

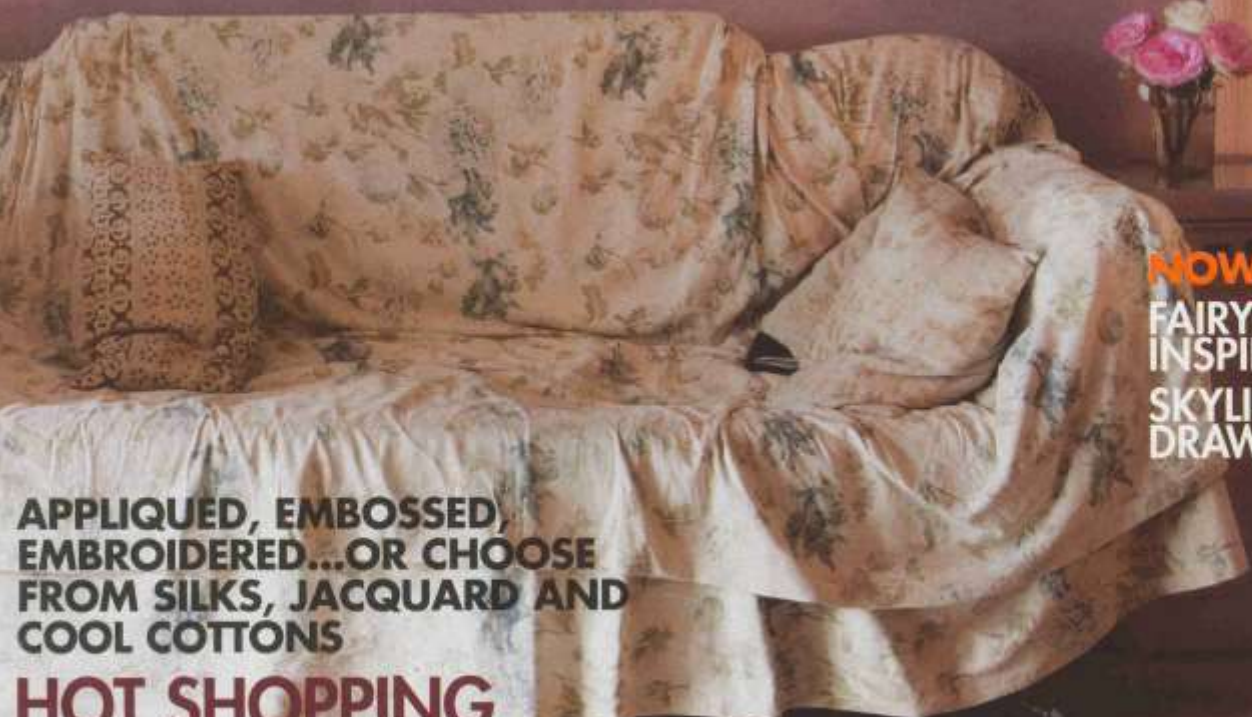
INSIDER VIEWS WITH SANJAY PURI & ROMI KHOSLA

ELLE DECOR

EXCLUSIVE
CHAT WITH
PHILIPPE
STARCK
IN INDIA

SUBSCRIBER'S COPY
www.elledecor.co.in

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2011 ₹100



NOW TRENDS
FAIRYTALE
INSPIRATIONS
SKYLINE
DRAWINGS

APPLIQUED, EMBOSSED,
EMBROIDERED...OR CHOOSE
FROM SILKS, JACQUARD AND
COOL COTTONS

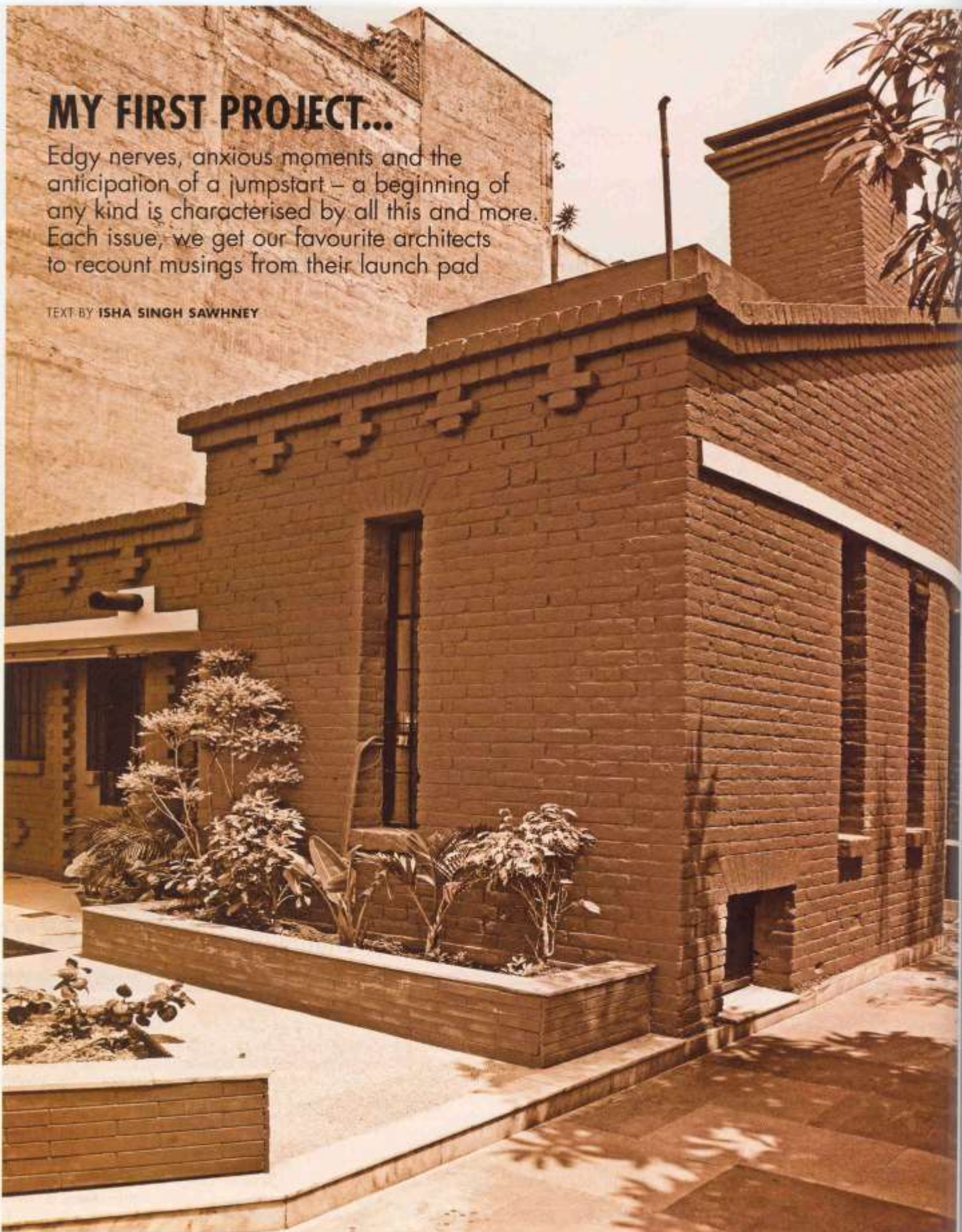
HOT SHOPPING

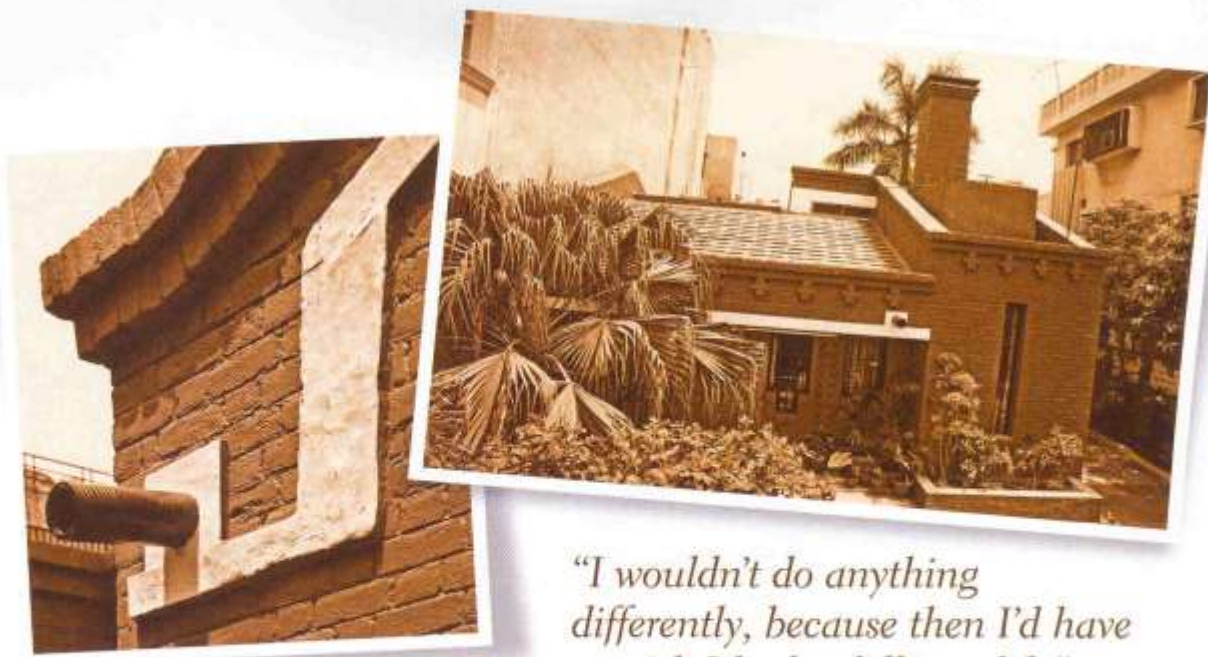
FABRICS BY THE YARD

MY FIRST PROJECT...

Edgy nerves, anxious moments and the anticipation of a jumpstart – a beginning of any kind is characterised by all this and more. Each issue, we get our favourite architects to recount musings from their launch pad

TEXT BY ISHA SINGH SAWHNEY





"I wouldn't do anything differently, because then I'd have to wish I had a different life."



ROMI KHOSLA

Founder, Romi Khosla Design Studio. A celebrated architect, he's one of the few people to have served on the prestigious Aga Khan Award Jury

Above, From Left White outlines create exaggerated borders, enhancing the predominantly rustic aesthetic; Nestled between concrete structures, the Chakraborty house is a soothing sight

Left Brick masonry allows the structure to breathe

Photographs courtesy Romi Khosla Design Studio. Website: www.rk-ds.com

Standing out among stark neighbours, the Chakraborty house is a sight for city sore eyes. Its sloping ceiling, tall chimney, generous garden, interlocked brick patterned facade, all outlined in white, recreates an Enid Blyton charm. Like most architectural careers, Romi Khosla's began with the commission of this private house. As his first project, it was iconic of what residential spaces began to typify in the '70s. This red brick structure in South Delhi's quintessentially Bengali colony, Chittranjan Park, was built for a retired professor and is a comforting reminder of a slower life. Especially when back-dropped by a vista of high-rises.

Even at the dawn of his career, Khosla identified instantly with his client's brief. Always fascinated by how the complexities of life are reflected in nuances of architecture, he points out the very complicated imagination of the Indian middle class. Right from back then, the award winning architect knew what to take into account, and what not to. "I have remained indifferent to the random whims and fancies of the 'middle class client', who continues to be the biggest patron of designers today," states Khosla. He never forgot that the ideal home of a retired Bengali teacher is very different from that of a Punjabi businessman. Working with his then partners, Pune based architect Narendra Denge and sustainable designer Vasant Kamath, his brief was to build something cosy and warm within a budget of ₹40,000. Thus for Khosla, the enchanting brick facade was as aesthetic as ecologically and economically

friendly. "Firstly, the raw material was easily available and we were playing with a small space where the look was more important than the plans." Essentially a place for the couple, it is a duplex with a simple design of two bedrooms, living and dining areas and the kitchen. They weren't really expecting long-stay house guests and like two nesting birds, they retired in the anonymity of their new home. Khosla planned the sloping roof and exaggerated chimney to provoke a classic image. Symbolising the ideal retirement dwelling, the project also went on to become a part of the Random House Publication, *Modern Architecture of Delhi*.

Despite hiccups spanning truant contractors, misunderstood drawings and bad quality work, Khosla, when asked if he would live a different life if he got another chance, says "no" firmly. "I wouldn't do anything differently, because then I'd have to wish I had a different life," says the former London School of Economics graduate and Pricewaterhouse Cooper accountant. Decades later, the rustic simplicity of the structure stands in contrast to his recent works – state-of-the-art luxury hotels and stores for India's top fashion designers. Looking at his clean lined, contemporary projects, it's easy to see the evolution that his creativity and ethos have taken.

As builder flats take precedence in the skyline, the unassuming red brick house is an anomaly. Its exaggerated silhouette stands like a miracle reminder – not falling victim to a growing industrial culture. Khosla's first project, in his words "is architecture rather than 'architorture'." ♦