THE MAKING OF iCED

A walk through iCED campus
International Centre for Environment Audit and Sustainable Development (iCED) was set up by the C&AG of India in 2011. It started functioning from the premises of RTI Jaipur from May 2011. In May 2013, the new building of iCED was inaugurated by the Vice President of India, Shri M. Hamid Ansari in the presence of former Governor of Rajasthan Smt. Margaret Alva. It is a green building and constructed according to green norms to make it environment friendly. More than that, it has also incorporated within its design the best of Rajasthani art, heritage and traditional handicrafts. It is a matter of pride for us that iCED won CPWD's award for best completed building in 2014. The iCED campus comprises the extensive outdoor area, the academic block, the hostel block, the sports block and the residences. The primary building material, especially for the outdoor facade is red sandstone, sourced from Dholpur mines in Rajasthan.

iCED has extensive green features like solar lighting, sensor-based lighting, solar water heaters, rain water harvesting system, use of local and eco-friendly materials, double glazing etc. It also incorporated features in its design like use of fenestrations, large windows etc., to cut down on energy requirements of the building. Let’s take a tour of the campus to learn more about iCED.

The outdoor area

The campus of iCED is spread over 16 acres and the ground coverage by buildings is only 2.05 acres. The entrance is framed by huge gates, inscribed with the logo of iCED. The logo of iCED was developed in conjunction with a graphical design agency based in Jaipur and
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consists of a leaf and a globe; while the leaf represents the environment focused theme of the center, which is environment, the globe represents the fact that iCED is the global training center for environment auditors across the world.

The perimeter of the plot is framed by a boundary wall which is reminiscent of the jaali work used in old Rajasthani havelis. The boundary has been planted with trees like neem, most of these were planted when the construction began in 2011. There are 2 distinct outdoors area—the area left and right of the building and the one adjoining the hostel. The areas in front of the Academic block comprise of small hillocks, planted with local varieties of plants like ‘Ashok’, ‘Gudhal’, ‘Gulturra’, ‘Murraya’ and ‘Choti Kutchnar’. These have not been covered by grass to save on our water requirements, this being a water stressed area. These hillocks also inter-weave walking paths around it and is lighted up by bollards, all of which are powered by solar energy. These form a tranquil walking area during summer evenings and winter mornings.

The green area adjacent to the hostel building has a more formal garden like appearance. It is covered by local varieties of grass and is surrounded by a pergola.
The sides of the pergola have been planted with flowering creepers, in a few years’ time, the cross beams will not be visible and one can walk under a canopy of flowers and leaves! A lawn planted with small flowering local shrubs surrounds the Amphitheatre, which is an open air venue for outdoor events. We have folk dance and music performances here and the experience is magical. The steps of the amphitheater are also an ideal place to catch the sun on cold winter mornings!

**Academic Block**

The academic block is framed by the glass and metal canopy which extends up to 13 meters in height and provides a sense of space and lightness. The canopy is made of toughened glass framed in metal and is held up by steel pillars framed in silver ACP. The steps leading up to the entrance are framed in black granite and provide a contrast to the white interiors. The steps leading up to the entrance of the academic block provide a good backdrop for photos!
The reception area of the academic block is a double height space, framed by long windows which allow abundant natural lighting inside the area, obviating the need for artificial lighting in the day. The walls as well as the floor are white to give a sense of lightness and space to the place. The flooring in the entire academic block is white marble, sourced from Makrana in Rajasthan. In the lobby, 3 things stand out the minute one enters—the rangoli on the floor, the design wall on the walls opposite the rangoli and the immense murals on the left and right hand side of the reception area. The rangoli was designed in-house and the stones were sourced after paying visit to innumerable stone quarries to get just the right colors! The colors of the rangoli—mainly rich brown and gold, have been reflected in the design wall which is actually covered by a wall paper made primarily from jute.

The 2 murals reflect ancient terracotta craft tradition of Rajasthan and has been executed by a young and up-coming Rajasthani artist. The 2 murals depict environmental themes, through Indian mythology and mythologies relating to environment across the world. There are manifestations of mother earth, the fish ‘Matsyavtar’ who saved the world from Pralaya to keep the nature re- energized. Above the fish, people who collected plant, seeds, herbs and animals to ensure survival are seen in a boat. Since time immemorial, Egyptian, Indian, Buddhist,
Inca and other mythologies have worshipped mother goddess, the earth and the environment and have spurred humans to protect and nurture animals, plants and the seasons which are part of the divine cycle of life and birth and this has also been depicted. On a more contemporary note, activities that degrade the environment are also depicted as are technologies like solar water heaters, mass transport etc., which are environment friendly. Symbols of many international environment accords are also embedded in the pictures so as to serve as a learning panel too! The lobby area also has 4 ancient wooden railway sleepers, mounted on stands to reinforce the idea of durability and beauty of natural materials.

From the reception area, the one side leads to the training halls and other side leads to the library. The library is a double height space, framed by a digital mural as well as a spiral staircase which leads to its upper floor. Magazines and periodicals are available only in digital format through tabs in the library. The first floor has books and a formal space for research and serious reading. The digital mural has been executed by young graphic artists from Jaipur. The mural is a photographic print out of a computer based art and shows a girl reading and then the girl flying through the air—symbolizing the flights of imagination that are possible through reading!
The Training halls 1 and II also have art works, all bought from exhibitions done by students of art schools across Rajasthan. The huge, white hued rooms are enlivened by huge windows, wall papers in different colors, skylights in training hall 2 and of course, original paintings, depicting various facets of life and environment.

The sit-out area, adjoining the training halls, is the favored place to take a break! It is a partially covered courtyard, with a cover of steel louvers and 3 walls covered by plants. These green walls not only bring the outdoors to an enclosed space but also serve to bring down ambient temperatures. The green walls are actually small plants fitted in small containers which cover the entire wall. The plants are all local varieties and are watered by drip irrigation system which lowers the water requirement. The stone benches are again made by local craftsmen; of design and colors chosen by iCED. The designing and manufacturing of these were done from Sikandra, near Dausa.
Adjacent to the sit out area is the formal lounge which is a space for receiving visitors. The walls of the lounge are covered in red and golden wallpaper and the area looks out to the sit-out area which makes the space look bigger and brighter than it is. Inside the lounge, 2 walls are covered with old photos depicting life in Jaipur before it became this big, bustling city. The Hawa Mahal, forts, roads are shown as virtually empty, many photos also depict styles of life gone by like a teacher teaching in an open courtyard, a wedding procession, children and grooms posing with horses etc. These pictures beautifully capture the old world charm of this princely city-state.

And then we come to our auditorium, which really is one of the most beautiful spaces in iCED. The space leading up to the auditorium has 2 glass paintings, encased in wooden frames, done by the reputed Jaipur-based artist. These glass paintings, similar in design, again depict environment themes through the use of colors and stylized pictures of flora and fauna all of which seem to flow sinuously into each other. These twin panels again bring a lot of brightness to essentially what is a dead space.
The auditorium is a mélange of unusual colors and designs conceptualized by iCED, all of which makes the space very unique. The color theme of grey and purple is very unique; so are the white clouds floating on top of the black ceiling, which are essentially sound reflectors. The walls are covered with sound proofing material and cloth tiles which pick up overall color palette. The walls on 2 sides have jaali work panels, which again, is a very traditional art form of Rajasthan.

The jaali art work, which depicts swaying grass and standalone flowers, has been executed by a Design Studio from Jaipur by local craftsmen who specialize in hand crafted metal work, and not machines, which gives it a certain appealing irregularity. The jaali work is illuminated by LED lights which look ethereal when rest of the lights in the auditorium are switched off.

The first floor comprises of working spaces for the officers and staff. The stand out feature of the first floor is that the main rooms look out to the green walls, which again serves to bring in the outdoors. The staff room and the officers’ rooms are framed by wide sit-out areas which provide a view of the hills close to iCED. In the
rainy season, when the hills are covered by low clouds, this is the place savor the scenery. These sit-out areas also provide a lot of sunny warmth during the often harsh winters.

The signage which show the placement of different rooms has also been custom designed for iCED. They consist of light colored wood cut in different legends and framed by colored resin plates. While the academic block signage is framed in orange, the ones in the hostel are framed in green and yellow for the sports block.

**Hostel**

The hostel is a two-storey structure, comprising of 80 rooms, which forms the residential facility for trainees and guest faculty of the various programs run by iCED. Its formal entrance is again double space with a reception area. This space is distinguished by the campus map, framed opposite the entrance. The map gives the layout of the entire campus, it also depicts the functions of various rooms in the campus. This unique map is three dimensional in nature, made utilizing ceramic tiles, wood and traditional miniature style painting. If you look closely, people are shown using the rooms for the purpose they were designed for. It has a wealth of details painted into it, like the dining hall is
depicted by people eating, the auditorium is depicted by people attending a stage show, the training hall is depicted by showing participants listening to a lecture! Executed by a design studio based in Jaipur, the campus map melds different traditional crafts to create a unique map which also serves as a design element and not just the campus map. Both sides of the reception lead to individual rooms. The rooms are furnished by simple wooden furniture designed and made in Jaipur. The lines are clean, simple and unfussy. The rooms feature LED lighting and are stocked with all basic amenities. The furnishings pay homage to the block printing tradition of Rajasthan. All the linen including the curtains, bedspreads, duvet covers have been made in blocks designed especially for iCED and in colors chosen by iCED. Blue-green and cream is the dominant theme, which imparts a sense of cheerfulness and serenity to the rooms The clocks also have been specially designed by iCED and pick up the cream, blue, green theme of the rooms. The rooms also feature a colorful painting done by specially-abled children, purchased from a non-profit organisation which uses the proceeds from the paintings done by children to educate them and make them economically stable.
The hostel also has an extensive dining space which is enlivened by custom designed art. One wall features graphic art with a Bollywood theme, featuring 10 major actors of Indian cinema, depicted in their iconic films and poses. So, we have Shah Rukh Khan carrying Kajol, Salman Khan in his distinctive goggles in Dabangg, Rajesh Khanna in Anand, Zeenat Aman in Hare Rama Hare Krishna and other such distinctive actors/scenes from their films. The graphic art, done by artists based in Jaipur is also populated by many supporting cast of people visible in the background and typical scenes from mofussil towns! Every time you look at the art work, you can discover something new like an expression, or a street hoarding, vintage cars etc! We also have pictures of villains like Ajit, Shakti Kapoor, Amrish Puri etc., on the column walls, looking down on the participants, as they finish their meals!

The wall opposite this art work also has art installation related to movies like ‘Mona In A Cage’, pictures of film camera, shot being taken, old gramophone made in cardboard, the clapper used in film shooting etc. So the dining space has a total Bollywood theme and serves as a
good starting point for many animated conversations about movies. Our foreign participants just love it and have been spotted taking pictures with their favorite movie stars!

**Sports block**

The sports block contains a swimming pool, a squash court, a badminton court, a billiards room, a gym and a table tennis room. In the summers, the pool is a big draw as are the TT room and the baddy court. Many keenly contested matches have taken place here!