



Prateek delights in creating fantastic murals to fill spaces—Unlike many other design houses, that give clients what they seek, TFF doesn't believe in "giving what the client is aware of and move away,"

The First Ferry and its Skipper, Prateek Chaudhry

The architecture boutique is on a unique mission to redefine living spaces, be it home, office or a retail store, that reflects the personality of people living or the philosophy of the corporate body. The recently published Gilt magazine, a renowned publication group, featured 30 best homes in the UAE. Three of which were designed and built by The First Ferry.

“If you don't find one, create one,” he says candidly, handing over a very sleek and handy orange card holder to me. He explains how difficult it was to find a good pouch that could hold all his cards, so he ended up making one himself. Meet Prateek Chaudhry, the skipper of The First Ferry (TFF), a premium international Interior Design house based in Dubai and London.

Set up in 2008, today it has offices in Kenya, China,

Singapore, and New Zealand to name a few. This architecture boutique is on a unique mission to redefine living spaces, be it home, office or a retail store, that reflects the personality of people living or the philosophy of the corporate body. With grit, determination and a sublime self confidence TFF is getting the attention it truly deserves. The recently published Gilt magazine, a renowned publication group, featured 30 best homes in the UAE. Three of which were designed and built by

The First Ferry.

Last year TFF collaborated with Gauri Khan, Bollywood superstar Shahrukh Khan's better half. Joining hands with Prateek and his team she will now be involved in architecture, landscape design, yacht interiors and bring in her signature line of furniture and chandelier collection.

Commended by his customers and having travelled across continents', Prateek is not the one to settle for any clichéd references. He doesn't want to be identified as being from one place. "I don't want to be identified as an Indian or a Kiwi." But what he enjoys is calling himself the skipper of his Ferry, "Captain is a mouthful," he says laughingly.

Conversing with him, is akin to getting momentarily transported to the sets of Mughal E Azam where one talks of opulence, grandeur, exclusivity and the extensive powers of the mind to create.

"The whole idea is to create a very unique brand. I personally don't think there is a brand in the market that we are trying to seek or become. We are doing everything to become an art house," says Prateek passionately.

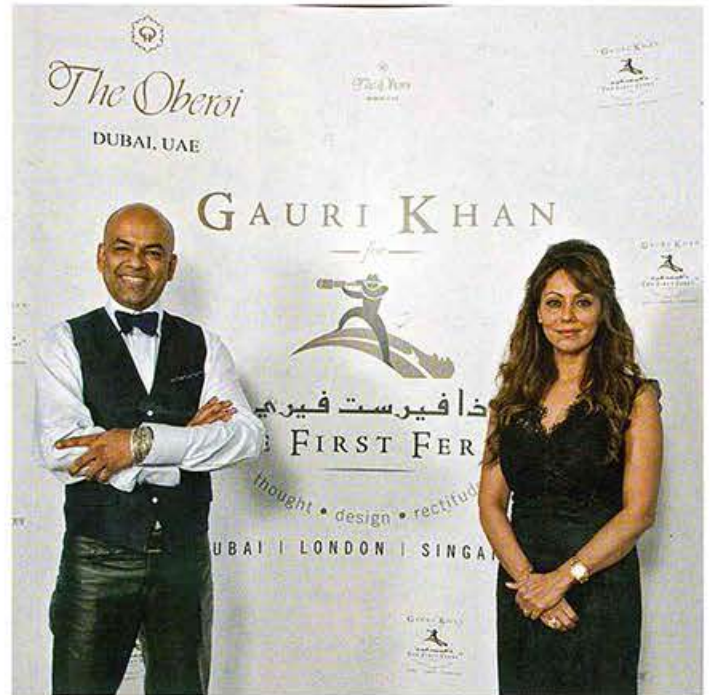
This passion for high class design has led TFF to expand its services into other departments such as furniture, lights, films, landscaping, art, and many more. Residences, commercial offices, retail, hospitality, restaurants, cafes, yachts, clubhouses and gyms are part of its ever-growing list of projects.

From being a mall promoter to having the privilege of carrying the Olympic Torch in the run-up in New Zealand, to teaching English in Australia, to working in a jewelry store, to launching a brand in Kuwait, to setting up TFF, he has donned many hats. A hard worker who never settles for the mundane, he has truly earned his standing today. With many fancy projects in his kitty catering to the Who's Who in the region, Prateek, doesn't believe in resting on his past laurels. For that matter he is ready to forego his sleep too.

"I sleep only for 2 hours everyday, and when I wake up, I say I wasted my time," he says in a matter of fact tone.

Decades back, a 24-year-old gold medalist, with a Post Graduate degree in advertising left the shores of Mumbai to work in Oman. Assigned with a tough job of promoting a mall, he saw it as an opportunity to grow. "I wanted the mall to be the center of the world. In two years I made it one of the most talked about locations," he explains. Combining the elements of aggressive he has tread a path, unperturbed by what lay in store for him. Experience they say is a good teacher, in his case he was a better student.

Always on the move, he followed the mantra of not getting too comfortable with any place. Overhearing a travel agent relentlessly convincing a friend to explore the land of Kiwis, he ended up packing his own bags



First Ferry collaborated with Gauri Khan for architecture, landscape design, yacht interior and her signature line

to New Zealand." I used all my savings to buy the ticket, I was even warned of not getting a refund, in case I changed my plans," he recollects. He has never regretted his decision.

"This kind of impulsiveness has been my strongest trait. I don't evaluate anything too much. The more you do so, the more you dilute it and the opportunity wanders away. Seize the moment," he emphasizes. An avid risk taker who has gone through the highs and lows of life, he has taken up some "really really" odd jobs. "No smoking, no drinking, no drugs, what gives him a high? The High gives me a high," he grins. Meeting people, enhancing client relationships, exploring the world is his forte.

Recollecting his days of travelling to work on a Ferry everyday to Davenport in New Zealand, with dolphins as companions, there was something new to explore every day, as the Ferry changed its route according to the weather. "It takes you to new horizons, sometimes its high wind, sometimes low wind. True to its name, when TFF takes a client on board, we help the client explore new opportunities and pave paths for new possibilities," he claims. Therefore the emphasis on designs as the cutting edge is paramount for him.

Having moved to Dubai in 2008, TFF aims to take bespoke to yet another level. Even his office was revamped to look like an art gallery.

"I have a team of designers and architects. The emphasis on being an art house is so strong that there is never a brief given unless there are some functional requirements. I call them artists, not designers," he differentiates.

The one mantra he keeps harping to his team is,



Intriguing designs for interesting, ultra high net worth clients

"don't worry about the client, for the client only knows so much. It is our responsibility as artists and designers to elevate his senses. I mean you only know what you are exposed to, only when you are introduced to finer things in life do you know what the finer things are."

Unlike many other design houses, that give clients what they seek, TFF doesn't believe in "giving what the client is aware of and move away," says Prateek. "Our objective is not commercial. Commercially, we can do a quick and easy job. The client is happy we are happy, we get the money, the production guys are happy as it is faster to execute and low in risk. Instead the premise of my design is not design, its art. I cater to an audience that appreciates art and can afford art," he explains.

"Don't worry about what is in fashion. I don't want something trendy.. Create something that can last 400 years, and it will," he tells his team. And to understand timelessness better he often listens to Beethoven, Mozart and the classical opera. "All current music is derived from what was created 1000 years back. They created it so long ago yet its fresh," he notes.

Designs for him have to last, "Times change, interiors have to last. I never worry about what is in fashion nor what is trendy. Look at the palaces." In his efforts of making things super exclusive, the questions that rings in our minds is, is it affordable in that case?

"It is not about affordability. If I do it commercially, it is far much cheaper. I could have gone to a store and got it," is his reply. The quest to bring in the unique elements is so strong that, in many instances he has

flown artists, sculptors from India to bring the art alive and make the work "super exclusive."

For instance he got the creator of Suppandi, the popular character in the Tinkle comic book, to Dubai. "My entire office wall is handsketched. I gave him a whole list of things as to what has to be there," he asserts. I am very closely connected to the handicraft association of India and want to bring this kind of talent to the forefront. I am of the very strong opinion that good art doesnt have to be expensive."

And who is he exactly targeting? "UHNI (Ultra High Net worth Individuals)," pat comes the reply. And why? "Because they have multiple homes, spaces, offices. Secondly, they like exclusivity. They love high design. Within their social circle they want their work to be exclusive. This gives them the sense of exclusivity," he adds.

With an enviable list of clientele and business alliances Prateek says that the hunger to expand so quickly so far is what keeps him ticking. "because I could have been very comfortable with five employees and two clients. Work life balance would have been perfect." But he hopes that such a day never comes.

Today Prateek Chaudhry is more than happy holding the magicians wand, waving it and enrapturing his clients. ▣

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