

**BEHIND
CLOSED
DOORS**

The Architect's Retreat was held on February 22, 2014 at the Yacht Club, Mumbai. It started at 9.30 am in the morning and ended in the evening at 6.00 pm. Through the day the assembled architects made short presentations on:

Practice

Practice & Patronage

Practice & Structure

Practice & Technology

Practice & Communication

Practice & Academia

Academics

Academics & Pedagogy

Academics & Teaching

Academics & Learning



These were debated and recorded.
This book is an account of that day.

Prior to this day, about 10 months in advance, we debated names and finally decided on those whom we would invite to the retreat.

They had to represent a large mix of attitudes and approaches to work, had to have a certain clear and continuous work accomplishment, represent a cross section of age groups, have inquisitive and academic bents of mind, be passionate about what they did and above all had to be well meaning, positive and honest; and had to be

people who did not posture, or as less as its possible for a breed of architects.

That is how the 16 architects got invited. When you look at the group, it's clear that they are representative of the larger community. While it is a fact that they took up the invitation, spent months developing and honing their thoughts, it would be wrong to assume that their concerns are unique. Far from it. The topics debated occupy all of our minds almost always.

The concerns that were discussed are daily fare; the world of architects in India discusses, toils, laments and celebrates them each day; over dinner, in classrooms, in offices, every moment of their life. And continues



ARCHITECT'S RETREAT

to discuss, and we are mostly unable to break the vice-like grip they exercise and the sense of déjà-vu that accompanies them. Sometimes not so honest, at others plainly so, or not well considered, these discussions often befuddle the mind, and shroud it with clouds.

The following pages should help in some parts, dispel that.

This is probably the first time that such a gathering has happened in the country, a group of architects met formally, in a tight room talked and discussed about issues of

Practice and Academics, with the only desire to effect change; imagine a new tomorrow, for the student, the young and old architects and for the profession.

And that's what I find truly valuable.

The essays are derived from the transcriptions of the recordings done on that day, and printed with minimal changes; and in most you will sense the excitement, the heady optimism, the dry cynicism and the humor in what seems like conversational tones, but are filled with deep insight, hope, anguish and thinking that is precious; has the ability to allow us to think of a better way of navigating our profession, and better ways of celebrating it.

Beyond the many seminal questions asked; at the core of them all is the fact that this effort was to better articulate, our essential meaning and identity as architects in India.

In the end, with what is said, and the many gaps left to connect and fill, with tantalising directions often not clarified, the book we hope, builds a world of cohesion- one that is worth reflecting upon and acting upon.

[ANIKET BHAGWAT]

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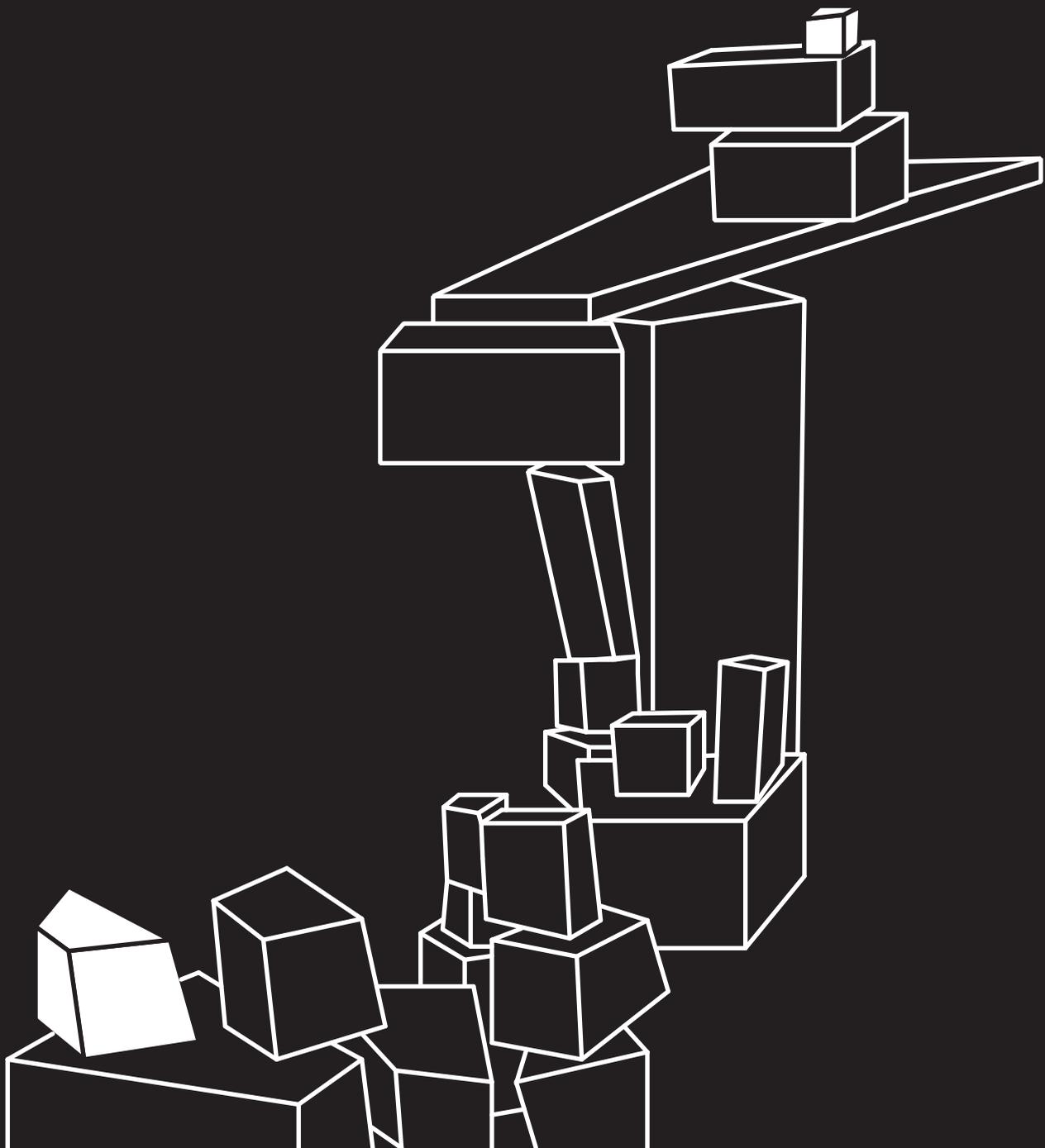


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PRACTICE AND **PATRONAGE**

IN WHICH QUESTIONS OF THE NATURE OF PATRONAGE, ITS DIFFERENT FORMS, ITS NEED AND NEW WAYS TO THINK ABOUT IT ARE DISCUSSED.

/ RAJEEV KATHPALIA
/ MAHESH RADHAKRISHNAN
/ SOUMITRO GHOSH



[OPINION]

[Rupali Gupte] *I think there were some very interesting ideas about an expanded practice that discussed the opening up beyond the clients and patrons. But Soumitro made a very interesting point, where he spoke about a space to discuss ideas. What kind of discursive spaces can architects create, so that it's not about crisis? You're producing something but there is a space to think about and discuss the larger ideas. Where do architects get that space?*

[Soumitro Ghosh] *The biggest opportunity and luxury lies with the institutions to start with, because that's the space, which has the energy and the capacity to actually create and ideate projects. A connection between institutions and good minds is necessary and making this feasible; it has to happen, not necessarily at a professional level. This is an enormous opportunity, and I believe that we are wasting our resources.*

[Samira Rathod] *Architecture is not a product that is packaged and sold by mass production but is about context, client, region and other factors. If a group of architects have a space where their good ideas would be supported, there would be a responsibility from students and architects to imagine and ideate. Maybe that kind of space would help and we would have research-based projects, inventions or innovations.*

[Rohan Shivkumar] *What was engaging with what Mahesh was doing was that he was using very popular modes of propagation with the public, like Facebook, which is very different from the modes that are currently in place. We, architects need to engage through institutional systems, with new ways of talking about architecture.*

[Ashish Bhalla] *What really is coming across is that architecture does not need a patron. Even the whole idea of crowd sourcing, is a very interesting idea. Somewhere I think the whole notion of the nobility of architecture, is something that all of you are assuming as the underlying basis which is a given it cannot be touched. Let's not lose sight of the fact that most people who invest in crowd-sourced ideas do so to make money or to kick start projects. Architects want to reach out and be more relevant to larger audience as well as retain the haloed noble ground on which only architects reside. That's a dichotomy.*

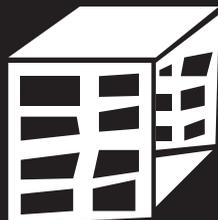
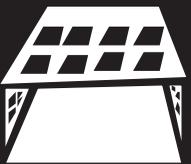
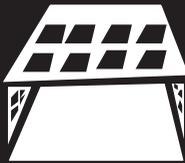
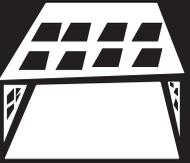
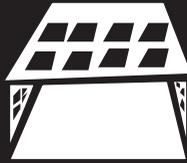
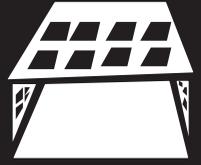
[Naresh Narasimhan] *I think it's not important anymore for architects to wait for patrons or clients. Many a times what I do is, unselfish it may sound, but I take the pro-bono route. And there you go and propose visions of whatever you want to do, without having a client in mind.*

[Vijay Arya] *When we talk about educating the patron, we are taking a very high position. I've seen a lot of times where the patron educates us. There is a lot of learning from the patron and we have to have some humility when we are working with a client.*

PRACTICE AND STRUCTURE

IN WHICH THE MANY FORMS OF ORGANIZING A DESIGN PRACTICE, THEIR INHERENT STRUCTURES AND CHALLENGES, AND COMPLETELY NEW WAYS OF IMAGINING HOW TO RUN A FIRM ARE DISCUSSED.

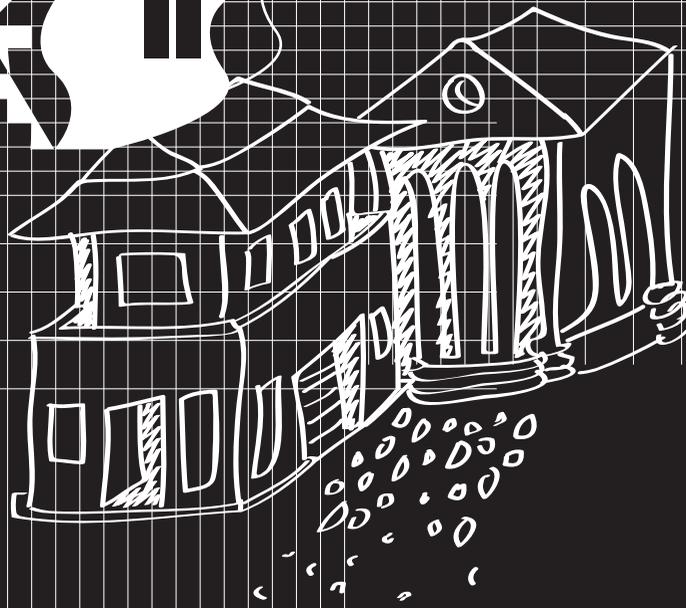
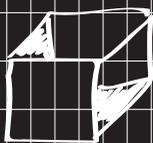
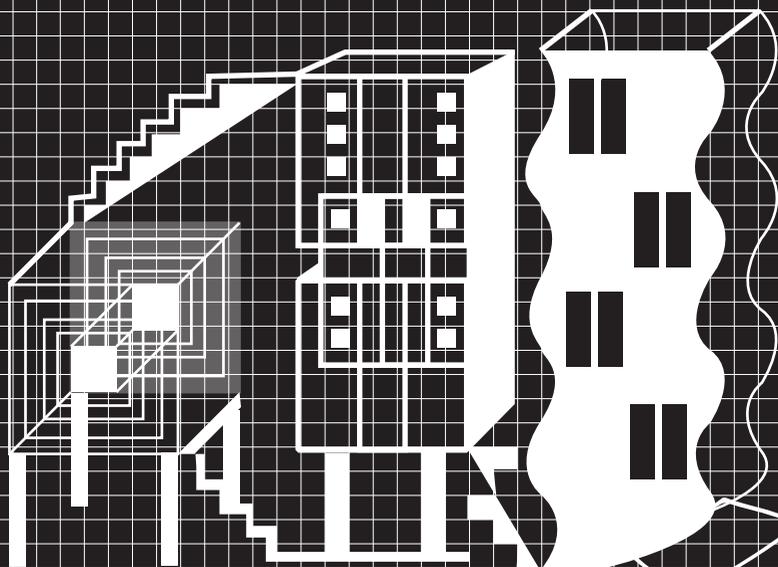
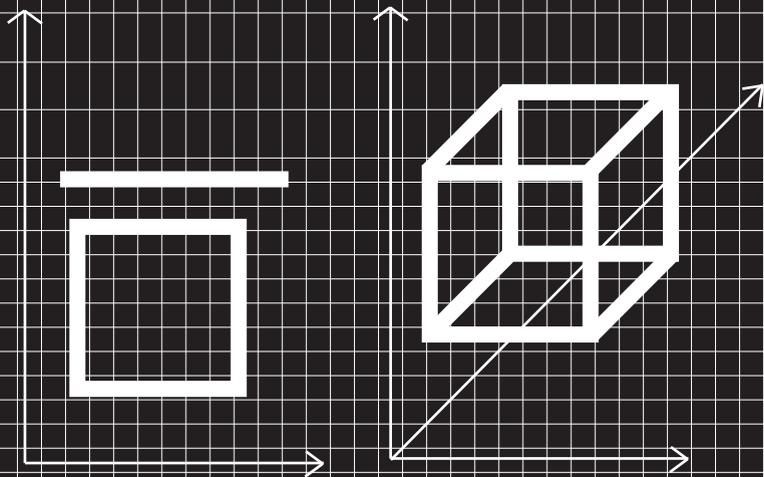
/ KIRAN KAPADIA
/ BIJOY RAMACHANDRAN
/ ASHISH BHALLA



PRACTICE AND TECHNOLOGY

IN WHICH WE ARE CAUTIONED ABOUT THE RISK
OF TOO MUCH RELIANCE ON WHAT IS CALLED
TECHNOLOGY, AND ALSO SUGGESTIONS MADE
ABOUT LEARNING THAT WHICH REALLY MATTERS
AND ARCHITECTS HAVE NO IDEA OF.

/ NARESH NARASIMHAN
/ SANJAY PRAKASH
/ VIJAY ARYA



PRACTICE AND COMMUNICATION

IN WHICH ARCHITECTS ARE SENSITIZED ABOUT THE NEED TO INFORM THEIR ROLE TO SOCIETY AT LARGE, THE MANY WAYS IN WHICH THEY TALK AMONGST THEMSELVES AND ALSO THE NEED TO RETURN TO MANY BASIC WAYS OF THINKING AND INFORMING DESIGN PROCESSES.

/ SAMIRA RATHOD

/ MEGHAL ARYA

/ MAHESH RADHAKRISHNAN



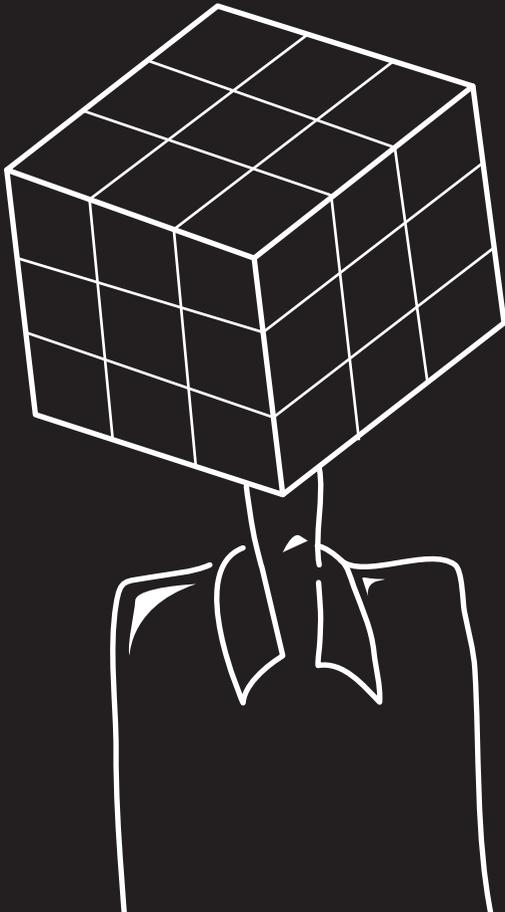
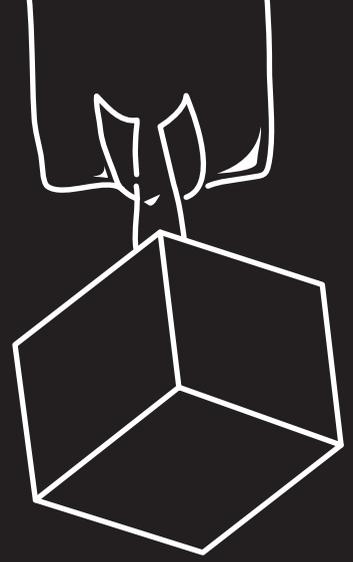
PRACTICE AND ACADEMIA

IN WHICH THE NEED TO REPOSITION AND REEVALUATE THE PRACTICE ARE DISCUSSED; MANY WAYS THAT AN ARCHITECT CAN FIND A SPACE TO EXIST OUTSIDE THE CONVENTIONAL DESIGN PROFESSIONAL PARADIGM ARE STATED, AND A DEEP NEED TO INTROSPECT OUR REASON FOR BEING IS EXPLAINED.

/ SUDIPTO GHOSH

/ RUPALI GUPTA

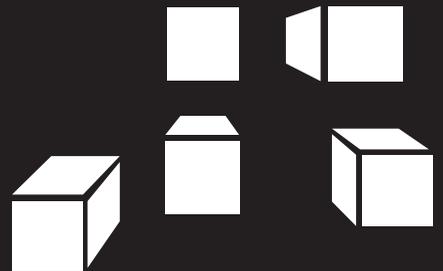
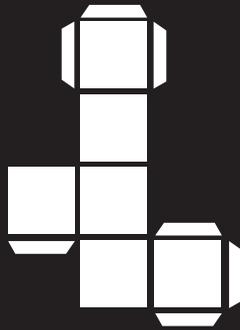
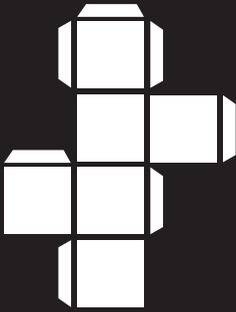
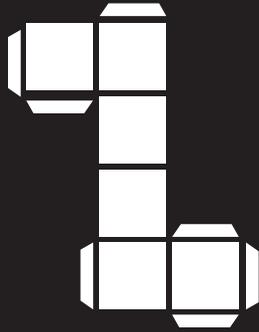
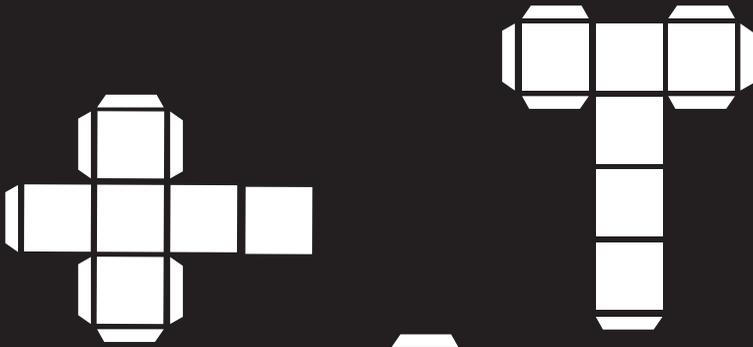
/ SUPARNA BHALLA



ACADEMICS AND **PEDAGOGY**

IN WHICH THE VERY MANNER IN WHICH
ARCHITECTURE IS TAUGHT IS QUESTIONED,
AND NEW WAYS OR SIGNIFICANT
IMPROVEMENTS ARE SUGGESTED.

/ ANEERUDHA PAUL
/ SOUMITRO GHOSH
/ NARESH NARASIMHAN

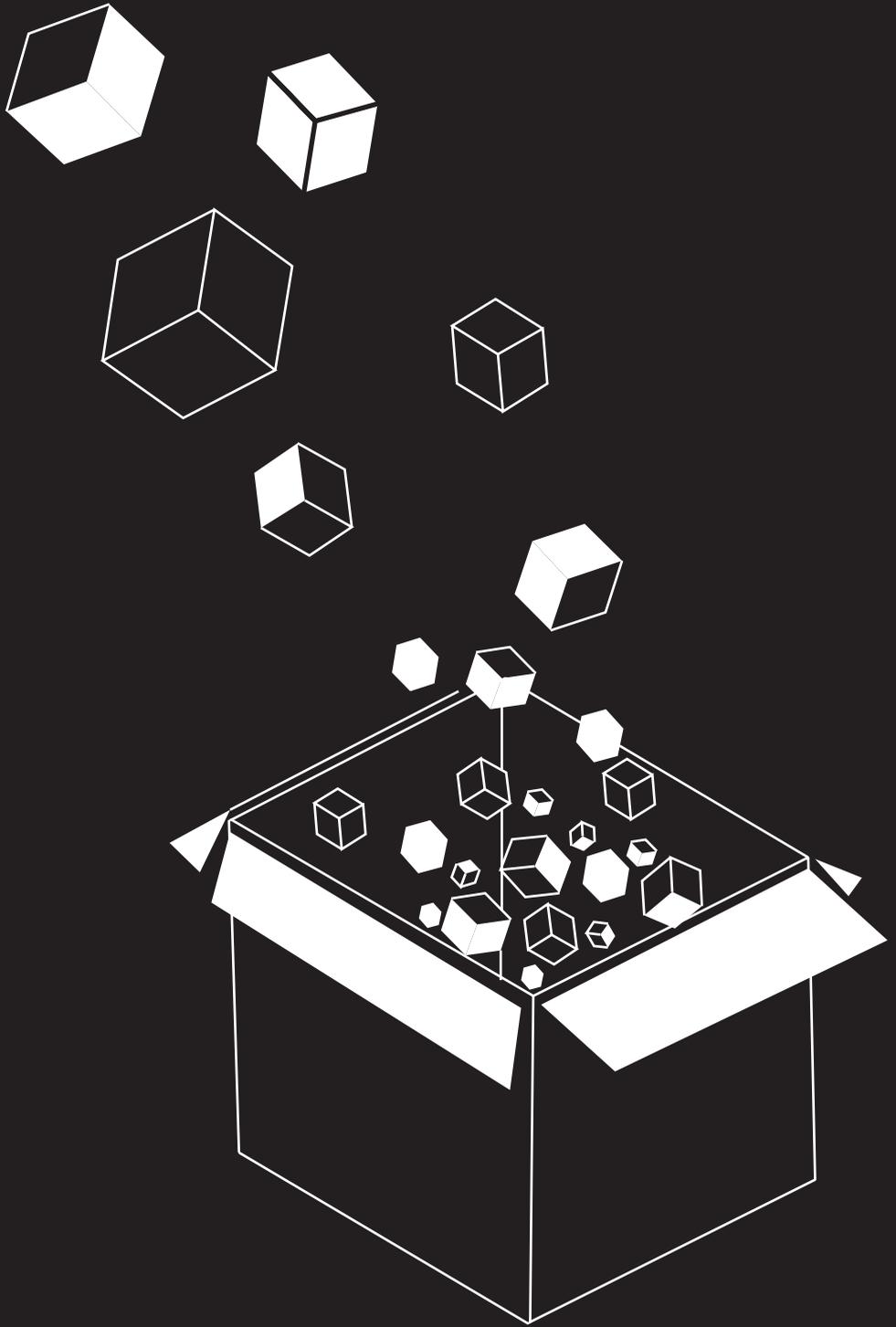


ACADEMICS AND TEACHING

IN WHICH THE TRAVAILS OF TEACHING IN THE
COUNTRY ARE DISCUSSED, AND THOUGHTS
KEY TO THE EVOLUTION OF A STUDENT ARE
ARTICULATED.

/ ROHAN SHIVKUMAR

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ACADEMICS AND **LEARNING**

IN WHICH WAYS OF LEARNING OTHER THAN
THOSE USED IN COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS ARE
SUGGESTED .

/ SANJAY PRAKASH

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