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**UNSTUDIO'S
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FOR KUTAI
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Tile Talks:
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50

BRAND WAGON

Odyssey adds an edge to the design value of a space with its toyls, murals, structures, sculptures and stonework.



Dar-as-salam (adobe of peace)



Gem Cubes



Parakeet

The Rolling Stones

It was in the pre-historic period of caves when the striking stone art played a pivotal role in interior design. But, it was not too long ago when a family came together to revive this art and enhance it with some contemporary modifications. That family is Grovers. Christened as Odyssey, the family-owned stonework brand has been striving hard to raise the benchmark higher in a segment, which was not highlighted in the past years. Odyssey Stone Architecture and Design is a brand of Natco Exports Pvt. Ltd., that offers services towards realization of elite projects and stone applications of interior and exterior design, both for residential as well as commercial spaces.

Odyssey has paved its way based on the experience of its parent company that began its operations in 1994 as an export-oriented-unit

of varied slabs and tiles of Indian marble, granite, slate and sandstone to countries such as Hong Kong, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore and parts of the Middle East.

Throwing light on the emergence of Odyssey, Ruchika Grover, Director, shares, "Odyssey embraces the potential of natural stone as an architectural and design element. More often than not, if one thinks about stonework, one thinks of the typical Rajasthani patterns and floral inlays. This, however, is a very limited perspective on stone and its application. There are hundreds of varieties of stone available in India and abroad, with different varieties suited to diverse environments and purposes. Odyssey brings this understanding of stone to the customers."

When asked about the inspiration



From inlays, murals, structures and sculptures, stonework is known to add an edge to the design value of a space. One brand that has 'carved' a niche for itself in this segment is **Odyssey Stone Architecture and Design**. Run by the young guns, the brand lays emphasis on art, innovation, technology and persistence. The Tiles of India brings to you its success story.

WORDS: PRIYANKA DESAI PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY ODYSSEY

behind the launch of Odyssey, she states, "Trading of granite/marble blocks was a family business and I travelled the world with my father exploring most of the quarries and stone processing units. After completing my education in 2007, I explored the various available options for value addition to natural stones in India. My sister, Shruti joined in soon after and together we dabbled in carving sculptures, creating murals, and exploring different surfaces. We failed miserably a couple of times but we were lucky enough to be able to convince some big names to give us a break.

Backed with my father's experience of over 20 years of experience in the stone industry, Odyssey has emerged as the ideal partner for large residential, hospitality and commercial projects developed in collaboration with architects and

designers from all over the world."

Speaking about the brand's evolution since its inception, Ruchika shares, "Odyssey was not conceived overnight and a lot of thought, trials and errors have gone into making it a success. A vision to be able to deliver something innovative to the industry has been the force behind the growth. But, we still have a long way to go before we meet with our own expectations. It is imperative for us to innovate and not be jaded in the process. The model we are steering toward brings both design and business together in harmony."

It is no easy feat to climb the steps of success ladder in a short period of time. Apart from innovation, zeal and determination, infrastructure plays a lion's share in a brand's strength. Ruchika is also of the same view and states that the Odyssey's manufacturing unit is equipped

with 45 CNC Milling machines and two water jet units, besides the block cutting, tiling, processing and polishing units. Speaking about the production capacity, she says, "The production capacity depends on the projects in hand at any given time as every project is customized and the materials are large in number."

In this machine-driven age, any infrastructure setup is incomplete without sophisticated technology. Though it may seem that stonework such as murals and inlays are handicrafts especially from the rural regions, Odyssey is set to change this perception about the segment. "Technology plays a huge role in our design development and manufacturing process. We are undertaking digital fabrication through 3 Axis and 5 Axis CNC milling machines, water jet, etc. All our products are modeled on Rhino



and 3DMax. We are trying to reduce our dependence on manual labour for quick production and maximum efficiency," she informs.

With such a high-tech set up, it is no wonder that the brand has a diverse range of products. The Crosta Collection is a dimensional-stone series, which creates a play of shadows on the stone. The collection has been developed keeping in mind the Indian stone but not in the traditional Indian way. Another dimensional-stone collection is the Kinetic, which explores 'energy in motion', adding life to natural stone. Each panel of this collection appears to be moving and offers the opportunity to the customer select from varying levels of turbulence (mild/moderate/high) to create a truly unique wall surface. The surfaces take inspiration from parametric design, nature (veins of leaves) and Islamic art. The latest collection, IshiKiri is inspired by the traditional Japanese paper-folding art of Origami and is intended to be utilized for surfaces, sculptures and cascades. Through customization of these surfaces, in the

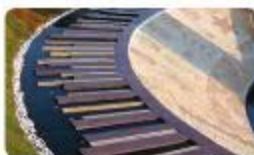


form of backlit and front-lit options for walls, IshiKiri can be manipulated for extraordinary results. The use of white marble in this collection takes forward a new step in the direction of customized backlit surfaces, which are typically only done with Onyx. This is a novel take on backlit surfaces, which tend to be appreciated only at night.

With such path-breaking collections, Odyssey has beautified various projects and has helped add that oomph factor. When asked to list some of her personal favourites, she shares, "One of our favourite projects was a façade, which was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and the textile block patterns. Each piece of stone was individually carved and then textured to give it an antique

appearance. Another favourite was a progressive mural for an entrance foyer along the entire length of the corridor. It started with Mother-of-Pearl inlay on the floor and went up on the walls with increasing depth till it became a lattice on the top."

We wrapped up the conversation with Ruchika shedding light on the challenges faced by this art-driven brand. "The biggest challenge has definitely been building the right team with the right level of motivation and commitment. The construction industry on a whole is very disorganized. Lack of trained professionals in our niche is also an obstacle. The machines we have imported from Italy are the first of their kind in the country. It has now been three years since we set up our factory and the number of machines have increased manifold, but it is only now that we can say we know some of what the machines have to offer. The learning curve has been very steep. Another thing, which is hard, is maintaining a balance between innovating and running a business," Ruchika concludes.



Odyssey has played an important role by doing great work for many esteemed clients. Take a look:

Bio-diversity Park, Hyderabad

The majestic monument for the Bio-diversity Park, built on the Gachibowli-Mehdipatnam Road, has become a landmark in Hyderabad as an artistic expression of the great mystery of life on earth and its creation. Architecturally, it depicts solid, liquid and gaseous forms. Odyssey was invited to collaborate on this prestigious project by Genesis Planners Private Limited, the project's lead architects and a well-known Hyderabad-based architecture firm. This mammoth undertaking required procuring, sawing, processing and polishing 165 tonnes of stone at their production facilities in Udaipur and Noida and shipping it for installation to Hyderabad. The monument includes a 32 feet high elliptical Bio-Diversity Pylon, depicting the evolution of species - starting from an atom, evolving to become molecules, proteins, various life forms and the intelligent human being. The base of the Pylon is composed of concentric circles representing nature's five elements - Earth (Prithivi), Air (Vayu), Water (Jala), Fire (Agni) and Ether (Akasha).

Hotel Kempinski, New Delhi

For one of the most prestigious and sprawling hotels in New Delhi, Odyssey was involved in the design and execution of the installations for Water Features, Hardscape, Façade and Sculptures. The scope included the design and construction of 22 water bodies and 2 swimming pools spread across the two towers of the hotel. The material palette primarily consisted of Black Galaxy, Irish Brown, Black Granite, Dark Grey Granite, Travertine and Gwalior White. The twin towers of the hotel building are designed to be clad with a combination of Irish Brown, Bianco Marfil and Gwalior White in 30 mm thick stone. A total of 105 sculptures were supplied, which included 39 lotus fire bowls carved from solid black granite blocks polished by hand. The artwork also included stackable block sculptures made of a combination of Black Granite and Semi-Precious Stones including African Carnelian, Grey Agate, Red Onyx, Indian Agate and Lapis Lazuli. These solid blocks were pre-polished from all sides and stacked on top of one another to create a monolithic structure of up to 2100 mm in height.



Hyatt Regency, Pune

Odyssey was awarded the hardscape contract for Hyatt Regency in Pune. The principal architects Bilkey Linas Design and Landscape architect Joel Burega envisioned a tropical feel for the external area of the hotel. Odyssey was involved in the stonework for various elements of the building including its landscape. The façade 5,000 sq.m. of Jaisalmer Flower Limestone in an antique finish has been dry clad on the twin towers of the property. The entrance driveway is cobbled in Black Granite and Yellow Jaisalmer hand-cut cobbles in 200 x 100 x 100 mm. The Black Granite arches are carved out of a single block of 300 mm thick stone. These arches are propelled on stainless steel rods and installed on 100 mm thick stone slab. Lotus Pad Cut-Work Lattice is water-jet cut in 50 mm thick Black Granite and is flanked by 216 lotuses carved from spherical stones. Odyssey handed over the project within 14 months from the date it was awarded to them.



Terminal 3, IGI, New Delhi

One of the prime infrastructure projects in New Delhi, the new Terminal 3 (T3) at The Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport is designed with many unique landscape features. Odyssey was awarded the hardscape and water features work for this iconic project. The scope of work under hardscape included 858 Movable Planter Boxes, 750 RMT of fixed planters in Steel Grey Granite, a landscape deck and planter benches. The external water features include five water bodies at the rotaries along the landscaped areas of the terminal, using 150 tonnes of Steel Grey Granite. These step fountains are made of 80, 100 and 150 mm thick pre-cut, polished, grooved, tapered and numbered solid pieces of granite processed at the Odyssey unit in Ongole. The water cascade at the arrival lounge is the sole internal water feature, made as combination of raw silk ivory, lavender blue and Steel Grey granite. The pieces are grooved and cut using a combination of CNC and water jet machines.

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