

Abundance Not Capital. Anupama Kundoo

18.09.2025–16.02.2026 | Exhibition hall 2

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What if architecture were not an instrument of capital? What if there is enough for everyone? How can anyone even dare to say such a thing out loud? The architecture of the Indian architect Anupama Kundoo shows that a different way of building is indeed possible. Using local resources, Kundoo designs structures of extraordinary beauty that care for the needs of people and the planet.

All around the globe, natural resources and labor are being exploited by the construction industry. At the same time, many people can no longer afford their homes, which have turned into investment products. How did building become so destructive to humans and nature, and what can architects do to counteract this? For the two curators, Angelika Fitz and Elke Krasny, Anupama Kundoo's work exemplifies a different kind of architecture: an ecological, material, and spatial embodiment of abundance that resists the imperative of "never enough" – or as Anupama Kundoo says: "What's the point of doing efficiently things that don't need to be done at all?"

Anupama Kundoo was born in Pune in 1967 and grew up in Mumbai, where she studied architecture in the late 1980s. As globalized urbanization took command of India, Kundoo decided in 1989 against the architectural dictate "form follows money." She moved to the experimental town of Auroville in South India, where she established her office, Anupama Kundoo Architects, at the age of twenty-three. Kundoo has taught at renowned universities around the world. She has exhibited multiple times at the Biennale and has received numerous prizes. She is currently operating offices in Berlin, Mumbai, and Puducherry, but the vast majority of her architectural work can be found in Auroville and Puducherry in the southern Indian coastal state of Tamil Nadu.

Wealth lies in Anupama Kundoo's projects not in expensive materials and perfect industrial products, but in the innovative use of materials and techniques that are locally abundant. She achieves this by combining high-tech and low-tech, further developing traditional building techniques, new lightweight construction methods, natural cooling, and regional material cycles. Kundoo defies the narrow confines of either/or. Her architectural practice is at the same time technological and spiritual, modernist and ecological, traditional and innovative, social and beautiful.

The exhibition draws on the architect's oeuvre spanning more than three decades and shares her curatorial research on eight dimensions of wealth and abundance: knowledge, materials, solutions, aspirations, differences, generosity, nature, and regeneration. The exhibition design by Anupama Kundoo and her team follows the floor plan of her own home, the Wall House. With a variety of models, material samples, and full-scale installations, the exhibition enables visitors to experience wealth and abundance in all their dimensions.

Eight Dimensions of Abundance

Crafting Experiments: The Abundance of Knowledge

The built environment is the largest collective undertaking in all of human history. While building had been collective work for the longest time, the modern division of labor separated architects, designers, builders, and users from each other, thereby leading to a disregard of “making” types of knowledge. Anupama Kundoo’s architectural innovations are based on the creative use of locally available materials and technologies. Earth, clay, stone, and manual know-how meet experimental processes. The Wall House, the architect’s home in Auroville, served as a testing ground for generating inventive methods that were later applied to other projects.

Local Economies: The Abundance of Materials

The mining, production, transport, and processing of materials have led to the exploitation of nature and workers in the globalized construction industry. To what extent are local economies that operate in a place-based manner possible, where the profit is not accumulated but remains with the people in the region? Anupama Kundoo’s interest in materials was initially of a particularly aesthetic and economic nature but developed into a critique of colonial structures. India is not a “poor” country that needs to be “developed.” Instead, she recognizes and appreciates the abundance of local building materials and construction methods and works purposefully with them.

Beyond Norms and Standards: The Abundance of Solutions

Standardization began with colonialism and ushered in the process of globalization, which displaced local architectural knowledge and indigenous building techniques. While norms provide security, all regulations must operate with generalizations and thus seem excessive for individual situations. Kundoo calls them “broadband antibiotics.” Why, for example, do all bricks have to be of the highest quality, even though they are therefore oversized for many applications? “I have always thought it foolish to ignore the building occupant and the craftsperson and instead design for the component manufacturer and building inspector,” states Kundoo.

Experimental City: The Abundance of Aspirations

Many of Kundoo’s buildings are connected to Auroville, where the vision of a town founded on unity and peace arose in the 1930s. The aspiration to build a community for the unity of people is not a metaphor here, but a constructed architectural experiment. Officially founded in 1968, Auroville is now home to approximately 3,300 people from 58 nations. The Auroville Charter, which was written by The Mother, states that “Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole.” Consequently, there is no private land ownership. All basic needs are to be met through community services, to which everyone contributes through their labor. Auroville is an experimental real space whose formation has been influenced by contradictory historical factors such as colonialism, modernism, integral yoga, Western anti-capitalist ideals, UNESCO support, and international development aid.

Reinventing Beauty: The Abundance of Differences

Architectural history has long been and, in some cases, still is written along historic periods, styles, and cultural differences. Anupama Kundoo's architecture eludes such classification. Her work brings together elements of modernism, traditional building methods, and place-based material experiments. Kundoo incorporates principles from ancient temples, traditional Tamil dwellings, and Laurie Baker's low-tech methods, and references pioneers like Le Corbusier. A coexistence is created in which things intertwine while simultaneously retaining their independence, a beauty that is both subtle and powerful, modest and accessible – and distances itself from spectacle or dominance.

Maintenance and Care: The Abundance of Generosity

All architecture requires constant care and, in turn, shapes the conditions for reproductive work. Maintenance and care are often described as invisible and unpaid labor, necessary for the satisfaction of basic needs, boring and repetitive, and not as practices rich in knowledge, skills, and meaning. Anupama Kundoo understands "maintenance as part of the ritual of life." The awareness of maintenance challenges and the structuring of caregiving are part of architecture. Generosity replaces the exploitation of care work.

Climate Healing: The Abundance of Nature

Architecture builds capital's relations to nature and, in modernism, is dominated by the notion of "mastery over nature." Practicing architecture as climate healing means having to build the relation to nature otherwise. This requires learning that nature is not for free, not a cheap resource to maximize profit, but that nature needs healing to recover from capitalism and to restore the very abundance of nature. Kundoo considers architecture as a contribution to climate repair, whereby human-nature relationships must be fundamentally rethought.

Soothing Architecture: The Abundance of Regeneration

During their visit to the Wall House, the curators felt a profound sense of renewal and calm. And they noticed: Architecture lacks a sophisticated vocabulary for soothing and regenerative spaces. Unlike many architectural icons that represent power, capital, and spectacle, Kundoo's architecture invites visitors to repose, recharge, and linger in the moment. The exhibition design also allows visitors to experience architecture as a space for taking pause and coming to rest – qualities that have often been overlooked in the architectural debate.

Projects in the exhibition

Hut Petite Ferme, 1990, Auroville, India
 Wall House, 2000, Auroville, India
 Multipurpose Hall S.A.W.C.H.U., 2000, Auroville, India
 Village Action Center, 2000, Auroville, India
 Keystone Foundation, 2000, Kotagiri, India (ongoing)
 Auroville Institute of Applied Technology, 2001, Auroville, India
 Residence Spirit Sense, 2001, Auroville, India
 Abri Transport Service, 2003, Auroville, India
 Sangamam, 2003, Auroville, India
 Creativity Co-Housing, 2003, Auroville, India

Town Hall Complex, 2005, Auroville, India
 Mitra Youth Hostel, 2005, Auroville, India
 Volontariat Homes for Homeless Children, 2008, Puducherry, India
 Light Housing Prototype, 2013, Auroville, India
 Full Fill Homes, 2015, Auroville, India
 Easy-WC, 2015, Auroville, India
 Shah Houses, 2016, Brahmangarh, India
 Library Nandalal Sewa Samithi, 2018, Puducherry, India
 Sharana Daycare Facility, 2019, Puducherry, India

Curators: Angelika Fitz, Elke Krasny

Project coordination and curatorial assistance: Agnes Wyskitensky

Publication:

Abundance Not Capital. The Lively Architecture of Anupama Kundoo

Edited by Angelika Fitz, Elke Krasny, and Architekturzentrum Wien

272 pages, € 38

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In this publication, Angelika Fitz and Elke Krasny introduce the concept of abundance to call for a paradigm shift in architecture. Using as its example the extraordinary work of architect Anupama Kundoo, this richly illustrated book demonstrates that non-extractivist and non-exploitative architecture is undeniably possible. Photographs and texts from Fitz and Krasny's curatorial field research, along with material from the architect's office, develop a novel framework for the analysis of architecture. Essays by international authors explore the issues of architecture and capital, CO2lonialism, working conditions in the construction industry, modernist utopias in urban planning, architectures of care, and offer insights into Indian architectural discourses.

With contributions by: Shumi Bose, Jordan H. Carver, Peggy Deamer, Madhavi Desai, Angelika Fitz, Rupali Gupte, Ranjit Hoskote, Elke Krasny, Charlotte Malterre-Barthes, Shannon Mattern, and Laurie Parsons

Comments on the book:

"Anupama Kundoo's architecture is a testament to the harmonious blend of traditional craftsmanship and an innovative approach to sustainability. This new book brilliantly examines and explains the theoretical underpinnings of her work, as well as showcasing its achievements."

NORMAN FOSTER, Founder and Executive Chairman, Foster + Partners
 and President, Norman Foster Foundation

“Reading this inspiring volume about reparative architecture and the building of generous spaces will fire your imagination while it suffuses you with hope.”
ANNE KARPf, author of *How Women Can Save the Planet*

“This approach is so relevant and necessary for today's world.”
MARTHA THORNE, urbanist and architectural consultant

The press release, as well as high-resolution press photos, are available free of charge for download at www.azw.at/press.

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