



THE **TELLER** MAGAZINE

Supported by G100 Arts Leadership & Films

Volume-1

Issue- 4

Dec 2025

INSIDE THE ISSUE

ARTIST IN FOCUS: MEET EMMA COYLE,

Top international contemporary artist of today

CELEBRATING ALL THINGS GOOD

Durga Pooja and Christmas celebrations in pictures

ON THE ENDURANCE OF STATUE MAKING

An interview with Ng Tze Yong, sixth-generation Singapore based artisan making wooden statues of Daoist and Buddhist deities

LIFE UNDER WATER : PHOTOGRAPHS BY

SWATI THIYAGARAJAN

Reconnecting with the sea through images and visual story telling

www.theateliermag.com



TABLE OF CONTENTS

04 Editor in Chief's Note

06 Prismatica

A curated space where visual arts meet the cutting edge

20 Ecosystem of art diplomacy, law, and economy

A space where art meets economy—exploring Diplomacy, copyrights, sustainability, marketing, and creative growth.

41 Performing arts

Film and arts are the soul's mirror, where emotion, memory, and meaning converge in every frame and stroke

51 Film magic

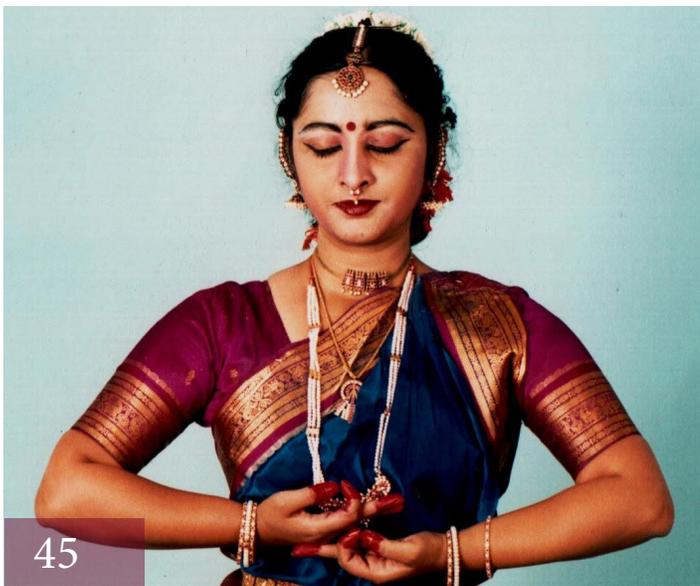
Where every click carves memory into art-timeless, raw, and real

56 Photography

Where movement heals, music connects, and stories breathe life. From classical traditions to contemporary expressions, every performance is a celebration of the human spirit.

63 Fashion

Wear your story — not as a trend, but as threads of wearable art. Here, fashion meets art to create pieces that speak, move, and inspire.



69 Soulful spaces

Soulful spaces celebrates architecture rooted in art, earth, and emotion. From temples to offices, every space holds the power to inspire and heal.

73 Poetry & Literature

Poetry and literature hold the pulse of language, where silence speaks and words find rhythm beyond reason

87 Inner muse

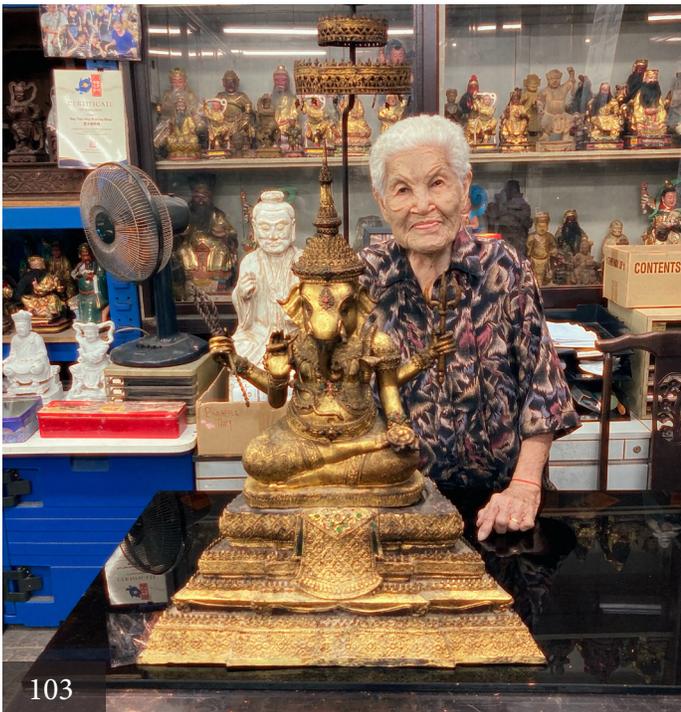
A journey through art and spirit—unfolding how creativity connects us to our higher self and a more meaningful life.

104 Magnet minds

Magnet Minds: Decoding the Language of Art and the Human Psyche - A Journey Through Stories, Reflections, and Expert Insights

117 Roots & Rythym

From ancient roots to modern rhythm -a journey through living culture



103



Nandan, at 15, is a sensitive and determined young soul who walks his path in his own way. Though not very verbal, he expresses himself creatively. He is Studying in Grade 6 through home-schooling while undergoing the many transitions in his young life. His meditation practice, his music, and his sports are the many facets of a young person learning to find a balance between his peaceful interior and an active exterior.



130

EDITORIAL



Executive Editor
Dr.Sandhya Rajasekhar



Managing Editor
Dr. Abirami Vivek



Editorial Coordinator
Falak Neaz

Col. K. Unnikrishnan- Advisor
Shahzada Khurram- Advisor
Cultural & Social Impact Partner-Kankali Trust (KT-ACED)

COVER PAGE

Sketched by - Nandan

Editor in Chief

Dr. S. Beena Unnikrishnan

Write to us: reach@theateliermag.com

Website: www.theateliermag.com

Picture credits -Freepik

Design - Roshika Ravanan

E-published by Sreebala INC

Address

4, Jayson Krishna, 5th Cross Street,
Wood Creek County, Nandambakkam,
Chennai - 600 016, Tamilnadu, India

Disclaimer: Writers are solely responsible for the photographs used ;
copyrights remain with the original creators, and the magazine bears no
liability.

Each day arrives wrapped in mystery.
The sky may be clear or cloudy.
Rain may fall before dawn.
But still, every morning,
I turn east, hoping for the Sun's golden promise.
Not out of certainty, but I trust the rhythm of becoming.
I lift my face, brimming with anticipation.
I stand rooted, making room for warmth I cannot yet see.
If clouds gather and rain
I open my petals to the quiet blessing.

When the sun appears,
I turn patiently, following his arc across the sky.
He warms my face, strengthens my stem.
And I bloom with a smile.
When the light fades, I do not chase it.
I turn toward the others beside me.
In the light, we were in each other shades without even knowing.
In the dark, we face each other,
Silent sharing the hush of night.

This is my life: I greet each day with hope,
Accepting all that comes, and staying rooted.
The beauty of life is that I am not alone; I am part of a field.
I remain tall and steadfast, supported by those beside me.
By dawn, we are ready, together to rise,
We turn east, awaiting the first light.
Each in our place, in this field.
And together, we paint the horizon yellow.
Spreading the power of hope and togetherness

As I write these words after the poem, I realise how closely The Atelier Magazine mirrors the life of a sunflower field. One sunflower alone is a quiet courage; a thousand standing together become a horizon of hope.

This year, through four issues, we have grown into that field. What began as a solitary vision has unfolded into a space where artists, writers, creators, and dreamers stand beside one another, each rooted in their own truth, each turning towards their own light, yet strengthened by the presence of the others.

The Atelier has never been just a magazine. It has been a place for gathering, a field of many stems, many colours, many voices. We believe creation is not a competition but a beautiful companionship. We hold space for one another, offer shade unknowingly, and rise again with the dawn.

As the year closes, I bow with immense gratitude to every contributor, reader, and supporter who has walked with us and to my incredible team. You have made this field vibrant. You have created a space for us to bloom together.

As we turn to the coming year, let us stay rooted and open together.
Together, we paint not just horizons.
We shape the seasons of art itself.

Beena Unnikrishnan

FOUNDER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



As the year comes to a close, it is time to celebrate the fourth and last issue of The Atelier Magazine for the year 2025; and the organic growth that we as the editorial and design team have seen in our sensibilities regarding art and culture.

The December 2025 issue of the magazine is again an eclectic mix of stories with contributions from authentic practitioners of the field. From our artist in focus Kristýna Palatá, who declares, “I paint what I feel,” to valuable guidelines by Rita Del Curto Askenasy on collecting art work with intention, to talented guitarist Don Alder’s story of giving back to society, to Funanani Mukununde’s article on women and African cinema, to Swati Thiyagarajan’s underwater photography; we have it all. Our literary section deals with the symbolism and significance of literature, where the authors explore producerly texts including cartoons. The story of the deeply meaningful Violin Wise initiative in India and the fascinating story of the 185year-old Singapore based Say Tian Hng Buddha Shop will keep the reader engaged. We also have features on two timeless festivals: Vijayadashami, marking the victory over evil by the powerful Goddess Durga, celebrated in India; and Christmas, the joyous occasion marking the birth of Christ, celebrated all over the world.

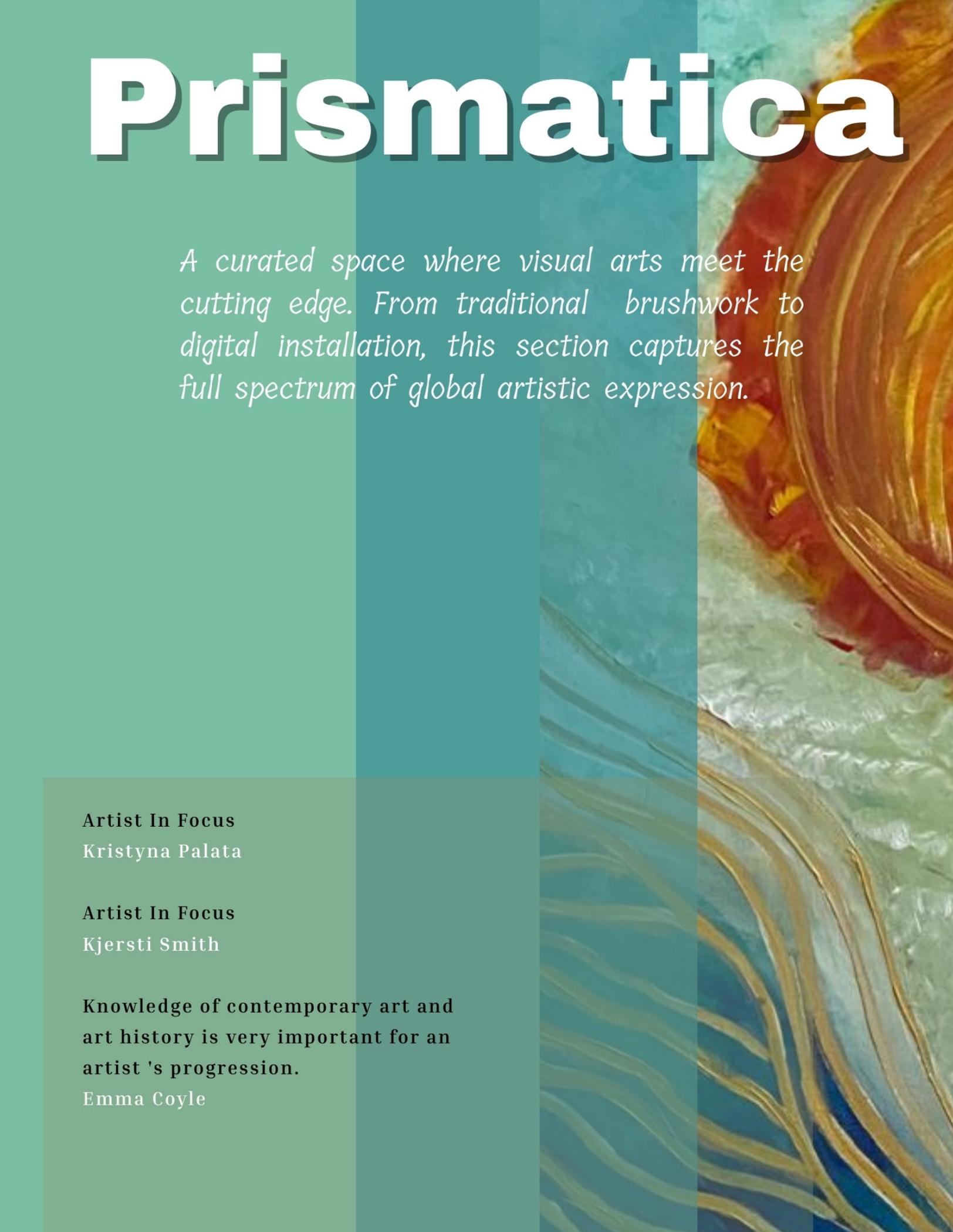
This would not have been possible without the intense networking done by the founder- publisher, and the editorial coordinator of the magazine. A special mention of the designer who rose to meet the demands of the magazine, her second issue as a designer with The Atelier. Though working from different parts of India—from Cochin to Calcutta—the teamwork is seamless and uninterrupted.

To all the contributors, readers and team members who made this possible, thank you.
And the artistic journey continues.

Sandhya Rajasekhar



Prismatica



A curated space where visual arts meet the cutting edge. From traditional brushwork to digital installation, this section captures the full spectrum of global artistic expression.

Artist In Focus
Kristyna Palata

Artist In Focus
Kjersti Smith

Knowledge of contemporary art and art history is very important for an artist's progression.

Emma Coyle



I PAINT WHAT I FEEL

Krisiřna Palařa

I am a person who feels more than she speaks. Since childhood, I have had a deep connection to nature and to what happens inside people, even when it is not often spoken aloud. Perhaps that is why I chose the path of a painter, or more precisely, someone who loves to create and express beyond words. Painting is not just a job for me; it is a way to communicate what cannot be put into words.

Based in the Czech Republic, I founded brand Arttyna, a studio where I create not only my paintings but also a story that I live by.





Arttyna is not just the name of my studio and e-shop, it is a symbol of my artistic journey. It is a path full of experimentation, learning, discovering new techniques and understanding what being expressive means. I believe that the creative process is endless; we learn throughout our lives, and each new painting is a step forward.

My passion is abstraction. It allows me to flow freely with emotions and intuition, to connect my story with the story of each viewer. People often tell me that they see their own symbols, memories, and dreams in my works. Each painting 'calls' its owner, and the one it is meant for will recognise it. This mutual connection is my greatest reward.

I am not an artist who paints from a reference. I believe that truth and beauty lie in authentic feeling and the present moment. That is why my paintings are created spontaneously, without a precise plan or script. Colours, textures, and dynamics arise from an inner voice that guides me. For me, a painting is like a walk in an unknown forest; I never know where the path will lead, but I trust it. I enjoy working with contrasts because I believe harmony lies in their balance. Gentleness and strength, light and shadow, calm and movement; these polarities are present in every moment of our existence.

Without storms, we would not appreciate the sun; without night, there would be no morning. I express this changeability and depth in every brushstroke, often using layers, reliefs, and textures. Every emotion deserves to be seen not only in colour but also in material.

Today, I am fortunate that my paintings travel to different parts of the world. Every package I send is prepared with love and care because I know each painting has its own story and place.

My paintings are exhibited regularly in galleries in the Czech Republic. Besides free creation, I also accept commissions where I try to capture the personal essence of the person. Even then, I remain faithful to my style—I listen, perceive, and tune in—so that the work is not just "according to wishes" but carries the truth and energy of its owner. I believe that every person carries a whole world inside, peaceful and stormy, gentle and wild.

My paintings are a way to make these worlds visible, share them, and perhaps even heal. And although each painting I create is unique, they are united by the truthfulness of the moment from which they emerged. That is why they can resonate with those who seek something real and deep within themselves.





Nature is my endless inspiration. In its beauty, cycles, and transformations, I find deep meaning that I imprint in my works. Autumn colours, light filtering through trees, the coldness of stone, the delicacy of dew; I transform all of these into visual form. Sometimes literally, other times more as a feeling, energy, or symbol. Music also plays an important role in my creative process.

I often listen to pieces that tune me into the right mood before I start painting. Some paintings literally emerged 'from sound', often piano or ambient tones. Even silence has its own music if we listen with an open heart.

As an artist, I believe that creation has not only aesthetic but also healing power. Many of my clients tell me that the painting they bought from me opened new emotions, released tension, or brought calm. This is confirmation to me that art is more than a visual experience; it can be a guide and an anchor in life.





ADDING A SPECIAL TOUCH OF FUN AND QUIRKINESS TO CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATIONS

Kjersti Smith

Kjersti Smith is a Scandi-African artist who paints, designs surface patterns and appliqué patterns, but she is best known for her fun and quirky children's illustrations. Having always loved drawing from a young age, it came as no surprise she would pursue a career in illustration. With a university degree in graphic design, she moved into illustration and surface pattern design. Kjersti's illustration work has appeared in places such as Eventyr fra Jordens Hjerte, a collection of folk stories from around the world published in Norway; on greeting cards, as prints and even as appliqué quilting patterns.



Kjersti draws inspiration from everything she sees around her, with a sprinkling of imagination. Initial ideas start from wanting to create something fun to hang on the wall, a story, a greeting card for someone special or a particular request for 'something that's a little different'. When she sits down to draw, she usually has an idea of what she wants to create in mind, but like with all her creations, there are elements that evolve organically while drawing. She finds by being open to things changing, the final result is often a lot freer and more fun.

A good example of this is one of her most popular black and white illustrations Fish Out of Water done in pen and ink. Kjersti had the idea of drawing a fish reading, because why not. It then seemed logical for the fish to have on reading glasses and be sitting on the beach. Being a fish, it would then need some shade from the hot sun and so an umbrella was introduced. This is pretty much how she approaches all her drawings. Sometimes a drawing will change or have things added if it feels out of balance on the page. When illustrating a book, the initial ideas stem from the text itself and then she adds her own special touch to make things more visually

interesting for the readers and bring the text to life. Kjersti prefers pencil and paper over computer always, but does use the computer so her work can be made into prints, greeting cards or, in the case of books placed into page templates to include the relevant text ready for print. While the traditional medium is preferred, she has learnt to appreciate that the computer has a purpose and can be a useful tool especially when creating repeat patterns for fabric designs, adjusting or changing colours for better print quality and helping edit illustrations to fit onto different sized and shaped products like mugs and calendars.

Since becoming a mother, Kjersti has found herself creating more fun character-based illustrations and has begun writing her own stories to illustrate too. She continues to add quirky elements to her characters like changing a pull along car toy to being a pull along snail with wheels or instead of a cuddly bunny toy making it a soft yellow duck toy with a bow tie. She prefers to create illustrations that can be enjoyed by both children and adults. While Kjersti loves illustrating, she also enjoys painting larger pieces.





HAREN OG LØVEN

EVENTYR FRA BURKINA FASO



DET VAR EN GANG EN LØVE SOM BODDE I EN SKOG. DEN VISSTE AT DEN VAR DEN STERKESTE AV ALLE DYRENE, OG DEN JAKTET SÅ NÅDELØST PÅ DEM AT DE TIL SLUTT VAR REDDE FOR Å BLI UTRYDDET. DERFOR HOLDT DE ET møte om hvordan de skulle løse problemet. Det endte med at det ble haren som skulle finne på noe.

Dagen etter oppsøkte haren løven og spurte: «Hva mener du om den nye situasjonen?»
 «Hva for en situasjon?» sa løven.
 «Jo, at den nye løven er større og sterkere enn deg.»
 «Det er ingen som er større og sterkere enn meg!» sa løven. «Jeg er dyrenes konge! Vis meg den som påstår at han er sterkere enn meg!»

Haren tok løven med seg bort til en dyp brønn.

«Han sitter der nede og gjør narr av deg,» sa haren.

Løven kikket nysgjerrig ned i brønnen og fikk øye på sitt eget speilbilde. Den trodde det var en annen løve, og brølte rasende. Ekkoet slo tilbake, så brølet lød enda høyere enn det egentlig var. Vill av raseri kastet løven seg ned i brønnen for å gå løs på motstanderen sin, og der druknet den.

Oversatt av Kjell og Kari Risvik. Illustrert av Kjersti Smith.

While she takes longer and uses a more considered and thoughtful approach for illustrations, when she paints, it comes from a spontaneous burst of creativity fuelled by emotions filled with colour. Kjersti finds that the two approaches complement each other and her desire to create. She has learnt how to create in short windows of time as motherhood seldom gives her long uninterrupted stretches. Initially she found these time constraints frustrating especially when in the creative zone; however, she has learnt to adapt. To her, the positive side to these short windows has meant she has less time to over think things and as a result, the work is often kept fresher and freer. Kjersti is currently working on her 2026 illustrated calendar after the success of the 2025 calendar, which is one of a few other projects in the pipeline. To see more of her work you can check out her website www.kjerstismith.com.





"KNOWLEDGE OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND ART HISTORY IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR AN ARTIST'S PROGRESSION."

Emma Coyle

London based visual artist Emma Coyle, acknowledged as a 'Top international contemporary artist of today; 'Recommended artist to invest in and to be inspired by', is a recipient of the International Art Market's Gold List award, one of the many that she has been honoured with throughout her twenty-year career. Born in 1981 in Dublin, Ireland, she graduated in Fine Arts (B.F.A.), from the National College of Art & Design in 2003. Emma was recently awarded the Collectors Art Prize - Art Legends of Our Time from the Contemporary Art Curators Magazine in Dubai, a recognition given to artists whose art 'has made a profound impact and is recognized as part of the living history of art'. Snap Collective, a publishing house in Paris, released the first book on Coyle's recent paintings in 2024.

Excerpts from an interview with The Atelier magazine:

1. Your early work was inspired by the knowledge of

1960s American Pop Art. How has that initial inspiration evolved over the two decades you've been painting, and what other genres or artists have since influenced your style?

Starting out in the late 1990's I came across the work of Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein and James Rosenquist in New York art museums. At the time their work was exciting and seemed to push boundaries within art. Not just the scale of art made in the 1960's to 1990's but also the theme they chose to use to create work. The use of familiar objects and mass media imagery is evident in all of these artist's work.

Throughout my career I have been an avid reader of art history books, I have always had a strong interest in what art came before. I have an interest in a huge range of art movements and genres, I am fond of Finnish and Norwegian artists of the 1800's and the more modern work from California's Light and Space movement of the 1960's.

2. You've been working on a new series of large-scale figurative drawings. What inspired this move to a different medium and scale, and what challenges or opportunities have you found in working with two-meter-high drawings?

My large-scale drawing series only commenced in 2024. It is extremely new for me and something I would like to develop over the next five years. As an artist it is important to always keep thinking and trying different mediums. Scale is an important factor of the series but also the materials I am using. Each drawing contains my own made charcoal and oil pastel colours alongside different graphite. As the work scale grows it grows alongside the scale of canvas I use for my paintings. I am working on a drawing which is not only two meters high but three meters in length. The size of paper I am using is important but it is a slow development.



3. Your current figurative work often uses imagery from current print magazines and advertisements. Can you discuss your process for selecting these images and how you transform them into fine art through your unique combination of line work and abstract elements?

My work always begins with extensive drawings and tracings which takes months to complete. I will spend months working on a body of drawings before I think about the painting stage. I select images from print magazines which I think are strong in form and then I minimise the image through the use of line work. Line work is extremely important to each drawing to create a form which is balanced. When bringing an image from paper on to canvas I continually work on the line, painting over lines and then redrawing at a later stage. It is a constant development throughout the painting process. Creating abstract forms in each painting is a result of using such minimal lines.



4. The “Collective Selection” series is based on 100 preliminary drawings. Can you tell us about the journey from these initial drawings to creating the largest paintings you have made to date?

I spent months of intensive work on preliminary drawing in 2023. At the time I was unaware of what these drawings were to be used for. After completing a body of preliminary drawings, I started to group drawing together to form a drawing series. Not all drawings will be used for paintings; I tend to pick the strongest images for final paintings. From these one hundred drawings I chose to make smaller groups of drawings and for the first time I wanted to create larger paintings from multiple drawings.

Over the past ten years I have been gradually expanding on the scale of my work, and canvases were getting bigger for my single form paintings. Now for the first time I wanted to use more than one form on a canvas. I went from using two and three figurative forms for one painting to using eight, on a ten meter long painting.





5. You consistently work on an ongoing abstract painting project alongside your figurative work. How do you find a balance between these two different creative approaches, and how does one inform the other?

The abstract work is very different from my figurative paintings. For my abstract paintings the starting point I use is very different. In the past I have used my own photographs of plants as a starting point for abstract work. After a five-year break from abstraction, I am back working on preliminary drawings and using photographs of water as a starting point. I tend to take my time pushing forward my abstract work whereas my figurative work can be planned up to three years ahead, it is more structured.

6. Your work has been compared to a wide range of styles, from Realism to Art Deco. How do you feel about these comparisons, and how do you define your own artistic identity?

I always considered my work as contemporary painting and enjoy hearing how others see my work. Knowledge of contemporary art and art history is very important for an artist's progression. Not to replicate what others do or have done but to work towards something new.

7. Having been based in London since 2006, how has the city's art scene influenced your work, and how does it compare to your early experiences in Dublin?

Dublin was a wonderful city to start my art career in. But of course, the scale of the city is so small in comparison to London. What drew me to London was the number of galleries and museums. London is such an important city for international contemporary art, its variety of exhibition each year is outstanding. Visiting galleries each month to see exhibitions is important for any artist, it is not only interesting but it inspires.

8. You've received numerous prestigious awards, including the Phoenix International Prize and named a "Top international contemporary artist." What do these accolades mean to you, and how do they impact your artistic practice?

Over the past ten years I have received wonderful awards from art organisations worldwide. Most recently Contemporary Art Curator in Dubai awarded me with their 'Art Legends of Our Time' award. It is nice to get recognition after working for over twenty years in art, but it does not affect what I make or how I make art. My studio work will always be the most important aspect of



my art practice and focusing on my work will always be my priority.

9. In addition to painting and drawing, you also work with photography using Polaroid and 120mm cameras. How does this photographic practice connect with or serve your work in other mediums?

I think like most artists, we constantly have ideas and expanding to different mediums to progress ideas is a natural development. I first used a darkroom in the late 1990's and have always had an interest in using photography as an additional medium within my studio. It is not every year I use a Polaroid camera or my dark room, but I do have plans for 2026.

10. Your biography mentions a recent work involving flat sculpture and painting on Perspex. What led you to explore this new medium and direction, and what can you tell us about your future plans for public art?

Public art has always been something that has interested me due to the scale of art used. It has been a slow progression starting with exhibiting on the London underground tube system to working with an art organisation that used the screens on Time Square in New York for exhibiting art. My paintings on Perspex where a continuation of experimenting with different paint mediums. I had finished working on a series of watercolour paintings a few years ago and wanted to continue trying new forms of painting.

I recently received an award from GGI, 'What Glass Can Do Competition' at the CODA summit in Washington, DC in collaboration with CODAWORX. GGI is a glass fabrication company who help organisations bring public art to life with the use of glass. They are currently making a glass panel with the use of one of my painting images. I look forward to receiving the glass panel and using this to forward my ideas for public art in the future.

Ecosystem of Art Diplomacy Law & Economy

A space where art meets economy—exploring Diplomacy, copyrights, sustainability, marketing, and creative growth. Bridging tradition and innovation to empower artists in the modern world.

Figures of Clay
Gareth Lloyd

From Protest Art to the SDGs:
The Evolving Power of Art to Transform Society
Patrizia Luchet

Collecting with intention:
How purposeful acquisitions can reshape the art world
Rita Del Curto Askenasy

Ekaa - The One An artistic and spiritual
journey rooted in India's ancient feminine heritage
Preethi Nair

Crimson Bluee: a creative platform for peace, power, and
progress
Interviews by Falak Neaz

Violin Wise: Pioneering a tradition of repair,
restoration and the art of violin making
Dr. Abirami Vivek

FIGURES OF CLAY

Gareth Lloyd

The art exhibition with a difference, RE:VISION brings together international artists who respond to the past; reconcile it with the present; and challenge what endures and expires—rethinking, reinventing and reconstructing—to instigate the potential for future change.

The exhibition urges audiences to interrogate and question: Who writes history? Who has the right to revise it? And how can art unsettle these narratives?

In *Figures of Clay*, three distinct figures share the same precarious folding table. At the centre one remains unformed, caught mid-emergence. To the left an Egyptian deity, a lotus blooming from its head, carries myths that refuse to fade; to the right a bodhisattva lifts a hand in a quiet gesture. Different in form yet equal in symbolic weight, they are all shaped from the same basic pliable clay.

This work grew from two encounters: Antonin Artaud's hallucinatory account of Mexico: "The land of the Tarahumara is full of signs and shapes, as if the gods themselves wished to mark the human form from every side." And the rituals of Wat Thamkrabok in Thailand, where molten lava is cast into monumental forms through heat, containment and patience. Between these poles—ecstasy and endurance—*Figures of Clay* emerged as an essay in which the sacred is almost funnelled back into being.



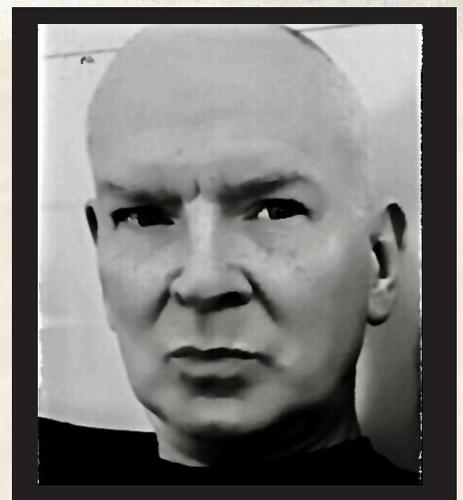
About the artist

Gareth Lloyd's work emerges from multi-layered reflections on the human condition, spanning personal narratives to the broader concerns of the 20th and 21st centuries. His art explores contemporary iconography, the commodification of information and media exploitation, all the while striving to develop a new, creative and alternative sensibility. Historically, Gareth moved away from the prevailing dominance of new media, opting instead for a path of dissent. His experiences at the turn of the century, particularly through American publications that propelled his work to an international audience amidst the 2001 disasters, exemplify this shift.



In 2010, Gareth received financial support from Arts Council England and 'Difference Exchange' to pursue his creative output and delve deeper into the options that open the human condition to its furthest possibilities. This period included residency in a Thai monastery, where he exchanged drawing lessons for a large studio space, allowing him to refine his techniques and explore new subjects. A highlight was his engagement with the monastery's unique molten lava statue-casting process. Gareth's work has been exhibited internationally, and meticulously analysed by the leading intellectuals and critics of his generation. His artistic journey reflects a profound engagement with the complexities of human experience, a commitment to resisting superficial objectivity and a dedication to exploring the depths of creativity and its potential.

RE:VISION at the Courtauld Institute, Vernon Square, is on from 24 September 2025 for two years at the Courtauld Institute of Art, Vernon Square, Penton Rise, WC1X 9EW. Nearest stations King's Cross, and St. Pancras International.



FROM PROTEST ART TO THE SDGs: THE EVOLVING POWER OF ART TO TRANSFORM SOCIETY

Paizizia Luchei

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Art has never been a silent witness. It riots in colour, whispers in shadows, and refuses to look away. For centuries it has been the rebel in the room. It has confronted injustice, challenged the status quo, and inspired change. Long before the term artivism emerged in the '60s, creators were already in motion expressing truth and power through their craft. The decade gave this age-old practice a name—and a rallying cry that spread worldwide.

Think of Francisco Goya's harrowing *The Third of May 1808* (1814), exposing and condemning the brutality of war, continuing a lineage that has shaped generations of politically engaged artists. Or Billie Holiday's haunting *Strange Fruit* (1939), which forced people who turned their gazes from the atrocities around them to listen and confront the horrors of

lynching in America. Art is not just visual; it is an all-senses rebellion. Think forward to the '80s. AIDS spreads like wild fire. The governments? Silent. But artist collectives like *Gran Fury* transformed grief into resistance. Their work shifted the narrative transforming shame and fear into dignity, love, and action with impact. Not to forget the *Guerrilla Girls*, the anonymous feminist art collective which shook the art world by exposing its systemic sexism and racism through bold, witty, statistics-driven posters and public interventions. Their relentless activism has significantly increased awareness, inspired institutional reforms.

It is this centuries-old fire that has ignited 'The Art of Change' initiative that spotlights artists, and in particular, women artists, whose voices, bodies, and craft cut across disciplines to drive the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) forward.



Become part of The Art of Change

One of the flagship initiatives of Charlotte in Red, a non-profit organisation, The Art of Change is a platform dedicated to amplifying women’s voices across art, culture, and activism. Charlotte in Red celebrates women who challenge conventions, spark dialogue, and transform their disciplines into agents of change, ensuring their stories resonate across generations. For more information, check out their website www.charlotteinred.com

With gratitude to Charles Meyer, Jing Wang, Sunflower Seeds Luxembourg asbl, MOB-ART Studio, the Deloitte Foundation, Naderi Production, and Joshua John Dillon — whose vision and support brought our Luxembourg pilot to life.

About the author

Patrizia Luchetta is the founder of Imagine Tomorrow and a forward-thinking leader dedicated to creating solutions that inspire change and drive impact. With over two decades of international experience spanning multiple sectors, Patrizia played a pivotal role in shaping Luxembourg’s national strategy for biomedical life sciences before returning to the private sector. Today, she advises companies on refining their sustainability strategies, drawing on her deep expertise in ESG and European regulatory frameworks. Patrizia also serves as a non-executive director on several boards, championing responsible business practices. Her passion for the intersection of art and technology led her to establish Charlotte in Red, a non-profit that documents the work of female artists raising awareness about the UN Agenda 2030, fostering collaboration between the creative and corporate worlds to advance sustainability.





COLLECTING WITH INTENTION: HOW PURPOSEFUL ACQUISITIONS CAN RESHAPE THE ART WORLD

Rita Del Curio Askenasy
Art Sales Director, MArt Agency

In my conversations with collectors, whether they are beginning their journey or are savvy collectors, I often return to one simple yet powerful idea: collect with intention. To collect with intention is to collect with purpose, clarity, and determination. It is not merely acquiring what is beautiful or trendy. It is about understanding that each artwork you choose reflects your values and your voice; and that you can shape both your personal narrative and the wider cultural landscape.

At MArt Agency, we know this intimately. As a B Corp female-founded, female-led agency, we are values driven. Our mission is to support the most talented contemporary artists through public art, brand collaborations and sales, placing their works in museum institutions and private collections.

As Art Sales Director, I work with collectors to build purposeful collections that reflect the world around us.

The reality of representation

Before discussing the power of intentional collecting, we must recognise the imbalance that still defines our art institutions. Despite growing awareness, artists from the global majority remain dramatically underrepresented in museum collections, exhibitions, and commercial galleries.

Between 2008 and 2020, only 11 per cent of acquisitions by 31 major U.S. museums were works by female-identifying artists, and works by women account for roughly 10 per cent of all artworks in museum and gallery institutions across Europe and North America. The figures are even more dismal when race and

gender intersect. Works by African American artists made up only 2.2 per cent of museum acquisitions over that twelve-year period, while Black women artists accounted for just 0.5 per cent. At the market level, the disparity deepens further: works by Black American women represented a mere 0.1 per cent of auction sales between 2008 and mid-2022. Latin American and LatinX artists also have little or no representation, constituting less than 1 per cent of represented artists across major US and European collections.

These statistics are stark. However, at MArt Agency we aim to change this. I take a very personal approach with my collectors, helping and advising which artworks they can acquire from our portfolio of artists that resonate with their acquisition or curatorial direction.



PC: Freepik

What it means to collect with intention

Collecting with intention moves beyond passive buying. It means being deliberate and understanding why a piece belongs in your collection and what story it contributes to. An intentional collector asks: What does this artwork represent? Who does it support? What narrative does it extend or challenge? The goal is not to acquire endlessly but to curate meaningfully.

Some guiding principles

Clarity of purpose:

Define what drives your collection, such as a theme, a social cause, or an aesthetic vision.

Thoughtful selection:

Choose works that deepen the narrative rather than simply expanding it.

Focus on quality:

Prioritise artistic strength, originality, and resonance over volume.

Strategic growth:

Establish boundaries in size, budget, medium, or focus to ensure cohesion.

Connection and dialogue:

Engage with artists, curators, and collectors who share your values.

Intentional collecting transforms a private collection into a statement of cultural engagement. It helps to rewrite art history to make it more inclusive, representative, and dynamic.

How MTArt embodies this vision

At MTArt Agency, intentionality is at the heart of what we do. As a B Corp, MTArt was built on the belief that values matter not as a trend but as a necessity. We go with artists whose practices engage with social, environmental, and identity-based issues, helping them gain visibility and sustainability in a system that has often excluded them.

We have over 60 artists in our roster, and their practices embody the values of today. Some of our talents include Àsikò, whose prices doubled after he had four museum acquisitions by The John K. Randle Yoruba museum. Also, Robert Montgomery, the first contemporary artist to exhibit in the Louvre and has had many museum acquisitions and exhibitions.

Among the artists MTArt has also collaborated with through open partnerships is the talented Stefania Tejada, who depicts the multicultural aspects of Latin American culture and was acquired by FAMM (Europe's first museum dedicated to women artists), and whose painting sold for 10 times pre-sale estimate at Christie's. A call to collectors and art lovers

To collect intentionally is to participate in shaping the cultural memory of tomorrow. Collectors hold extraordinary influence, and their choices inform what museums will one day exhibit and what history will remember.

By supporting artists who reflect the world, you help rewrite the narrative of art history itself. You do not have to sacrifice aesthetic pleasure or financial investment. Rather, you align both with purpose. Whether you are building your first collection or refining your fiftieth, let intention guide you. At MTArt, we believe that when collectors buy with purpose, they do more than invest in art. They invest in progress, one collection at a time.



PC: Freepik

EKAA - THE ONE AN ARTISTIC AND SPIRITUAL JOURNEY ROOTED IN INDIA'S ANCIENT FEMININE HERITAGE

Preehi Nair

Content and Messaging Consultant, Kankali Trust

About a month ago, I joined the Kankali Trust as a part-time content and messaging consultant to work on Ekaa – The One, a project reclaiming India's forgotten Yogini heritage and wisdom. At its heart are the vibrant paintings of the 64 Yoginis that Dr. Beena Unnikrishnan has lovingly created over the last decade, each capturing the unique energy and symbolism of these powerful embodiments of goddess Shakti. Even within this short time, the mesmerising energies of the 64 Yoginis have quietly shaped a deep sense of presence and purpose within me.



Map of the regions all over India



Mrs. Suparna Banerjee Debroy paying tribute to Dr. Bibek Debroy

NATIONAL EXHIBITION TOUR LIST OF STATES AND DATES

EXIHIBITION PLACE	DATES	DAYS
TRIVADRUM	16, 17, 18 Jan	Fri, Sat, Sun
COIMBATORE	21,22 Jan	Wed, Thu
BANGALORE	25, 26, 27 Jan	Sun, Mon, Tue
MUMBAI	1, 2, 3 Feb	Sun, Mon, Tue
BHOPAL	6, 7, 8 Feb	Fri, Sat, Sun
AHMEDABAD	11, 12, 13 Feb	Wed, Thu, Fri
JAIPUR	16, 17, 18 Feb	Mon, Tue, Wed
NEW DELH	21, 22, 23, 24 Feb	Sat, Sun, Mon, Tue
GWALIOR	27, 28 Feb	Fri, Sat
VARANASI	3, 4, 5 Feb	Tue, Wed, Thu
KOLKATA	9, 10, 11 Mar	Mon, Tue, Wed
BHUBANESWAR	14, 15, 16 Mar	Sat, Sun, Mon
NAGPUR	20, 21, 22 Mar	Fri, Sat, Sun
HYDERABAD	25,26,27 Mar	Wed, Thu, Fri
VUJAYAWADA	30, 31, 1 Apr	Mon, Tue, Wed
CHENNAI	To Be announced	

Y64: the national exhibition tour across 16 cities Dates

If this is what a month has given me, I can only imagine what her decade long work must have gifted Dr. Beena Unnikrishnan with: depth of insight, clarity of vision, and a rare intimacy with the Yogini wisdom that only years of devotion, inquiry, and lived experience can offer.

I feel a quiet happiness for Dr. Beena, for the journey she has stayed true to over so many years. The launch of Ekaa – The One on December 4, 2025, in New Delhi, India's capital, once known as Yoginipur, was the culmination of that journey.

The event drew eminent figures from Delhi's intellectual and creative circles, as well as prominent policymakers.

The centerpiece of the launch was the screening of Y64: Whispers of the Unseen, a documentary chronicling the project's journey.

Dr. Jain Joseph, Chairman and Founder of Neo Film School and the documentary's director, shared his experience bringing this vision to film. His work captured something transcendent. The documentary's surreal treatment, elevated by Dr. Beena's authentic voice and evocative music, wove the subject into something everyone could feel deeply. In fact, the audience sat transfixed, many moved to tears.



Launching Ekaa The One, the national exhibition tour across 16 cities, starting in Jan 2026



Author's photo

For updates regarding exhibition dates and venues please check the website <https://beenannikrishnan.com/projects/ekaa>

Honourable Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways of India, Nitin Gadkari sent warm virtual wishes, congratulating Dr. Beena and her team. Mrs. Suparna Banerjee Debroy paid a moving tribute to the late Dr. Bibek Debroy, who was an early patron of the initiative.

Now, as the painting exhibition prepares to travel across 16 states in India over 81 days, the feminine wisdom and the timeless energies the 64 Yoginis embody will reach people across the country. Having felt a quiet transformation in just a month, I can only wonder what these 81 days will awaken in thousands of others across India.

CRIMSON BLUEE: A CREATIVE PLATFORM FOR PEACE, POWER, AND PROGRESS

Interviews by Falak Neaz
Editorial Coordinator, The Atelier Magazine

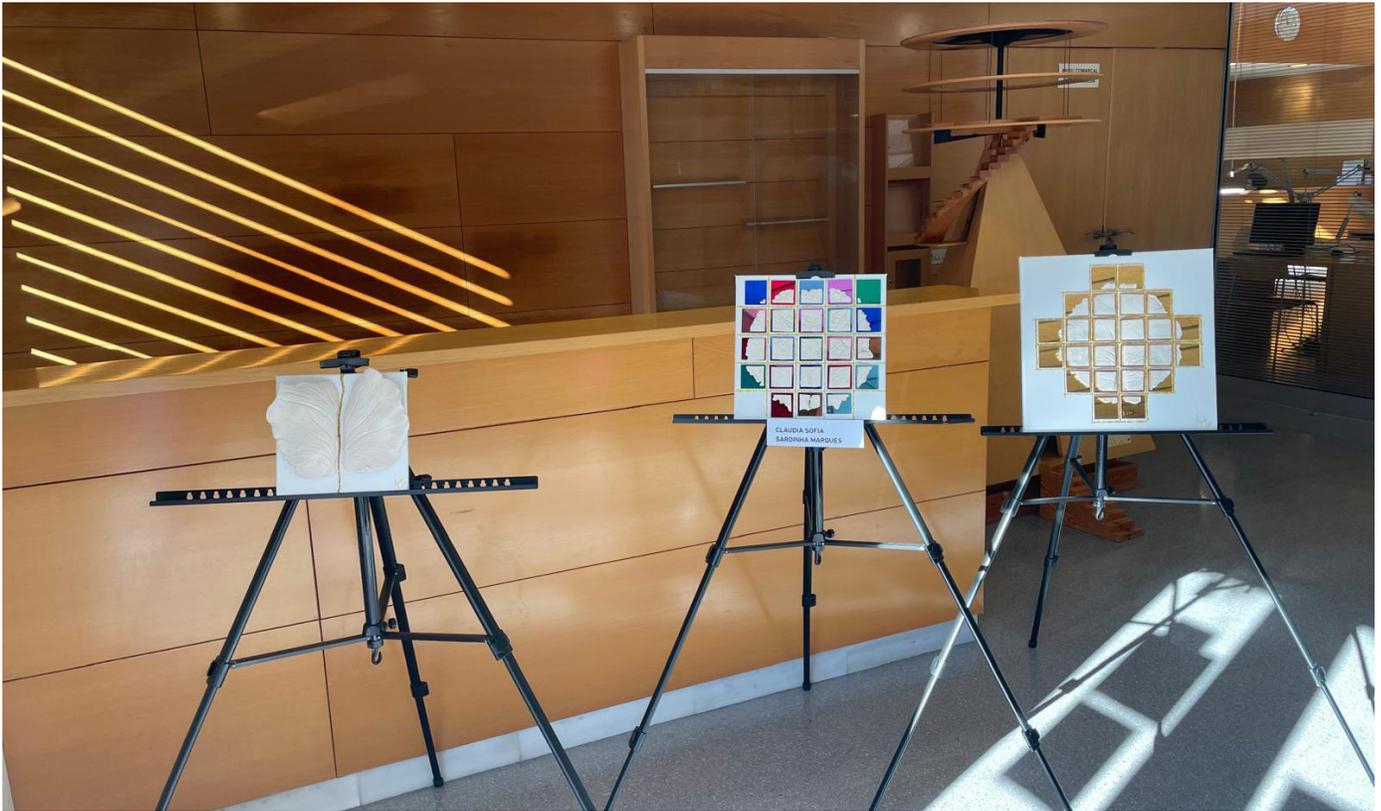


A global art exhibition and platform for artists, Crimson Bluee is an initiative of the Ekaasmya of the G100 group that uses cultural diplomacy to bring countries together through creativity. Crimson Bluee highlights the importance of art and peace through cultural diplomacy, envisioning creativity as a bridge between nations and hearts. It is an international art platform that brings together artists, thinkers, and changemakers in a dialogue of power, peace, and progress. Curated by Indian artist Beena Unnikrishnan and Swedish politician from the Green Party Bodil Valero, the initiative explores the balance between feminine and masculine energies: between fire and calm, strength and reflection.



Through exhibitions, talks, and cultural collaborations, Crimson Bluee redefines art as a form of diplomacy and coexistence, where creativity becomes a universal language for harmony and transformation. The initiative hosted an art exhibition at The House of Europe, Berga, Spain in October 2025. Honorary president of the House of Europe Mr. Jaume Farguell, played a crucial role in organising the event.

The Atelier Magazine spoke to a few artists who displayed their work at the Berga exhibition.



Claudia Sofia Sardinha Marques

Claudia is a psychologist and art therapist of Portuguese origin, whose work is inspired by the earth and the geometric patterns of traditional tiles. For her, creation is a meditative act of compassion, authenticity, and surrender, opening space for deeper love. Guided by curiosity and sensitivity, she blends diverse forms of knowledge from medicine and biology to art and geometry, using symbolic language as a tool for growth and healing.

1.As a psychologist and art therapist, how do earth-inspired geometric tiles promote healing in your Crimson Bluu contributions?

In my view, Crimson Bluu proposed a space for healing through colour, matter and geometry. The geometric and telluric squares/tiles promoted healing because they remind us that we are part of a greater whole, show us that fragmentation is not a flaw but a human condition, and reveal that beauty emerges from the

relationship between parts and not from perfection.

Set in a multicultural environment, the exhibition amplified its therapeutic impact by invoking visual and symbolic references recognisable in different cultures; from Iberian squares/tiles to colours and ancestral geometric patterns, present in various traditions. This diversity creates a common territory of belonging, where distinct identities meet without cancelling each other out, reinforcing the idea that healing is also a collective and relational process.

In Crimson Bluu, healing took place before any interpretation. Art acts where language cannot reach, acting as a silent mediator, allowing each visitor to find in the pattern and material a place of reconnection, integration, and meaning.

2.In what ways does your symbolic language aid self-awareness for audiences like cancer patients at this event?

The symbolic language of the exhibition operates on a pre-verbal level, allowing people in highly vulnerable situations, such as cancer patients, to access their own inner experience without the pressure of having to name or explain it.

The geometric patterns, earth-inspired materials, and visual organisation offer a safe mirror where complex emoticons can be recognised without judgement.

Rather than directly confronting pain, the piece of art creates a space for containment and identification. This symbolic distance favours self-awareness, as it allows each visitor to observe their own experience from a place of greater emotional stability. In an event with diverse audiences, this inclusive approach transforms the aesthetic experience into a moment of pause, reflection and reconnection with oneself, where art becomes a silent mediator between the body, emotion and meaning.

3. How does blending medicine, biology, and geometry align with the exhibition's themes of compassion and surrender?

The combination of medicine, biology and geometry reflects the understanding of the human body as a living, vulnerable and deeply interconnected system, but also one endowed with intelligence, potential and the capacity for self-regulation. Medical and biological knowledge brings recognition of how the body functions in a state of full health and in relation to its different systems, while geometry visually translates this internal and invisible order. The presence of elements from nature, such as cabbage leaves, through their natural patterns, induces the perception of internal organisation and perfection, reinforcing the idea of organic, self-regulating functioning. In this context, compassion arises from respect for this vulnerability and surrender as acceptance of the natural cycles of the body and life, where control gives way to trust and listening.



Varalakshmi Bharanidharan

Varalakshmi always had a craze to do things differently, and this inspired her interest in Mandala art. With 10 years of experience, a degree in Fine Arts, and Masters diploma in art therapy from California State University, Long beach, she has a strong foundation in the field. She has produced more than 500 hand-drawn and hand painted creations showcasing her expertise.

1. How does your 10-year Mandala expertise and art therapy diploma from California manifest un-materialistic peace in the show?

My decade-long journey with sacred geometry Mandalas and my art therapy diploma from California come together to create an experience of un-materialistic peace by shifting the viewer's attention inward. Every Mandala I create—whether rooted in the Flower of Life, metatron cube etc., illusion-breaking geometry, or sensory-based symbolism—is designed as a mirror of the self and communication. In any of the shows, my works guide viewers from the noise of the outer world to the balance of their inner selves by connecting and viewing new perspectives to look at the world and self.

My therapeutic approach ensures that each piece not only visually appeals but emotionally regulates, holding viewers that connect the geometry and self as the form drawings are the first language we use to communicate.

2. With over 500 hand-drawn creations, what unique differences do you bring to Crimson Blueue's theme of progress?

Over 500 mandalas, each built from sacred geometry, allow me to map "progress" as an inward spiral rather than a linear chase. A fusion of tradition and transformation, I use Vedic geometry, intuitive design to depict progress as evolution of thought, energy, and consciousness. All my works are hand-drawn, not digitally generated. This adds warmth, imperfections, rhythm, and soul, mirroring human progress. My art incorporates concepts from art therapy, such as visual balance, sensory release, and pattern harmony, helping viewers experience inner progress while observing the artwork.

3. How does your fine arts background enhance the cultural diplomacy dialogue at the House of Europe, Berga?

My fine arts background enables me to engage in cultural diplomacy through a language that transcends borders: geometry, symbolism, and visual storytelling. Sacred geometry exists in every culture, from Indian yantras to European cathedrals, making my work a natural bridge between traditions. At House of Europe, my art creates dialogue connecting universal patterns across cultures. The mandala, the circle, the vesica piscis, the flower of life—these patterns exist globally. My work highlights these shared visual heritages, inviting cross-cultural reflection and mutual appreciation. By bringing Vedic geometry and meditative drawing practices into international art conversations, I contribute India's philosophical depth to European cultural exchanges.

Art therapy principles help the audience not just view the art but experience emotional grounding through it, turning the exhibition into a shared peaceful space, which is a core value in cultural diplomacy. My works like Illusion to Harmony and Nada Samskar, represent transitions, balance, and unity across the cultural significance. My fine arts foundation serves as a tool for connection, bridging diverse cultural energies through sacred geometry, shared emotion, and shared human experience.

Anna Tubau

Born in 1948 in Puigreig (Barcelona), Anna is a painter based in Berga, Spain. Beginning her career in the 1980s, she was mentored by prominent local artists Joan Ferrer and Josep M. de Martín. Tubau's work focuses on urban landscapes, still life, and especially the female form, exploring what lies beneath each deliberate line and colour.



Her style 'balances sensitivity and restraint', as described by Catalan painting expert Toni Puig. Anna Tubau's art, characterised by thoughtful composition and subtle emotion, is included in numerous private collections throughout Spain.



1. How do your urban landscapes and female forms from the 1980s mentorship evolve to align with Crimson Bluve's harmony themes?

I believe that with my artwork, I have achieved a personal style, and my goal is to create a feeling of peace and calm in the public.

2. With works in Spanish private collections, what subtle emotions do your 100x73 cm pieces convey at House of Europe?

With my artwork, I try to find balance, simplicity of lines and colours, and beauty.

3. How does Toni Puig's description of your sensitivity and restraint resonate in this international peace platform?

As Toni Puig states, there is a constant effort to find balance and harmony in every aspect of life and with people close to me.

Maria Teresa Pajerol
Spanish artist Maria Teresa Pajerol spoke to The Atelier Magazine about her experience.

1. How do the dimensions of your 70x90cm creations reflect the meditative power and peace motifs in the brochure?

The two paintings I brought to the exhibition are about life. In one of them it is represented by two stones. This one is about life on Earth; the connection between earth and humans. We are like stones; we need others to be able to change things. The other one is about the formation of life in space, from where it was formed and the evolution to infinity.

2. What personal exhibition experiences inform your approach to this G100-supported international dialogue?

For me, art as a vehicle of peace helps me look at pain closely and connects me with reality and people and also enables me to see a better meaning to everything. Regardless of the differences between us, whether few or many; art allows us to establish communication and communion to go from being many and diverse, to sharing a single common sense.

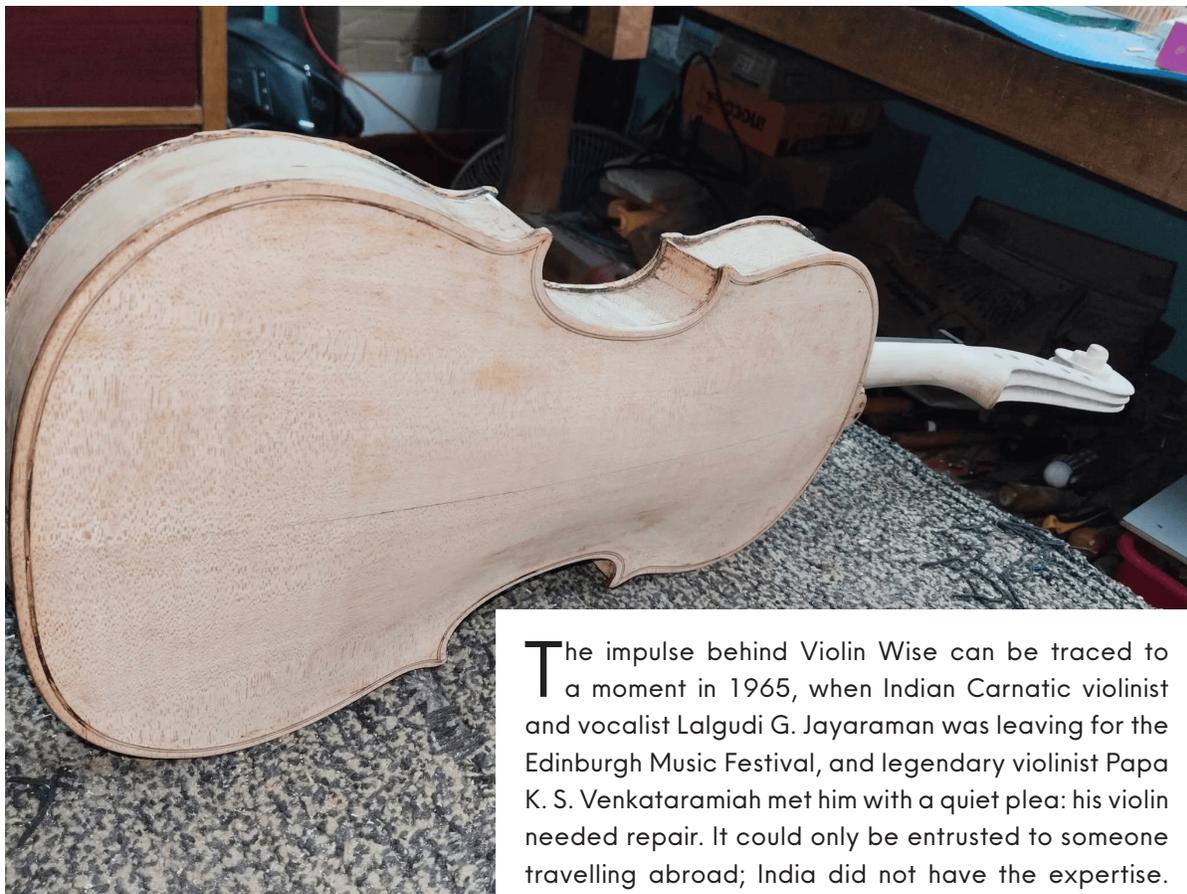
3. How does your style contribute to the transformative coexistence narrative at House of Europe?

The different styles and themes have made me think about the coexistence between cultures and that at the same time all people can understand each other through art.



VIOLIN WISE: PIONEERING A TRADITION OF REPAIR, RESTORATION AND THE ART OF VIOLIN MAKING

Dr. Abirami Vivek



The impulse behind Violin Wise can be traced to a moment in 1965, when Indian Carnatic violinist and vocalist Lalgudi G. Jayaraman was leaving for the Edinburgh Music Festival, and legendary violinist Papa K. S. Venkataramiah met him with a quiet plea: his violin needed repair. It could only be entrusted to someone travelling abroad; India did not have the expertise. For a young Lalgudi G.J.R. Krishnan, Lalgudi's son and disciple, this was unforgettable; he grew up watching local repairers work without proper tools or training, instruments returning with uncertainty, and musicians carrying an unspoken anxiety.

Decades later, during a December concert season in Chennai, that memory resurfaced sharply when a violin with a broken neck was brought in, just hours before a performance. This time, instead of helplessness, there was a solution. The instrument was restored in the Lalgudi Trust's workshop by master luthier James Wimmer, quietly affirming what Krishnan had long dreamed of: that India could, at last, begin training world-class luthiers of its own.

An instrument from abroad, a tradition made Indian

Although the violin originated in Europe, India embraced it so completely that it became an indispensable part of Carnatic, Hindustani, film, and fusion music. Violin playing techniques evolved uniquely in India, and performance traditions flourished.

But one thing did not evolve alongside them: a parallel culture of violin making and expert restoration. For generations, Indian musicians have depended on foreign luthiers for critical repairs. Even minor issues required waiting for a foreign tour or entrusting violins to local repairers who lacked the specialised tools and training the craft demands.

A chance encounter in Santa Barbara

In 2002, fate intervened. During a performance in Santa Barbara, Krishnan was introduced to James Wimmer, a master luthier trained in the European tradition. Their conversation was immediate, organic and transformative. When Krishnan asked if he would teach in India, Wimmer agreed without hesitation.

With support from the Lalgudi Trust and generous patrons, Wimmer arrived in Chennai in 2013. The first workshop under the Violin Wise initiative began, modest in scale, monumental in intent.





The luthiers shaping India's future

Only four artisans have completed the full programme, and each carries a transformative story. Violin Wise has a strong Kerala connection, with three of them hailing from the Southernmost state.

Renjith Leela Chandran's journey began with curiosity. A carpenter from Kerala, he built his first violin using local wood; an experiment that became a calling. After training at Violin Wise, he devoted himself entirely to the craft. Today, he restores instruments, builds new violins and continues advanced study with international masters. In time, his passion became a shared one at home as well; his wife Athira stepped into the workshop beside him, eventually crafting her own violin under his guidance.

For Vinay Murali, the craft began as a family inheritance. His father, Murali, had been servicing violins since 1982, but Violin Wise transformed their practice. "After the training, our work became easier, better, more accurate," Vinay says. Today he serves as a guest luthier with the Symphony Orchestra of India at the NCPA, supporting their concert seasons, a significant leap for a craft that had no formal roots in India until recently. When asked how many instruments he has repaired, he smiles: "We never kept a logbook. Now the work is too much to count."

A violinist turned luthier, Sathyanarayana approaches every instrument with a musician's intuition. "Each violin has its own character," he says. "Being a luthier isn't just technical — you have to feel the wood, listen to it." His dream is to establish a dedicated workshop where he can build, restore, and also guide young musicians to understand the violin beyond performance; its structure, its soul, and the care it deserves.

Building a rare craft, brick by brick

Wimmer brought not only expertise but a complete pedagogical culture: he used authentic European luthier tools and tone woods (spruce, maple, varnishes); kept a strict workshop discipline—working from 9 am to 5 pm—that was hands-on and immersive; and introduced meticulous craft traditions including plate tuning, scroll carving, purfling, bass bar shaping and sound post placement.

For the artisans, this was an entirely new world. Many came hesitantly, worried about closing their shops, losing daily earnings, or simply not knowing what to expect. The Trust removed every obstacle: participants were given stipends and provided with food throughout the training, and ultimately the full set of tools required to continue the craft independently. What began as training in repair and restoration evolved, over several editions, into the art of full violin making. In 2020, the trainees achieved the remarkable: each crafted a replica of a historical Stradivarius or Guarneri violin with internationally comparable precision.

The sound of trust returning

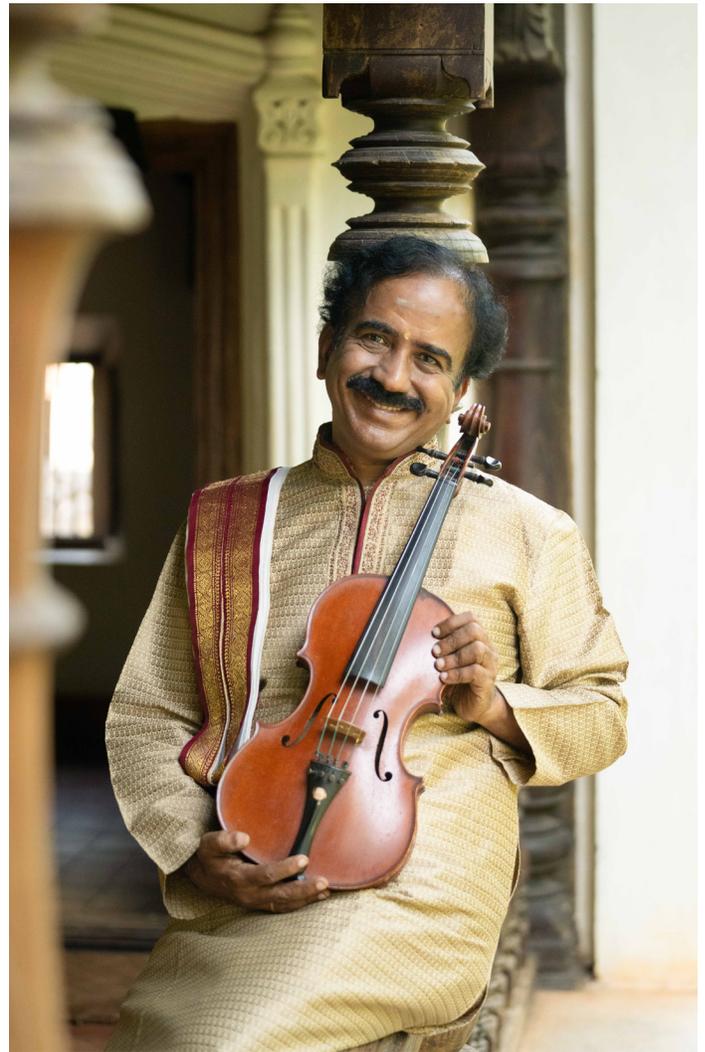
Today, India's leading musicians, orchestral players and film musicians entrust their instruments to these luthiers. What began as a practical solution has quietly grown into a cultural shift. For the first time, Indian violinists no longer carry the silent fear of a collapsed bridge, a fallen sound post, or a warped fingerboard without help at hand. The expertise they once sought abroad now exists here, within reach, rooted in their own musical landscape. In the hands of these newly trained craftsmen, the violin receives not only skilled repair but a sense of belonging, the assurance that its care, like its music, has finally found a home in India.

A future waiting to be built

Violin Wise has achieved something rare: not the revival of an old Indian craft, but the birth of a new one. A craft that sits at the intersection of Western tradition and Indian musical imagination.

Krishnan hopes for the movement to grow, setting up of regional centres for violin making and repair, conducting vocational training programmes, sealing institutional partnerships and eventually, obtaining a Make in India identity for fine string instruments.

India may never have had a luthier tradition. But we are building one now, carefully, passionately, piece by piece.



The silence before the first note

Every time a violin plays on stage, we hear the artist. What we do not hear is the invisible world behind it, the hands that shaped the plates, the ears that tuned the wood, the patience that made the sound possible.

Violin Wise reminds us that music is not only what happens under the spotlight, but also what happens in the quiet corners where craftsmen work; unseen, steady, essential. In those corners, a new Indian story is being written. Not of an inherited craft, but of a chosen one.

Not of tradition reclaimed, but of a tradition created. One violin, and one luthier, at a time.

About the author

Dr. Abirami Vivek, founder of Magnet Minds, is a counselling psychologist and early childhood educationist. She is also National chairperson, All Ladies League, Women's Economic Forum (WEF).

Performing Arts



Performing Arts – where movement heals, music connects, and stories breathe life. From classical traditions to contemporary expressions, every performance is a celebration of the human spirit. Discover how the arts build bridges to community, well-being, and joyful living.

**Playing music with the strings
of social responsibility**

Don Alder

**Dance therapy: Unlocking new pathways to
healing, connection, and
self-discovery**

Suparna Banerjee

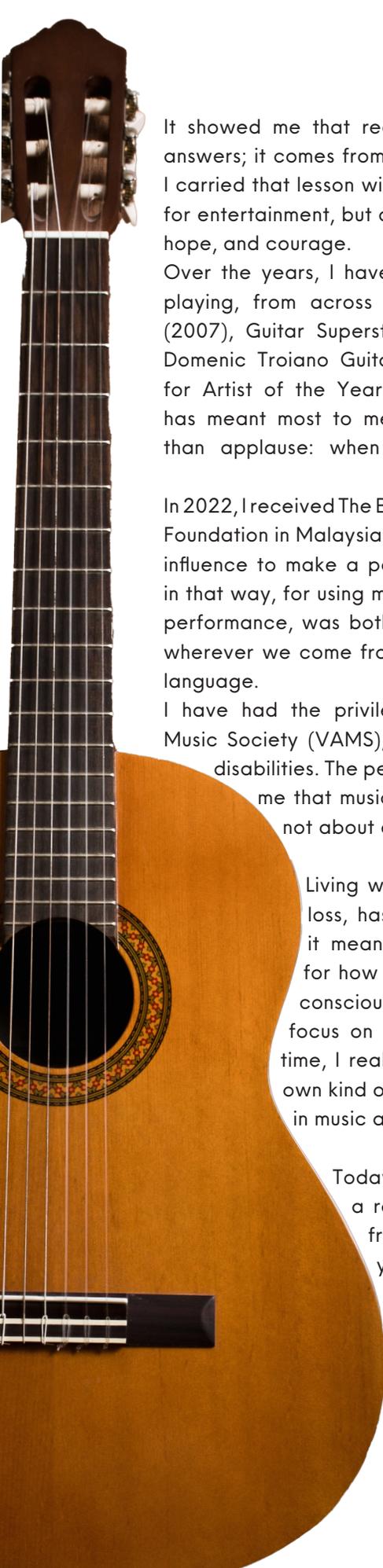
PLAYING MUSIC WITH THE STRINGS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Don Alder



When I first picked up a guitar as a kid growing up in Williams Lake, British Columbia, I never imagined that it would take me around the world or connect me to so many extraordinary people. I did not dream about awards, stages, or recognition. I just knew that music made sense to me—it felt like home. Over time, my guitar became more than an instrument. It became a bridge, a teacher, and, I hope, a small force for good in the world.

Looking back, I see how much of my path has been shaped by the people and causes that inspired me. One of the most defining experiences of my life was joining the Rick Hansen Man in Motion World Tour in the mid-1980s. Rick and I had been friends since our school days, and when he set out to wheel around the world in a wheelchair to raise awareness about spinal cord injury and accessibility, I wanted to help however I could. For more than two years, I travelled as part of his team, doing whatever was needed and witnessing firsthand what true perseverance and compassion can accomplish. As you can imagine I learned a lot about wheelchairs, their design and wheeling efficiency which provided me the skills to be selected to represent the Canadian Paralympic Team as the equipment manager and wheelchair technician in 1996 and 2000. That role taught me that meaningful contributions do not always happen in the spotlight. Sometimes, they happen behind the scenes, making sure someone else has what they need to succeed. That period of my life, working beside athletes and advocates who embodied courage and dedication, shaped how I view success.



It showed me that real change does not come from having all the answers; it comes from caring enough to try. When I returned to music, I carried that lesson with me. I began to see my guitar not just as a tool for entertainment, but as a voice; one that could tell stories of inclusion, hope, and courage.

Over the years, I have been fortunate to receive recognition for my playing, from across the world: International Fingerstyle Champion (2007), Guitar Superstar (2010), Worldwide Guitar Idol (2011), the Domenic Troiano Guitar Award, and Vancouver Island Music Award for Artist of the Year. Each of these honours felt surreal, but what has meant most to me is when music connects to something bigger than applause: when it creates understanding or sparks change.

In 2022, I received The Brand Laureate Award from the Asia Pacific Brands Foundation in Malaysia, recognising individuals who use their talents and influence to make a positive impact on society. To be acknowledged in that way, for using music as a vehicle for social good rather than just performance, was both humbling and reaffirming. It reminded me that wherever we come from, compassion and creativity speak a universal language.

I have had the privilege of working with the Vancouver Adapted Music Society (VAMS), an organisation that empowers musicians with disabilities. The people I have met through VAMS continually remind me that music has no boundaries—physical or otherwise. It is not about ability, but about expression.

Living with vitiligo, a skin condition that causes pigment loss, has given me a deeper understanding of what it means to be seen—and sometimes misunderstood—for how you look. Early on, I struggled with it. I felt self-conscious about performing, wondering if people would focus on my appearance instead of my music. But over time, I realised that embracing my difference could be its own kind of message. It is not always easy, but authenticity, in music and in life, is worth it.

Today, I serve on the board of Empower Through Music, a registered non-profit in Vancouver that provides free music lessons and instruments to underserved youth in the city and surrounding areas. Seeing a young person discover the joy of music, watching that spark of confidence and self-expression come alive, reminds me exactly why I started playing. That is where change really begins: when people find their voice and learn they have something worth sharing.

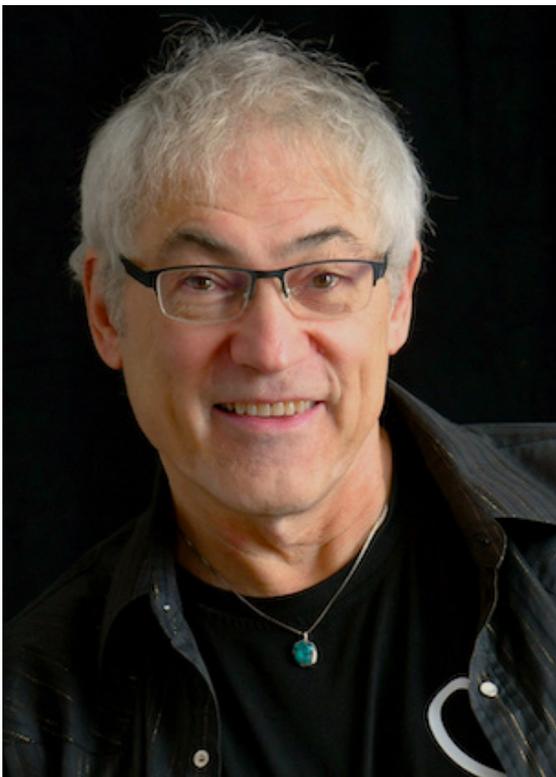




In recent years, I have received some of the greatest honours of my life. In 2024, I was appointed to the Order of Canada, the nation's highest civilian honour, recognising both my contributions to music and my work in the community. In 2025, I was deeply humbled to receive the King Charles III Coronation Medal; and name was inducted into the BC Entertainment Hall of Fame. These are distinctions I could never have imagined in my youth, and they remind me daily that any success I have had is built on the encouragement and generosity of others.

If there is a single idea that ties my life and career together, it is this: music is connection. It bridges people, cultures, and generations. I often say that I play music in the key of social responsibility. I believe music has a responsibility to lift people up. It is not just about notes and rhythm; it is about empathy. Sometimes, people ask what keeps me motivated after all these years. The answer is simple: gratitude. I am grateful for every note I get to play, every audience I meet, every opportunity to give back. You do not have to be famous or flawless to make a difference, you just have to be willing to show up and build on small successes.

So, I will keep playing wherever people gather. Not just for the music itself, but for the connection it creates and the change it can inspire. If one chord, one lyric, or one act of courage helps someone believe they can make a difference too, then I have done what I set out to do. At the end of the day, that is what truly matters: to play, to serve, and to live—in the key of social responsibility.



DANCE THERAPY: UNLOCKING NEW PATHWAYS TO HEALING, CONNECTION, AND SELF-DISCOVERY

Suparna Banerjee



Meditative posture in dance.
Photo copyright Eva-Maria Horstick ArtEve.de

Dance as a therapeutic tool is gaining recognition across various disciplines. Over the past few decades, the approach of dance has shown positive effects, aiding individuals in overcoming emotional struggles and boosting self-esteem across a large spectrum of age groups and societies. Furthermore, dance's interdisciplinary interconnections with practices including yoga make it a versatile therapeutic approach. Dance therapy, as opposed to rigorous dancing training for professional performances, is used in rehabilitation, medical, and educational settings.

Interdisciplinary connections

The roots of dance therapy can be traced back to ancient practices, where dance was intertwined with physical and spiritual disciplines such as yoga. In many Sanskrit dance treatises, hasta (codified hand gesture) resembles that of the practice of yoga. In fact, many of our classical dance forms, including Bharatanatyam and Odissi, borrow yogic postures, and thus practicing them can bring focus and mindfulness while pacifying anxiety and trauma. The integration of yoga in dance-based therapy programs can also enhance coping skills for individuals facing mental health issues.

Dance therapy also has a long history of partnering with martial arts. To strengthen muscle coordination and mindfulness, martial arts have been integrated into dance therapy programs. It is a powerful way to reconnect with oneself and others, transcending barriers and overcoming negative thoughts that block the smooth running of our day-to-day activities. As part of therapy, dance can help overcome emotional struggles and boost self-esteem and self-confidence while enhancing physical, cognitive, social, emotional, spiritual, and creative processes.

Therapeutic approach of social dancing

As the field of therapeutic dance continues to evolve, its potential to create meaningful social change and improve the quality of life for diverse populations becomes increasingly evident.

Aerobic dancing has had a positive effect on flexibility in the younger population and helps build strength in senior people. It is used in treating conditions such as depression, schizophrenia, and Parkinson's disease. The goal of such therapy is to support clients in experiencing the benefits of movement while facilitating personal growth and empowerment. Additionally, it can improve working memory and reduce the severity of depressive symptoms, particularly among female patients.

Dance serves as an instrument for empowerment and healing in social dancing while offering the clients a unique avenue for self-expression and connection with their communities. The healing power of dance makes this art form an important element of holistic well-being.

Cognitive benefits of dance

Natyashastra, an ancient Sanskrit treatise on theatre, asserts that dance was brought into use because it created beauty in a dramatic spectacle. The beauty is brought forth through elemental movements and also with ideas and sentiments like "visual poetry."



Elemental dance.
Photo credit: Jo Ellen Vardeman

The cognitive dimension of dance refers to the mental activities, such as memory, imagery, perception and attention, reasoning, and decision-making. Furthermore, it enhances spatial awareness and cultivates human cognition.

Today, Indian classical dance has emerged as a therapeutic tool, significantly impacting the well-being of individuals across various demographics. Practitioners like the late Astad Deboo demonstrated the therapeutic benefits of dance; specifically, with hearing-impaired children, that dance could transcend communication barriers and foster self-expression and social integration. In another instance, Mrinalini Padhi's integration of dance and drama for hyperactive and autistic children yielded remarkable behavioural improvements.

This author, along with her collaborator Janice Baker, demonstrated that dance assignments had positively impacted a learner at a mid-western university in the USA with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a condition characterised by inattentiveness, overactivity, and impulsive behaviour.

Several practitioners' works have explored the therapeutic benefits of dance in the elder population and revealed how dance enhances their locomotion and balance. Elsewhere, practitioners often use hand gestures in the elder population to work on muscle stiffness. For older adults, dancing can reignite a sense of joy and provide opportunities to connect with past movements, also observed by this author in a study conducted in the pandemic. In the same study, it was also noted that dance goes beyond aesthetic expression to serve as a powerful instrument of enhanced memory, spatial awareness, and locomotive functioning.

The healing power of social dancing

Social dancing, for example, ballroom dancing or Zumba classes blooming in urban cities, reveals dance's social engagement with others in a society. They function as a medium for social bonding to overcome stress, trauma, and anxiety. The liberating nature of Zumba, in particular, empowers individuals to escape the pressures of daily life, leaving them feeling energised and motivated.



Expressing emotions through dance.
Photo credit: Jo Ellen Vardeman



Effective dance therapy with an elderly participant experiencing Body pain.
Photo credit: Suparna Banerjee



Dance helps connect with past movements.
Photo credit: Suparna Banerjee

Effect of dance on pain and healing

Dance, as a physical medium, connects deeply with illness and pain. Since both pain and illness are also experienced in the body physically, dance is the common link between them. The relationship between pain and dancers is intricate: pain is experienced during training and also linked to injury that can hinder performance. The stigma surrounding injury in the dance community often pressurises dancers to continue performing despite discomfort. Dancers, however, must navigate the moral implications of pain, balancing their commitment to the art with the need for self-care.

Dance therapy has also proven great in patients with early-stage dementia and those experiencing body pain and hypertension in older generations. Dancing to music can help elders to alleviate pain, which plays a crucial role in their healing process. Some studies have stressed the importance of dance/movement therapists listening to personal experiences and engaging in embodied inquiry to learn more about rehabilitation and the psychology of illness.

Conclusion

The exploration of dance as an interdisciplinary therapeutic approach reveals its impact on cognitive, emotional, and physical well-being. In a world where stress and emotional struggles dominate, dance therapy stands out as an instance of hope, inviting individuals to embrace the positive effects of movements. Cognitive benefits, such as improved memory and spatial

awareness, further underline the importance of dance as a therapeutic medium. Further to this, the relationship between dance and pain management reveals the art form's capacity to alleviate discomfort and facilitate healing, particularly in older adults. Whether through structured therapy sessions in rehabilitation centres or joyful social dancing in clubs, the healing power of movement is a testament to the resilience of the human mind and body at all ages. As dance's therapeutic potential is likely to expand, new pathways to healing, connection, and self-discovery will be unlocked, reminding us all of the profound impact that dance can have on our lives.

About the author

Suparna Banerjee is an independent dance educator and researcher, and also a visiting artist-scholar at Iowa State University, USA. She earned her PhD from the University of Roehampton, UK, and holds two master's degrees, one in Performing Arts (Bharatanatyam) from the University of Pune and another in English from the University of Kalyani, India. With over 20 years of experience, she has collaborated with dancers for performances both in India and internationally, and has conducted workshops for seniors and individuals with special needs. Her scholarly contributions include a book chapter in a Palgrave Macmillan anthology and various peer-reviewed articles. Suparna has received multiple international awards and grants and is currently working on a documentary titled *The Body as an Archive*.

Bibliography

1. Banerjee, S., & Baker, J. (2024). Embracing 'diversity, equity, and inclusion' through the interdisciplinary practice of screendance: Shaping undergraduate dance education. *Diálogos com a Arte—Revista de Arte, Cultura e Educação*, 14, 28–48.
2. Barton, E. J. (2011). Movement and mindfulness: A formative evaluation of a dance/movement and yoga therapy program with participants experiencing severe mental illness. *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, 33(2), 157–181.
3. Burkhardt J., & Brennan C. (2012). The effects of recreational dance interventions on the health and well-being of children and young people: A systematic review. *Arts & Health*, 4, 148–161.
4. Chen, M. D., Kuo, Y. H., Chang, Y. C., Hsu, S. T., Kuo, C. C., & Chang, J. J. (2016). Influences of aerobic dance on cognitive performance in adults with schizophrenia. *Occupational therapy international*, 23(4), 346–356.
5. Fernandez-Arguelles, E., Rodríguez-Mansilla, J., Antunez, L., Garrido-Ardila, E., & Munoz, R. (2015). Effects of dancing on the risk of falling related factors of healthy older adults: A systematic review. *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 60, 1–8.
6. Ghosh, M (trans). (1951). *The Natyasastra* ascribed to Bharata Muni. Asiatic Society of Bengal.
7. Hanna, J. L. (1995). The power of dance: Health and healing. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 1(4), 323–331.
8. Norouzi, E., Hosseini, F., Vaezmosavi, M., Gerber, M., Pühse, U., & Brand, S. (2020). Zumba dancing and aerobic exercise can improve working memory, motor function, and depressive symptoms in female patients with Fibromyalgia. *European journal of sport science*, 20(7), 981–991.
9. Sneha, M. (2023). *Dance Movement Therapy in India: An Exploration* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Hyderabad).
10. Tarr, J., & Thomas, H. (2021). Good pain, bad pain: Dancers, injury, and listening to the body. *Dance Research*, 39(1), 53–71.
11. Vatsyayan, K. (2022). *Classical Indian Dance: in Literature and the Arts*. Third edition. DK Printworld (P) Ltd.



Film Magic

Film and arts are the soul's mirror, where emotion, memory, and meaning converge in every frame and stroke. They unravel the seen and unseen, offering layered narratives that stir thought and awaken the senses.

Purple resistance, her truth, her lens:
African women are transforming the story of
violence
Funanani Mukununde

PURPLE RESISTANCE, HER TRUTH, HER LENS: AFRICAN WOMEN ARE TRANSFORMING THE STORY OF VIOLENCE

Funanani Mukunzunde

In a world over-crowded by men telling stories the way they know, twisting the narrative to suggest that it is somehow the woman's fault, carefully massaging the egos of their fellow male peers. Films crafted to dishonor women's truth, to silence her. He will never understand the depth of our pain, the measure of our resilience, a woman's story, my story, my voice. The film industry helped me reclaim that voice.

African women are born to be storytellers, passed down from generation to generation. My grandmother did it, and so can I. The difference is that I have access to film training, digital tools, and the global markets. It is no longer about the intimate space as we gather around the fire to tell the tales that build or break us.

We women live in societies that demanded our silence, echo our powerlessness, and loot our strength. We need to redefine the representation of African women on the screen, not as a symbol of suffering, but as drivers of narrative, transformation and justice, the inspiration of healing. Gender based violence is not a new wound in our society, it is an inherited bruise carried silently by generations of women. As a South African young woman, I have joined the powerful shift that is happening, refusing to suffer in silence. We are taking a stand, boldly and visibly, by painting the digital streets purple, a colour that shows resistance, dignity, and collective anger.

The theme of women standing in emotional spaces shaped by broader societal issues is one that brings me into storytelling. Our lives as women are shaped by

political and social contexts, and it is a woman's right to tell the story the right way. A moment to reclaim my voice as a form of survival, a testament of my rebirth; The Road to Her Soul is the film that marks my entry into African film but most importantly it marks the return of my voice. My story as I navigate the emotional ruins after a traumatic event. Capturing the moments of the impact and disconnect as I find a way to rebuild what a man tried to destroy. My truth translated through performance and camera angles that felt intimate and breathtaking.

Africa's cinematic future is female, and fearlessly so, audiences across the world turn their attention to one's truth becoming clear, the most powerful stories being told right now, from women who once had no voice. Women who survived, women who rose, women like me. One of the most notable examples is Rungano Nyoni's I Am Not a Witch, a film she both wrote and directed. Through the story of a young girl accused of witchcraft, Nyoni exposes the institutional violence, exploitation, and silencing that young African girls endure. The narrative's emotional truth comes from Nyoni's perspective as a woman who is grounded in empathy rather than spectacle.

Another significant contribution is from Scholastique Mukasonga, whose novel Our Lady of the Nile was adapted into film. Though not the screenplay writer, her original text provides a deeply feminine exploration of harassment, sexual exploitation, and political violence faced by schoolgirls before the Rwandan genocide.





BLACK STARS

THE ROAD TO HER SOUL

WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY:

FUNANANI MUKUNUNDE

SILENT CONFESSIONS

A FILM BY
SALT & LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

SALT&LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS SILENT CONFESSIONS
STARRING NICHOLAS NGOEPE , TUMELO MAMABOLO AND INNOCENTIA NHAMUNDA
EDITOR JAMES RAMUTHELO
SOUND OPERATOR ZINHLE XULU BOOM SWINGER KATLEGO SEIPI
GAFFER TSHEPANG KHOALE DOP TSHEPO MOLATLHEGI
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR PHATHUTSHEDZO MOREN KHOROMBI
PRODUCER FUNANANI MUKUNUNDE
WRITTEN BY FUNANANI MUKUNUNDE AND MFUNDO MNCWABE
DIRECTED BY SIBUSISO KESWA



Mukasonga's writing ensures that violence is not sensationalised but treated with the emotional and psychological weight it deserves.

In East Africa, Wanuri Kahiu's *Rafiki* stands out. Kahiu co-wrote and directed the film, telling a story of love, danger, and violence directed at young women who dare to exist outside patriarchal control. Through her writing, Kahiu challenges the way society polices women's bodies, autonomy, and even their right to love.

West African filmmaker Apolline Traoré has also become a critical voice in stories confronting violence against women. In films such as *Desrances* and *Frontières*, Traoré writes narratives deeply rooted in female survival stories from threats of sexual violence to the brutality women face while crossing borders in search of safety. Her stories refuse to reduce women to victims; instead, they highlight courage, endurance, and solidarity.

These female-driven narratives stand in sharp contrast to the earlier wave of male-written stories about rape in African cinema. Unlike films that blame women, romanticise violence, or silence victims, works written by African women prioritise the survivor's voice, depict trauma with honesty, and expose the social structures that enable abuse.

This shift in filmmaking mirrors a broader cultural movement. Gender based violence has plagued Africa for generations, but today, countries like mine are rising in resistance. The same energy is visible in films written by women: a demand for justice, accountability, and a future where women can own and tell their own stories.



African female writers are not just creating films; we are creating testimony, resistance, and healing. Through our pens, we give voice to millions of women whose stories have been overshadowed, dismissed, or rewritten. Our work marks a powerful transformation within African cinema and one where women no longer play the role of silent subjects but become authors of their own narratives of survival and resilience.

About the author

Funanani Mukununde is a passionate practitioner of the arts and media, a creative entrepreneur, and a people-driven storyteller. She is producer, scriptwriter, a director of the Lens, and a creative intellectual being. She is the founder of Mukununde Media House, and a co-founder of Infinity Frame Network, a platform that aims to bring people together through the art of storytelling, education, and history. She holds a National Diploma in Film and Television Production from the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA). She has also completed a Certificate course in Full Stack Development.



LIGHT & SHADOWS

Where every click carves memory into art — timeless, raw, and real

Photography

Life under water: Reconnecting with the sea through images
and visual story telling

Swati Thiyagarajan

LIFE UNDER WATER: RECONNECTING WITH THE SEA THROUGH IMAGES AND VISUAL STORY TELLING

Swati Thiyagarajan

"The greatest landscape for the human soul is wild nature and the greatest landscape for nature is the human soul."



The first time I saw a wildlife film, I was transported into the world I was watching. I felt I was walking through the tall grasses of the Mara with the wildebeest on their migration. I could feel the hot breath of the lion on my neck and the wind against my cheek as a cheetah whizzed past. It was visceral and immediate. I thought to myself, I want to do that. By the time I was an adult and working as a journalist, I was more invested in conservation storytelling. While I was still mesmerised by the grandeur of the blue chip film, I felt that the natural world needed a more immediate voice as the threats were so much more immediate, from habitat and biodiversity loss to climate change and the displacement of tribal and local communities from their ancestral lands. Conservation issues needed to be on the news and galvanise policy and people into action. That is the challenge I enjoy. Getting the story on the news and making people care. Visual storytelling is one step deeper than verbal storytelling. Our species is

hardwired to listen to stories. All the lives that we live, our choices, be it religion, consumerism, charity, money; whatever drives us lives within a story that has captured our minds.

Our brains process visuals 60,000 times faster than word and that response is tied in directly with our emotions. This also poses a challenge: obtaining the visuals. The wild is not a character who can be directed or produced. She does as she will and you get lucky or unlucky in capturing that. What it does take is what I see as 'P cubed': patience, perseverance and passion.

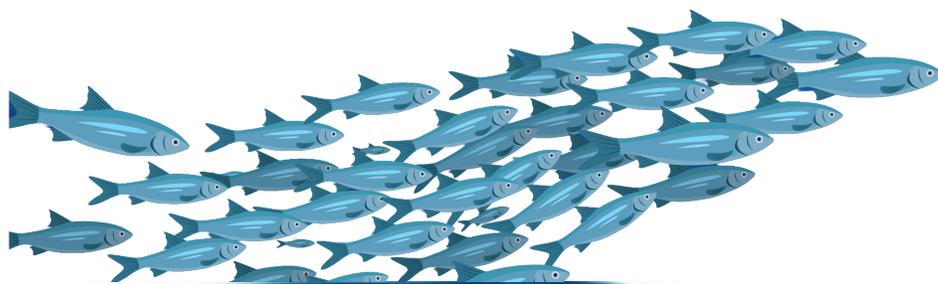
I started Born Wild, a prime-time television show on NDTV, a 24 hour news network. It was the first time that a long format news documentary on the environment became a long running series. This allowed me to travel the length and breadth of India, explore all of her wild spaces and meet some extraordinary people. To have a camera that could capture these experiences, those moments and the wild, was a gift.





But two decades later in 2019, I left NDTV as a new challenge emerged. I had moved to Cape Town in 2008 and was still travelling back and forth to India to do my show Born Wild. On my doorstep in Cape Town lies the Atlantic Ocean, taking a lap around the Cape of Storms. I was surrounded by people, including my husband, who were water babies and I had an abject fear of water. I had had a near drowning incident as a child and I could not imagine a time when I might ever be comfortable in a swimming pool, let alone the ocean. At this time, I could not but be aware of all of the enormous challenges that the ocean was facing from over fishing, pollution and warming and acidification. I wanted to join the Sea Change Project, a not-for-profit environmental storytelling organisation co-founded by my husband Craig Foster. At that time, we were in the last lap of completing the film My Octopus Teacher (MOT). This had been a long five-year process. In that time, I had made a

few forays into the water, at very low tide when I could stay in the shallows and cling to the amazing kelp. Not only is it just the ocean on my doorstep, but one of the most magnificent ecosystems on the planet, the amazing kelp forests, underwater forests of the Great African sea forest as wondrous and biodiverse as any tropical forest on land. Perhaps even more as they are so under studied and under explored as is the ocean itself. My few forays, which had me clad in a wet suit with a life jacket on, had me wishing I could get over my fear. The water is also very cold which was one more thing to deal with. By 2019 working on MOT, had stoked my fomo into new heights and my conservation storytelling radar was itching to talk about the ocean. But how could I be a voice for her without full immersion? I needed to understand her like I did the land. It was not enough to be associate producer on MOT and advise and ideate on the story crafting. I wanted to be in the water as well.

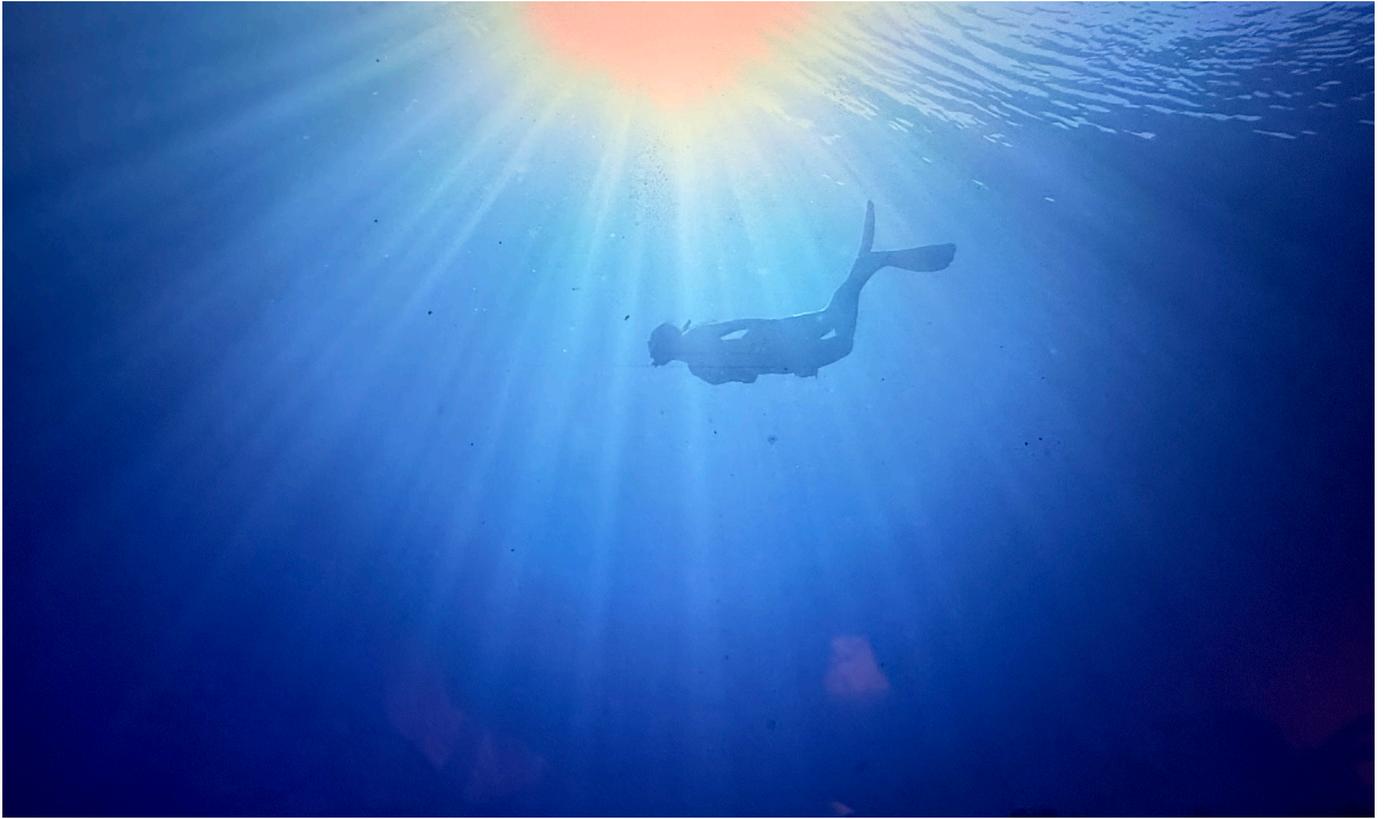


At that time something tragic happened. Octopus fishing traps in the bay killed several whales when they got entangled in the ropes that secured the traps. I jumped onto one of the rescue boats and set out to record this. My stories were published and along with other groups we got the attention of the then-Minister for Environment and she asked for all traps to be removed until they were deemed safe for whales. We saved many whale lives that season. Two days after this when I was in the shallows, a young humpback swam into the shallows to feed and I felt like the ocean was asking me to get my act together. I started swimming lessons the very next day.

It was not an overnight transition. It took two years after starting my swimming lessons to not only acclimate to the cold but to really become comfortable enough in the water. I still feel fear but I feel more wonder as the sea forest slowly opened up to me and started to share her magic. Today I swim out on my own, I don't wear a wetsuit as I am completely cold adapted and I have learnt to scuba dive. I use my camera and storytelling skills now for the Sea Change Project. Underwater, visibility is God. That is the single thing that can make or break how you film. Also, a bonus if the ocean is calm.

Unlike animals on land, animals in the ocean are less wary. However, you need to control your body and your movement. The more relaxed you are the better and the less frenetic or fast your movement in the water, the less pressure waves, which animals can sense, are pushed out. Of course, as anywhere in the wild, use caution, do not ever touch an animal without consent and always allow an animal to approach instead of chasing it and causing distress. Light, as in any kind of photography or filming, is key and so also your individual artistic eye as you compose your shot or film. I am still on a steep learning curve with all of it but patience, persistence and passion, is slowly making it better.





www.theateliermag.com

Right now, I realise that the greatest challenge we face is not just environmental but that as a species we are deeply disconnected with the very world that we are so biologically entwined with. We are part of nature, but we are living like we can create a life outside of her. This disconnect has led to an alarming 'extinction of experience' which is preventing us from making the right choices for both people and planet. This disconnect is even more apparent with the ocean as most people never get to see beneath the surface, creating a kind of 'sea blindness'.

This is my new journey, finding images and telling visual stories to foster connection. To change 'sea blindness' to 'sea love'. To make everyone want to visit the world beneath the waves, the home from where all life began and if they cannot physically, then maybe like I travelled viscerally to the Mara all those decades ago, I can make them travel underwater, like we did with MOT and like we are doing with all of our Sea Change Project work.



About the author

Swati Thiyagarajan is a 'Nature Storyteller' whose career as a conservation and wildlife journalist began with her environment reporting on the Indian television channel, NDTV. An award-winning environment journalist, she has authored *Born Wild: A Journey into the Wild Hearts of India and Africa* and has been involved in making films on wildlife as co-director, associate producer and executive producer. She is deeply involved in the Sea Change Project that focuses on preserving the Great African Seaforest.



Fashion

Wear your story — not as a trend, but as threads of wearable art. Here, fashion meets art to create pieces that speak, move, and inspire.

MAALGAADI: Making slow fashion and ethical practices fashionable
Sakina Ansari



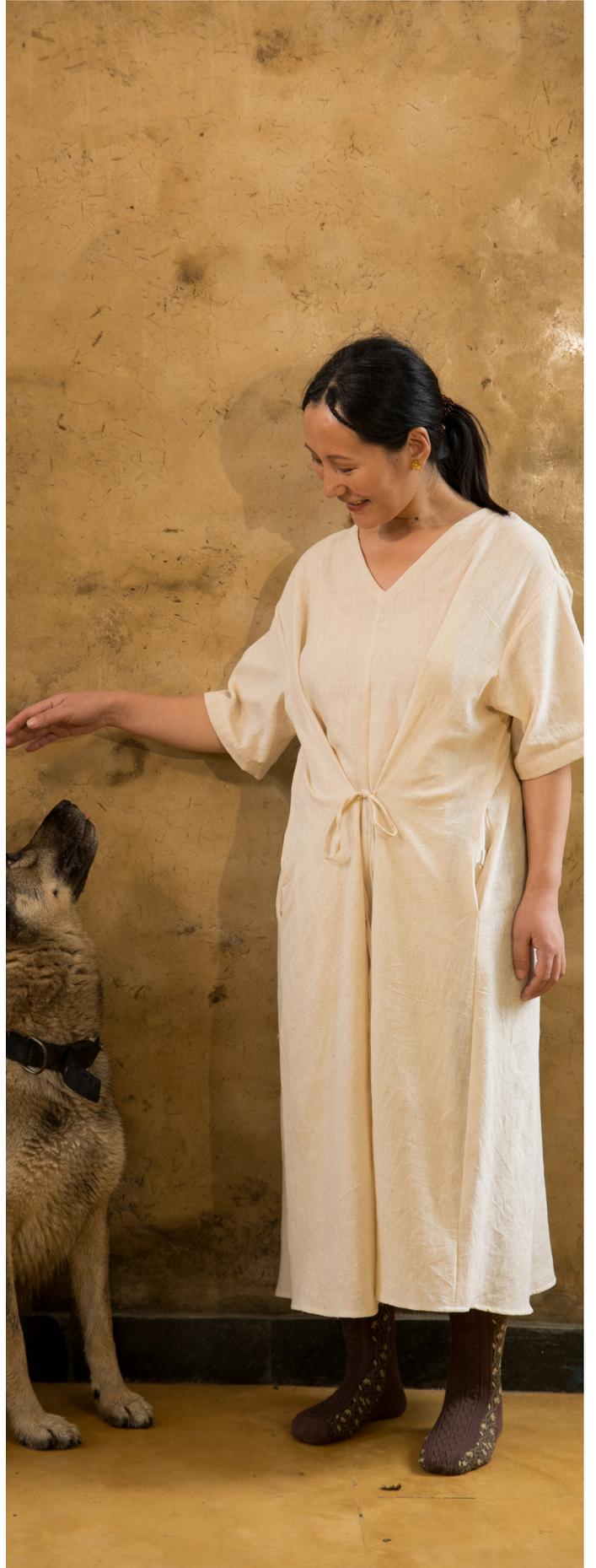
MAALGAADI: MAKING SLOW FASHION AND ETHICAL PRACTICES FASHIONABLE



For founder's Sakina and Shahin, the journey from showcasing fashion, accessories, gifting, and lifestyle products in their multi-designer space MAALGAADI in Chennai; to prioritising conscious selling, sustainability, and slow fashion online has been a meaningful one. It was a collective journey that included merchandiser Ranjani and executive director Krishna Ramkumar.

MAALGAADI is now an online presence, showcasing handcrafted fashion, jewellery, and home products made by Indian artisans, using traditional techniques and ethical sourced natural fibre. By choosing slow fashion and promoting eco-friendly practices, MAALGAADI's community values intentional living to help reduce the carbon footprint.









MAALGAADI believes in connecting customers with the makers of the product and thereby develop a sense of belonging. The focus on responsible consumption and appreciation for artisanal craftsmanship makes MAALGAADI a truly unique online platform.



Soulful Spaces

Soulful Spaces celebrates architecture rooted in art, earth, and emotion. From temples to offices, every space holds the power to inspire and heal. It's not just design—it's the art of living with intention.



WSweet Escape: Where baking and art meet

Khadija Malik





SWEET ESCAPE: WHERE BAKING AND ART MEET

Khadija Malik



At Sweet Escape, a Pâtisserie that I founded, I combine my love for baking and art to create interactive dessert experiences. From a young age, I spent hours watching baking videos and experimenting in my kitchen, and over time, my simple cupcakes and buttercream creations evolved into custom macarons and 'Paint Your Own Cake' experiences. I trained at the Academy of Pastry Arts in Bangalore, interned at The Westin Kolkata, and completed an advanced course at the Academy of Pastry Arts in Malaysia to hone my skills. At Sweet Escape, I love turning desserts into a canvas, giving guests the chance to express themselves creatively before enjoying their treat.

To some, a cake is dessert. To me, it is a blank canvas. Smooth fondant or chilled buttercream becomes my surface; edible colours and food-safe brushes replace paint and pencils. Within minutes, flowers bloom, skies deepen, and entire scenes take shape, not on paper or canvas, but on something destined to be sliced and shared. Painting on cake is more than decoration. It is where baking and art meet, and it turns food into an experience rather than just something to eat.



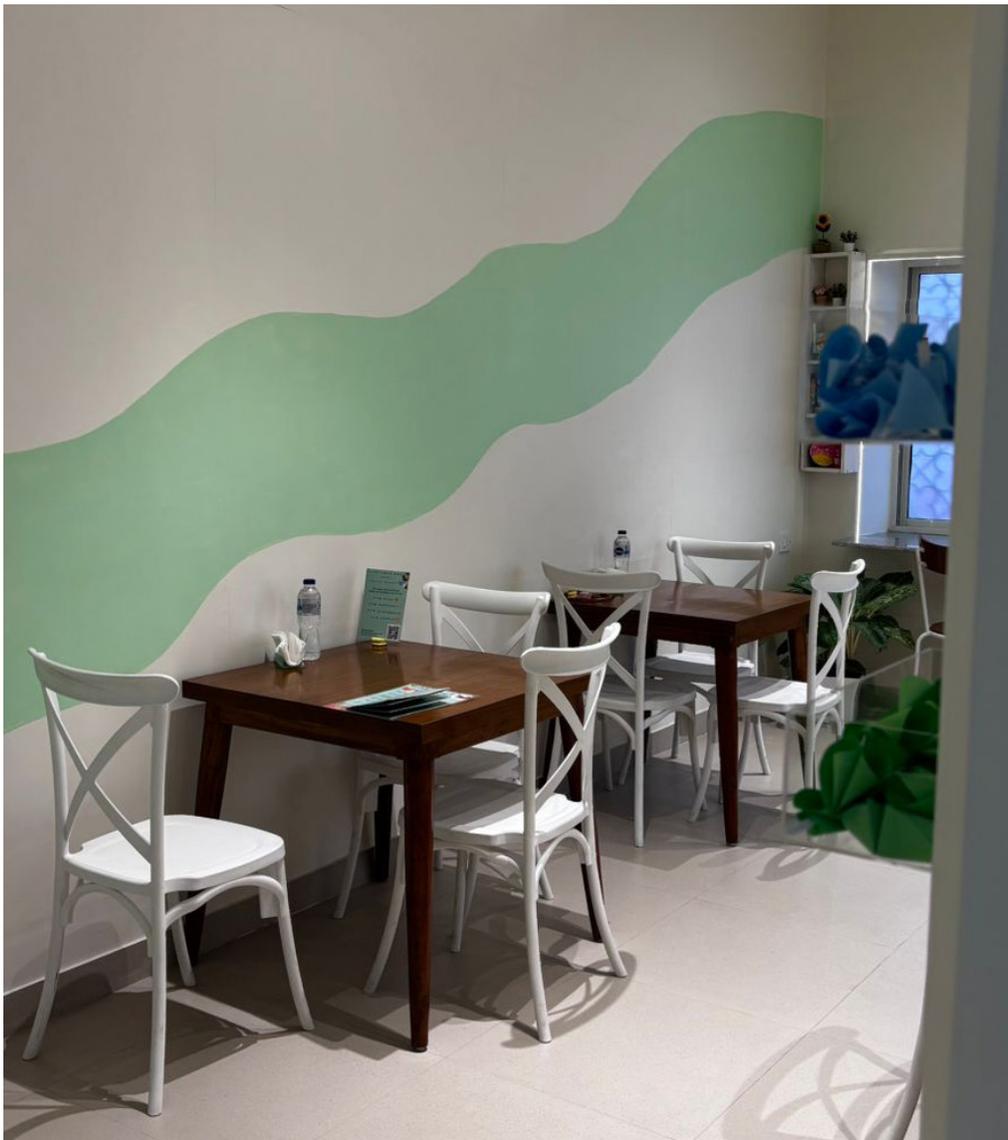
My path to edible art did not start in a professional kitchen. As a teenager, I spent hours watching baking videos on YouTube, pausing them to jot down recipes in a notebook. My first creations were simple cupcakes topped with American buttercream frosting. The name Sweet Escape came to me in school, and with my mother's help, I made my first business card and began selling at local exhibits. After college, I enrolled in pastry school in Bangalore.

My internship at The Westin Kolkata gave me a close look at the precision and pace of a five-star pastry kitchen, and the short, advanced course in Malaysia helped me refine my skills even further. When COVID-19 hit, I shifted my plans and started baking from my small home kitchen using an OTG oven. There were plenty of failed bakes, but also small wins that kept me going. I began experimenting with macarons, eventually moving to a cloud kitchen with a commercial oven. Soon, my oversized customised macarons, 6-inch, macaron bouquets, became one of Sweet Escape's most popular products.

When I opened a small café space, I wanted something that felt personal, something that reflected who I am, someone who loves origami, painting, and craft as much as pastry. That is when the idea for 'Paint Your Own Cake' came to life. One slice of cake, four edible colours, brushes, and complete creative freedom. Guests could paint whatever they liked before eating it.

When we posted a reel of it on Instagram, it exploded with over 600,000 views. People came to the café just to try it, and soon families, couples, and kids were sitting down to paint together. I still remember giving away 100 cakes to celebrate and watching strangers bond over something as simple as a brush and a slice of cake. What surprised me most was the reactions. Guests would walk in curious, often a little unsure about how it would work, but the moment the colours and brushes were set down in front of them, their faces lit up. They leaned in with the same excitement as kids opening a paint box for the first time. By the time they finished, they would sit back with huge smiles, proudly holding up their slice as if it were a framed painting. More than once, someone told me, "It looks too pretty to eat." Some even hesitated to take the first bite because they didn't want to ruin their artwork. But when they finally did, it was always with laughter, a mix of pride, joy, and that sweet reminder that art does not have to last forever to be meaningful.





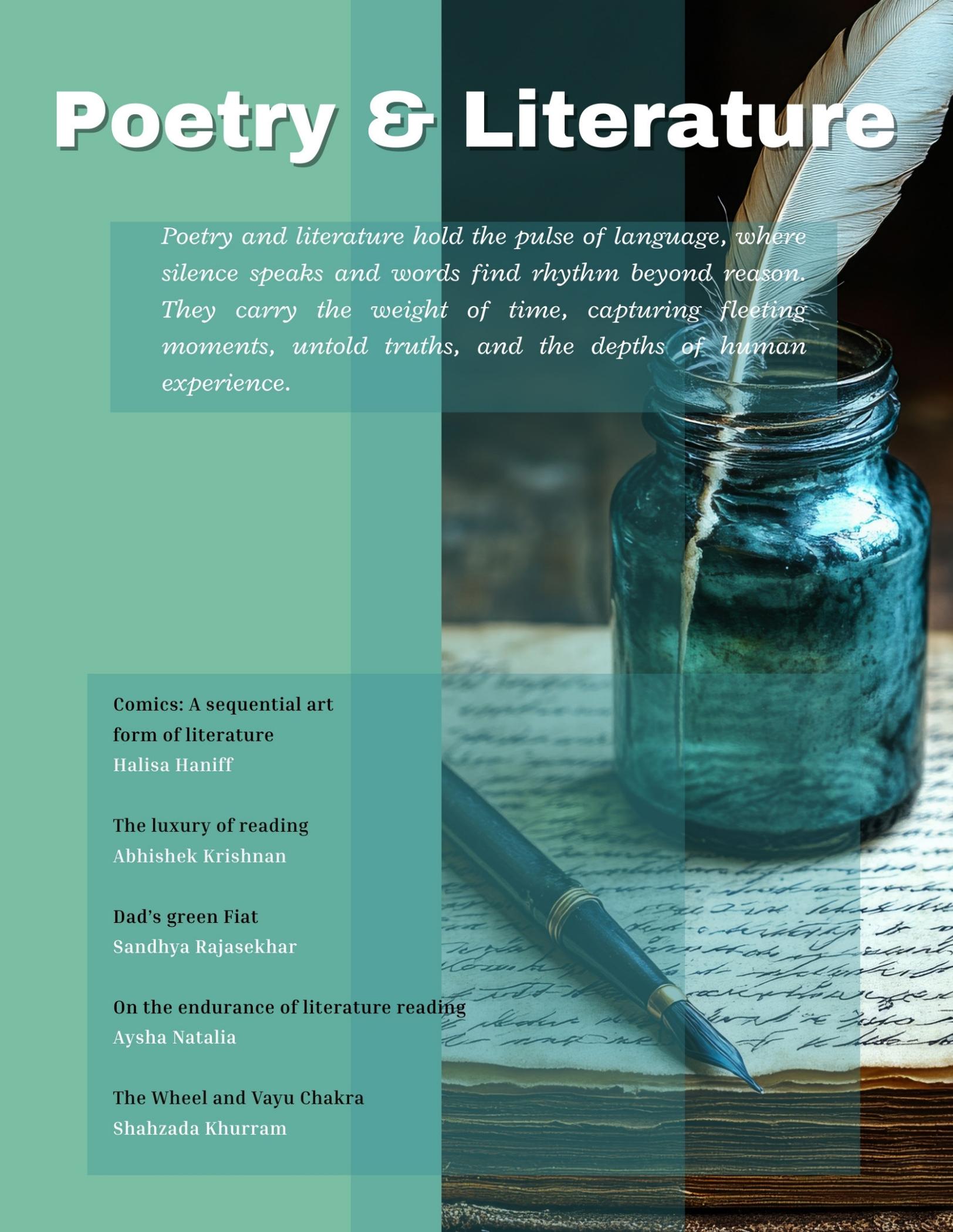
Food is one of the most universal human experiences, and art is one of the most universal languages. Painting on cake brings them together in a way that is both interactive and accessible. In traditional art, the viewer is an observer; in food, the diner usually gets a finished product. Here, the guest becomes the artist, and the cake becomes both medium and reward. Painting on cakes can transform a simple dessert into a visual masterpiece. Dessert is a dynamic art; it has the flow of art just like music and drama. The amalgamation of dessert and art elevates the experience of the dessert through its visual appeal and creates edible aesthetics. It feels like a fun way to connect with customers. It gives them a chance to take part in the process instead of simply

receiving a finished product. At Sweet Escape, it has become part of who we are. Guests come for the taste, but they leave talking about the creativity they experienced.

As we prepare to open a larger space, I am planning even more ways to connect food and art. That means more interactive ideas, more ways for guests to express themselves, and more opportunities to make dessert an activity as much as a treat. Painting on cake has shown me that art does not have to hang on a wall to be meaningful. Sometimes it is in your hands, shaped by your own brushstrokes, and shared with people you care about. And even after the last bite is gone, the memory of colour, laughter, and creativity remains.



Poetry & Literature



Poetry and literature hold the pulse of language, where silence speaks and words find rhythm beyond reason. They carry the weight of time, capturing fleeting moments, untold truths, and the depths of human experience.

Comics: A sequential art form of literature

Halisa Haniff

The luxury of reading

Abhishek Krishnan

Dad's green Fiat

Sandhya Rajasekhar

On the endurance of literature reading

Aysha Natalia

The Wheel and Vayu Chakra

Shahzada Khurram

COMICS: A SEQUENTIAL ART FORM OF LITERATURE

Halisa Haniff



Comics have been a part of my life. The art, the sketches, the colours and all of it make it a good example of storytelling. But in the last few years, my degree took me down a bigger rabbit hole of looking through studying the art of literature. Certain details looked sharper, and I looked at the art in a lot of different angles. Some would say it is age, but I have to say that it was years of exposure.

Growing up, I was fascinated by the world of picture books and comics. The drawings spoke to me in ways people often could not. I don't think it was about the words anymore sometimes, because if the artist can illustrate sequential art that well, it could already tell one heck of a story. Think about this: images that could speak—how emotion is alive between lines and silence, how expression could carry meaning.

As a child, I only knew the joy of holding a new book, a story. Years later, I realised that sequential art is an art form in itself. When I revisit comics today, I find myself not just reading but decoding: studying how each drawing, gesture, and arrangement works to shape meaning.

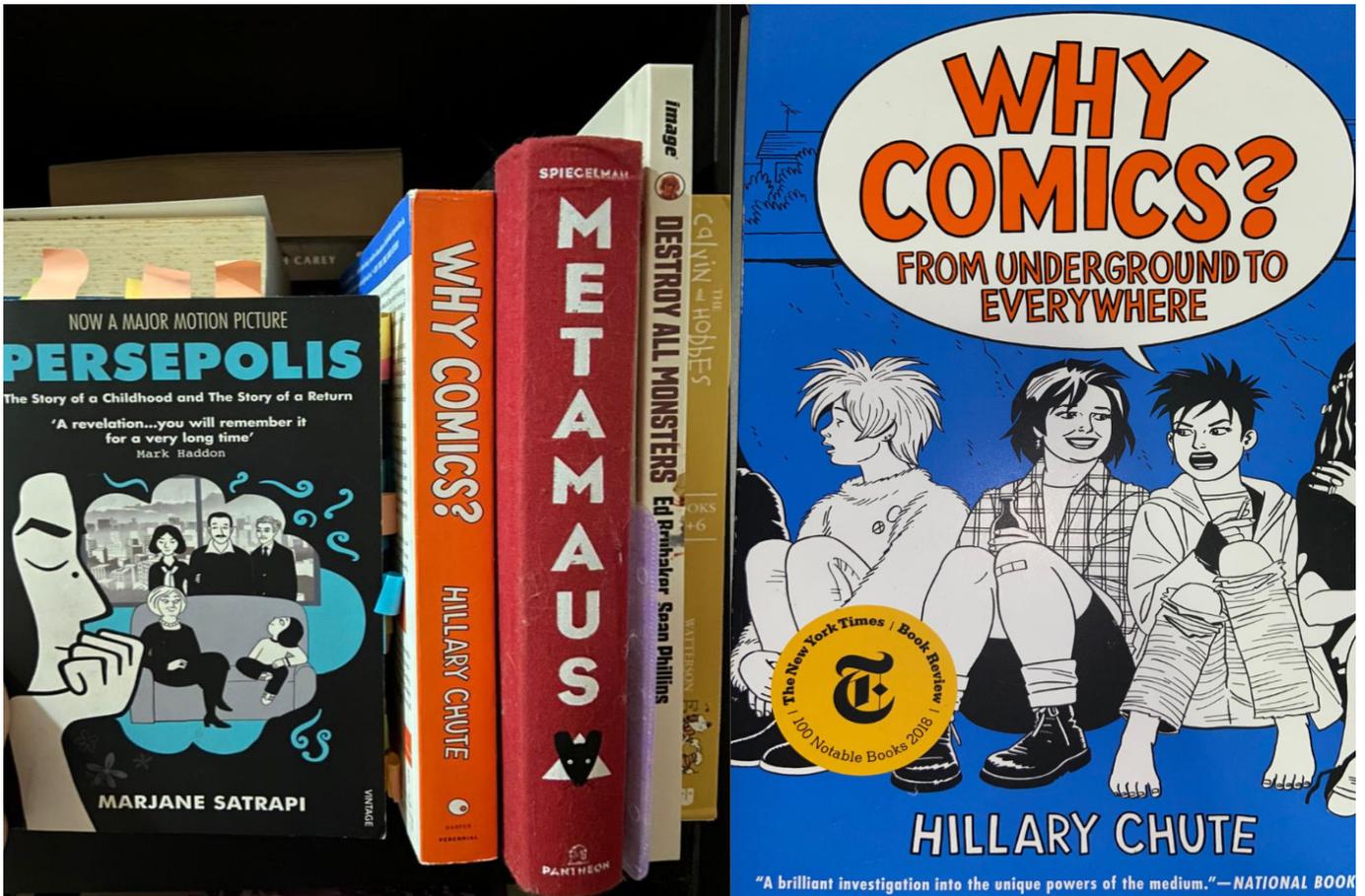
Four months ago, I completed my dissertation titled *Defying Cross-Cultural Patriarchy in Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis*. That experience made way for the return of my passion for this medium. Satrapi's humour, defiance, and political courage continue to inspire me. Her work reminds us that art and literature are inseparable, that rebellion and resistance can exist even in black-and-white drawings. Studying English Literature for over three years has taught me to appreciate the presence of art within books (even if I, or we, already think we know).



ON THE OTHER CORNER OF THE CITY, HERBERT WAS SEEN WALKING BACK TO HIS SO-CALLED "LUXURIOUS" HOME. A COUPLE WEEKS BACK, HE MOVED IN WITH A YOUNG GIRL AND HER PARENTS, AND HERBERT DIDN'T LIKE THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WHEN HE FIRST ARRIVED.

IT WAS A GOOD HOME WITH A STURDY ROOF, NO DOUBT, BUT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD HAD ITS ODDITIES. THERE WAS ALWAYS A STENCH THAT HERBERT COULDN'T STAND AT TIMES, ESPECIALLY WHEN PEOPLE LEFT THEIR FOOD OUTSIDE FOR THE STRAYS. HE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THEY DID IT. DESPITE THIS, THE NEIGHBOURHOOD HAD ITS COZY CHARMS, WHICH MADE IT JUST AS GOOD ENOUGH TO HANDLE, EVEN FOR PEOPLE.

THE AREA WAS PEACEFUL AND QUIET, WITH NO HIGHWAYS NEARBY TO DISRUPT THE TRANQUIL AREA. HE GUESSED IT WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR HIM AND HIS OWNER.



Whether in words or sketches, stories come in many forms, and we should always open storytelling with open arms and open minds.

Remember, at some point, as kids, we used to just read anything? Well, at some point in my childhood, I used to think comics or picture books were just for kids. But every time I turned a page of a graphic novel like *Persepolis*, I felt a jolt in my chest, knowing there are more comics out there like this.

My question now is: why aren't comics studied more deeply in literature classrooms?

Why do some still treat them as lesser works, when most writers and directors are obsessively wanting to turn a graphic novel or comic into an animated movie or live-action series? In Malaysia, there are only a handful of classes that touch on comics or graphic novels, and most public understanding of them remains connected to superheroes. While superhero comics have their place, it can be fun to look just a little beyond them sometimes. More serious works like *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, which won a Pulitzer Prize, or *Persepolis* by Satrapi, a coming-of-age narrative. Comics can hold tragedy, humour, politics, and memory all at once, which is the very essence of literature itself.



It was not until I encountered Hillary Chute's **Why Comics? From Underground to Everywhere** and Scott McCloud's **Understanding Comics**, I realised how deeply this field could be explored. Chute's writing gave language to what I had always felt, that comics are not side notes to literature, but living, breathing texts. She examines how comics have addressed illness, disability, punk movements, and gender, textually and visually. Through her work, I found validation to pursue more of this fascination. Chute taught me that, 'maybe these are not just comic books anymore; it's an influential art form.'

I still remember the first black-and-white panel of **Persepolis**. The emotional and political weight of comics lies in their immediacy. In works like this one, trauma is not only told, it is drawn, put in sequence and then witnessed. In some cases of genres, comics turn memory into something visible, forcing the reader to go into stories that prose might distance a reader from. From my experience as both a reader and an artist who tries to develop my own visual and textual stories, like *What a Cat Wants*, I strive to continue onward and

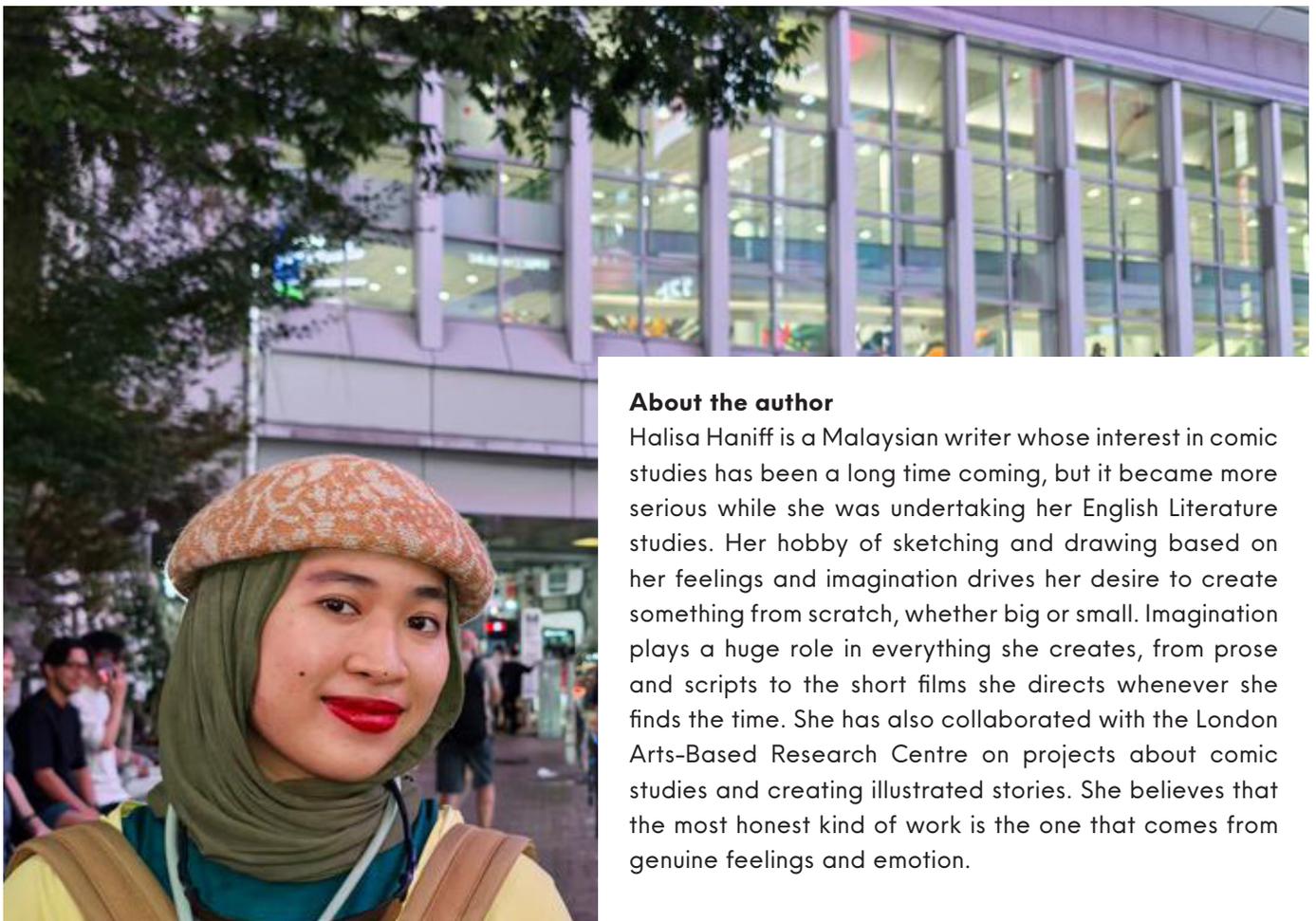
keep my passion alive, not just by studying comics, but also by being a little cartoonist myself when I can.

I have come to believe that comics must be read and studied with the same seriousness as any text. Whether drawn in bold colour or black ink, it invites us to read differently so we can find its meaning.

Maybe that is why comics still matter more than ever. They are a reminder that text and visual art are meant to be together, and meant to be taught more in schools. These stories—even the less popular ones—deserve to be seen and not simply heard of by their own title.

In the end, comics are stories that demand to be seen as much as read—not to be left as something ancient in your parents' bookshelf, as they say, "I used to read this as a kid!". It should be immortalised in education as much as the famous titles of prose are. Comics are not diversions from literature; they are extensions of it. As Hillary Chute reminds us, asking "Why Comics?" is not just a question; it brings you in for more out of curiosity, like all forms of literature.

Cartoonish? No. Sequential art—comics, as a medium, should not be dismissed so easily.



About the author

Halisa Haniff is a Malaysian writer whose interest in comic studies has been a long time coming, but it became more serious while she was undertaking her English Literature studies. Her hobby of sketching and drawing based on her feelings and imagination drives her desire to create something from scratch, whether big or small. Imagination plays a huge role in everything she creates, from prose and scripts to the short films she directs whenever she finds the time. She has also collaborated with the London Arts-Based Research Centre on projects about comic studies and creating illustrated stories. She believes that the most honest kind of work is the one that comes from genuine feelings and emotion.

THE LUXURY OF READING

Abhishek Krishnan

*“Writers trap characters and entire worlds within the pages of a book.
Readers set them free.”*

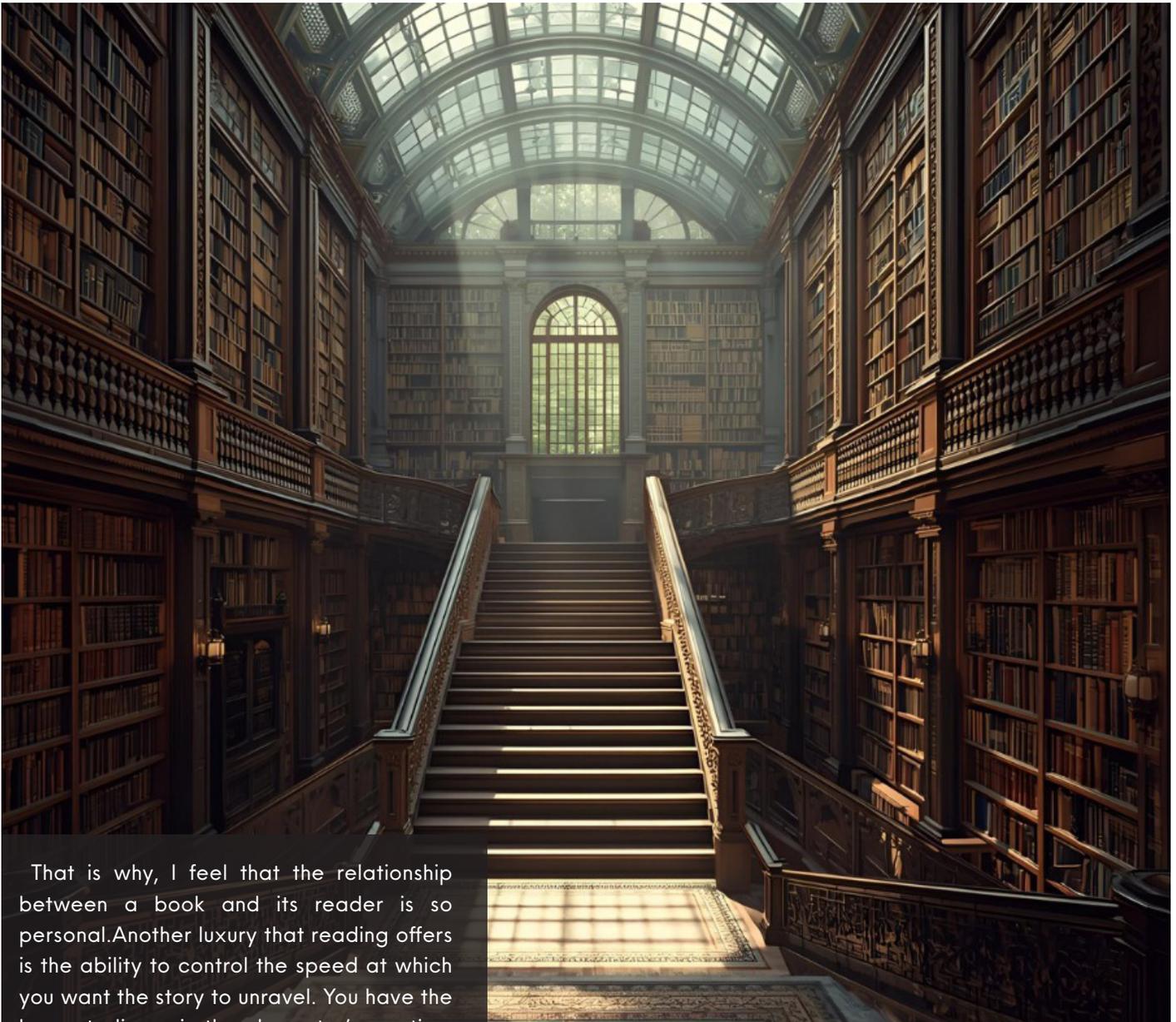
Imagine this: you are reading a novel. A dragon enters the scene. In your mind, you picture it green, with spikes running down its head. But then, a sentence later, the text reveals that the dragon is blue. Instantly, your imagination shifts, reshaping the creature into your chosen shade of blue. Perhaps cobalt or sapphire.

But the bottom line is this: without even realising it, you are watching a little film projected inside your head. While your eyes absorb the words, your mind builds a stage, casts the characters, and directs a performance solely for you. That is the secret splendour of reading: every book is universal, yet every reading is private.

As a writer, I have often been overwhelmed by the thought of how one book can have millions of visual versions, each one created in the mind of the reader. It's like launching your story into a multiverse, where your characters lead the same lives in different worlds.

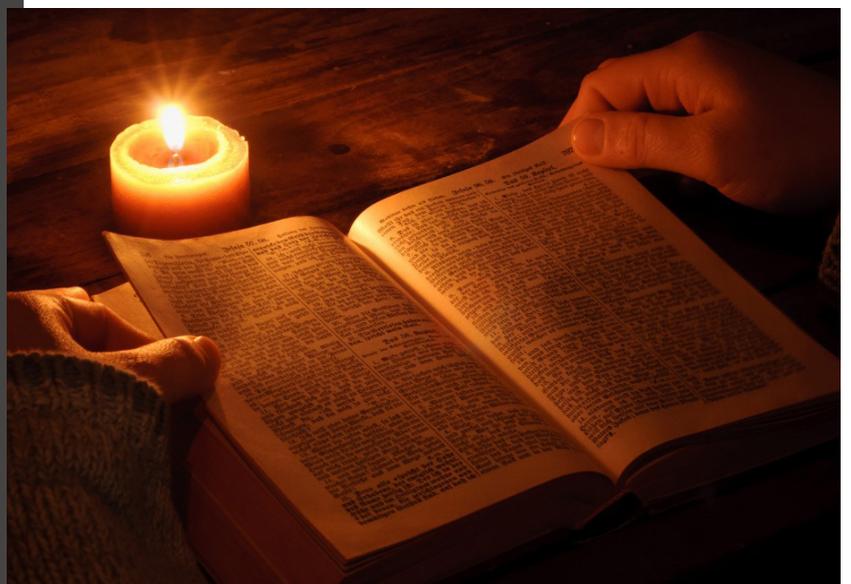
And so, I would say, reading is an art. One that turns text into living images in the theatre of the mind. It is perhaps the only form of art that has just one audience—you— and yet is soul-quenching. Unlike mediums where emotions are conveyed through audio or visual, or both, reading stands quietly apart. Quietly, quite literally.





That is why, I feel that the relationship between a book and its reader is so personal. Another luxury that reading offers is the ability to control the speed at which you want the story to unravel. You have the luxury to linger in the character's emotion, environmental beauty, or simply savour the literary nuances for as long as you wish. That is why, whenever a book is adapted to another format, people so often say, "The book was better."

In a world that worships speed, in a world where videos under one minute have reshaped our entertainment palette, in a world where pre-imagined audio-visual data is fed directly into our minds, reading remains a niche that allows you to call the shots. Some books even offer a dual journey—both outward and inward. While your eyes read the lines, your heart reads between them: the philosophical undertones, metaphors, wordplay,





and second meanings that open up a parallel track in your reading experience. Suddenly, the imaginary world you created carries a beating heart that reasons and empathises. You relate to the characters more deeply. And with the luxury of time, you can linger in their world for as long as you want. Now, the book becomes even more personal.

Here is something more I have realised, over time, about the luxury of reading. Perhaps the most interesting of all. I first read *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy in the early 2000s. The vocabulary felt heavy then, and I often paused to look up meanings. But I finished it, and the story stayed with me. The characters and the setting remained vivid in my imagination. About a decade later, I picked it up again. And this time, it hit me differently. My brain staged a different show all together, based on what I had lived in the ten years between readings. I had already been acquainted to the vocabulary, and so the story flowed freely.

The faces of Estha, Chacko, and Baby Kochamma morphed into new versions of themselves. Ayemenem, the skyblue Plymouth, the pickle factory—they all transformed. The shifting timelines in the narrative gave me a perspective on storytelling I had not appreciated before. It was like reading an entirely new book. So just as a book paints different pictures for different people, it also provides different experiences for the same person at different times. It grows with you. This is why a good book survives the test of time. It lives as long as someone is willing to read it anew. And so, literature becomes one of the most democratic of art forms.

The novelist may have sweated over every line, but once the book is published, it belongs as much to the reader as to the author. Because even the world in the writer's head is completely different from the one in the reader's. The authors create the notes, play the melody, and pass them on. The readers take those notes and play the tune on a different instrument altogether.

I have always believed that the truest luxuries are not the ones we display, but the ones that reshape us from within. Reading belongs to that category. It does not glitter on the neck or speed through the roads, but it polishes the soul and takes you on a far more profound journey. And perhaps that is the greatest gift literature gives us.

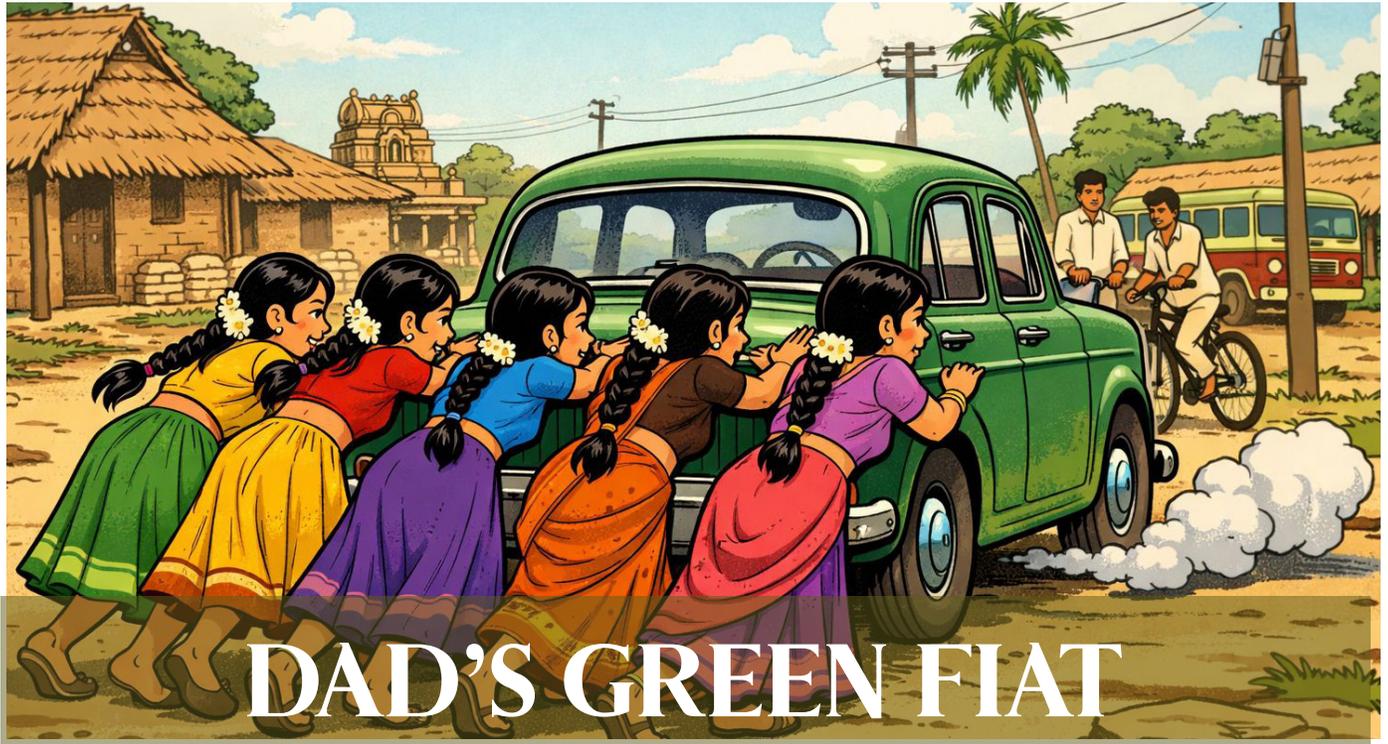
It teaches us to listen to the voices in our heads, to imagine, to hold multiple truths at once. It reminds us that meaning is not fixed; it is fluid, shaped by perspective. So, the next time you pick up a novel, pause for a moment. Realise that you are not just reading. You are directing. You are choosing colours, tones, gestures, even silences. You are giving life to beings who do not exist until you summon them. The writer may have lit the spark, but it is you who keeps the fire alive. Because every reader is a magician, and every book is a spell waiting to be completed.



About the author

Abhishek Krishnan, a native of Chennai, is a passionate storyteller, and author of the books, Hero and the Divine Five series. Currently the Chief Writer and Head of Narration at MyndCanvas, and co-creator of the Divine Five IP, he finds joy in bringing stories to life across various mediums. His creative journey began with a degree in Visual Communication, which laid the foundation for his career in storytelling. He has written screenplays for animated features, some of which have been featured on prominent networks such as Cartoon Network and Sonic Channel.





DAD'S GREEN FIAT

Sandhya Rajasekhar

Dad had a small green Fiat, for as long as we could remember.

Five girls squeezed in at the back; my mom and my brother—the youngest—sat in front with dad, whenever we went out as a family. With dad at the wheel, we were happy, comfortable and excited to go out together, sometimes to watch a movie starring a favourite hero and sometimes to my dad's village or my mother's town.

"Dad, time to buy a bigger car." We girls complained as we grew up and got too big to fit into the back seat.

And that was not all. As the much-loved Fiat got older, it broke down anywhere and everywhere, and soon we girls were adept at pushing the car till the engine revved up to life. "Get in, get in," my dad would call out.

It was time to visit dad's village, two hours away from the city. We stocked multi vitamin syrups and capsules and some medicines in the car and set off. After lunch in his brother's house, a chair was placed in the open verandah for dad to sit. Dad was a surgeon, and the old, illiterate villagers gathered round him, complaining of weakness, loss of eye sight and so on.

"Come and see me in the hospital in the city." He advised some. For the others it was the multi vitamin syrups and capsules.

"Get the medicines," he asked me and I dashed off to the car. As I handed them to him, he smiled, "This is enough to keep them happy and going."

We spent an unusually long time at the village that day. By the time we left, it was beginning to get dark. About an hour's drive later, as dad drove down the road in the dark, the car spluttered and came to a halt. Dad got out.

"Let me check the carburettor. Maybe there is no water." He said. Some of us got out and crowded in front, peering into the car with its bonnet open. It was too dark to make out anything.

"Well, let's do it." I said, nonchalantly.

Dad got behind the wheel. We pushed some length, but the car refused to start. As if answering our prayers, a lorry came by. The driver stopped the vehicle and jumped out.

"Any problem? Can I help?" he asked.

Dad opened the bonnet again. "This needs to be fixed," the driver said, "There is a repair shop nearby. It shouldn't take long."

He hooked the car to the back of his lorry with a chain and drove us out of the dark lane, till we hit the main road, and stopped at the repair shop.

My father thanked him profusely.

"It is okay, sir. I couldn't drive past without helping when I saw so many children, and girls pushing the car!" He paused. "Just outside the cemetery, too."

Finally, dad sold the beloved Fiat that was so much part of our growing up years.

— Aysha Naïalia —

ON THE ENDURANCE OF LITERATURE READING

‘In My Favour’

Dawn was an affliction, stormed to do one’s utmost,
Enduring the holocaust was the expectation,
The agony of wielding swords to survive the winning post,
Conation to conquer and overcome is the direction.

Reminiscing of the sky of falling blades,
All to be thought of was the severance tender slicing through my arms,
Colours of red that would appear in roaring shades,
Moving on from these encounters was my crown-of-thorns.

But contentment is where I wish to be,
Step-by-step I passed the invisible milestone,
Oblivious to my own strength that all but me could see,
After all, the battle was meant to be mine alone.

There is something profoundly powerful about words. Words have the ability to stir emotions I never knew could coexist within me, both comforting and haunting all at once. Through literature, a sense of honesty emerges, as if every written line unveils a truer version of the self. When I write, I often find myself slipping into a trance-like rhythm, where my thoughts and hands move in perfect harmony, racing to capture every feeling before it fades.

Being a writer at heart, I have always sought refuge in expression; in the delicate art of turning emotion into language. Yet for much of my life, I found myself at war with my own mind, wrestling with silences too heavy to name. The world outside moved like a film I could no longer touch, while I remained frozen in a frame of stillness. Physical pain, no matter how sharp, could never rival the quiet ache that lived within me. It was a sorrow that moved like a shadow through every corner of my being, unspoken yet endlessly present.



There are countless forms of art in this world, each offering its own language of expression. Some artists speak through the stroke of a brush, others through the quiet precision of a sketch. Photography, too, becomes a vessel of memory; capturing fleeting moments and turning them into something timeless. True art is born the moment one believes in its worth, for self-belief breathes meaning into every creation.

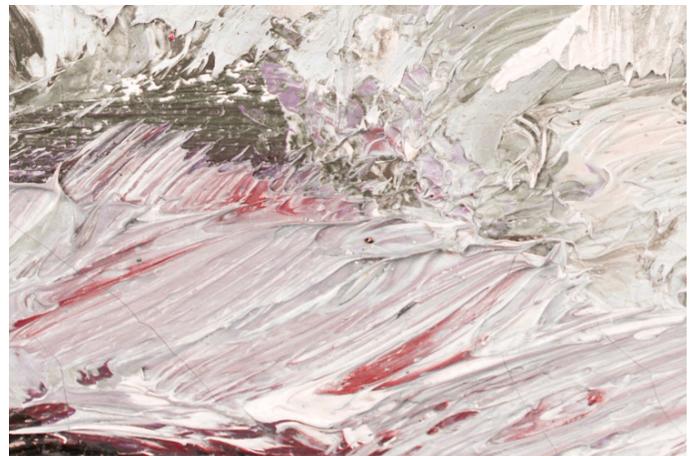
Art is the language of the unseen. It is a quiet pulse that beats beneath the surface of human existence. It speaks where speech falters, breathing life into silence and meaning into the void. Through art, emotion takes form: grief finds colour, joy takes shape, and longing learns to move.

Each creation, no matter how fragile or fleeting, holds a mirror to the soul. It reflects what words cannot capture; the tremor of being alive.



Words do not merely describe; they transform. They slip between moments, binding thought to memory, and memory to eternity. A single line can echo through generations, carrying a heartbeat that refuses to fade. In literature, emotion is distilled as if the essence of feeling is preserved like pressed flowers between pages. The past speaks, the present breathes, and the future listens. Such is the alchemy of language: the ability to make the intangible endure.

Creation, at its core, is a form of healing. From the fractures of human experience, beauty quietly emerges. Not to erase suffering, but to transform it. A stanza becomes a luminous scar; a whispered confession; a melody, a pulse that steadies the heart. Through the act of making, anguish softens, reshaped into something that can be held, understood, and finally released. True healing does not lie in forgetting, but in turning agony into something that speaks. Expression is never a solitary act. What begins in one pair of hands becomes a universal language. The written word, in particular, bears witness to this continuity. Literature defies time, breathing beyond its author and carrying the essence of thought long after the ink has dried. To read is to commune with ghosts, to listen to voices that



refuse to be forgotten. Each sentence becomes a resurrection, each phrase a quiet promise that beauty endures. The spirit of the writer lingers not in biography but in resonance, in the echo that stirs within those who understand. Ultimately, expression transcends the boundaries of a page. It exists in the gestures of living; in laughter that pierces silence, in tears that cleanse the heart, in the fragile persistence of hope. It is both question and answer, chaos and calm. To create is to bear witness to the miracle of existence; to experience creation is to remember that every feeling, however fleeting, is proof that one is still alive.

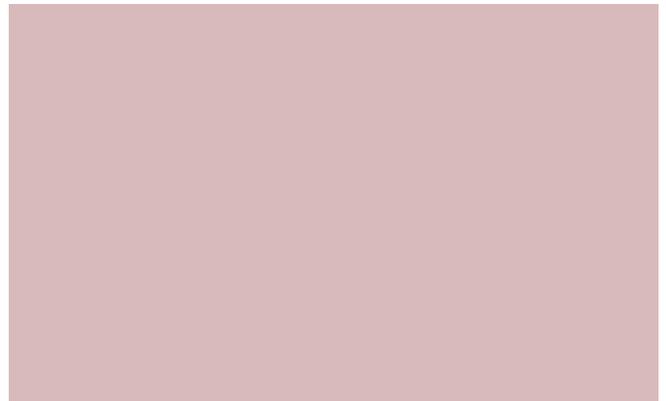


In an age governed by immediacy, where moments are measured by how quickly they vanish, literature stands as a quiet rebellion. While the world scrolls endlessly, searching for what to feel next, literature invites pause. It teaches the art of staying; of lingering with a sentence until it reveals its pulse. To read is to resist forgetting; to write is to insist that meaning still matters. Literature evolves, yet its essence remains untouched: the need to name the unspoken, to leave something behind that breathes beyond its maker. Even now, amid the hum of modernity, writers continue to forge meaning from chaos. They craft stories that challenge, poems that console, sentences that survive the forgetfulness of time. Through them, literature endures. Not as relics, but as resistance.

Perhaps that is literature's quiet victory. It does not demand attention, yet it remains. It does not need permission to matter. In a world enamoured with the instant, the written word insists on time. And in doing so, it preserves what is most fragile; the ability to feel deeply, to think slowly, to remain human in the face of haste.

About the author

Aysha Natalia is a graduate of English Language and Literature from the University of Nottingham, Malaysia. Her work often drifts between silence and confession, shaped by a devotion to mental health advocacy and the belief that language can heal what the world overlooks. At the age of 24, she released their debut book, *I Wish I Could Tell You*, published under the pen name Orion, a name chosen to transcend gender and invite readers to meet the author through emotion alone. She writes for those who struggle to speak, believing that even the quietest voice can echo if it is honest enough.





The Wheel and Vayu Chakra (from “The New Gods of Clay”)

They arrived with the rains — the origami-folded mockingbirds of the West.

Each a small miracle of paper and posture, wings sharp with precision, voices tuned to echo anything that sounded profound.

They fluttered down by the river, shimmering with expertise, rehearsing wonder for their own reflection.

They said they had come to understand the spirit of the land.

They said it as if understanding were an act of conquest.

By the water sat Sita, her hands deep in clay.

The wheel spun — slow, perfect, eternal — like a breath that refused translation.

The air smelled of earth and monsoon; it was older than any alphabet.

The mockingbirds surrounded her, blinking behind lenses.

One admired her (Abhāva as though it were art.

Another recorded her rhythm and called it resilience.

A third spoke solemnly of *strī-puruṣ tattva*, as if gender were a new discovery; a fourth, of *prakṛti-*

santulan, while tossing plastic bottles into the mud.

They spoke of *shakti-pradān* as though the world had been waiting for their permission to be strong.

They spoke of *avashesh* — the residue, the waste — while leaving behind their footprints of pity.

From the shade of the neem tree, Valmiki watched, amused.

“Their song is clever,” he said. “It repeats everything and means nothing.”

Sita smiled. “Echoes are harmless,” she said. “Until they believe they are origins.”

The mockingbirds asked their questions.

“Why so much chaos?” one chirped.

“Why do people sleep near temples and beg near gold?”

“Why such faith in what cannot be proved?”

Sita lifted her hands, dripping with red earth.

“Because life here is a dialogue, not a definition,” she said.

They nodded, delighted. A perfect quote for the brochure.

As twilight fell, they spoke of remedies.

Cleaner rivers, neater faiths, smaller gods.

They promised to return with solutions — more organized, more humane, more profitable.

That night, when the mockingbirds folded themselves to rest beneath

tarpaulin tents, Sita fed their leaflets to her kiln. The fire rose blue, then gold, then soft as forgiveness.

Words like *prakṛti-santulan*, *strī-puruṣ tattva*, *shakti-pradān* curled and turned to smoke.

Valmiki stirred. “You burn their words gently,” he said.

“I’m only sending them home,” she answered. “They came from air; they must return to it.”

By morning the mockingbirds were gone, folded again into the sky — lighter, louder, carrying their versions of truth.

They would tell stories of dust and devotion, of the potter by the river who smiled like philosophy.

They would publish, speak, and sing — their origami wings immaculate, their voices trembling with borrowed awe.

Sita turned her wheel.

The river rose and swallowed their reflections, one by one.

The pots cooled in the shade, hollow and bright, ready to hold the wind.

Valmiki spoke, barely above the hum of the wheel.

“They’ll come again.”

“They always do,” she said. “Each time folded differently, but from the same paper.”

The wind slipped through her new vessels, whispering — a low sound, half-song, half-truth.

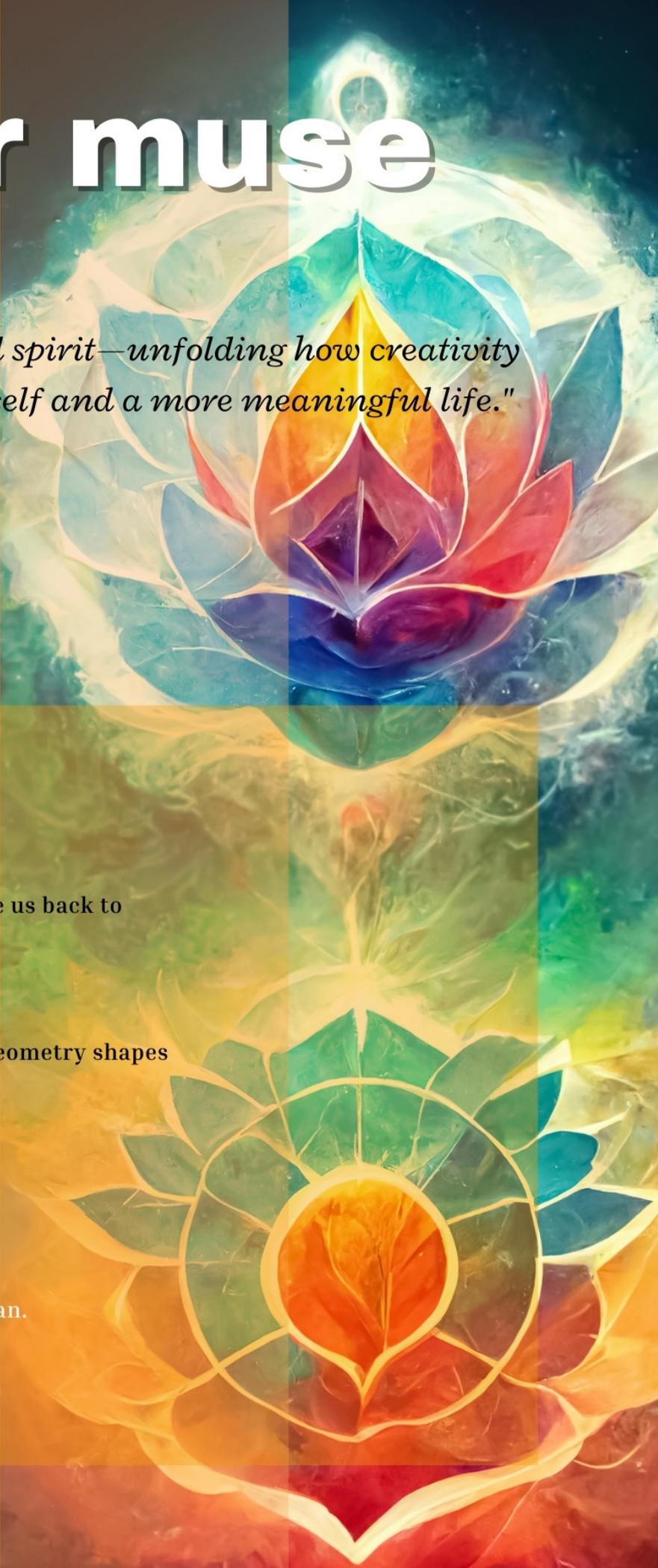
It was the earth, remembering how to laugh.

About the author

Shahzada Khurram is a curator, author, and cultural influencer whose work bridges institution-building, critical writing, and public engagement. Former Director of Bikaner House and former advisor to Sanskriti Museums, his practice spans exhibitions, policy-adjacent cultural work, and transnational conversations shaping contemporary cultural futures.



Inner muse



"A journey through art and spirit—unfolding how creativity connects us to our higher self and a more meaningful life."

In the arms of my creator

Lesedi Mogoatlhe

Music is a subtle force that can guide us back to ourselves

Marianne Gubri

Between structure and spirit: How geometry shapes human perception

Fabiha Iqtadar

Statue-making will endure, because religion has always been a part of human civilisation.

An interview with Ng Tze Yong, artisan.



IN THE ARMS OF MY CREATOR

Lesedi Mogoailhe

For as long as I can remember, I have escaped the noise of the world through my imagination. I would dream up entire worlds and feel as if I had gone on epic journeys simply by giving them life through a drawing, a sketch, words, or dance.

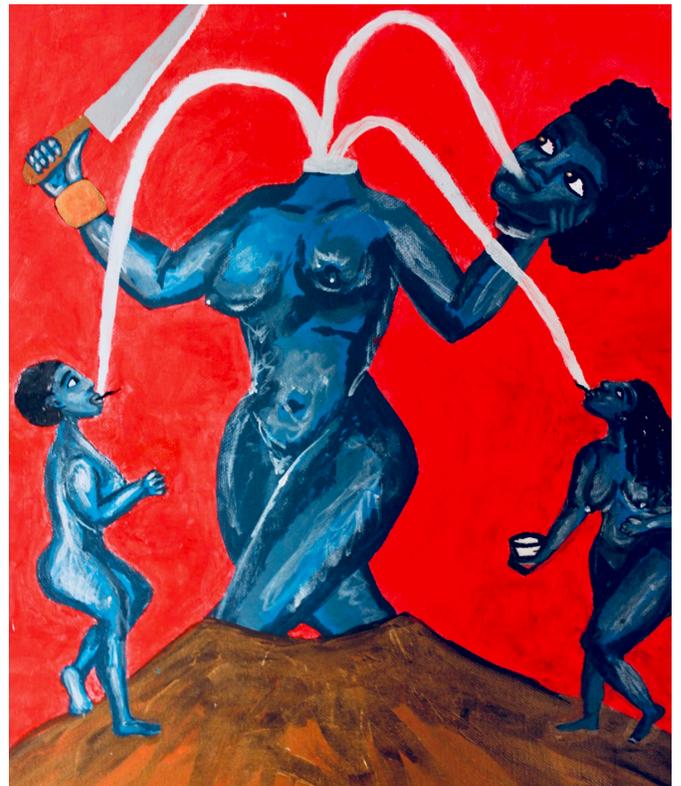
I grew up in a typical South African township, in a small, four-room brick house with an outside toilet. My mother, a rural girl, came to Johannesburg—the city of gold and lights—to build a successful career as a social worker. Along the way, she met my father, a quick-witted, loud, and creative socialite. With a strict and obedient upbringing, my mother pursued her work with diligence, constantly studying to improve her position in life. My dad, on the other hand, sought out bars with the loudest music and seemed to appear for homework time only when we had creative projects.

I did not realise it then, but I was drawn to his way of chasing mystery, colour, and noise. I will never forget the pride I felt walking to school one day, holding a model of a house my dad and I had built from scratch

using cheap cardboard and pencils. Being raised by my mother came with strict rules, including a ban on playing in the streets, which limited opportunities to make friends in our neighborhood. With no room for negotiation, my sister and I immersed ourselves in books, sometimes reading all day during the holidays between cleaning and preparing food.

I discovered that even in books written by others, my creativity would soar, hovering like a giant cosmic eagle over the worlds I painted in my mind.

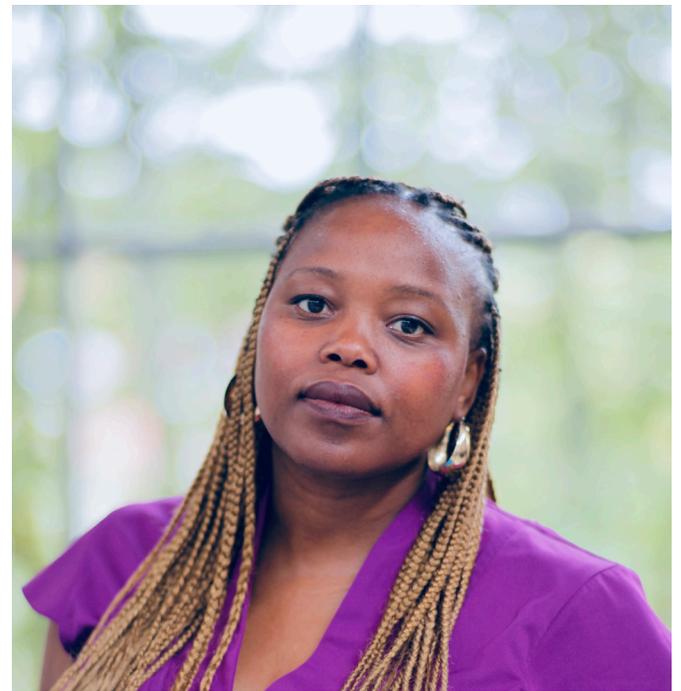
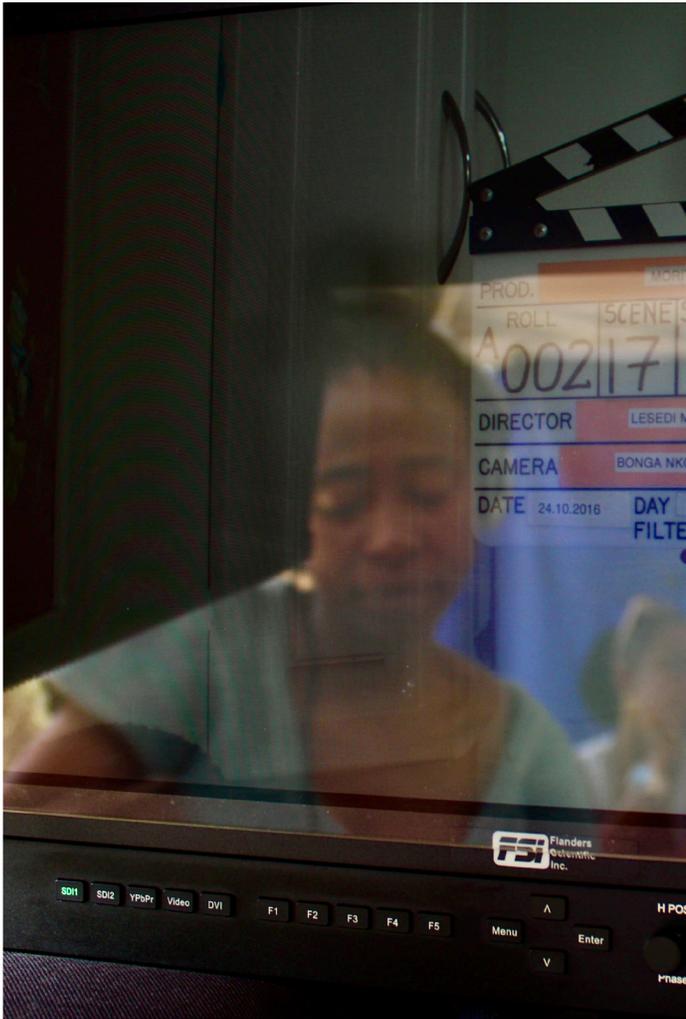
But life at home became tumultuous as my parents' clashing values created a friction that made the air hot and unbearable. It was in these times that I escaped even more deeply into the arms of the creator—a bigger me—who lived deep in my core. Soon enough, my creator needed little prompting to conjure something beautiful and whole for me to find comfort in. I would watch the soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful* and be inspired by the elegant dress sketches that would eventually become a Ridge Forrester fashion line.



I even sketched a matric ball dress for my sister—a Chinese-collared two-piece of gold silk with black stitched edges. She loved it and wore the skirt and top proudly to her ball. In that moment, I knew I was an artist; it was my first validation, but in my view, I was simply devoted to the creator within me.

When my parents divorced, it was no surprise to me. I had already written a novel about a single parent living with their children after their spouse died. My creator was preparing me for what life might be like. The novel even had chapters about the single parent finding new love and how devastating that would be for the children—and indeed, that is exactly what happened.

But my creator was not always the bearer of bad news. It also gifted me creative boons that made life feel like an overflow of magic pouring from my heart. I felt this when I made music videos in film school that immersed me in the world of Black consciousness movements and Rastafarian vegetarian practices. I found healing when I made a fictional film honouring my lost dreams of becoming a ballerina. In one scene, a young black girl in a blue tutu tearfully laments to her mother about her father forgetting to pick her up after a ballet concert. The film ends with her having an unexpected adventure with a new friend who coaxes her out of her comfort zone. Then, in my early thirties, in the throes of pain from



burnout and stress-related illness, I was confined to my home as I recovered. Once again, the creator beckoned, urging me to buy paints and canvas to bring forth the helpers that would guide me through this dark period. I painted a set of twin ancestors with massive eyes, big gold jewellery, and black veils. They seemed to see right through me, reminding me how vast life was, and that my suffering was merely a speck in the constellation of existence. When I was angry, I painted a fiery image of a blue-bodied Chinnamasta, the Hindu goddess of death and rebirth, and felt seen to the core of my being. Sometimes, as I get stuck in the mundane mud of adult life, my creator goes to sleep, patiently waiting for me to finish my daily duties. But as soon as my life force takes a knock from my obligations, my creator whispers in my ear. It had me cut up my childhood blanket and embroider little white, star-like stitches, then red ones, and finally a massive white snake in the center. It said to me, "Go and baptize this blanket in the ocean." I did as I was told, because I knew that to baptize the work was to put my own two feet in holy water.

About the author

Lesedi Mogoatlhe is a visual and sonic storyteller deeply attuned to the power of radio and music. As the editor and host of the Radio Workshop podcast, she facilitates the expression of voices across Africa, notably through early podcast projects with LGBTI+ activists in criminalised contexts. Drawing on over 15 years of experience in TV and film and an MA in Documentary Filmmaking, Lesedi's work, including her documentary projects that reimagine South African histories, acts as a vibrant bridge between past and future. Her inherent musicality, alongside a profound connection to spirit and dreaming, lies at the very heart of her creative practice.

MUSIC IS A SUBTLE FORCE THAT CAN GUIDE US BACK TO OURSELVES

Marianne Gubri



Beauty as nourishment for the soul

I first touched the harp at the age of five, and its voice has never left me. Born in Brittany, land of Celtic roots and ancient myths, I have lived in Italy for over two decades, weaving together art, therapy, and spirituality.

As a harpist, composer, and therapist, I have shared music worldwide in concerts, retreats, and healing sessions, always guided by one vocation: to use sound as a path of transformation. At the heart of all these

experiences lies a simple truth: art is the language of beauty and harmony, and its mission is to awaken the soul.

Beauty, truth, justice, and the archetype of harmony

Plato reminded us that beauty is inseparable from the good, the just, and the true.

He wrote: "Beauty is what the soul recognizes as its own. In beauty there is something immortal." Beauty nourishes the soul, not only as an aesthetic delight but as a reminder of order, proportion, and harmony.

P.D. Ouspensky, when speaking of objective art, wrote: "**A work of objective art is quite similar to a book, with the only difference that it appeals to man's emotions rather than to his intellect.**" True art, in this sense, is not only self-expression, but a transmission of universal laws—an art that orients, transforms, and uplifts.



I believe this is the essential mission of art: not only to express, not only to cathartically release, but also to regulate our emotions, to help us manage stress and tension, to express our inner self and give words, or even sounds; to what is otherwise unnameable.

Beauty carries a subtle nourishment, a resonance that awakens the deepest parts of our being. In my work with harp therapy, it is not rare to see patients in hospitals moved to tears by a few simple notes. During concerts, too, I often witness people silently touched, sometimes unable to explain why. It is not only the sound itself but what the sound carries—an invisible energy, a breath of harmony—that enters directly into the listener.

The harp as archetype

According to Jung, archetypes are universal symbols that belong to the collective unconscious, shared by humanity across time and culture. The harp is one of these archetypes: a timeless bridge between heaven and earth, spirit and matter.

We find it everywhere: in ancient India, Saraswati played the veena, an instrument that was in essence a form of harp. In Babylon, the harp accompanied rituals, while the golden harps of Ur still testify to their sacred power. In Greece, Apollo played the lyre, embodying cosmic harmony and the seven rays of creation, just



like the seven colours of the rainbow. In the Middle Ages, Western iconography shows angels with harps singing in choirs of light. In Egypt, harpists often held the role of psychopompos, guiding souls from one realm to another.

Like the teaching of Buddha that 'the string too loose cannot make sound, and the string too tight will break'; the harp embodies balance: a single cord stretched with the right tension creates resonance, harmony, and the path between earth and sky.



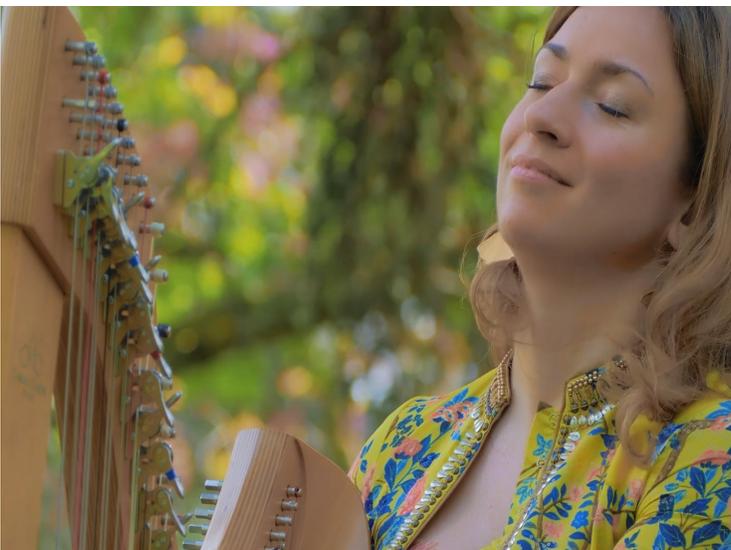
The science of emotion, intention, and consciousness

Today, neuroscience confirms what ancient traditions already intuited: music is not only heard, it is lived. When we listen to music, our brain's reward system lights up, releasing dopamine, moving our bodies, lifting our emotions, and fuelling motivation. Music does not merely entertain; it transforms us from within.

Music helps regulate our inner states, guiding the mind through brainwave rhythms: from the busy activity of Beta, to the calm creativity of Alpha, the intuitive visions of Theta, and the deep rest of Delta. Art—and especially music—becomes a subtle key to guide us into these states, helping us calm stress, release tension, and reawaken creativity. But there is more. Quantum physics reminds us of the role of the observer: intention modifies reality. The same is true in music. The way a harpist touches the string—hand relaxed, heart present, intention pure—shapes the vibration that reaches the listener. There is no mediation between the musician's finger, the string, and the ear of the one who listens. In that moment, music is not just sound; it is a direct transmission, almost like a massage made of vibration and silence.

Music as a path of soul and self

Art is not only about emotion. It is also a way to enter different states of consciousness. Just like meditation, music allows us to move from the waking, active mind into states of calm and inner stillness. In these moments, intuition opens, creativity blossoms, and a deeper connection with the Self becomes possible. The harp, with its archetypal resonance, is particularly suited to this role. It carries the listener gently from surface noise to inner silence, from agitation to serenity. It is music as a threshold practice, leading to contemplation, transformation, and healing.



An invitation

This is why I say: let music be your ally. Go to concerts. Play an instrument, or sing. Come to retreats where sound is lived as an initiation. Above all, do not let music use you—use it consciously. Create your own playlists: one for activity, one for calm, one for moments of concentration, one for when you need to awaken joy and motivation. Because music is more than sound; it is nourishment for the soul, a mirror of harmony, and a subtle force that can guide us back to ourselves. For me, the harp has always been a thread of beauty that weaves through life, reminding us that art is not luxury, but necessity. Art is energy. Art is healing. Art is the secret nourishment that allows the human spirit to flourish.



About the author

Marianne Gubri is a harpist, composer, and sound therapist internationally recognised for her work at the intersection of art, spirituality, and healing. With a career spanning over twenty years and hundreds of concerts across the world, she has developed an approach that blends musical performance with therapeutic practice. Trained in harp therapy, vibroacoustics, and sound healing, she works in both clinical and holistic settings, from hospitals to retreats, guiding people through experiences of transformation, meditation, and inner resonance. Through her recordings, writings, and teaching, Marianne continues to explore the harp as a threshold instrument—an ancient voice of beauty and balance that connects the human soul with universal harmony.

BETWEEN STRUCTURE AND SPIRIT: HOW GEOMETRY SHAPES HUMAN PERCEPTION

Fabiha Iqadar



“The Circle is Eternity, the Octagon a Passage”

Art is not merely a visual experience; it is a journey through perception, emotion, and consciousness. In my work, I explore water, geometry, and the unseen spaces that exist between the physical and the spiritual, crafting compositions that invite viewers to engage deeply with both form and meaning.

Drawing inspiration from Indian heritage, I seek to uncover dimensions often overlooked, the hidden spaces that reside between structure and flow, the finite and the infinite.

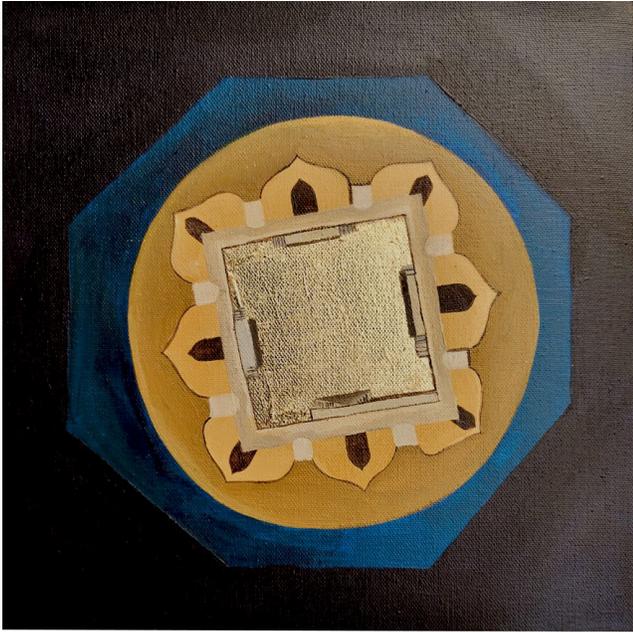
The octagon holds a central place in this exploration. While the circle represents eternity, continuity, and infinite cycles, the octagon serves as a passage or threshold, guiding the viewer's perception toward that infinity. In my compositions, the octagon becomes a vessel for reflection, a structured space where fluidity and motion—embodied as water—can exist alongside precision and order. Art and life often balance between structure and spontaneity, the tangible and the intangible. In my work, this balance finds expression through geometry, particularly the octagon, a shape that exists between the square and the circle, embodying both earthly stability and spiritual infinity.

In my creative practice, I explore the dialogue between rigid structure and fluid expression. Gold water-like flows across octagonal spaces introduce motion and energy into geometric compositions, transforming static shapes into living, breathing forms. The contrast between precision and spontaneity mirrors the human condition; our quest for order amidst the currents of life.

Water as a metaphor

Water is the essence of life. It is mutable, reflective, and transformative—a medium that carries both the visible and the invisible. In my artworks, water takes on a metaphysical form, often transformed into liquid gold, flowing through sacred geometries as if alive. This fluidity juxtaposed with the rigidity of geometric structures mirrors the tension between control and freedom, stability and movement, order and chaos. The result is a space where viewers can witness a meditative interplay of energy and calm, reflection and transformation.

By incorporating colour psychology, I amplify this experiential journey. Gold and warm tones evoke illumination, energy, and spiritual awakening, while cooler shades of blue, green, and muted earth tones encourage introspection and calm. These hues do more than decorate, they guide emotional perception; influencing how the viewer moves through and interacts with the artwork. Colours act as a silent language, shifting moods,



highlighting forms, and drawing attention to the interplay of structure and fluidity. Step closer, and subtle transitions reveal themselves; step back, and the larger spatial relationships and rhythm emerge, allowing the work to be experienced on multiple levels.

Geometry as guide

The use of geometric forms in my practice is deeply tied to the heritage of Indian sacred spaces. The octagon is not only symbolic, it structures the viewer's perception, creating pathways for the eye and mind to travel. Every line, curve, and axis shaped movement and focus, transform ordinary spaces into meditative experiences. By echoing these principles in my work,

I aim to create environments where structured spaces and flowing elements coexist, offering viewers a moment of pause, reflection, and spatial awareness.

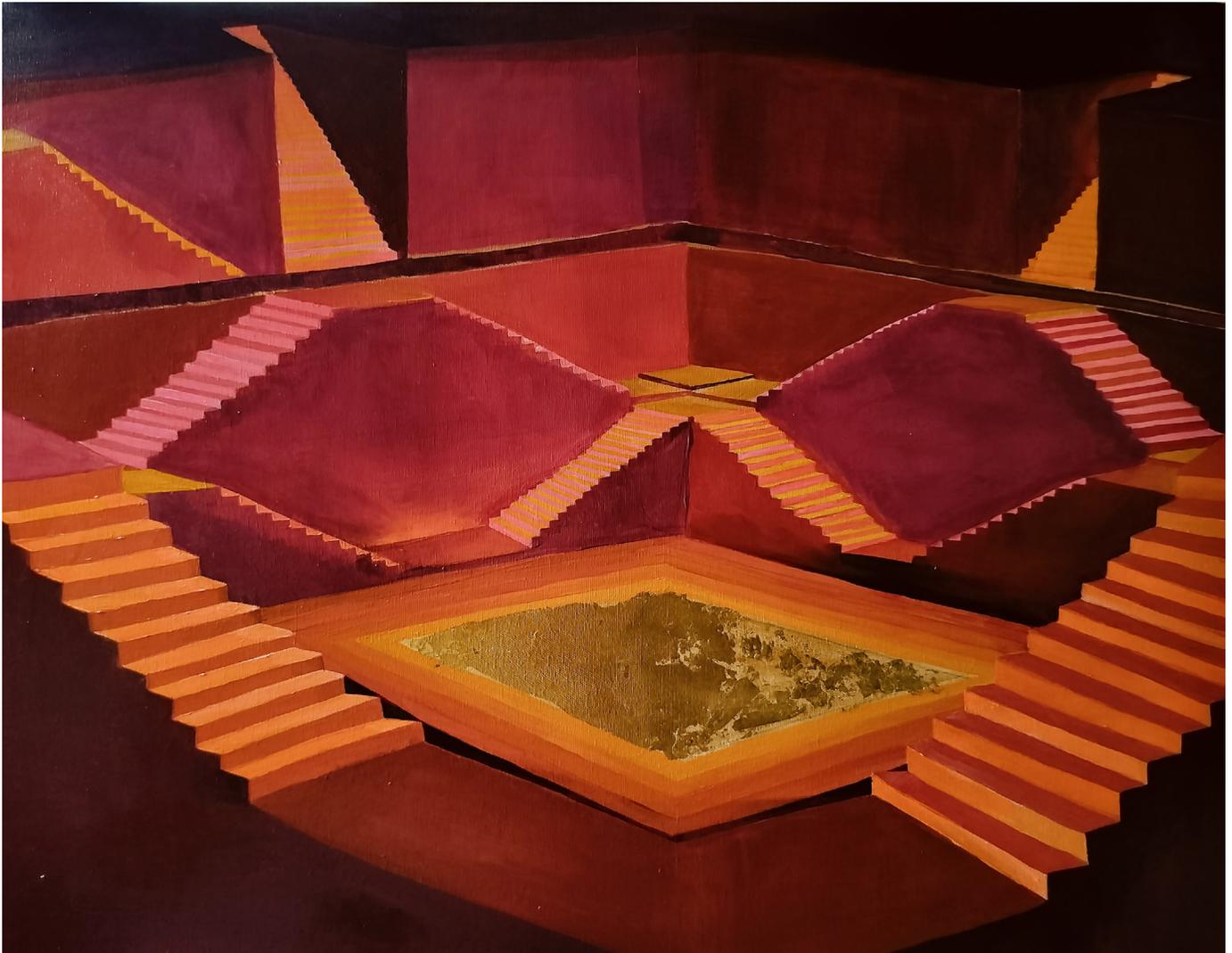
The viewer's experience

Engaging with these compositions is akin to stepping into a visual meditation. The octagonal spaces act as thresholds; the closer one observes, the more intricate the details become: the layering of gold, the subtle washes of colour, the dynamic flow of water within geometric boundaries. From a distance, the patterns harmonise into a unified whole, offering a sense of balance and serenity. This duality between intimate detail and overarching form mirrors human perception itself, constantly negotiating between what is seen and unseen, the tangible and the abstract.

Through this interplay of structure, colour, and fluidity, my art becomes a bridge between materiality and the divine, between the finite human experience and the eternal cycles suggested by geometry. The octagon and circle serve as metaphors for these concepts, while water and colour translate them into sensory experience. In this space, perception is not fixed; it evolves with movement, perspective, and engagement, inviting a dialogue between the viewer and the artwork.

Within octagonal boundaries, water flows like poetry, light illuminates, and perception expands, revealing hidden dimensions and the eternal dance between the finite and infinite. Through careful orchestration of form, hue, and flow, my art becomes more than a visual encounter; it becomes a spiritual journey, a bridge connecting tradition and contemporary expression, the seen and the unseen, the earthly and the divine.





About the artist

Fabiha Iqtadar is a multidisciplinary artist trained in BFA Applied Arts at Jamia Millia Islamia and MFA Visual Arts at Aligarh Muslim University, India. Drawing from Indian heritage, traditional design systems, and her own explorations in glass painting, clay tiles, and mixed media, Fabiha's practice bridges the material and the metaphysical.

Her work has been showcased in notable exhibitions, including Live in Splendour at the Visual Arts Gallery, New Delhi, and the Art Spectra group exhibition at the All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society (AIFACS). Fabiha has conducted creative workshops for both youngsters and elderly participants, focusing on visual expression, illustration, and design thinking. She has also completed significant art projects, such as a glass painting installation for Christ University, Lavasa.

“STATUE-MAKING WILL ENDURE, BECAUSE RELIGION HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PART OF HUMAN CIVILISATION”.

An interview with Ng Tze Yong, artisan.

“...as we enter a future where the pace of technological change is exponential, I think there will be a growing counter-force, one that brings humans back to the spiritual and mythological. In this re-appreciation of the unseen, we will more clearly understand what makes humans human.”



Ng Tze Yong is the sixth-generation artisan at the 185-year-old Singapore based Say Tian Hng Buddha Shop (est. 1840), which specialises in hand-crafting wooden statues of Daoist and Buddhist deities for culture lovers, devotees, and temples in Asia and Europe. He is also a programme director at a philanthropic grantmaker that supports hospitals, universities, and charities. Previously, he was the head of a charity and a journalist who reported from the West Bank, Kosovo, and Kashmir. He studied liberal arts at Brown University (USA) and Intermediate Arabic at the American University in Beirut. He also has a master's degree at New York's Parsons School of Design, on a President's Scholarship.

Excerpts from an interview with The Atelier:

1. Established in 1840, Say Tian Hng Buddha Shop (Singapore) has a 185-year-old heritage in hand-crafting wooden statues of Daoist deities. Can you share how this traditional art form has been preserved and evolved over the generations?

This craft tradition is many centuries old. Wooden religious figures in China date back to at least the Tang dynasty. In our family, the craft became part of our story in the early 19th century when one of our ancestors became a disciple of a master craftsman in southern China when he was moving around, working as an itinerant key-maker. When the master craftsman died prematurely, our ancestor took care of his master's young son and



made sure he passed the skills down for the boy to have a means of livelihood, before he himself moved away to another town to avoid competing with the boy for business.

Over the subsequent years, our family settled in different places - Kinmen Island (now part of modern-day Taiwan), then Singapore, as we fled poverty and war. Amid these, the skills were passed down from generation to generation. I am now the 6th-generation craftsman, learning from my grandma who is 94 and my dad who is 73, as I juggle a full-time job at a philanthropic grantmaker that is unrelated to my family business. I am not an expert, but sharing a perspective here from my lived experience.

2. Tell us more about the statues you craft. Who are these deities?

The statues are of gods and goddesses from the vast Daoist pantheon. It is an incredibly diverse and inclusive cast of characters: gentlemen, maidens, old sages, mischievous teenagers, ferocious generals, unruly monks, humans, tigers, parrots, tortoises, serpents, fantastic beasts, and anthropomorphised astrological features such as stars and planets. They are characters from ancient stories from religion, philosophy, history, literature, and mythology.

Many were immortalised due to a cherished value they embody, such as integrity, courage, compassion, etc. Devotees are drawn to different deities due to fate and destiny, or more practical reasons such as life circumstances, occupations, and wishes. Whoever they are and represent, they make up a divine system that ultimately helps devotees make sense and provides solace, hope, strength, each in his or her own way.



3. Although you work with statues of Daoist deities, you mentioned that you occasionally restore Hindu statues as well. Can you share any stories of Hindu customers whose statues you restored, and how honoring these cross-cultural requests has impacted your craft or business?

Yes, sometimes Hindu customers ask us to restore their statues. This may seem surprising, but not in Singapore. As a former British colony, Singapore is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious nation. It is not uncommon to see Chinese Singaporeans who are Daoists stop briefly and pay their respect when they walk past a Hindu temple. You may see Hindus doing the same when they walk past Chinese temples.

In fact, one of Singapore's most famous temples, the Goddess of Mercy temple at Waterloo Street, is located right next to a Hindu temple. Every day, you see devotees of either temple pay respects at the other temple. It is a seemingly-small but very precious side of Singaporean society.

4. What are some key cultural or spiritual themes that you believe link Daoist and Hindu religious art and craftsmanship?



Daoism and Hinduism are widely-regarded as polytheistic religions, meaning they involve the worship of many deities. In contrast, monotheistic religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism, recognise one God.

In polytheistic religions, iconography is especially important, because there is a need to identify and differentiate between the many gods. How this is done is via the visual language with how they are depicted. Just from looking, you would deduce a Daoist deity's age, for example, by facial hair; gender by length of hair, for example; role, depicted by the use of robes or armour; seniority, via a court official's cloth hat or an emperor's flat-topped hat with curtains of beads; weapons, poses, backdrop, human or animal companions, facial expressions, and even skin tone, like the use of beige, black, red, etc. It is through this triangulation, a sort of shared code that expresses a story and function, that devotees identify each deity and remember what they stand for.

That is similar to how Hindu, Greek, and Roman gods and goddesses, as well as Catholic saints, are identified too. This heightened reliance on iconography is probably also the reason why both Daoist and Hindu sacred art is maximalist—rich in primary colours, shimmering gold, vivid details, expressive, exuberant, and literal—so the identification can be easily made, even for the lay person.

5. Beyond visual style, what other parallels do you see between Daoism and Hinduism?

Scholars have noted intriguing similarities between some Daoist and Hindu deities. Examples include Nezha and Nalakūbara, Sun Wukong and Hanuman, etc. Although they are not the same deity, there are fascinating parallels in their origin stories and the way they are depicted. This possibly emerged from centuries of cultural exchange between India and China during which the spread of Buddhism, which rose in India in the 5th-4th century BC within a broader Hindu context, brought with it many Hindu deities it had already assimilated eastward along the Silk Road, where they were further assimilated and transformed into Chinese society.

Another similarity lies in the imperfections of the deities. You might expect gods to be perfect in every way, but many Daoist and Hindu gods had human emotions and flaws, and struggled like we do with doubts, rage, pride, moral trials, sorrow, etc. Some had complicated family issues. Many made mistakes. They are gods in spite of that, not because of that, because of the way they overcame it. This not only made them relatable; it inspired and gave hope to devotees.





6. How do the techniques used in creating Daoist statues compare or contrast with those traditionally used in Hindu statue craftsmanship?

Hindu statues are often made of metal, a material associated with permanence, representing the eternal. There are also practical reasons, as Hindu rituals, for example, abhisheka involve bathing the statue with water, milk, ghee, etc., so you need a material that can withstand regular handling. In Daoism, however, wood is the preferred material because of a belief that wood is a living material, and still considered to be so even after it has been chopped from the tree. Thus, when a craftsman handcrafts a statue made from a living material, the statue is believed to imbue the Qi—life force—of the craftsman over the weeks of attention, care, and patience spent in the making of it. Daoist devotees tell us the experience of worship with wooden statues is deep and energetic due to the Qi it already possesses, and the exchange it can continue to have with the devotees' own Qi through the

daily veneration.

7. How do you envision the future of traditional Daoist and Hindu statue-making in a modern world that increasingly values cultural heritage and preservation?

Statue-making will endure, because religion has always been a part of human civilisation.

In addition, as we enter a future where the pace of technological change is exponential, I think there will be a growing counter-force, one that brings humans back to the spiritual and mythological. In this re-appreciation of the unseen, we will more clearly understand what makes humans human.

You cannot find some answers through AI. You find it through a different search, via a different dialogue that is slow, ambiguous, one that is with the past, present, and future all at once, and which is as much with our inner selves as it is with the infinite universe.

You can visit the Shop's website at www.saytianhng.com

Magnet Minds

Magnet Minds: Decoding the Language of Art and the Human Psyche – A Journey Through Stories, Reflections, and Expert Insights

The canvas of the mind: Expressive arts and neurodivergence

Monika Hubczuk

**Archetypes in art:
How Jungian symbols guide emotional insight and growth**

Priyamvada Tendulkar

**Artists and mental health:
A delicate intersection**

Suchita Bhatia

THE CANVAS OF THE MIND: EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND NEURODIVERGENCE

Monika Hubczuk



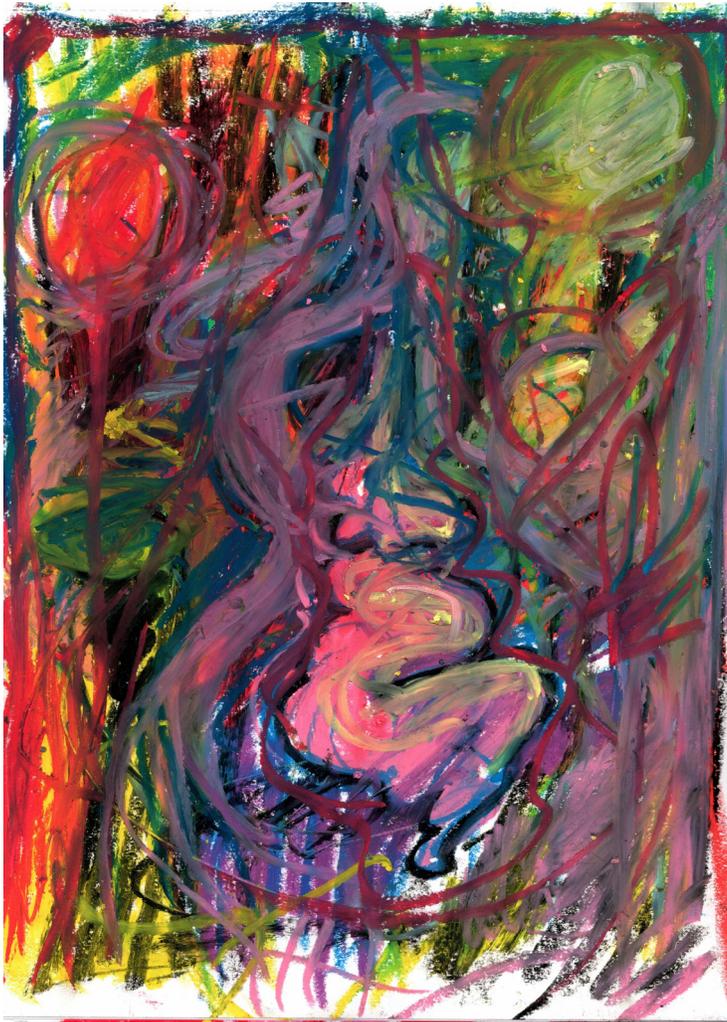
For many adolescents, traditional talk therapy is a daunting prospect. Now, imagine navigating the already complex landscape while being neurodivergent. This term describes natural variations in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood, and other mental functions, and is often used to cover conditions such as Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, and Tourette's syndrome.

The emphasis on direct verbal communication and abstract emotional exploration can sometimes feel like an ill-fitting suit for these individuals. This is where expressive art therapies (EATs) enter the picture, offering a vibrant, non-verbal, and strengths-based approach to support neurodivergent adolescents. EATs, which include visual arts, music, drama,

and movement, provide a unique avenue for self-expression and connection, moving beyond the confines of spoken language.

Beyond words: Differentiating expressive art therapies

It is crucial to distinguish expressive art therapies from what is commonly known as art therapy. Art therapy often centres on the creation of a single piece of visual art with a specific therapeutic goal in mind. The artwork becomes a focal point for discussion and interpretation. Expressive art therapies, on the other hand, cast a wider net. The emphasis is less on the final product and more on the process of creation



and the experience of expression. While it can involve many modalities, the therapeutic value lies in the freedom of sound, the joy of movement, or the focused exploration of colour. Think of it this way: art therapy is like painting a picture of your feelings, while EATs are like composing a symphony of your entire experience.

When talking isn't enough: Why traditional therapy can be a challenge

For neurodivergent adolescents, the typical therapeutic setting can present a unique set of obstacles. The expectation of sustained eye contact, the need to verbally articulate complex internal states, and the sensory environment of a quiet room can be overwhelming. Many neurodivergent individuals process information and emotions in a non-linear or non-verbal way, making it difficult to engage with a therapeutic model that heavily relies on spoken language. EATs offer a refreshing alternative, a space to be seen and heard in their entirety.

The heart of expressive arts

Expressive art therapies thrive on a strengths-based approach, celebrating what adolescents can do rather than focusing on challenges. The therapeutic value comes from the process of creation—the focused use of materials and colour—creating a safe space for non-verbal communication and self-discovery.

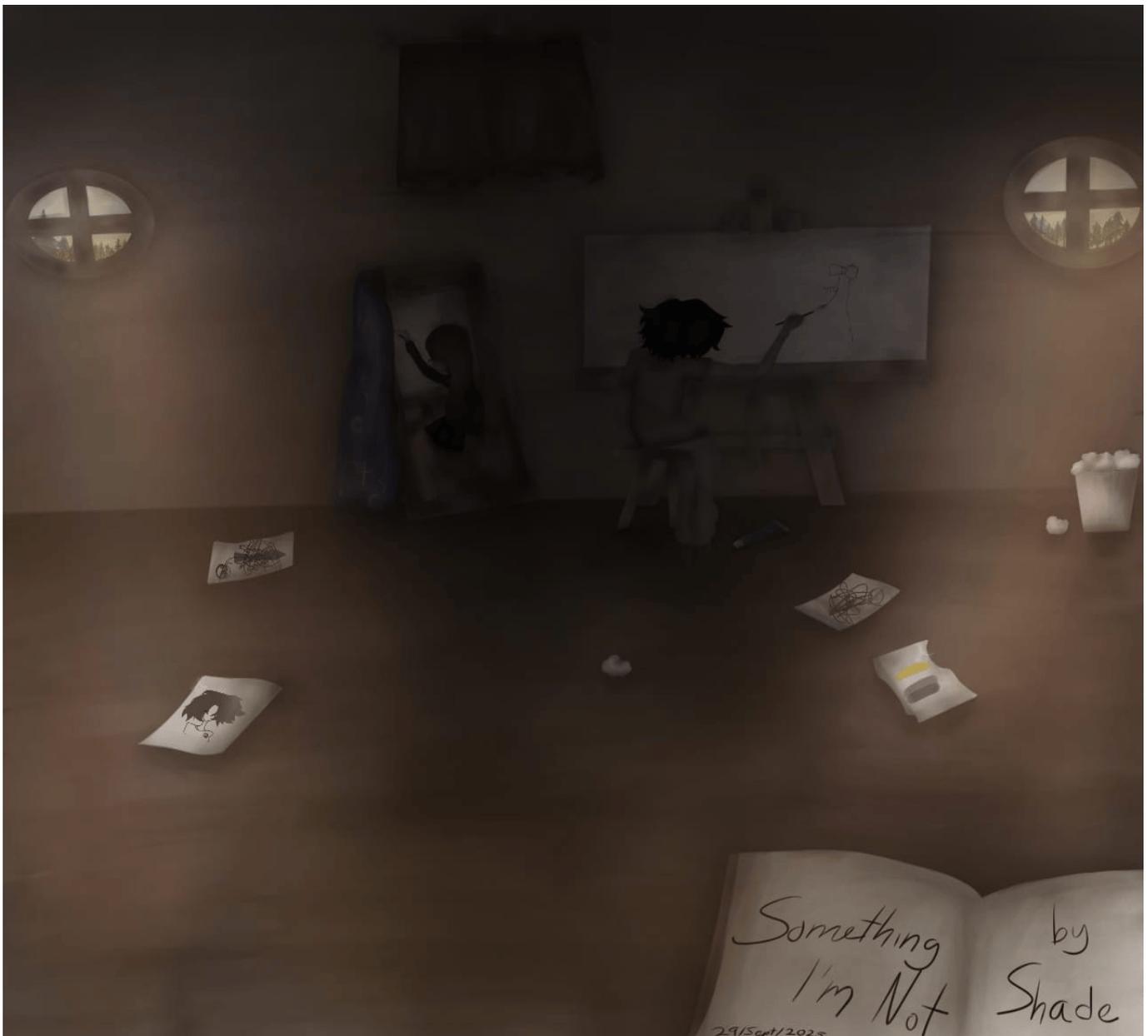
Unlocking inner worlds: The power of visual arts

In the context of EATs, visual arts offer a particularly accessible and impactful avenue for neurodivergent adolescents. Specifically, materials like pastels, clay crayons, and digital drawing tools provide tactile and sensory ways to externalise internal experiences. The act of choosing colours, applying pressure, and forming shapes can be deeply grounding and expressive, allowing for the exploration of complex emotions and identities without the pressure of verbal articulation. Crucially, the creation of art often happens

simultaneously while the client is talking about their current difficulties, worries, or presenting problems. The physical act provides an essential sensory outlet, allowing the neurodivergent person to better channel intense feelings, especially those that cannot be fully expressed verbally.

The art is an anchoring mechanism and a communication amplifier. The therapeutic focus is rarely on interpreting the final art piece. Instead, the focus remains firmly on the client's process of making it and their feelings when looking at it. The artwork acts as a momentary container for complex emotions, offering distance and clarity without the pressure of forced verbal analysis.

Consider a group of neurodivergent adolescents, all navigating the typical adolescent issues of anxiety, insecurity, and the evolving exploration of their identity. Each finds unique ways to communicate through drawing and digital art: One young person might find solace in creating intricate abstract forms using pastels, with vibrant colours and sharp angles representing the overwhelming rush of emotions they struggle to articulate verbally, all while discussing a difficult interaction at school. Another might engage in a flurry of dense, overlapping colours and lines using clay crayons, creating an emotionally charged piece that speaks volumes about unspoken anxieties while describing a specific worry.





through visual arts like drawing and digital creation, EATs create a therapeutic environment that is inherently affirming and strengths-based.

The goal is not to change or “cure” the individual, but to provide them with a rich and varied palette with which to paint the canvas of their own minds, fostering resilience and a profound sense of self in a world that often demands conformity.

About the author

Monika Hubczuk is a fully accredited Integrative Counsellor and Psychotherapist specialising in neurodivergent client care. Holding a BSc and MSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy, she blends a range of key therapeutic modalities—including Person-Centred Therapy, CBT, ACT, and Existential approaches—to create bespoke, client-led journeys. With over 1,000 hours of specialised experience working with neurodivergent clients (Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, etc.), her approach explores the critical intersections of expressive communication, sensory processing, and personal identity—bringing an affirming, creative lens to mental well-being.

A third individual might use digital drawing to explore their identity and insecurity, often employing muted, dark colours, shadows, and hidden elements.

This piece may look starkly different when viewed in a bright room versus a dark room, reflecting the client’s internal struggle to be seen and understood. Finally, a fourth young person may use a restricted palette of muted colours to map out feelings of insecurity and withdrawal, using negative space to represent the sense of isolation often experienced when masking their true selves. Together, these different visual expressions highlight the profound effectiveness of EATs in bypassing the limitations of verbal language to reach the core of adolescent experience.

The path forward: A summary

Expressive art therapies offer a profound and essential alternative to traditional methods, providing neurodivergent adolescents with a unique and empowering pathway for self-discovery and authentic connection. By prioritising the simultaneous creative process and celebrating non-verbal communication



ARCHETYPES IN ART: HOW JUNGIAN SYMBOLS GUIDE EMOTIONAL INSIGHT AND GROWTH

Priyamvada Tendulkar

Therapy often deepens where conscious language reaches its limit and something deeper speaks through a dream, a gesture, or a sketch made without conscious thought. Carl Jung would say the Psyche is erupting through a constellation of archetypes: universal images shared across cultures that shape our imagination, myths, and emotional lives.

What Jung traced in myth, painters rendered in brushstrokes: the Tarot stages as Death, Lovers, Fool, and World, for example, are each a facet of the psyche's endless performance showcasing beauty, loss, and renewal.

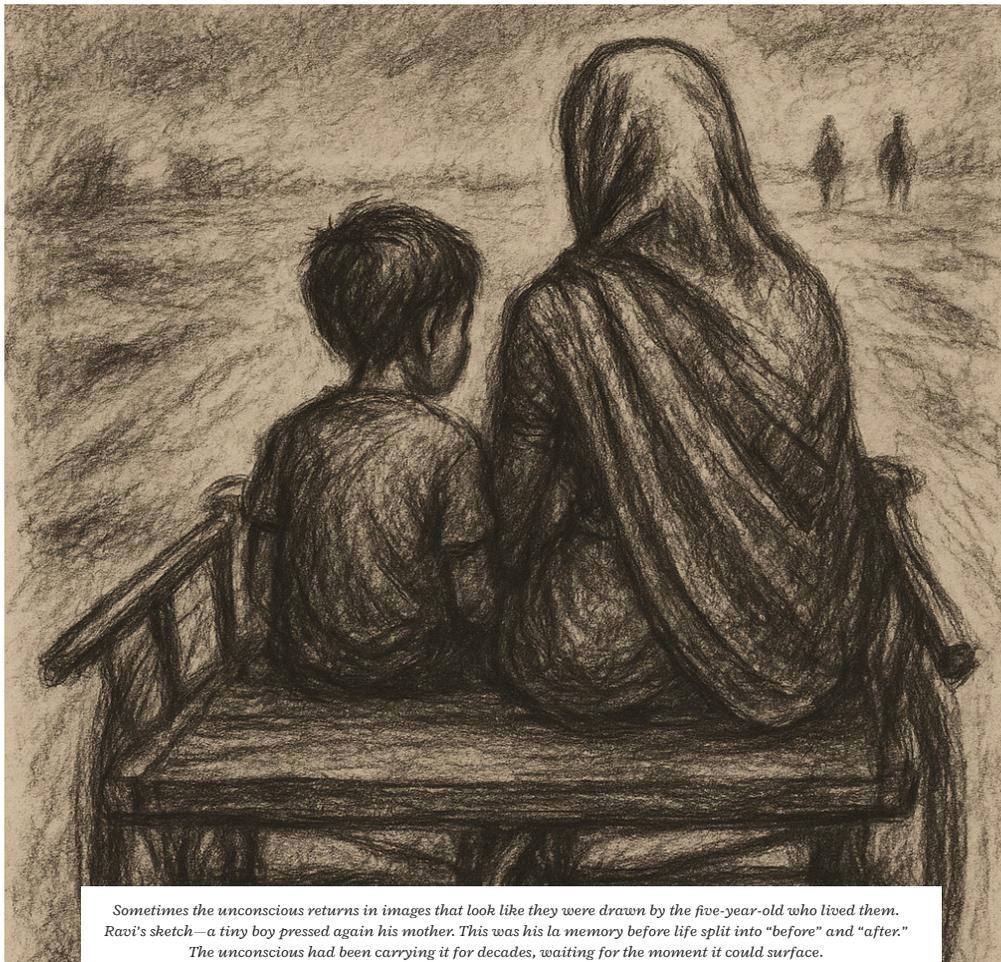
The language of the Shadow

In Jungian thought, the Shadow is not evil; it is simply repressed impulses, emotions, and instinct, those



*"The sea remembers what the mind forgets."
The unconscious, rising like a wave—carrying faces, journeys, and omens—echoing
the psyche's own tides of creation, deruction, and renewal.*

parts of our psyche we repressed to fit into society. These forbidden shards yearn to be seen and show up in archetypal form whenever we draw, dance, or dream; a wounded child, a storm, a serpent, a dark mirror. The Shadow is the domain of Eros, the life force that seeks to restore these split parts of the psyche, to make the unconscious conscious, but without shame; allowing us to meet our envy, rage, and longing as energies yearning for integration and wholeness.



Sometimes the unconscious returns in images that look like they were drawn by the five-year-old who lived them. Ravi's sketch—a tiny boy pressed against his mother. This was his last memory before life split into "before" and "after." The unconscious had been carrying it for decades, waiting for the moment it could surface.

When the Psyche paints itself: The Hero's journey

In therapy, I often witness how an archetype does not just appear on paper—it is personified in life. Take Ravi. He lost his mother when he was five, and with her went not only nurture but the emotional scaffolding that helps a child feel loved and worthy. Too young to cope, Ravi's psyche repressed his grief at this incomprehensible loss. But the need for love and anchoring sought fulfillment indirectly.

His psyche felt driven to earn healing through performance. Cricket, school, friendships; they were not merely activities but attempts to earn the love he never received. But as he came close to success or intimacy, the repressed terror would surface: if he again has something worth losing, he would have to confront his vulnerability to loss. This is the Wounded Hero archetype, his life a series of 'almosts'—almost

successful but never quite living up to his potential because his psyche was split between intense yearning and fear. Every domain of life reflected that fracture, reaching for greatness, and then some tragic form of self-sabotage would reveal the hidden turmoil of the psyche. Relationships repeated the same arc, because love threatened to expose the depth of his unmet need.

In every Hero's Journey, the wound becomes both curse and compass, shaping an unconscious mandate: "Find what was lost." But one cannot find outside, what has been buried inside. And psyche's self-sabotaging drive is its attempt to break the hold of the conscious, freeing the repressed parts to speak up. And so, Ravi came to therapy, after losing himself entirely after a breakup, which brought him to the edge of life itself. The final stage of his Hero's Journey begins with descent; facing the one truth he had spent his

entire life running from, which surfaced in therapy from a sudden sketch he had made and sent right before a session. In it was his last memory with his mother, before life was split into a brutal "before" and "after". The Psyche let loose the grief of losing his mother, and the unconscious vow he had made to punish himself for surviving her, burdened with survivor's guilt. As a boy, he came to believe that he had somehow failed her, that if he had been more, done more, been worth more, she might have stayed.

And so, he lived with an invisible contract written in childhood: Do not claim joy. Do not rise too high. Do not thrive. His collapses, failures, and sudden regressions were not flaws of character but rituals of self-punishment, attempts to atone for a loss that was never his to carry.

This was his dark night of the soul, the mythic threshold where the Hero finally confronts the Shadow figure that has been shaping his life from behind the curtains. The demons he had battled — self-blame, collapse, fear of thriving—did not disappear; they transformed. What once consumed him became fuel, a fierce clarity that he wanted to live, not merely endure. This is the turning point of every epic: when the Hero realizes that the quest was never about slaying dragons outside, but reclaiming the inner world he had once lost in the fire.



Archetype in motion – dance can be a uniquely healing art for the feminine within the Psyche

Eros and Aphrodite: When the body becomes symbol
If Ravi's arc revealed the Hero, another client of mine, Kanchan, carried a different myth — the wounded maiden. Kanchan, a young, warm woman with many relational qualities, shunned intimacy in a casual yet baffling way, until her therapy work around binge-eating and thinness-obsession stirred something deeper. Kanchan had been through her own Hero's Journey, as a recovering "golden child" of a family. Her mandate had been self-sacrifice. And through a very vicious and prolonged downward spiral, in which she confronted Thanatos, the death drive, she had confronted her Shadow of self-hatred. From that battle, she emerged with the insight that the little girl who could not choose to stop loving her parents, had to stop loving her own self instead. This was the source of her unworthiness and sense of rejection, which was the root of the exhausting burden of guilt and obligation that she carried around for every scrap of kindness that came her way. She emerged determined to reclaim Eros buried under duty. Her brush with suicide was the psyche's demand for rebirth. As she healed, Kanchan began an authentic, heroic forward march in life. And yet one knot remained:

binge-eating and perfectionistic body shame. And in a couple of random moments of dance, another archetype rose—the Exiled Aphrodite, numbed by years of survival. On a solo trip abroad, she realised that she was no longer frightened of being desired. Her binge-eating traced back to a childhood sexual trauma - unlocked, again, through dance. Months later, while dancing with her boyfriend, a disavowed memory surfaced and body memories unfolded in fragments over the next few months—numbness thawing into tears, anger, disgust, and hatred. And therapy uncovered that she had felt unsafe for years, and carried a father wound, and thus, she had avoided men, relationships, and all sensations tied to vulnerability. Through intimacy, Kanchan began to heal her body shame. Reclaiming Aphrodite was never about becoming desirable or flawless; it was about letting her body remember warmth, rhythm, and pleasure—especially in the very body-parts where trauma had imprinted numbness. In Jungian language, this awakening was her anima's return, the re-emergence of Eros after years of Logos-driven survival, where analysis, self-control, and emotional numbing had replaced vulnerability and feeling.



The Psyche's art of renewal

What art teaches us—and what therapy confirms—is that the psyche never speaks in straight lines. It speaks in images, instincts, rhythms, and myths. Ravi's Hero, Kanchan's Aphrodite, and countless others reveal that the unconscious is not a dark pit but a creative intelligence trying to restore balance.

And whether we call it integration, healing, or wholeness, the deeper truth remains:

inside every human life is a story waiting to be seen; and art is often the first place it appears.

When we learn to read these images, something extraordinary happens. The old self dissolves, the Shadow softens, and a more coherent, more courageous self steps forward. Not healed, but whole enough to continue the story.

And perhaps that is the deepest promise of art and archetype: that no matter how lost we feel, the psyche is already composing the next chapter—one brushstroke, one symbol, one truth at a time.

About the author

Priyamvada Tendulkar is a practising psychotherapist, writer, and founder of a growing private mental-health practice in Mumbai.



She has over half a decade of experience across relationship dynamics, trauma, addiction recovery, and family systems. Known for her integrative therapeutic lens, weaving psychodynamic thought, Internal Family Systems, REBT, and trauma-informed perspectives, she helps clients navigate intricate inner worlds with nuance, depth, and compassion. She facilitates group programs on sexual trauma and addiction recovery that weave somatic awareness, therapeutic journaling, and grounded self-help practices.



Ray of Hope Igniting Flame Commendations presented to *Khape*

ARTISTS AND MENTAL HEALTH: A DELICATE INTERSECTION



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Suchita Bhatta

Edvard Munch, one of my favourite artists, lived with severe anxiety and alienation. His most famous work, *The Scream*, emerged from that deep inner turmoil. Frida Kahlo endured a traumatic marriage and relentless physical pain, channelling her suffering into evergreen, soul-stirring paintings. Michelangelo, Virginia Woolf, Van Gogh... and in more recent times, Robin Williams and Billie Eilish—who has openly spoken about suicidal

thoughts brought on by the pressures of fame—remind us of a truth that is as uncomfortable as it is undeniable: artists often live at the edge of their emotions.

Artists are perhaps the most vulnerable when it comes to mental health—because, by nature, they are sensitive. Being an artist myself, I have interacted with creators across disciplines—filmmakers, podcasters, painters, photographers, cinematographers—and I have found one unshakable truth: artists are a soft, perceptive breed, acutely tuned in to the textures of the world around them. They feel more, notice more, absorb more. That sensitivity is their gift, but it is also their greatest vulnerability. And, many artists lack business acumen.

So, how can artists protect their mental health? For starters, balance is key. Building a routine, however loose, can help. I came across a remarkable book by Mason Currey, *Daily Rituals: How Artists Work*, which compiles the habits of creators ranging from Ingmar Bergman to Carl Jung, Hemingway to Kafka, David Lynch to Tolstoy, Ayn Rand to Maya Angelou. It offers a blueprint you can adapt, a reminder that discipline and creativity are not opposites, but partners.

Worrying is almost part of the artistic DNA—worrying about money, about work, about the visibility and sale of one's art. Now, with AI reshaping the creative landscape, artists must continuously update and upgrade their skills, learning not just to coexist with these tools but to use them as amplifiers for their vision.

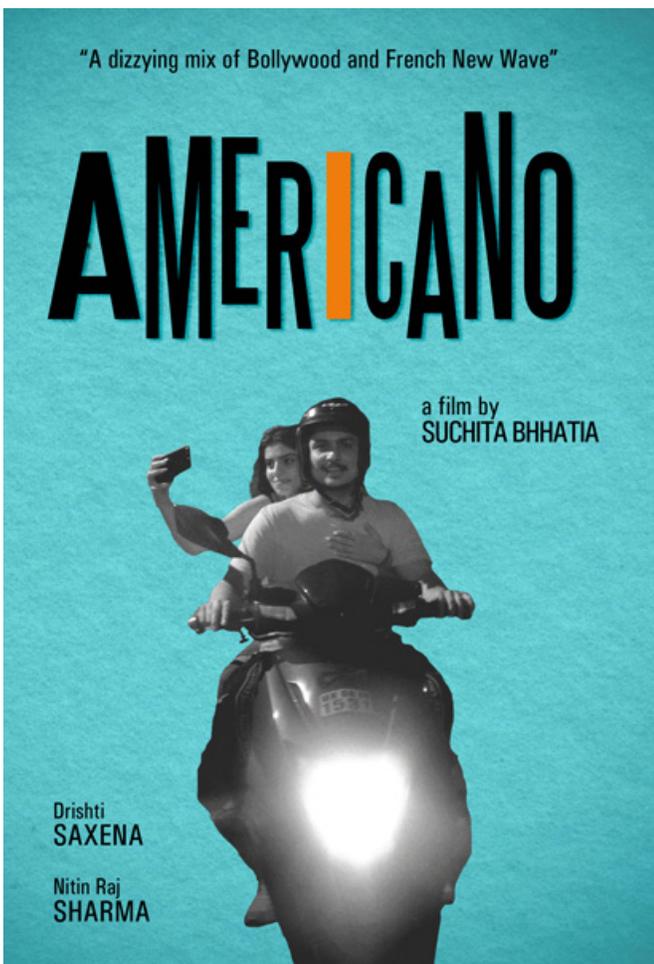
Because many artists work in isolation, their eating habits, sleeping patterns, and general lifestyle often go awry. We are now, thankfully, speaking more openly about the importance of nutrition, exercise, and mindful living. Eating in accordance with your body's needs,

It is rare for someone like Charlie Chaplin to be both an extraordinary artist and commercially astute. Art is often a freelance profession. There is no 9 to 5 routine, no office hierarchy, no boss to guide you: you are your own boss. That means working at 3 a.m. when inspiration strikes or rising at 4 a.m. to meet a deadline. Until you reach a certain level, the income is inconsistent. Rejection is constant. You need to be seen; you need to be heard; and that relentless need for visibility can take a toll on mental well-being.

On top of that, society's definition of 'success' can be crushing. Many brilliant artists are labelled failures by their families simply because they do not marry, or they cannot financially support others. And yet, some, like Van Gogh, created masterpieces precisely because of their mental health struggles—schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or other conditions that shaped their way of seeing the world. Keeping consistent meal times, moving your body regularly, surrounding yourself with the right kind of people; these are small yet profound acts of self-preservation.

Meditation can help. So can finding or building communities that truly understand your path.

Artists naturally make their own rules, but in India, many still live under the shadow of societal expectations. My advice: pay less attention to what society dictates and more to how you define yourself. Through my podcasts *The Artists* and *The SOS Show*, I have had the privilege of speaking with numerous creative minds—actor and drummer Vasundhara Das, actor and entrepreneur Rajeev Khandelwal, and Padma Shri journalist Bhawana Somaaya, among others. Across these conversations, one theme emerged again and again: artists can survive, even thrive, if they care for their mindset and mental health as diligently as they care for their craft.





Some takeaways that have stayed with me:

- Define your own success. Never let the world impose its definition on you.
- Stay anchored in your art. You are already finding yourself through it, trust that process.
- Be ambitious; but not isolated. Build and nurture the right communities. Surround yourself with people who align with your spirit and can walk this path alongside you. Because at the end of the day, being an artist is not just about creating, it's about protecting the soul that creates.

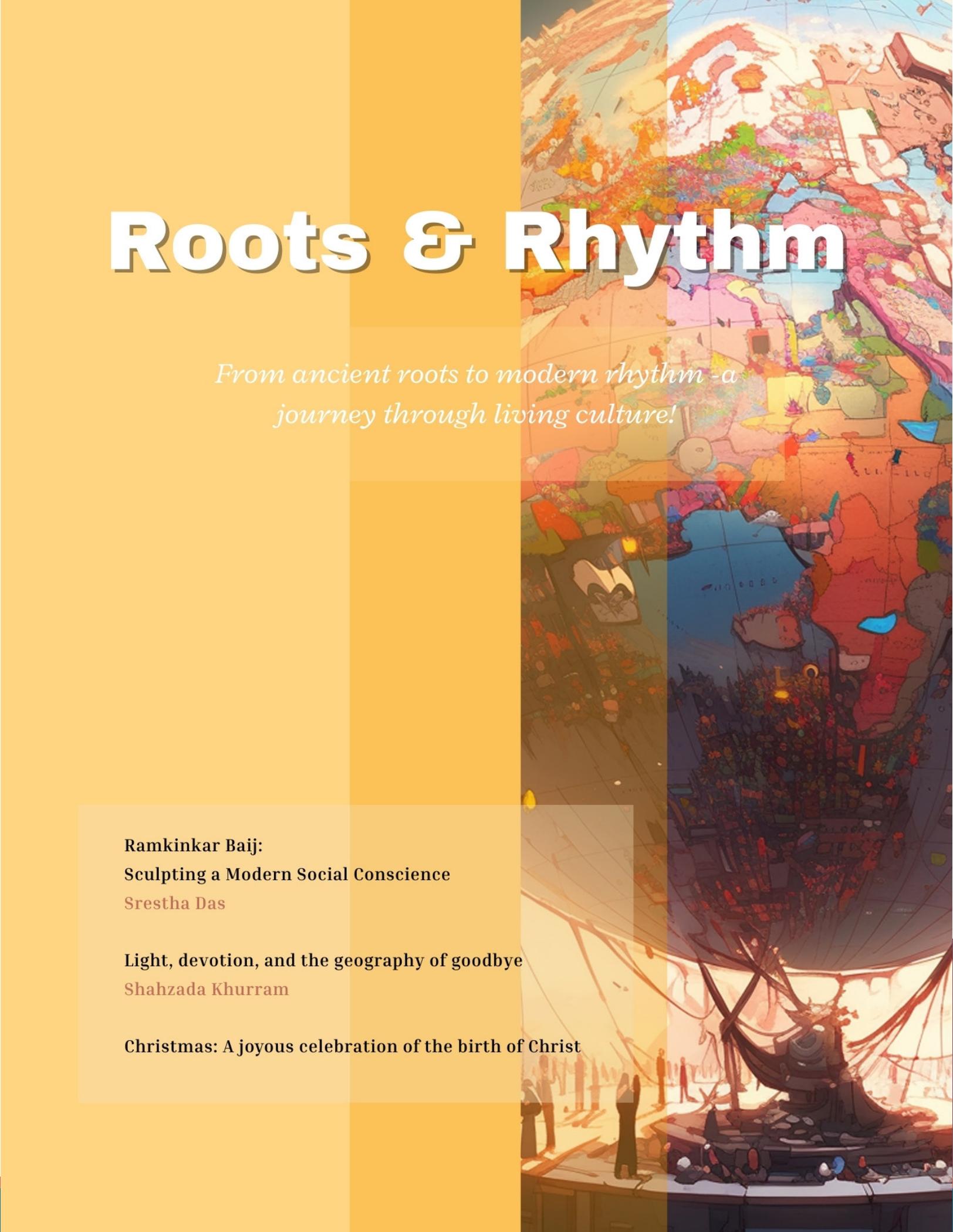
About the author

Suchita Bhatia is a filmmaker, podcaster, and mental health advocate. Her feature film *Khape* has travelled to prominent South Asian film festivals. She directs films

across mediums, including AI-generated works, and is currently completing a documentary on mental health. She also hosts two acclaimed podcasts—*The Artists* and *The SOS Show*.



Roots & Rhythm



From ancient roots to modern rhythm - a journey through living culture!

Ramkinkar Baij:
Sculpting a Modern Social Conscience
Srestha Das

Light, devotion, and the geography of goodbye
Shahzada Khurram

Christmas: A joyous celebration of the birth of Christ

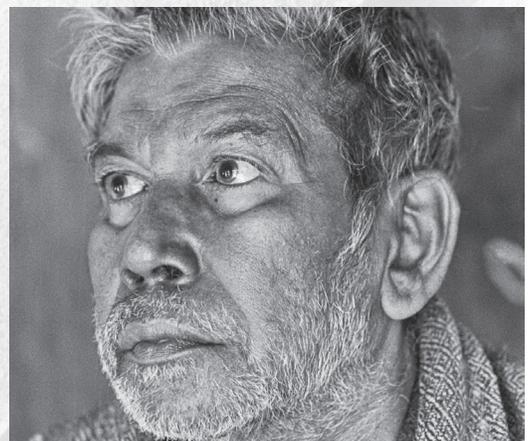
RAMKINKAR BAIJ: SCULPTING A MODERN SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

Sresitha Das

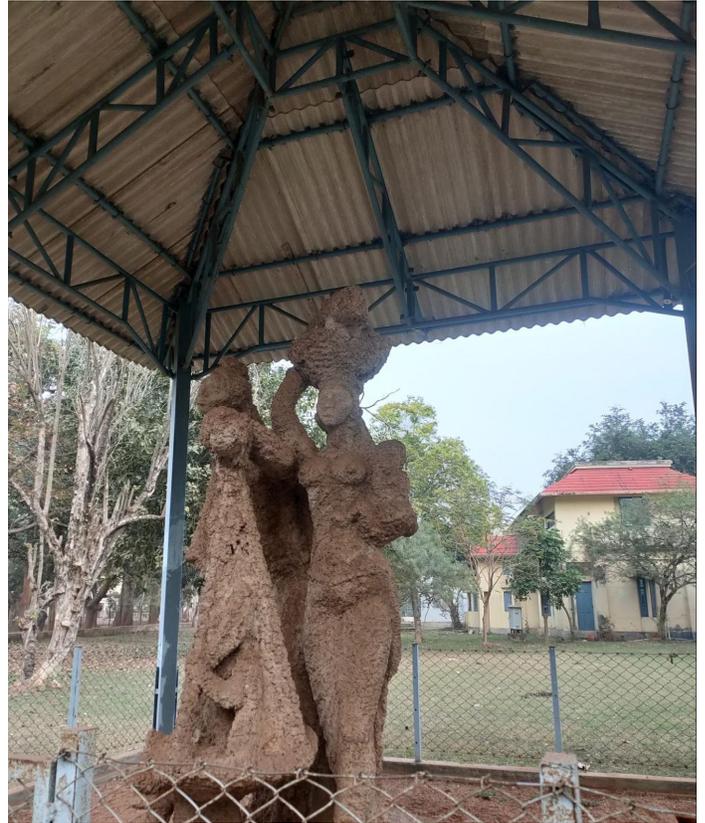


Ramkinkar Baij (1906–1980) stands as an audacious symbol of modernity in twentieth-century Indian art. As a sculptor, painter, and educator at Kala Bhavan, the fine arts faculty of Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan, India, he courageously navigated the waters of colonial academicism and the genteel revivalism characteristic of the Bengal School. Ramkinkar's oeuvre transcends mere aesthetic triumph; his sculptures serve as profound acts of social commentary that interrogate the entrenched hierarchies of class, caste, and gender, while simultaneously forging a vibrant visual language for a nascent nation.

Arriving at Kala Bhavan in the late 1920s, Ramkinkar found himself immersed in the experimental ethos championed by Rabindranath Tagore. In an artistic landscape dominated by portraiture and mythic allegory, Ramkinkar shifted away from the patronised figures of rajas and idealised deities to focus on the environment and the reality of Santhal villages. He drew inspiration from the red laterite soil and the unglamorous labour of daily life, embodying a commitment to authenticity and accessibility.



Ramkinkar Baij, Courtesy of DAG



Figures 1 & 2 The Santhal Family, 1938, Ramkinkar Baij



His choice of materials—cement, concrete, and gravel—mirrored this philosophy, eschewing the polished permanence of marble or bronze. Ramkinkar’s sculptures were often site-specific, allowing the elements—wind, rain, sunlight—to shape his creations. The raw, weathered surfaces of pieces such as *Santhal Family* (1938) and *Mill Call* (1956) reveal not just the artist’s tactile engagement but also resonate with the textures of earth and time, creating a dialogue between the work and the environment.

Figure 3 Mill Call, 1956, Ramkinkar Baij



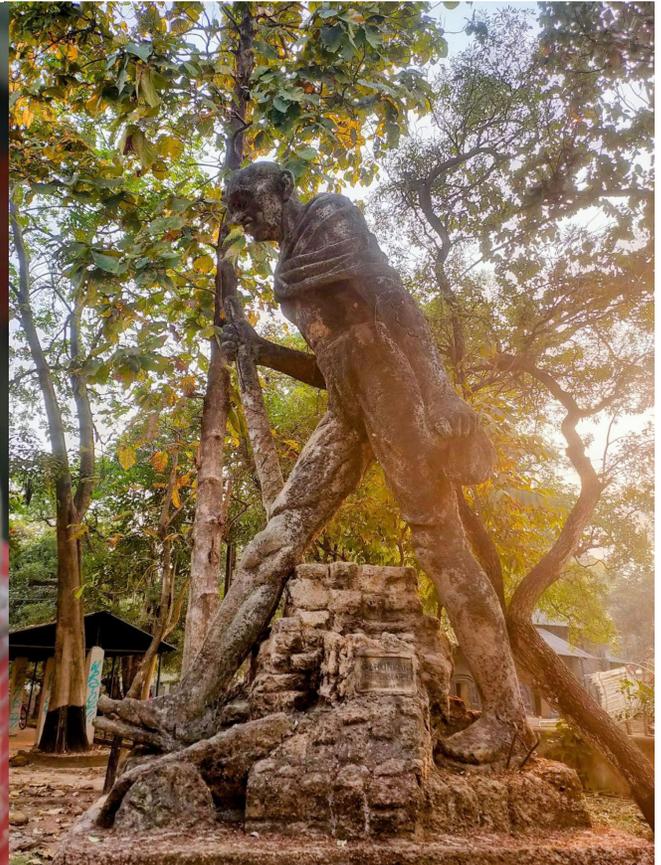


Figure 4 Mahatma Gandhi, Ramkinkar Baij

Among his acclaimed masterpieces, *Santhal Family* emerges as a landmark of Indian modernism. Here, a tribal couple, accompanied by a child and a dog, stride purposefully across an expanse, their figures lean and muscular. The woman, balancing the child on her hip, embodies strength and agency equal to her male counterpart, challenging the conventional portrayal of women in nationalist art as passive figures. Ramkinkar's ability to capture such agency critiques historical narratives and inspires a re-examination of female roles in both art and society.

Similarly, *Mill Call* is a visual testament to the dynamics of labour and the evolution of rural economies. The figures of industrial workers, bent forward in response to the factory siren, encapsulate a collective urgency. In this representation, women are not marginalised but featured as integral participants in the workforce, their physicality and social presence serving to dismantle the patriarchal invisibility that often pervades discussions of labour.

Ramkinkar's engagement with femininity is both complex and distinctly modern. His female figures are far removed from the traditional ornamental nudes or allegorical goddesses; they are representations of workers, migrants, and self-possessed individuals.

In works like *Harvesters*, women are depicted in the throes of agricultural labour—bending, reaching, and straining against the rhythms of nature—each form defined by its exertion rather than objectification. Even in more intimate portrayals, his female subjects exude autonomy and presence, reflecting an unsentimental honesty that defies the binaries of virtue and desire that have historically constrained women in Indian society.

Ramkinkar's *Gandhi* takes on the political rather than the spiritual. Here, the Mahatma is depicted in motion, staff in hand, his frail figure leaning into the wind with quiet resolve. Crafted from cement and laterite, Ramkinkar avoids the grandeur often found in monumental sculptures. Instead, he presents Gandhi as the embodiment of ethical simplicity and perseverance. Placed within the expansive landscape of Kala Bhavan, the sculpture implicitly draws parallels between Gandhi's political journey and the daily struggles of the Santhal villagers, serving as a poignant reminder that the quest for freedom is deeply rooted in the lived experiences and labours of ordinary individuals.



PC:Freepik

Ramkinkar Baij's work stands as a powerful testament to the potential of art as a vehicle for social change, merging aesthetic innovation with deep socio-political engagement.

His sculptures not only reflect the realities of the marginalised but also challenge prevailing narratives surrounding identity and agency in Indian society. By foregrounding the lived experiences of everyday individuals, particularly women and labourers, Ramkinkar elevates their stories to the forefront of cultural discourse, dismantling the historical hierarchies that have often silenced them.

His commitment to raw materials and environmental integration further emphasises the fluid relationship between art and the socio-political landscape, positioning art as a dynamic participant in the ongoing dialogues of modernity and tradition. Ramkinkar's legacy endures as a clarion call to redefine the role of the artist in society, prompting future generations to harness the transformative power of creativity in their quest for justice and equality.



About the author

Srestha Das is an art historian who explores the vibrant intersections of art, history, and lived culture. As resident historian and executive at Bari Kothi in Murshidabad, she transforms archival research into engaging narratives for travellers and heritage enthusiasts. Her broader research examines Bengal art and cultural practices from the late 18th to the early 20th century. A trained classical and Rabindra Nritya dancer, Srestha also travels to discover new cuisines and explore layered histories.

LIGHT, DEVOTION, AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF GOODBYE

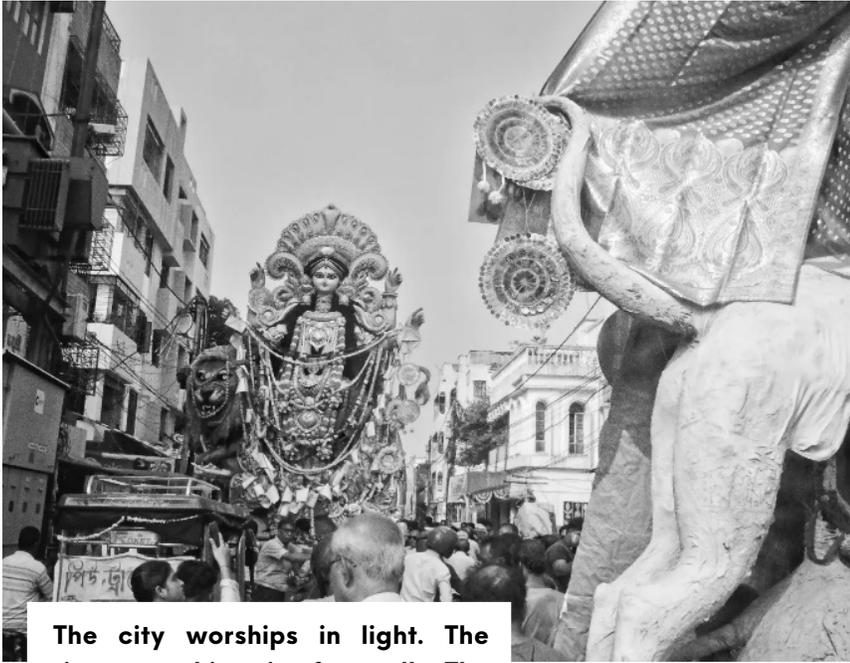
Shahzada Khurram

Curator, Cultural Programmer, Public Art Facilitator

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAJEEV SRIVASTAVA

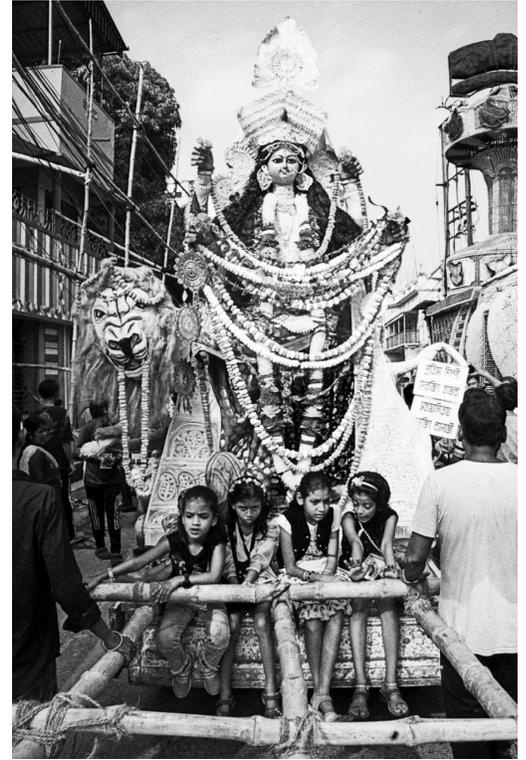


Kolkata's Durga Puja is a breathtaking event of devotion, creativity, and cultural grandeur that enchants millions every autumn. This festival—Vijaya Dashami—drawing its roots from the mythic victory of Goddess Durga over evil soars beyond religion into a brilliant celebration of art and community. Vibrant energy courses through the city as elaborately made pandals stand like ethereal palaces, each a work of art highlighting subjects from traditional Bengali motifs to modern global influences. The enchanting rhythms of the dhak drum syncs with dazzling lighting. Sacred scents of incense, and shiuli, mingle with mouthwatering aromas of local delicacies, calling everyone to participate in both spiritual homage and joyous celebration. Durga Puja in Kolkata is not just a festival; it is an experience of a lifetime.



The city worships in light. The river worships in farewell. The metropolis worships in frenzy.

Rajeev Srivastava captures the magical beauty of Durga Puja across Chandannagar, Taki, and Kolkata in West Bengal, India, where the festival season unfolds not as a series of rituals, but as a shifting landscape of emotion—protection, parting, and artistic delirium. This feature follows that arc, tracing how Bengal turns faith into form, and form into something incandescent.



Where two Bengals breathe the same goodbye.



Where devotion burns brighter than night.

Chandannagar: Where devotion becomes design

In Chandannagar, worship does not settle into familiar shapes; it expands into light. Once a quiet French enclave along the Hooghly, the town transforms each year during Jagadhatri Puja into a kinetic theatre of radiance. But the spectacle is not decoration—it is devotion redesigned.

Local light-makers build entire universes out of bulbs and LEDs. Mythology flickers beside science fiction; colonial symmetry meets folk intuition. Overhead, colossal Jagadhatri (Durga) idols rise with a gravity that is both maternal and monumental. Here, divinity is not distant, it is illuminated, magnified, made present through craftsmanship that spills onto every street. The deeper truth is older than the electricity that frames it: the Eastern idea of the Mother as protector. In Chandannagar, light is not an aesthetic choice. It is a grammar of faith.

Taki:

The river that knows how to say goodbye If Chandannagar dazzles, Taki softens. On Vijaya Dashami, the Ichamati river becomes a slow-moving poem. Idols drift toward the midstream, boats cut through copper light, and petals scatter like quiet embers.

Once, before geopolitics hardened the horizon, Bangladesh's boats would meet India's in a shared choreography of immersion. The border is stricter now, but the river remembers.

The people do too. Every immersion echoes a larger memory—of land once continuous, of rituals once mirrored. Rajeev's lens follows the choreography of parting: the tilt of the idol, the faces leaning forward, the moment the clay disappears beneath a shimmering threshold. Taki becomes less geography and more sentiment—a landscape of shared longing.



Kolkata: Bijoya, where frenzy turns into art
Kolkata refuses to say farewell quietly. As Bijoya (Vijaya Dashami) arrives, the city contracts into a storm of art—its own, unmistakable signature. Pandals become temporary civilisations, each neighbourhood bending bamboo, cloth, mirrors, terracotta, and light into astonishing worlds that vanish within days.

This is the metropolis at its truest: loud, inventive, chaotic, and breathtakingly committed to beauty. On immersion day, the city moves like a single organism, singing, dancing, surging around the idol as she is carried out. The farewell is operatic, the emotion unrestrained.

What Rajeev captures is not spectacle alone but the fleeting, fragile humanity within it: the thrum of the dhaak, the sweat and sandalwood in the air, the brief shimmering moment before the idol merges with the river and the city exhales.



When the city dreams in public.



About the photographer

A Delhi based photographer and filmmaker, Rajeev Srivastava's work blends documentary clarity with a quiet, poetic visual style. Drawn to vintage Russian, Japanese and German lenses, he brings an analogue warmth to digital photography, letting natural light and intuitive bokeh shape the emotional tone of his portraits. His parallel career in documentary cinema includes collaborations with the World Bank, BBC, Reuters, APTN and France 24, where he has captured complex social and cultural narratives. As a film critic and festival curator, he has helped shape contemporary cinema discourse. Across mediums, Rajeev's images stand out for their honest light, calm frames and a deep, human curiosity.

CHRISTMAS: A JOYOUS CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Christmas is a season of coming together in the spirit of love, light, and joy. Every part of the world celebrates this festive season with a unique experience, be it the twinkling lights of the city, the warm family feast, and the heart-touching carols of Christians worldwide. Our magazine has designed a beautiful mosaic of Christmas celebrations from around the world, with the aim to celebrate the glorious diversities of this festival. Treat your eyes to the delightful images of this season, presented below!



Christmas as faith, family, and togetherness. Christmas in Peru is deeply rooted in faith and family. Homes come together on Christmas Eve to share food, tradition, and moments of togetherness.



PHOTO CREDITES - JULIO NORIEGA



Nativity scenes and spiritual heritage

Peruvian nativity scenes often blend Christian symbolism with Andean cultural elements, reflecting the country's rich spiritual and artistic heritage.



PHOTO CREDITES - JULIO NORIEGA

Christmas Eve traditions (Noche Buena)

Christmas Eve, known as Noche Buena, is the heart of the celebration in Peru, marked by family dinners, midnight gatherings, and shared joy.



PHOTO CREDITES - JULIO NORIEGA

Illuminated cities and historic plazas

Cities and historic plazas across Peru are illuminated during the season, creating a festive atmosphere that blends history, light, and celebration.



PHOTO CREDITES - JULIO NORIEGA



Community, culture, and hope
Christmas in Peru is also a celebration of community, where cultural traditions, music, and shared values reinforce a sense of unity and hope.



PC: AMAL VINOD KIRUNA, SWEDEN



PC : Claudia



PC: AMAL VINOD KIRUNA, SWEDEN



PC : Claudia



PC : Claudia

www.theateliermag.com



PC : Chaimaa



PC: AMAL VINOD KIRUNA, SWEDEN



PC: AMAL VINOD KIRUNA, SWEDEN



PC : Chaimaa



PC : Chaimaa



PC : Guilmette Baghdadi



PC : Beatrice



PC: Vinod kumar



PC: Vinod kumar



Best wishes to Outgoing and Incoming Global President 2025 & 2026



BODIL VALERO

Former Member of Swedish and European Parliament (2006 - 2019),
Co-convenor Global Greens, Sweden

**G100 GLOBAL CHAIR
Security & Defence**

Group of 100 Global Women Leaders
www.G100.in

Bodil Valero

Global President 2025

G100 Global Chair, Security & Defence



DATIN HARTINI BINTI OSMAN

Group Managing Director,
Prihatin Group of Companies,
Malaysia

**G100 GLOBAL CHAIR
Philanthropy, Business & Poverty
Eradication**

Group of 100 Global Women Leaders
www.G100.in

Datin Hartini Binti Osman

Global President 2026

G100 Global Chair, Philanthropy,
Business & Poverty Eradication

Celebrating Leadership, Legacy & Sisterhood




**G100 ASEAN Meetings 2026
Philippines**

Along with
Women Economic Forum (WEF) - ASEAN
Philippines

18-21 June 2026



The Manila Hotel
1 Rizal Park, Ermita, Manila
Metro Manila, Philippines 0913

RSVP Required





**G100 Singapore
Diplomatic Meetings
2026**

30 January 2026
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM



Grand Corpthorne Waterfront
392 Havelock Road Singapore
169663

RSVP Required