

A woman with white hair, wearing a red and white patterned top, is looking out of a window. The window has a dark frame and is set into a light-colored wall. The scene is dimly lit, with light coming from the window. The text is overlaid on the image.

Didi Contractor

Marrying the Earth to the Building

A film by **Steffi Giaracuni**

SYNOPSIS

"Didi Contractor - Marrying the Earth to the Building" is a poetic documentary approach to an aged artist and architect, the landscape of North India, the buildings and the people for whom she designed her houses that sensitizes us to her vision and global issues affecting our ongoing relationship with mother earth.





SYNOPSIS

Long Version

The documentary "Didi Contractor – Marrying the Earth to the Building", is the poetic vision of a life in deep communication with the environment, opening up prospects of new ways of thinking about architecture and uniting earth and building as in a marriage.

This 82minute film takes the viewer on a journey through the world that Didi Contractor brings to life with clay, bamboo, slate and river stones.

We meet people from who live in the visions realized by this 86year old architect and share in their enthusiasm to carry forward her fascinating ideas.

For the past two decades Didi Contractor has been passionately implementing her architectural visions in North West of India, the Kangra Valley, at the foot hills of the Himalayas combining rural traditions with modern requirements. They resemble works of

art from clay, bamboo, slate and river stone and pay tribute to the natural surroundings. Despite her age she pursues her vision working day and night – dreaming her designs then designing her dreams. She sketches roughly, then proportions with pinpoint accuracy.

Didi Contractor's buildings are economically and ecologically sustainable, bright and well ventilated. Students from all over

the world now come to understand architecture as part of the ecosystem, lend hand and experience traditional building practices.



When I was a little girl,
everytime I had a daydream
I would design a
house for me to live it in.

Didi Contractor

Dharmalaya Institute
Bir • Built from 2012 to today





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

by Steffi Giaracuni

For the past 20 years, Didi Contractor has been building in adobe, addressing herself to such complex challenges, as climate and cultural change, the energy crisis and pollution, while opposing conventional roles, persistent paradigms of colonial history and modernization along Western lines.

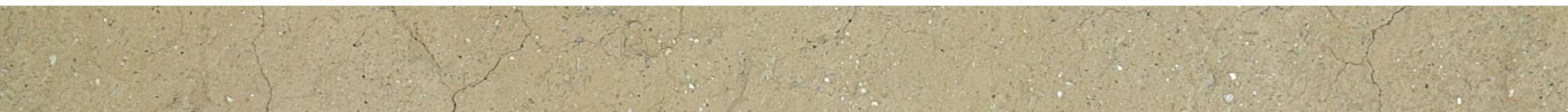
I am thrilled by her architectural vision, admire her ideals, her bravery and strength of character,

and want to explore her creative ideas, which differ from everything that I had assumed in my life so far.

Her houses are convincing evidence of a possible alternative way of life. In order to understand how daily decisions can influence our environment, I wanted to explore her experiences, to know how and where she lives and works, with whom she communicates, and what interests and

influences motivate her to build these mud houses.

For the length of a film, in the darkness of a movie theater, I would like to take the audience through the fascinating world of this 86 year old woman, Didi Contractor, and her vision. With this film I would like to inspire people to explore and to support their own unusual imaginative ideas.





I feel very motherly when
I'm making a house for someone.

Didi Contractor

DIDI CONTRACTOR

Didi Contractor was born in 1929 in Minneapolis Minnesota. Her German father, Edmund Kinzinger, and American mother Alice Fish Kinzinger, were both Expressionist painters, associated with Bauhaus group of the 1920s. Although she always felt drawn towards architecture, she studied art. As a young woman coming to adulthood in the middle of the twentieth century, she was not encouraged to study architecture.

In 1951, she met a young man from India and fell in love with him. They married and Didi Contractor happily set out to begin a new life in distant India with her husband Narayan Contractor, a Hindu student of civil engineering. They raised a family and Didi immersed herself in her new home and its cultural patterns, turning her training in art to design and architecture.





**Sambhaavna Institute
Dining Hall**
Kanbari • Built in 2014



ARCHITECTURE

Being in a mud house
shifts many things and
most of all it shifts that
sense of limited time.
Mud is such a material,
it's the earth itself.

Monisha Mukundan – Quote from Theatrical Feature



Sadhana's House
Rakkar • Built in 2000

ARCHITECTURE



Nishta Health Clinic
Rakkar • Built in 1995



That's a Gandhian idea
which states that
if you build a house, the
materials shouldn't be
sourced from further away
than three miles.

Barbara Nath-Wiser – Quote from Theatrical Feature





Naresh Kumar • Eco-Builder

Monisha Mukundan • Writer

Sadhana Vohra • Clinical Psychologist

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CAST

Sourabh Phadke • Architect

Ruud Kooloos • Architecture Student

Jugal Kishore • Potter

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Joginder Singh • Photographer and Architect

Deepa Bhushan • Lawyer and Member of the Governing body of the Sambhaavna Institute

<<



Chitra Vishwanath • Architect

Dr. Barbara Nath-Wiser • Physician and Director of Nishtha

Mark Moore • Co-Founder of Dharmalaya Institute

<<



© Bela Böke

DIRECTOR STEFFI GIARACUNI

Steffi Giaracuni is born on 1975 in Heiligenstadt (Germany). Since 10 years she is living in Basel (Switzerland).

She studied media design at the Bauhaus University in Weimar (Germany) and documentary film with focus on camera at the Zelig - School for Documentary, Television and New Media in Bolzano (Italy).

Since 10 years she repeatedly realizes documentary film projects as director, editor, camera operator and producer.

"Didi Contractor – Marrying the Earth to the Building" is her first full-length documentary as a director and producer.

Filmography

2011 **Zwischen Kommen und Gehen**
Short Documentary (director, camera, editing)

2010 **Laura D’Oriano – Die geheimnisvolle Schweizer Spionin**
TV-Doc (editing)

2007 **Brüder**
Cinema Documentary (camera)

2006 **Per chi vien su dalla campagna**
Short Documentary (editing)

2005 **Seringal – Das Versprechen der Ministerin**
TV-Documentary (editing)

2003 **Nelken für Reisch**
Short Documentary (director)



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CREDIT TEAM AND PRODUCTION

Year of production: 2016

Running Time: 80 min 44 fps

Sound: 5.1 Dolby Digital

Subtitle: English

an Individuofilm Production
Basel, Switzerland

in Co-Production with Xaras Media
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

© **individuofilm | Xaras media | 2016**

Film Editor

Britta Kastern

Cinematographer

Maria Rank

Sound Recordist

Senso

Composer

Nico Contesse
Fatima Dunn

Color Grading

Bahman Kormi

Graphic Design

Christina Albert

Re-Recording Mix

Bernhard Leimbrock

Producer

Steffi Giaracuni

Co-Producer

Britta Kastern
Bahman Kormi

Creative Producer

Norma Giannetta

Production Assistant

Snehal Ramteke
Neha Vaddadi

Sound Mixing

Herold Studios, Frankfurt a.M.

Subtitling

Tradukt

DCP-Master

Tweaklab

Sponsored by





Sambhaavna Institute, Water Tower
Kanbari • Built in 2015

It's blending so well into
the countryside. It feels
right for the place.

Deepa Bhushan – Quote from Theatrical Feature

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🌐 www.didi-contractor-documentary.com

📘 www.facebook.com/Didicontractor

THANKS

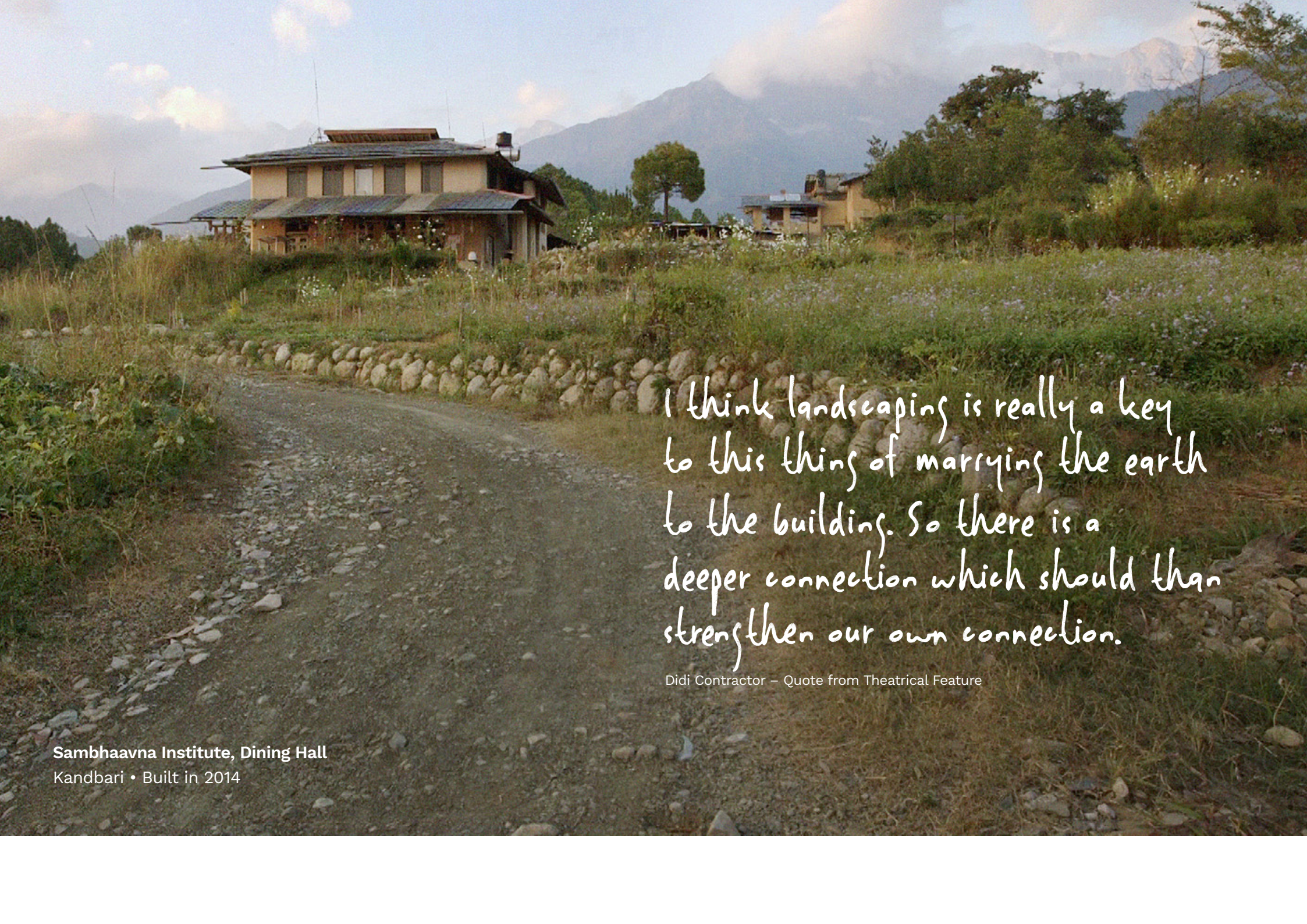
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I think landscaping is really a key to this thing of marrying the earth to the building. So there is a deeper connection which should then strengthen our own connection.

Didi Contractor – Quote from Theatrical Feature

Sambhaavna Institute, Dining Hall
Kandbari • Built in 2014