

favourite, favourite subjects.” She would binge watch BBC specials on the topic. But she also knew that such a nomadic career path would be hard for her parents to get their heads around. “It was never really on the cards for me. So the next thing that lined up with archaeology was architecture, but I didn’t really have much information or knowledge about what it was.” Architecture, she says, became the only acceptable bridge between her scientific upbringing and her artistic curiosity. It was “the right mix of art and science.”

Still, it was not love at first sight. “By the end of my first year, I thought that I had made a mistake,” she admits. What kept her hooked was not the academic work, but the world beyond the classroom. The university encouraged travel and field study, and took students to Old Delhi, Hyderabad, Rajasthan, places where architecture lived, breathed, and aged with poetic grace. “When you see that architecture in real life, take measurements and do drawings of the old monuments... that actually made me interested,” she shares.

It was in these streets, and later in summer internships, where she found her footing. “Every summer vacation, I would join an office – that used to be the happiest part of my student years.” There, she wasn’t sheltered from reality, she was thrown into the thick of it. Kaushik was dealing with the day-to-day grind of what it takes to bring a project to life – like speaking with authorities for permits, negotiating with vendors, learning to read by-laws, taking minutes at client meetings – basically handling the gritty, unglamorous underbelly of the building world. “That taught me so much... so today I’m very confident in my knowledge across all aspects of this business.”

Her hands-on education would eventually become the foundation of her booming company: an architectural practice that is fully holistic, vertically integrated, and fiercely independent. “We do in-house architecture, right from excavation... interiors, fixed interior, soft interiors... in-house art curators, decor. So we really are not dependent on any outside agency.” She has learned, through experience, that too many voices can dilute a vision. “Too many cooks spoil the broth, which means the outcome is always a surprise.”

In every creative’s life there is that moment of recognition. Of understanding that theirs will be a more unconventional path, and instinct interrupts expectation. When something deep and intuitive whispers a truth that logic has not yet caught up to. For Indian architect and interior designer Aparna Kaushik, that moment arrived in a quiet clinic one morning as she prepared for what she thought would be her future in medicine. “I went to my aunt’s clinic... she opened it for me especially early in the morning to give me a medical certificate,” she recalls. But when Kaushik stepped inside and faced “a whole bunch of patients already waiting” something inside her snapped into focus. “I decided to myself, look, this is not my life... I’ll die before I do this.”

It was an unexpected pivot, from medicine to the world of architecture, but Kaushik insists she didn’t yet understand the significance of what she was stepping into. It’s true she had grown up with a love for history, storytelling, and the romance of ancient worlds. And as a child she was mesmerised by “the excavation sites in Egypt and archeology. One of my

WORDS: JESSICA MICHAULT

WORLD BUILDER

Architect and interior designer Aparna Kaushik is the woman that billionaires turn to when they want to come home



Top and Jewellery:
Aparna's Own,
Skirt: Zimmermann

Her clients, meanwhile, want homes that feel like complete worlds, where architecture, interiors, landscaping, art, and objects speak the same language. She obliges them by controlling, through her company, the narrative from start to finish.

This creative autonomy and total ownership appear to suit her temperament beautifully. When asked how she navigates being one of the only women at her level in her field, often the only one on massive construction sites, she shrugs. “80% of the time I’m the only woman in the room.” But Kaushik doesn’t allow gender dynamics to shape her confidence. “I’ve never felt that I’m in a male-dominated world... I don’t want to play the woman card at

all.” In fact, she says, it may have even worked in her favour: “If at all, being a woman has helped me. When I made a mistake when I was first starting, I was not really shouted down.”

Her ease in these environments is rooted partly in personality. She has always been, by her own admission, abundant in energy. “My parents always used to say that I have so much energy.” But it also comes from a deeper clarity about who she is and how she wants to live. For years, she operated as what she describes as “a happy go lucky person,” someone who did four projects a year, ran a small team of seven or eight, and escaped often into the fantasy of fashion. “I love fashion... I would just go and sit in the tailor’s boutique, cut patterns.” Her world was charming, full, but contained.

But then everything changed.

She met a mentor with an almost monastic view of life, who shook her awake. “He’s a very simple person... with zero, absolutely zero attachment.” During long conversations about life, purpose, and potential, she realised that ease had become a limitation. “I was wasting my potential... something needed to be done.” She learned, she says, that “you have to explore the last ounce of your potential... you can’t understand spirituality before exploring yourself completely.”

What followed was a creative and professional rebirth. Her company grew from a handful to nearly 100 people. Her clientele expanded from Delhi to 15 cities across India and into London and Dubai. Her projects evolved from conventional luxury to deeply bespoke, emotionally resonant, meticulously crafted homes.

And she chose, very intentionally, to do fewer projects, but at an unparalleled level. “If you want to do less work, the only way is that you do exclusive work... according to my own inherent personality, I don’t want to fight myself by doing volume I’m not cut out for.” Today, she takes on only seven to eight projects at a time for her 100-person team. This hyper-selectivity is what allows her to go all in: “I like to be involved in every aspect. I’m very detail oriented.”

Her style, which she describes as “countryside chic... contemporary, classic and chic” and her love of natural and organic materials reflect her passion for process and craft. If she needs a specific marble, she goes straight to the quarries. If she imagines a tapestry, she boards a flight to Chennai to spend three days in a workshop surrounded by artisans, golden threads, and embroidery



Jacket and
Trousers:
Zimmermann,
Jewellery:
Aparna's Own

PHOTOGRAPHY: ŽIGA MIHELČIČ; STYLING: CAMILLE MACAWILLI; LOCATION WITH THANKS TO DELANO DUBAI

frames. “Workshops are my heaven... I’m like a kid in the candy shop.”

One of her most memorable recent commissions for a client involved creating elaborate hand-embroidered banners representing exotic rescued animals. The piece required “10,000 hours of hand embroidery... 200 people working on it,” she shares. And she documented every step of the intricate process for posterity. Her delight in this world is palpable; it’s where she is most herself.

But beyond craft and aesthetics, Kaushik’s work is also shaped by the evolving psychology of what the home is meant to represent, particularly post-pandemic. “Covid unlocked something in people,” the architect confirms. She has seen Indian homeowners shift from a culture of saving to one of living, of prioritising wellness, experiential spaces, and private sanctuaries. “You can go to Morocco or Mexico... but why not create your own experience at home?” And increasingly, they do. Her sensitivity to cultural nuance allows her to adapt across geographies. Middle Eastern clients, she notes, value privacy and clear spatial distinctions; Indian families embrace openness and interconnection; London clients favour restraint, subtlety, refined curation. But beneath it all, she insists: “Fundamentally, human beings all over the world are the same. It’s about family and being connected.”

Perhaps it is this insight, this ability to read people, not just spaces, that makes Kaushik such a powerful collaborator. She approaches each project with empathy, curiosity, and the quiet confidence of someone who has spent years listening deeply to the needs of others and to her own inner voice and creative instincts.

She is also profoundly curious, a seeker in the truest sense. Creativity, she believes, requires stepping away from the familiar. “The key for me is to change my environment. To go somewhere new and stay there for an extended time, meet people, and get to know the area on a more profound level.” To that end, she doesn’t take quick trips; she often relocates temporarily to different cities around the world, immersing herself in the sensory fabric of a place. This year she spent 20 days in a coastal village near Bordeaux – “literally a cabin on the beach,” surrounded by oyster farmers. Next, she wants to spend two to three years slowly ab-



Blazer, Trousers, and Jewellery: Aparna’s Own

sorbing Africa, starting in the north. “I think I’ll keep travelling,” she says, “because until you have fully found yourself, you need to continue to explore the world.”

In the end, what sets Kaushik apart is the same instinct that pulled her away from medicine and toward design all those years ago: an unwavering commitment to listening to the truth within herself. She builds homes, but she also builds worlds, identities, and emotional landscapes. She builds with intention, with devotion, and with the courage to follow her curiosity wherever it leads. And she builds, most of all, from a place of clarity. “Ultimately, I have nothing to prove to anyone... you have to be content with yourself first.”

It’s a powerful philosophy that has helped her create not only extraordinary spaces, but an extraordinary life.