



PHOTO: DESIGN TEMPLE

MUMBAI LOST AND FOUND

Divya Thakur, founder of Design Temple in Mumbai, wants to celebrate India's cultural heritage in her design. "We're an incredibly old civilisation," she says.

Text: SALKA HALLSTRÖM BORNOLD

As late winter days go, it could have been gloomier. But for Divya Thakur, it's her first experience of snow. "It's so beautiful," she says, looking out at the slushy sidewalks in front of the Clarion Hotel in Stockholm. She'll be coming back on 22–28 April to fill the lobby with Indian design.

With her own brand and boutique, Design Temple, Thakur has become a design authority in India and her home city of Mumbai. Her latest collection was just introduced at Maison & Objet, the home and design fair in Paris.

"It's produced by artisans all over India," she says. "Our whole point is to take things from our past and see if they can be relevant today. We don't sell products. We sell the idea of something."

"This collection is about occasional furniture, built around the idea of conversation. In the villages of India, people love to get together. We developed these so they can just be picked up and moved around, casually."

What does a "contemporary Indian idiom" mean today?

"It's a language that is evolving. The reason



why this concept is important to us, is that we have a tendency to adopt Westernism without understanding where we come from. We're an incredibly old civilisation."

Is there a tendency to embrace everything Western?

"That seems to be the stamp of approval, which is really what we try to find a way around. We all exist in the avant-garde, the contemporary. But we don't want to ignore the past when we go into the future."

Where is this trend coming from?

"We've been cut away for many years. We've lived under the rule of the British and I think we missed out on that entire

portion of what a civilisation goes through to modernise. While the West went through its industrial revolution, we were fighting a completely different battle of independence. We came into our own at a later stage."

So globalisation is a threat to India's cultural heritage?

"Absolutely. We are all citizens of the world, but I like to celebrate the differences. The villages of India haven't changed that much, but in the city, there is a desperate need to belong to a Western idiom."

What in your background shaped your way of thinking?

"I come from a village in Bihar. My father was in the army and I grew up believing that your qualifications determined how well you did – not your background, and not your father's money. Then I went to a privileged boarding school in Mumbai. So I've had different experiences. One that is extremely remote, which is the village. One that is extremely utopian, which is the army."

"Mumbai is like any wonderful city in the world, like New York. But a part of me is Gandhian. I like equality, and I believe in a merit-based society." ⁵⁴⁰