The Project

The Project proposes India’s entry for the Venice Biennale. It is pursued as an exercise in visual semiotics, to develop a language that reintroduces architectural ornament, both figurative and geometric as the medium for communicating sensation. Sensation that may fill the void in Modernist/Contemporary architecture.

The relationship between Research and design

The research employed Visual and textual means for generating ideas about the nature of ornament. The design then began with directly attempting to convert the graphics into building elements, ultimately aiming for an integrated approach to the building. It was a continuation of the research but a lot of quasi-results that were developed in as in independent graphic language began to be challenged in being developed as architectural elements, integrated in space. Ironically, it was discovered that even in the case of ornament, “the design becomes final not when there is something left to add, but nothing left to take away.”

Source – Mallika Arora, June 2014
The fact that the project aimed at unifying a neat minimalist space experience and atmosphere generation, with ornamental articulation posed a very interesting question about the tension between a straight line and a curve, between abstraction and realism, between figure and geometry; as well as about how they may be combined. The fact that the figurative component of the ornament was based on dance positions, lent a fourth dimension. The issue then was not just how to freeze movement in space, but also how the space is navigated and experienced, and how the ornament is revealed in time. The integration between the ornamental building elements and the building itself thus became extremely important.

The Relationship between the Project and the wider social context

In the brief for the coming Biennale, Rem Koolhas discusses the issue of homogenization and the dissolution of identity by claiming that one can no longer talk of a (contemporary) Chinese, African or Portuguese architecture. The project thus intends to stir a debate on cultural capital and soft power. Within the visual grammar, it tests this idea, with a territorial-context specific choice of figuration and a temporal-context specific choice of geometry.

Methodological line of approach

Methodologically, it explores the overlap between analogue-craft and digital mass customization. Although it is integral to the process, limitations of time and scope prevent a detailed work on this aspect. But I hope that after graduation there will be an opportunity for me to further this research.