelled to architectural havens across the globe from Singapore to Miami, Krishika always found herself marvelling at the ingenious design choices in all the spaces she visited. Drawing from these excursions, she drew up a plan to bring a curation of these pragmatic aspirational lifestyle products to Indian markets.

Krishika also believes that the future of the industry lies at the crossroads of art and technology, and ardently spearheads all the digital divisions of the company.



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Tanishka Juneja explores the new crossroad of art & technology...

Evolve Interiors and Exteriors Solutions is a new-age surface décor finishes company that combines technology with design to manufacture novel surface finishes applicable across interiors, exteriors, furniture, and artefacts. The company is one of the pioneers of Liquid Metal Finishes - A revolutionary process that will change the way the design industry works with metal in India. Evolve promises to introduce path-breaking, innovative, and green technologies which are Made In India.

Krishika holds an MBA from Imperial College Business School, where she specialized in international market development. Interestingly, the business plan for what is now a distinguished player in the surface decor space was only meant to be her capstone project during her BBA at NMIMS. Having travelled to architectural havens across the globe from Singapore to Miami, Krishika always found herself marvelling at the ingenious design choices in all the spaces she visited. Drawing from these excursions, she drew up a plan to bring a curation of these pragmatic aspirational lifestyle products to Indian markets.

Her meticulous market research for the project impressed her father, Himanshu Shah, a veteran entrepreneur in the pharmaceutical space. Prior to Evolve, Mr. Shah was the Managing Director of Neela Systems Limited, where he manufactured stainless steel plants for companies like Reliance, Wockhardt, Cipla, Sun Pharma among others. It was during this time when he discovered his love for materials. Seeing real market potential in the idea, he proposed that they partner up to breathe life into Evolve.

He believes consistent innovation is key to drive any business in today's era. Having started out in the '90s, his philosophy is that a business should be profit-making to be valuable.

The pair learnt everything about the craft on the job, in taking care of the artistic wall finishing needs of projects with various scales - right from 100 sq. ft. to 10,000 sq. ft. in size.

We spoke to Krishika Shah about planning, innovation, how her designs are different from her competitors and about the future. Let's see what she had to say ...

You did your MBA from Imperial College Business School and specialized in International Market Development. Was this (design studio) always a part of the plan?

Yes, I started out with Evolve in 2013 and took a one year break to go do my MBA. So, Evolve has always been a part of the plan. I would not call it a design studio,

rather a surface decor company, as we primarily specialise in manufacturing different finishes for interiors and exteriors. MBA helped me gain exposure to how business' work internationally and also gave me a platform to interact with a diverse set of people to understand consumer behaviour better.

Planning an idea in your head is easier than implementing it in real terms. How long did it take for you to successfully develop the idea of building a studio?

Definitely! Evolve started out differently – as a lifestyle product company dealing in utility products that helped make life easier. We pivoted to becoming a surface decor company when we realised that there was a need in the market for unique finishes. This happened in 2015 and it took us about 3 years to bring our ideas to the market. Over the years, we worked on designing distinct textures using liquid metal and textured concrete. We then tested our finishes in different areas of India to check if they stood the test of time and worked on small projects. Once we were sure that the products were durable, we started working with clients.

With tough competition from established and experienced studios, how easy or difficult was it to make space for yourself?

As a company, we believe that innovation is key and hence, we focused on working with international technologies that helped push the boundaries of conventional materials like metal and concrete. This gave us an edge to create designs that were never seen before. So, while it was relatively easy for us to create space for ourselves, the challenge was to create awareness. To educate our potential clients on how to use our products and visualise our finishes is what took time and efforts.

“WE ARE PROUD TO BE A ‘MADE IN INDIA’ BRAND AND OUR HANDLE HELPS US COMMUNICATE THE SAME. WHEN INTERNATIONAL CLIENTS FIND OUR PROFILE, IT ALSO HELPS THEM KNOW INSTANTLY THAT THIS IS A BRAND FROM INDIA AND ALSO GENERATES A GREAT RECALL VALUE.”

What do you think sets your designs/work apart from other decor companies?

Our designs push the limitations of popular materials, like metal and concrete. This enables us to create looks and feels that were not possible before, thus setting us apart. We have also productised our finishes range, so the client can directly purchase a pre-designed product and have it installed in their new home instantly. As a company, we try our best to innovate new products that help our consumers in decorating their houses with the least hassle.

Your Instagram handle says 'Evolve India'. Is it because you're trying your best to introduce technologies that are Made in India or there's more to it?

You have that correct. We are proud to be a 'Made in India' brand and our handle helps us communicate the same. When international clients find our profile, it also helps them know instantly that this is a brand from India and also generates a great recall value.







You're someone who's a perfectionist. Have you always been one or your profession demanded you to be one?

Before I entered this industry, I believed I was a perfectionist. But the profession has made me realise that there was scope to improve. Even the difference of few millimetres could be a cause of concern while designing a space. And we, as suppliers of interior products have to ensure that we have double and triple checked the measurements, packaged it in a damage proof way and have communicated installation instructions to

you recall a special moment or experience with any one of them?

There have been so many learning and enriching moments but the most special one was with Mr. Wadhani, for whom we created a copper entrance door and aluminium finished reception table. We managed to supply and install the products in time for his office opening and I cannot forget the happiness on his face when I met him to get feedback on the final look of the product. His excitement in greeting me, telling me how our finishes have made his office stand apart from the others

beginners module which helps you understand the surface finishes landscape in India and the science behind textured finishes using material like concrete and metal. The advanced course is for professionals in the design industry who want to learn how to create these textures, how to prep the base substrate, and what tools should one use. The goal is to share our knowledge and enable local craftsmen to upgrade themselves. The course is also great for designers to get an in-depth knowledge of surface finishing materials.

How has lockdown affected your



the applicators. Any mistake in these steps could impact timelines majorly.

Can you name some celebrities (Indian or overseas) who've been your clients?

We have worked with Gauri Khan Designs to finish Karan Johar's bar table using our much-loved copper patina finish. We have also supplied our bronze finished panels for Mr. Rohit Shetty's house and a copper patina finished door for Kapil Sharma. Both the spaces were designed by KNS Architects. We recently finished singer Shabab Sabri's house where we designed an accent wall for his living room.

Since you've had so many clients, do

and how it bought him great joy – his kind words serve as a motivation to me every day to do better. And it's moments like these that will be cherished for long.

You had recently launched Evolve School of Textures too. Tell us something more about it?

School of Textures started out as being a one-on-one training course for professionals who would like to learn the art of Surface Design. However, COVID has bought a new era – one which is technology-enabled and digitally advanced. So now, we are taking it online to provide access to a bigger audience to learn the art of creating textures. We have 2 online modules for the course. The first is a

business and what changes will be seen once things get back to normal?

The lockdown has impacted our revenue majorly. Our products fall in the lifestyle category making them non-essential. One doesn't look at investing in art or decor pieces when times are tough or budgets are tight. However, there has been a rise in the demand for our DIY products. As most people want to just assemble the products in their new homes now. Once things get back to normal, I suppose all the sites will resume work, and hopefully, activities will be accelerated to cover time. Clients are definitely going to be looking for surfaces that have anti-bacterial properties along with other technical requirements.