

A N E E S M E H K R I



FURNITURE | PRODUCT | INDUSTRIAL DESIGN



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Hello.

With over 15 years of experience as a furniture and interior designer, I've worked across multiple intersections of industrial design. My practice is rooted in a deep interest in tangible product design, where handicraft, traditional techniques, and evolving methods of manufacture come together in every piece I create. My most notable career growth was at Urban Ladder, a furniture e-commerce company based in India, where I honed my skills at furniture design, whilst learning more about hands-on handcrafting techniques.

My journey began early, growing up in a home filled with colonial-era furniture and curios. Alongside this, I was constantly exposed to craft, embroidery, papier-mâché, lino printing, pottery and other hands-on practices, and whilst being an artist inherently, it all naturally drew me towards furniture and décor as a career.

In 2023, I decided to pursue a Master's in Design Products at the Royal College of Art, taking a break from Mela Artisans to expand my skills in industrial design. During this time, my project Airloom explored the use of natural fibres as sustainable filtration materials as an alternative to HEPA, responding to a reality where cities are increasingly choked by air pollution. Post completion of the program, I rejoined Mela Artisans, returning to the handicrafts industry I had come to deeply value.

Over the years, I've worked across a diverse range of projects; from packaging and accessory products to furniture and low-tech industrial design. However, my core interest lies in creating furniture and décor that balances function with a refined aesthetic, often integrating minimal handcrafted elements to elevate the final product. I'm particularly drawn to designs that bring attention to the diminishing indigenous crafts of India.

My portfolio reflects work I take great pride in, each piece resolved with attention to detail, while staying true to the brief, price point, and usability. I approach design as a balance between respecting traditional methods and exploring new techniques to create something relevant and enduring.

At the core, I've always aimed to work with or build systems that create meaningful impact for the socio-economic groups behind these crafts, with sustainability as a fundamental goal. The organisations I've worked with value this approach; design that is not only aesthetically considered, but also functional, responsible, and grounded in real-world use.

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FURNITURE DESIGN

The Malabar Collection

Designed in 2015, Malabar was conceived as a mid- to high-end furniture range spanning the living, dining, and bedroom categories. While the final collection focuses on living, dining, and storage pieces, the intent was always to create a holistic design language that could extend seamlessly across the home.

The inspiration for Malabar is deeply personal, rooted in childhood memories of growing up in a home filled with eclectic British and plantation-era furniture, thoughtfully collected by my grandfather. This early exposure shaped an enduring appreciation for form, proportion, and craftsmanship. The standout pieces are the Barrister bookcase and the Chaise lounge, which took direct inspiration from pieces that still exist in my parent's home.

Malabar is a contemporary reinterpretation of colonial-era furniture, drawing from the layered design influences of the west coast of southern India during the British Raj. The name itself reflects this context; an acknowledgment of the Malabar coast, where cultural exchange between East and West produced a distinctive visual and material language.

The collection subtly references classic European styles such as Shaker, Sheraton, Louis XVI, and French Provincial. These influences are not literal but distilled, expressed through refined leg profiles, edge detailing, balanced proportions, and considered product typologies. Each element in the collection was rigorously refined through an iterative process, with countless micro-adjustments made to curves, joinery, dimensions, and finishes. From selecting the right wood tones and hardware to perfecting leg heights, shutter styles, and usability, every decision was deliberate and anchored in both function and aesthetic integrity.

The resulting pieces embody clean, functional lines, enriched with details such as turned legs and cast brass hardware, subtle nods to Indian craftsmanship. While the forms are modern and restrained, they carry a quiet nostalgia, echoing the elegance of the past.

Malabar ultimately sits at the intersection of heritage and modernity. It reflects a broader design lineage, when Eastern craftsmanship met Western design systems, giving rise to what is often described as Anglo-Indian or British Colonial furniture. Inspired by pattern books that defined Regency, Chippendale, Sheraton, and Adam styles, this cross-cultural dialogue produced furniture that was both rooted and adaptive.

With Malabar, the intention was to create pieces that feel timeless, furniture designed not just for use, but to endure,

The Satori Collection

Designed for Urban Ladder





Each piece is handcrafted by artisans in Jodhpur, using time-honoured woodworking

The Satori Collection | Bar Cabinet

The Bar cabinet that i designed for the Satori range, for me is are a standout piece, with an element of clean lines, angular faceted surface treatment, and custom built handles, executed in a dark mahogany finish.



The Taarkashi Collection

An exciting project where I could foray into the realm of handicraft techniques I've always been deeply passionate about, the Taarkashi Dining Range became an exploration of how traditional Indian craft can be meaningfully integrated into contemporary furniture.

The collection draws from Taarkashi, a centuries-old inlay technique originating in Kashmir, where fine strips of brass, silver, or gold wire are meticulously embedded into wood to create intricate linear patterns. What fascinated me most about this craft was its precision and delicacy, an almost graphic quality that lent itself beautifully to modern interpretation.

In this range, the intention was not to overpower the form with ornamentation, but to use Taarkashi with restraint.

Every element in the range was considered in relation to balance, between surface and structure, detail and restraint, craft and modernity. The forms remain clean and functional, allowing the intricacy of the technique to stand out without excess.

More than just a visual exercise, this collection was also about engaging with and recontextualising a traditional craft. By integrating Taarkashi into a contemporary setting, the aim was to create pieces that are not

Galatea was one of those projects that tested everything; patience, material understanding, and the limits of what could realistically be achieved. It was a process heavy on R&D, marked by a handful of breakthroughs and a long trail of failures. Challenging from the outset, the collection set out to do something ambitious: integrate marble into a knock-down furniture system across dining and storage.

The intent was clear; to create statement pieces that felt elegant and premium, but in the most restrained, minimal way. No excess, no ornamentation, just material, proportion, and presence. But marble doesn't cooperate easily.

Bidri | Explorations

Self Initiated project

Bidri Explorations began as an attempt to engage with, and in some way salvage, an endangered craft from Bidar, India. Bidriware is defined by its striking contrast: fine silver wire inlaid into a zinc-based alloy, which is then chemically treated to achieve its deep blackened patina



Pouf with Bidri Feet

Self Initiated project

The Scallop Collection

Material: Mango wood/ brass detailing
Place of Manufacture: Moradabad
Software used: SolidWorks, Trimble SketchUp + Vray
Featured on: www.melaartisans.com

Designed for Mela Artisans (2021)</

DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY



