

# DESIGN movement

Gopika Chowfla Design Studio has given many big brands their identity and communication, including Oberoi Hotels, Spicejet, Nirulas and Oxford. They are known for classic design that resists the spirit of age.

Gopika Chowfla worked for ten years in advertising before she started her studio. Now, thirteen years later, she still finds the process of creating something as exciting as she did when she started out.



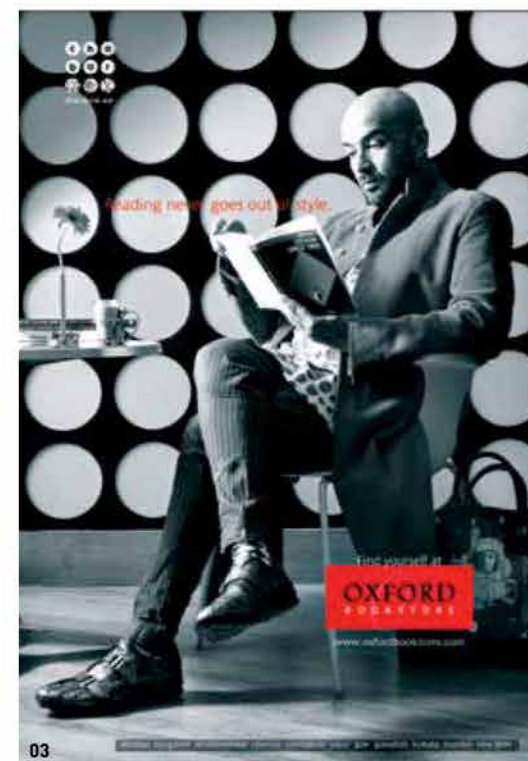
**Design is a shared vision.** Design is not fine art that will go up in a gallery as one's personal expression. Design is a joint venture between the designer and the client. The client has a design need, and the designer is providing a solution. Design is problem solving.

**We try not to be trendy.** Trends change and then design falters. The kind of projects we do, the design needs longevity, and can't afford to be trendy. The shelf-life of a brand signature needs to be at least 10 years. While the application of a brand identity can follow trends, the core needs to be constant.

**Always work like you're working with your left hand.** Staying out of your comfort zone will always help. Incubation of the idea takes time, not the execution. It is so easy to lapse into obvious answers, especially when you've been using the visual language for years. The challenge is how do you make the language newly relevant again? If the design solution comes too quickly, I often try to make it as complex as possible and then start deconstructing and simplifying it again to reach another result →



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**01 The Raintree Hotels Identity.**  
A chain of eco-hotels.

**02 Asia 7 Identity.**  
A pan-Asian restaurant serving food from seven countries.

**03 Oxford Bookstore Ad Campaign.**  
The theme was "Reading never goes out of style".



**My generation was inspired of the Bauhaus.** I'm influenced by the Western Modern Movement and I appreciate the design explorations by the Russian constructivists and Italian futurists. I love the sans serif. I enjoy playing with typography, negative spaces, deconstruction of form, etc. I don't like decorative design that depends on embellishments or faddish styling.

Logos like the 'I love NY' rebus by Milton Glazer are icons in modern design. I like the Tate Modern museum and Google identities. They aren't static – the designer has created plenty of room to change and play with the design while preserving the integrity of the design. I like a lot of British design, it is fresh and neat and easy to engage with. It is nicely detailed and is usually infused with some wit or irony. Dutch design is sort of straight up. Contemporary Japanese design has that deep influence that seems to be a continuum from their historical understanding of materials and form. They have managed to take their traditional cultural identity and modernize it. It's not kitsch or a superficial application of embellishments.

**A lot of colloquial and street graphics are popular in current design trends.** I'm wary of Kitsch; I think it's a cop-out, the easy way out. A part of this new interest in kitsch I think is to find a design link to our pop culture that has evolved out the 'unorganized' sector of Indian design. You take something from one context and put it in another. You put a Rose Brand Atta's graphics on an expensive hand-bag and it becomes a desirable designer object. I don't see that as real design.



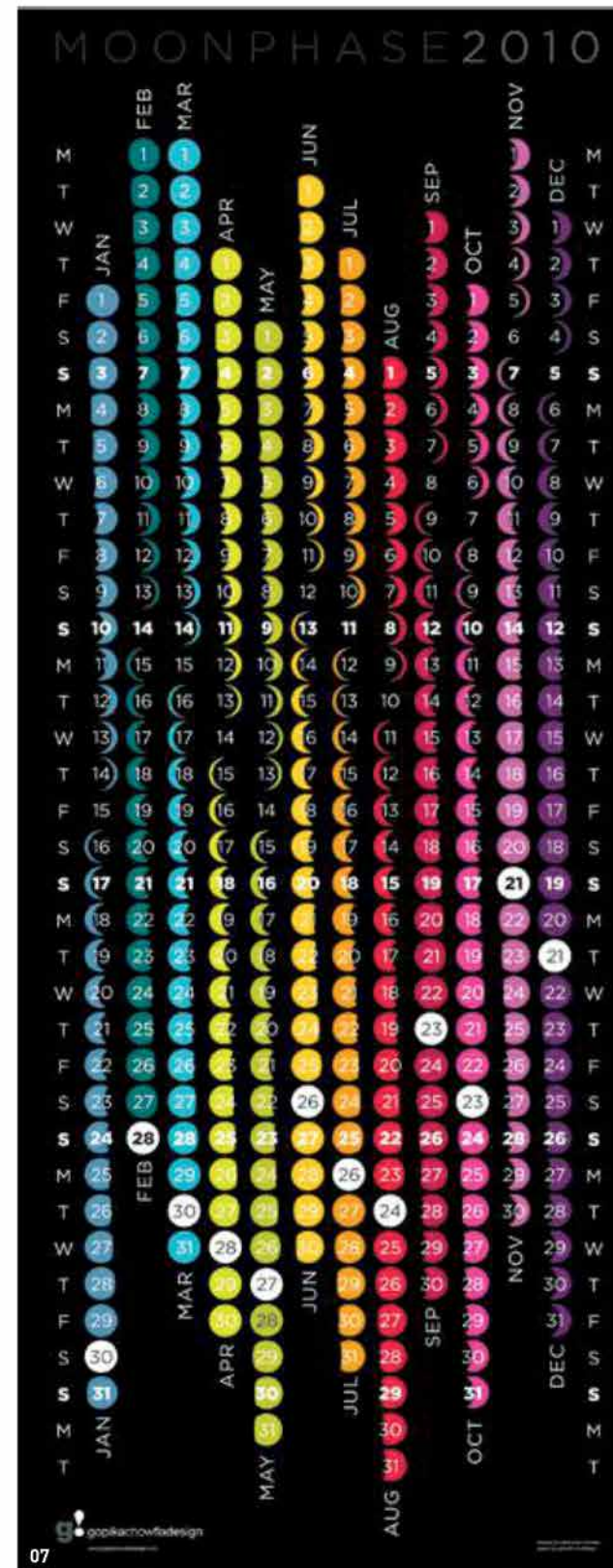
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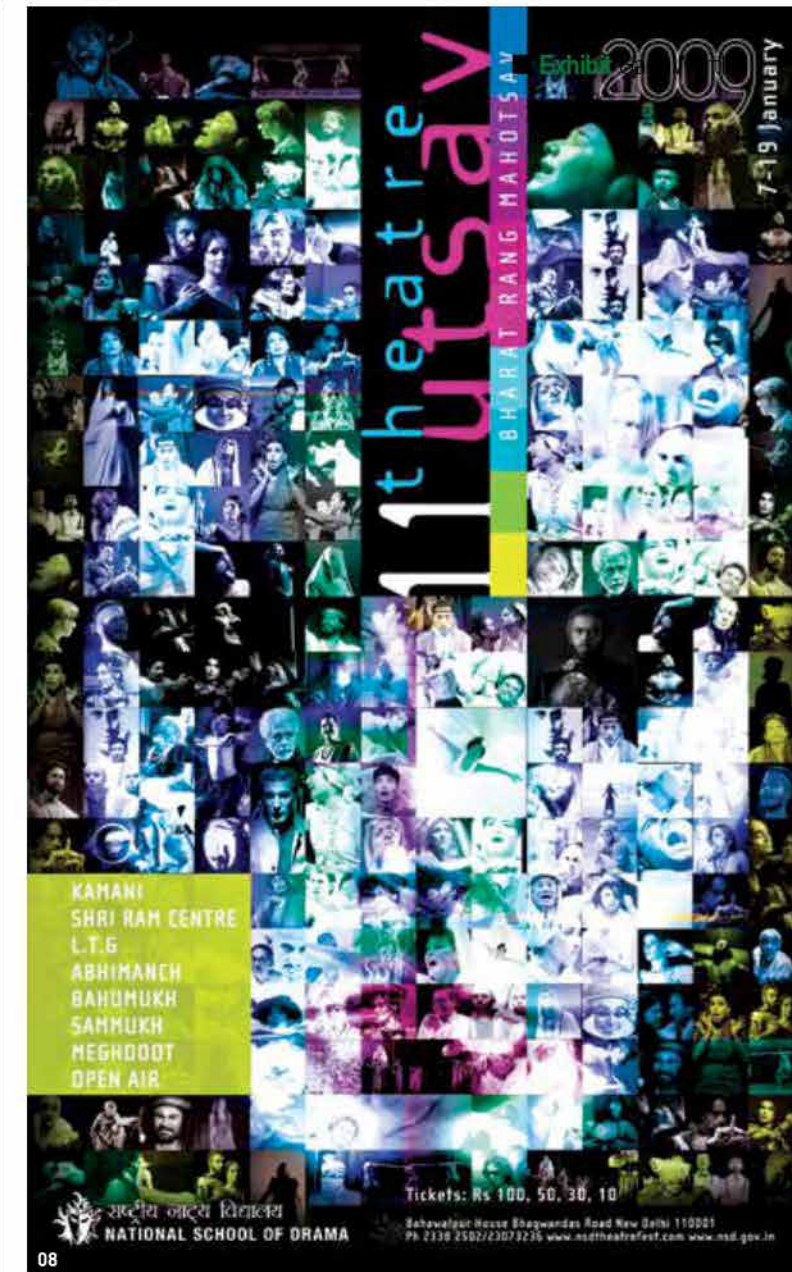
**04 Nirula's Packaging Design.** Doodles and graffiti-like personal consumer statements dress the surface of the packaging.

**05 Fitness Factory Identity.** A chain of gymnasiums.

**06 Jal Tarang Identity.** A 100-acre tourism and leisure development in Jaipur on the Mansagar Lake.

**07 Moonphase Calendar 2010.** Self promotion.

**08 Theatre Utsav Event Poster 2009.** National School of Drama's annual 2-week festival.



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**Indian graphic design is still very young.** Some don't even consider it a real profession. Without a national forum, we have still come quite far. But the biggest development needed is design education for design buyers (clients), so that they make an educated decision when buying design.

**Clients should trust their designer.** Even if you have years of experience, clients seldom trust you in what is your area of expertise, and not necessarily theirs. When you are working on abstracts like corporate identity, after the few basic technicalities like reproducibility, extendibility etc. have been addressed, what is the correct design? And when the client doesn't trust his designer, the designer ends up making thousands of options and the client selects the worst one, like Airtel did.

**There is good design, there is passable, then there's the bothersome.** There are some logos that pass by without impressing or hurting you. Some you can't resist but engage with. Some irk you every time you look at them. The Airtel one hurts me when I see it, like a sperm gone wrong, or frog larvae. As opposed to the Vodafone logo, which is nicely balanced, sits well on small as well as large outdoor applications and is endearing - you can hug it ←