

透視雜誌

perspective

ARCHITECTURE
INTERIORS
DESIGN

AUGUST 2013

www.perspectiveglobal.com



COUNTRY FOCUS
INDIA 專題透視在印度



A CAPITAL IDEA

In Mumbai's shiny new Bandra Kurla Complex, James Law Cybertecture moulds sustainability, form and functionality
科建國際於孟買興建的 Bandra Kurla 綜合大樓，外形功能皆勝人一籌，更達到可持續的目標

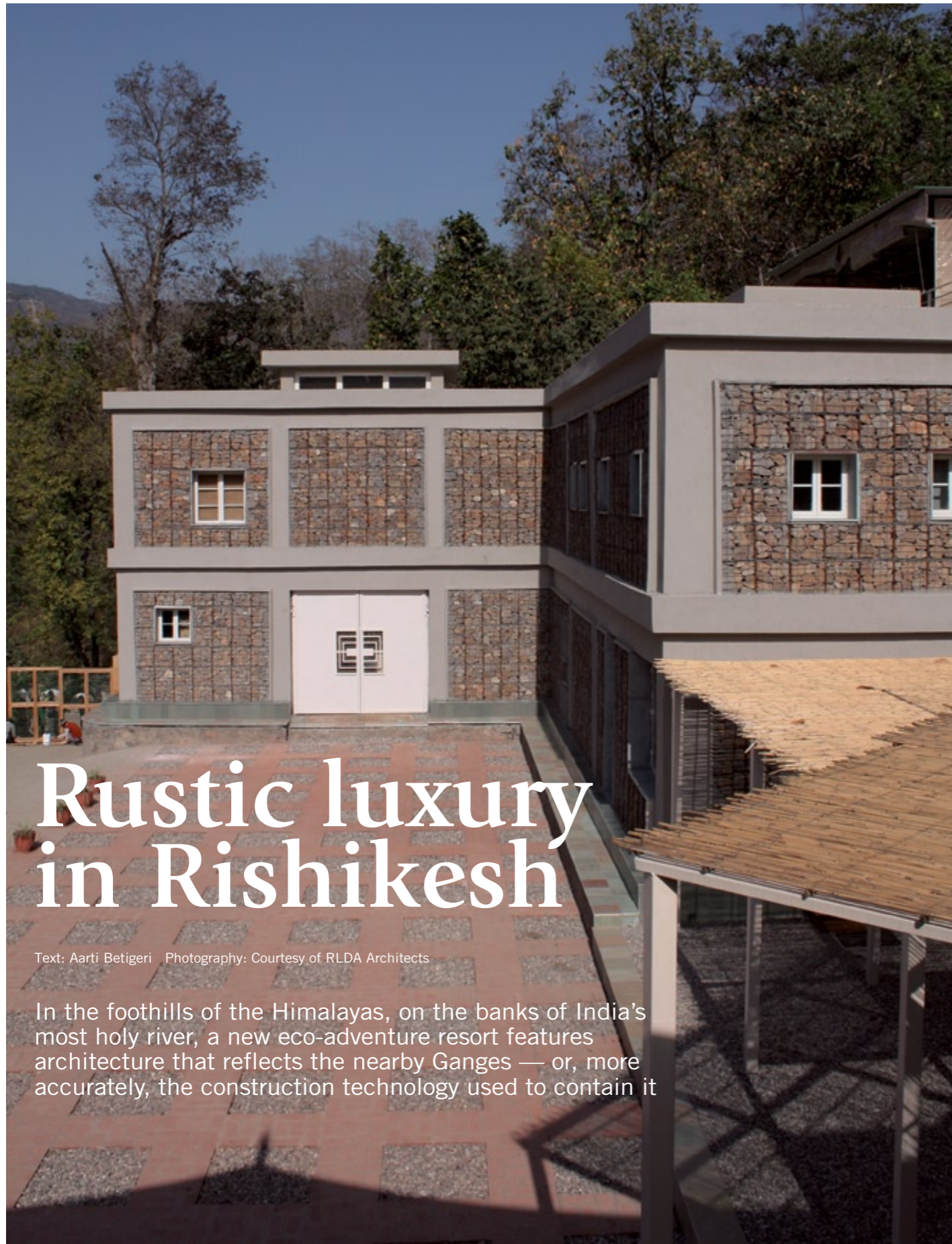
THE BRAIN TRUST 2013 設計智庫2013

The challenge of conserving our heritage and saving our city's character
保育古蹟與保留城市特色的挑戰



HK\$48
US\$18
€15

9 771606 255002



Rustic luxury in Rishikesh

Text: Aarti Betigeri Photography: Courtesy of RLDA Architects

In the foothills of the Himalayas, on the banks of India's most holy river, a new eco-adventure resort features architecture that reflects the nearby Ganges — or, more accurately, the construction technology used to contain it



The Atali Resort is an unassuming cluster of cement and stone buildings in the town of Rishikesh in northern India. Incorporating stylised gabion boxes in its architecture, the design makes a feature of these utilitarian wire cages filled with rocks, which have long been used to form retaining walls to prevent soil erosion on riverbanks. Here, however, the 'boxes' form part of the construction of one of the two main buildings.

"We really took our cues from the location, because the property is set on the Ganges, and we went from there," says Rahoul Singh, principal architect at New Delhi-based RLDA Architects, the firm responsible for the design.

Atali was completed in December 2012, three years after it was initially commissioned. The hotel's owner, Vaibhav Kala, was already an established local adventure tourism operator, and wanted a permanent structure to complement the seasonal campsites he already operated. This was primarily to allow his clients to be accommodated year-round, including during monsoon season, when he had been noticing an increase in tourism.

Kala's brief was clear: the resort was to be

comfortable and modern, but well away from seven-star luxury. It was to be rooted in the immediate context: that is, to fit comfortably into the local geography and terrain. It had to be rugged, unfussy and ultra-modern. "It was important that the architecture reflect the ethos of spartan luxury," says Singh.

That was where the gabion boxes came in. What better way to echo the resort's location on a riverbank than to incorporate the very structure used to contain it into the design? Singh, along with RLDA's other principal architect, Lakshmi Chand Singh, also opted to bind the rocks together using ungalvanised steel wire which rusts quickly, to create the impression of the passing of time, as well as add a jolt of red to the otherwise monochromatic colour scheme. Many of the rocks filling the boxes came from the site itself, as well as polished riverstones.

There were limitations when it came to the resort's terrain: a riverbank in between mountains means steep slopes. The architects opted to construct two central buildings: one housing accommodation for guides and storage space for equipment such as boats for river rafting; the other housing the reception area, the dining room and a conference room, overlooking the swimming pool.

Top Traditional reed chatai, or blinds, help to cool the buildings naturally
Facing page The resort's 'spartan luxury' approach is rugged, unfussy and ultra-modern



Above The Atali Resort sits on the banks of the river Ganges, in the foothills of the Himalayas. Right A reed trellis creates intricate and complex shadowplay on the gravel walkways.

The roof of this building is a tensile one, recalling the shape of the numerous tents which dot the riverbank. Twenty-two accommodation cabins are located up the hill, scattered among the trees, all with sweeping views of the Ganges and surrounding mountains.

Perhaps the most striking part of the design is a two-level reed trellis which creates intricate and complex shadowplay on the gravel underfoot and the gabion box walls of the building, with an elliptical staircase in the middle. This was a deliberate move, and another attempt to create a visual nod to how time passes. "We wanted to make people aware of the environment, and the passage of time, through the movement of the sun which changes how the shadows fall," says Singh.

The natural theme is repeated in the windows of the cafeteria, where a traditional reed *chatai*, or blind, is featured. Efforts were made to cool the buildings naturally through the use of inset windows and thick stone walls. The stone building features a clerestory, a small opening in the roof, which allows hot air to leave the building. "These are all modern versions of traditional features," says Singh.

And while Rishikesh might be on the way up the mountains, it still suffers north India's brutally hot summers — so Atali's rooms all feature air conditioners.

Of course, visitors to Atali are holidaymakers, drawn by the prospect of kayaking, rafting, hiking, swimming, and putting the resort's climbing wall to use, rather than to marvel at the architecture. But that, says the architects, is precisely the point. "As architects, we have different ways of thinking," Lakshmi points out. "But to a layperson, what appeals to them is ease and comfort." ●



The gabions are filled with rocks from the site itself, as well as polished riverstones.



The two-level reed trellis was an attempt to create a visual nod to how time passes via the movement of the shadows created by the sun.