

# The Indian temple and modernity

Indian temple design is frequently assumed to be a subject for history books. In the pages of those books, we are told about the strikingly complex form and decoration of temples, conceived with astonishing geometric intelligence, realised with significant craft skill, and laden with meaning. Historians' accounts of temple practices are usually archaeological in character, seeking to uncover historical ways of knowing – and the wider cultures – out of which the temples emerged, understood as different to our own present. In this context, architects today tend to see contemporary practices of Indian temple design as a curiosity. Particularly given our prevailing professional values that were shaped by modernism in the twentieth century – concerned with ideas about function, honesty, and authenticity – new temples are typically understood as replica or *pastiche*; as an anomaly in global architectural production rather than a practice to be taken seriously.

This issue of **arq**, curated by Megha Chand Inglis and Crispin Branfoot, does take the contemporary practice of temple design seriously. Numerous complications quickly emerge. For example, what is the role of the architect in contemporary temple design – in relation to historical practices engaged with stories, oral traditions, and models – when the prevailing global idea of the architect emerges from Western technological cultures and ideas of production? How should the repair of historic buildings be approached when the received conventions of architectural conservation emerge too from Western origins? How can distinctive historical forms be reconciled with modern structure and servicing? The papers collected here address such complex issues, reflecting on contemporary ideas of the architect, architectural knowledge, and architectural practice. Taken together, they highlight modern and colonial values that often go unquestioned in our profession. Chand Inglis and Branfoot's opening 'perspective' – 'Indian temple architecture and modernity: practices, knowledge production, methodologies' (pp. 4–13) – expands on the important questions involved, and introduces the subsequent papers with respect to them.

We are proud that, over the last twenty-five years – and particularly over the last ten – **arq**'s international reach, across practice and academe, has grown significantly broader and deeper. This issue – like, for example, our earlier issue on Everyday Architecture in China (**arq** 21.3) – focuses on particular place-based contemporary practices that have wider lessons for our field and profession. We remain keen to further the journal's international concerns, and to pursue the opportunities presented to reflect on the practices, ideas, habits, and values of our profession.

THE EDITORS