

PLATFORM15

YEARS

A CREATIVE PLAYGROUND [ART / STYLE / MUSIC / FILM / LITERATURE / DESIGN]

NOV
2020
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2021
Rs.
500

The Transforming Act Farhan Akhtar / *Red Pill* Hari Kunzru / *The Inimitable Photographer* Martin Parr
Chronicles of a Couturier Tarun Tahiliani / *A Suitable Boy* Ishaan Khatter / *Booker Prize Winner* Douglas Stuart



On the Myriad Shades of Love
Anoushka Shankar

THE OTHER SIDE

Deconstructing the idea of a singular cohesive self through creative communication and critical thinking is *The Other Side*. Founded by artist Rachna Toshniwal, also an environmental activist by training, the retreat is located in the tiny village of Bagdanda in Alibag just on the other side of the concrete jungle that is Mumbai. The multipurpose communal space, situated in an old coconut grove, is an attempt to explore the interconnection between nature, art and the evolving self. Founder Rachna intends for the space to be what Swiss psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Carl Jung termed as ‘the *temenos*, a magic circle, a vessel, in which the transformation...would be allowed to take place’.

In an attempt to promote diverse voices, the *Other Side Studio* offers space to conduct workshops around the arts, alternative healing practices, self care, wellness and therapeutic processes. The minimalist space further offers an art residency to take a deeper plunge into the unique, natural setting.

Designed by multidisciplinary firm *Architecture Brio*, the space deftly deals with the burning question that surrounds coastal areas in contemporary times; the densification and increase of population in the area with the threat of rising sea levels. Elaborating on the dilemma the team asserts, “It is important to consider, when construction activity does take place, it builds resilience to an uncertain future. Moreover, it should employ building methods and use materials that have a minimal impact on their fragile ecosystems.” Away from the metropole yet connected through the Mumbai skyline, the space, categorised into three zones, deals with the depleting groundwater levels through distinctive planning. The onset of the project was marked with one of its most important aspects, the water harvesting pond whose curvaceous shape is in contrast to the man-made geometrical interventions on site. Responsible for collecting rainwater, the pond not only replenishes groundwater but also adds to the biodiversity in the area.

Taking into account the possibility of slight flooding in the topography, team *Architecture Brio* included a nimble and lightweight steel structure to lift the building off the ground. The planning process further ensured that the intent of the retreat reflected in the construction as well. In a bid to let the natural area remain undisturbed, the construction process involved off site manufacturing. Another one of the idiosyncratic aspects of the retreat is the idea of a structure resting on large boulders, loosely inspired from the *ambalama* in Sri Lanka. A part of public infrastructure in early 19th century architecture, it was an exclusive space where pilgrims from all across South Asia collected to rest, meet and share stories. Playing a similar role in the retreat, the space invites a plethora of perspectives to strengthen connection with themselves, others and the natural world.

Designed in a manner that responds to the context of the area, the ecological retreat that is *The Other Side*, with its agrarian character, comes across as the perfect solution for the uncertainty we face in the present moment, nature runs like clockwork and is never late for anything. It is in its full glory that we can find serenity, dipping into our creative self that has festered away due to fatigue on the job coupled with the unpredictability of the pandemic. Distance from daily stressors and exploring the self with art sounds like exactly what we’re all in need of. ///

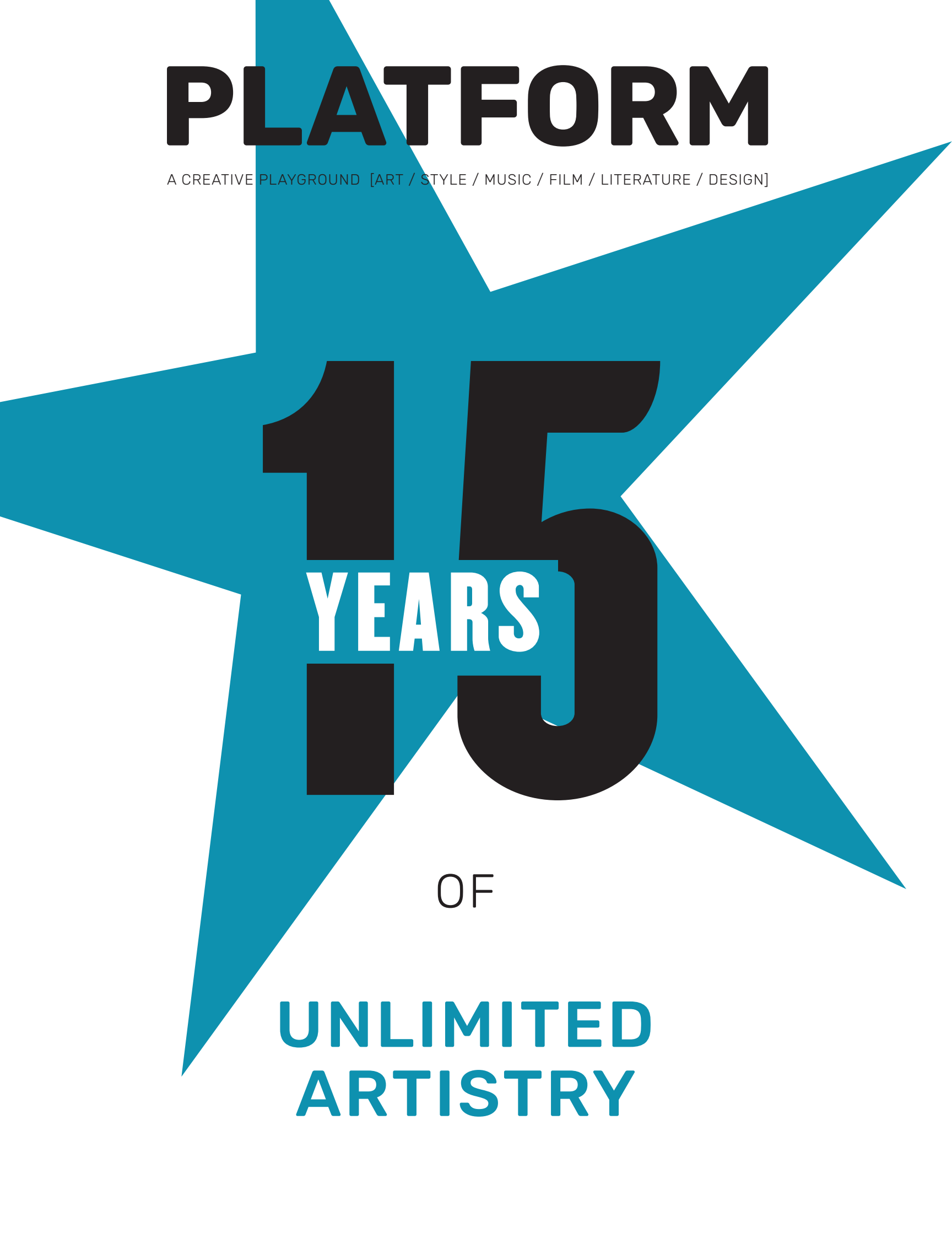
Words Unnati Saini

Photography Randhir Singh and Edmund Sumner



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OF

**UNLIMITED
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