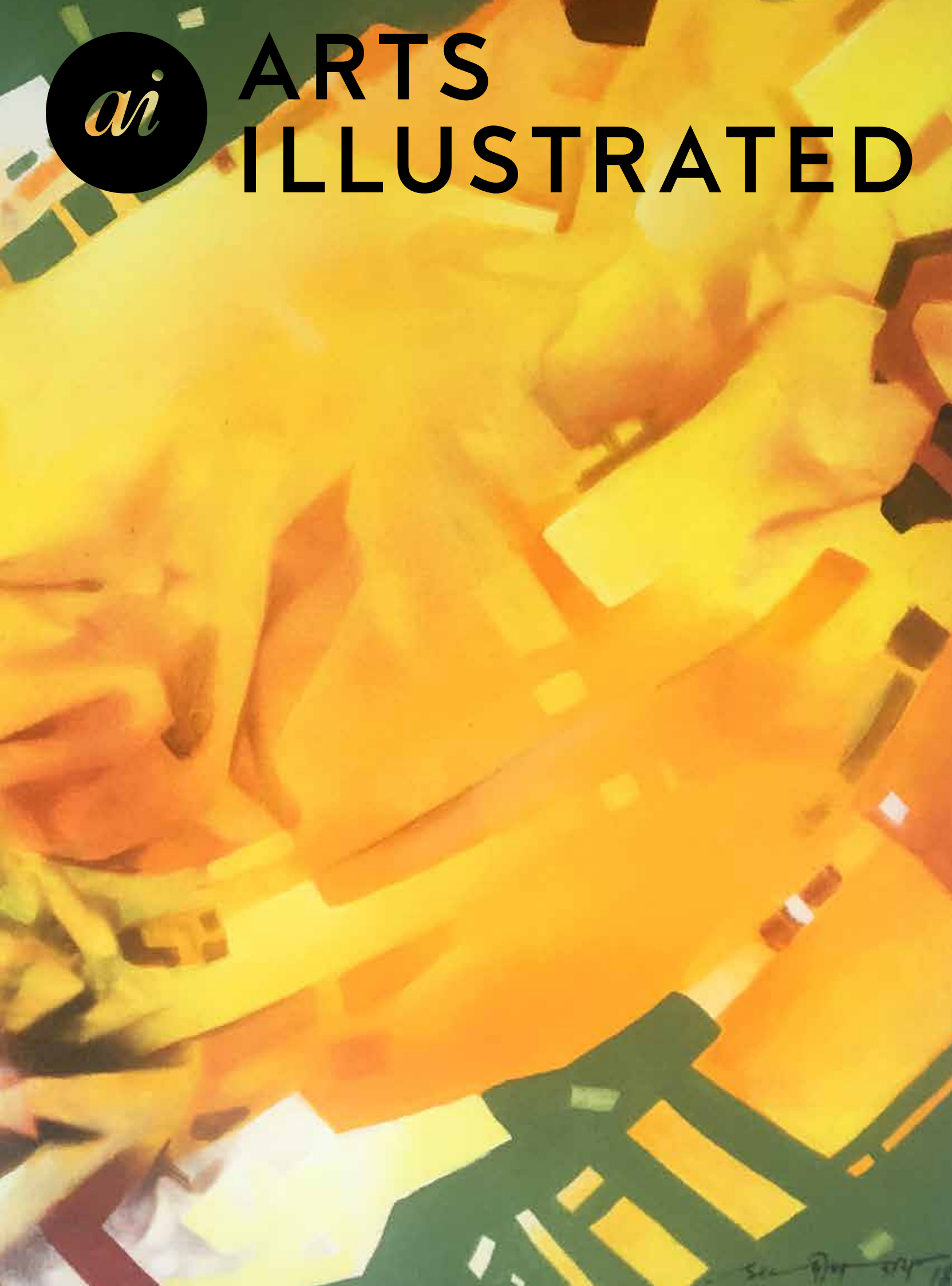




ARTS ILLUSTRATED





Team

Sales Offices

Chennai

127 T.T.K. Road, Alwarpet,
Chennai 600018
phone +91 82203 08777
phone +91 44 4216 5100
sales@artsillustrated.in

Coimbatore

Jenney's Residency
Opp CIT Avinashi Road,
Coimbatore Aerodrome Post,
Coimbatore 641014
phone +91 82203 08777
sales@artsillustrated.in

Abu Dhabi

Flat No. 701, 7th Floor,
H.E.Shaikh Tahnoon Bin Moh'd
Al Nahyan Building, (Arab Bank
Building), Al Nasr Street,
Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.
phone +97 15631 89405
sales@artsillustrated.in

Singapore

No. 1, Kim Seng Promenade,
12-01 Great World City (East
Tower), Singapore 237994
sales@artsillustrated.in

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Contributors

Abha Iyengar
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Arti Sandhu
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Poonam Ganglani
Rehana Munir
Saritha Rao Rayachoti
Shantanu Prakash
Subhra Mazumdar
Supriya Sehgal
Tania Banerjee

Published by
LA 5 Global Publications
#127, T.T.K. Road, Alwarpet,
Chennai 600018, India
phone +91 44 4216 5100
info@artsillustrated.in
editorial@artsillustrated.in
sales@artsillustrated.in

Special Thanks
Akosua Adoma Owusu

Anandamoy Banerji

Appupen

Dipalee Daroz

Dr. Pradeep Chowbey and Susmita Chowbey

Edward von Lönngus

Ingrid Pitzer

Inoue Naohisa

Jerry Uelsmann

Karan Khanna

Kavita Nayar

Leonardo Pucci

Oliver Beer

Paul Walsh

Peter Svatek

Prerna Pradhan, Ajay Sethi and Sunil Philip

Sudip Roy

Terence Eduarte

Special Acknowledgements

Akar Prakar, Kolkata

Anant Art, New Delhi

Centre Pompidou, Paris

Chanel Ltd. Fze, Dubai

Context, Westland Publications

Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum

Goethe-Institut, Chennai

Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi

Mojarto, an NDTV Venture

Para Site, Hong kong

PSP Design, Chennai

Talwar Gallery, New York and New Delhi

The Guild Art Gallery, Alibaug

The Met Breuer, New York

Tim Van Laere Gallery, Antwerp

Printing

Srikals Graphics Pvt. Ltd.

No. 5, Balaji Nagar, 1st Street,

Ekkaduthangal, Chennai - 600097

Distributed by

I B H Books & Magazines

Distributors Ltd.

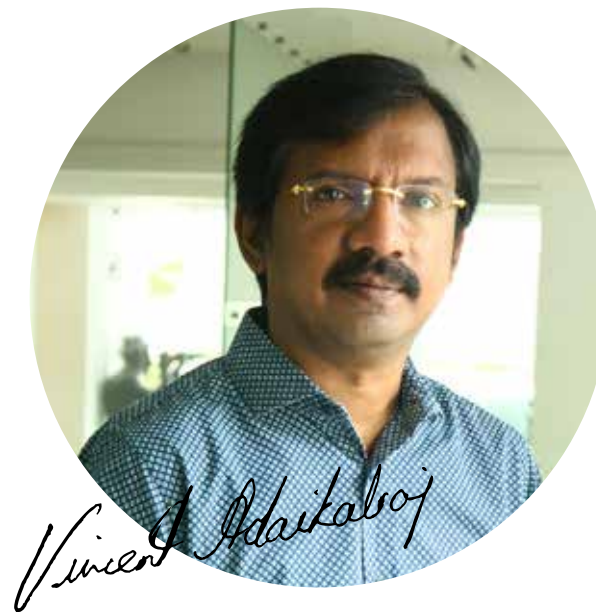
Publisher's note

Arts Illustrated turns five, and so, the theme for this anniversary issue is simply the number '5'. What are the different, quirky, literal, unpredictable, far-fetched, believable ways in which this number of balance can be interpreted? How far is it going to take us; and, more importantly, how delightfully fun is the process going to be?

In the past five years, we have looked at various themes and met artists who gave us surprising perspectives, but one common thread that bound them all together was that we kept the themes relevant to the reality of our times, and that's how we defined the 'contemporary' in the art. With '5', too, no matter how we choose to interpret it, it will continue to deeply question, engage and deliberate over the things that shape our world.

A big thank you to all our artists, writers and advertisers who continue to support and encourage the work we do at Arts Illustrated, helping us move forward with grace and humility in this journey.

Vincent Adaikalraj



Editor's note

The five things you won't find in this issue:

- The five elements
- Anything to do with anything 'five' in religion
- The five Olympic rings
- The five senses
- The phrase 'High Five'

The five things you will find in this issue:

- Openness
- Inclusivity
- Quirkiness
- Unpredictability
- Dialogue

So please do read, yes?



Praveena Shivram
praveena@artsillustrated.in



Don't hold the movement of time. Instead, give it more speed (translated Bengali proverb)

I graduated from the Government College of Art and Crafts in 1984. I was extensively trained in the craft of realistic painting, as was the tradition of the typical Bengal school style in my college. I continued to make realistic works for almost three decades after completing my formal education, although I always had the urge to break away from the formal qualities of the recognisable. Only in 2004 did I produce my first body of abstract works. For me, what the eye sees is represented in realistic works, but abstraction is the voice of the soul. It involves a lot of emotion and sensitivity to sentiments. The process is that of giving form to our innermost feelings – the formless.

All my abstract works associate with a time of the day (or night). All life around us moves in a ritualistic way. The environment around us changes by the minute and that has a direct bearing on our emotions and thought processes. My abstract works are an endeavour to express these very emotions, of a moment in time. My thoughts are manifested into a form, but I allow my viewers to interpret the renditioning. There are no rules in doing that.

For the cover of the fifth anniversary issue of Arts Illustrated, I chose to create a work titled 'Five A.M.' I have used five colours in the work to interpret this time that is a sacred moment of transition from night to day, from stillness to action.



Sudip Roy

Cover design and sub-covers
curated by Rahul Kumar.

The Art of Contemporary Dialogue

Five artists – Kavita Nayar, printmaker; Karan Khanna, photographer; Anandamoy Banerji, mixed-media artist; Dipalee Daroz, sculptor working with clay; and Ingrid Pitzer, sculptor working with formed paper-pulp – have a free-flowing, open-ended, potent and intriguing conversation on 'The Future of Contemporary Art'. And we walk right in.

RAHUL KUMAR

Photographs by Shantanu Prakash



Kavita Nayar (KN): For me, contemporary is what is going on at the moment. From the art historical perspective, it is everything post-modern.

Anandamoy Banerji (AB): The term contemporary defines your 10 years. Isn't that a poetic definition? It's the preceding 10 years. It is the immediate recent history of your times.

KN: But when it comes to talking about contemporary art, it's very difficult for us as practising artists to be critical about it because we are too close to it. We are in it ourselves.

Karan Khanna (KK): Art today, in any case, is so dynamic. You express the socio-political scene and what is happening in the world today. I find that this has been happening for centuries. And, it probably will carry on the day after tomorrow as well.

AB: I agree. The characterisation will change. But, on the other hand, we call art fairs a 'platform for the contemporary art', as if trying to project and talk on a contemporary platform with light thrown on what is going to be the future of art.

KN: But what is wrong with that? Such events are important and very good.

AB: I'm not judging. Today you have hundreds of thousands of people visiting from a mere few thousand that ended up at the first art fair in India in 2008.



Kavita Nayar

KN: It certainly helped in creating a new way of thinking about art and involvement of people in art. We follow the West all the time, as if history for the East is written by the West. We now talk of conceptual art, but think of the contra perspective. What I find very interesting with my field of film photography today is that with the advent of the digital age, things have opened up to such a great extent. I started photography when there were black and white photos and I started with pretty much a pinhole-type camera, and then you advanced through the ages into this totally wide open digital age. Your imagination is your limit.

KN: But Karan, tell me at this point do you feel redundant sometimes?

KK: I find it challenging and I find it very invigorating because here is something I thought I was pretty much a master of, doing my business very well and suddenly you are thrown into these screens where you are going through tutorials to use new tools and software. The whole thing

becomes kind of an experimental issue actually rather than something straightforward like going out and shooting images.

KN: I feel the same for print-making. When we learnt and practised, we were masters. And suddenly digital printing came. Viewers are not aware of the difference.

KK: That is the main problem that I think most photographers face today. Instead of looking at what I am trying to say in it or what I have done in it, they feel I have used Photoshop and that makes my picture less important. I tell such viewers 'Why don't they ask which brand of paint is used in a painting?' If that is not important, then which software I used to alter my image is also irrelevant.

Ingrid Pitzer (IP): I think we all see that in the same way. All these latest technical possibilities are good, but, for instance, art education does not help distinguish the skill, the reality and the virtual. And that is scary. We have no identity except a

Facebook identity. Is it the same? No!

Dipalee Daroz (DD): I think if technology and manual or physical skills are used together, it can create wonders. Let me illustrate; Daroz has done some huge digital works recently. Digital images are printed directly on clay tiles. He creates all the images on the computer, but then takes it to clay in a technically sound way. And now he is thinking of the next stage of this process – to make it three-dimensional. For him, the flat surface is not bringing the tactile and relief quality of clay. But the plan is to use technology so it can be scaled far more than what human hands can do.

KK: So, if you are doing photography or making ceramic work, there is a thought process that goes behind it and that is where the artist comes in. It is not because you have a phone that can take pictures and you become an artist. And one is not a born artist. My dad (Krishen Khanna) was a banker for 14 years and gradually trained himself to be an artist.

KN: I was a dancer; I was not supposed to be in visual art at all



Dipalee Daroz

(Laughs). Talking of technology merging with manual labor, I saw this work by Tony Oursler at a museum in London way back in 1996. He is an American multimedia installation artist. I was flabbergasted. It was mind blowing how the artist used the digital camera projection on to the surfaces of the works itself.

IP: It's like creating magic, *maya*. And this can be done by using both, technology and manual work.

DD: But in animation, traditionally they made a 1,000 sketches to just showcase the movement of a cup from table to

hands to lips. And, more than anything else, this understanding of frame and movement is critical even when done digitally.

AB: I have personal fascination towards drawing. When I say drawing, it is not referring to realism or abstract. I mean simple drawing, a black line on a white surface. Over the years I have started feeling that basic drawing is slowly coming back into fashion.

DD: Yes, new tools and techniques will come and go, but the absolute fundamentals will stay.

IP: I agree. It's the root because it is the basic technique for anything creative.

AB: You can see in all the fields, be it in painting, or even for sculptures or architecture, drawing is coming back and will be a prominent factor again.

KK: But how about this playing out for abstract art? And, a more fundamental question – where does abstract art come in all these



Anandamoy Banerji

in terms of our contemporary art? I feel Indian art is very abstract.

AB: That is true, but I do not think there can be 'absolute abstraction'. There is always a reference, even if it is not representational. Take, for example, the image of *Ganesha* with 10 hands. That is a kind of abstract concept for the West. But for us it is not abstraction; we find *Shiva* in a small stone. When you talk of Mark Rothko, I see it simply as a play of proportions; on a huge canvas of massive magenta, there is suddenly a black dot.

IP: Well, all that comes later. I have not learnt what I'm doing now in a day. What we were trained in art school over the years was seeing and drawing. We were taught that drawing is the base of everything and our professor was very strict and very good. Without this, you will miss out on many things.

DD: This applies to all forms of visual arts. I think abstraction also doesn't come without the basics of drawing. You need to learn to see and have a sense of proportion.

KK: It's like just because anyone can write does not make him/her an author or a poet.

IP: Exactly. Let everybody build a house and then see what happens. Let us see what happens if everyone is allowed to drive a car without gaining knowledge of driving and traffic rules.

AB: But then, there is a serious question – who is the judge? Is it only the artist as the creator? Is it the gallery that takes the risk and



sells the work? Is it the author who writes text on the exhibition? All these entities have an important role to play. And then the collector or buyer. I remember many years ago some artists were invited to make works for a chain of hotels in Europe. We decided the image but they governed the colour scheme to match the hotel brand. You see where I am going with it...there is no straight answer.

DD: Interesting. I think corporates have a role to play for sure in increasing art viewership.

How do you make many more people access art?

AB: Editions is such a great way to make work less expensive. I remember in my college days, I am talking of 1979, my final year, Jyoti Bhatt said a very interesting thing. He said 'I do only prints and you need to accept that this is my image. And that is the work. The work is not the technique'. In the same manner for photography, it's a technique, but it is the image that makes the art. These are the missing links which are to be established properly.



Galleries are not there only to sell but also promote and educate.

KK: How about ceramics, Dipalee? One can use moulds and produce editions?

DD: For my practice, it is very personal and it is an inward journey. Mine is not an external practice, rather it's based on intuition. I don't know if I ever do any calculation or planning.

KN: See, planning no artist does. When we are working in our studio we are not planning at all.

DD: Exactly, but in ceramics there are broadly two categories. One is the commodity culture of production and functional pieces, and the other is purely art and expression. Within Indian contemporary ceramics, most are practising commercial pottery and just a few are practising art for expression.

AB: That means ceramics has not reached the platform of art?

DD: No, that's not true. But, yes, ceramics for expression, an art form, is done by a much smaller proportion of practitioners. We are in a transition phase. In another 10 years, a lot will change. Also, there is an imbalance of expectations between the client and myself, for instance. The collectors and clients are still looking for pots, whereas I have

taken a detour. I find it difficult to make a connection with those kinds of viewers because they can't relate to my work. I am waiting for that time when more viewers will see clay beyond function.

KN: I feel another major thing that is missing is art criticism. There is no critical analysis anywhere like it used to be in the newspapers of the 1980s and 1990s. At best, we have feature writers, and no, they are not critics.

AB: They are informers.

KN: Yes. In those days, people writing books were also featuring the artists in mass media articles. Those who write today do not want to gain knowledge, and sadly those who create art do not want to use hands and do labour.

IP: Personally, I would never ever be ready to give up the joy of creation because that is my payment. I could never ever imagine doing something just using technology. It is your creation and that is not just there because someone operated a machine.

KK: I use the camera. You may use your iPhone. But at the end of the day, it's a medium to create something and my joy is to create something after taking the tools and using it and then using another tool to extend that

creation and complete that work. So, my joy involves the technical aspects also.

IP: I don't contradict you at all because before you make a photo you must choose what you are doing, and the choice you can only make when you are trained and when you know why you are doing that. And then learn to reject.

KK: Well, with the digital age, the idea of using your mind to select is reducing. I tend to shoot carefully and selectively when I have 36 frames on a film. With a digicam, I click and I delete, I click and I delete. Therefore, the brain is not actually thinking properly. That is one of the downsides of it after all.

DD: And then, there are fabricators who will do the actual hard work for you. Most of the sculptors are doing that.

KN: But then there is a stagnation in that work.

KK: Yes, because I decide my concept. The 'helper' can just finish it. He will not decide anything on your behalf. My father was making a painting the other day and he had put some red colour on the canvas. When I returned after a few hours, I said, 'Hey, what happened to the red?' He said, 'It was not working, you know.'

DD: Having someone else do your work is preconceived and nothing is spontaneous.

KN: Such work will lack soul. Frankly speaking, when I give my plates to print editions, I am always in the press. The printer is very impartial and follows the rule book, and I don't like that.

DD: He is mechanical. But is that the future of art production?

IP: I believe the future of visual art will be dictated mainly in fields which have nothing to do with the arts. The value, purpose, expression and everything will be decided in fields outside of art.

When I say outside of art, I mean the commercial side; that part will take over everything. People who have any power to manipulate and tell this is art and that is not will preside and tell what is the future and what is art.

AB: That can be dangerous.

KN: I agree with that. But think about this, there was noise about conceptual art. A lot was being talked about it, and now it is on a

downturn. The actual practice of art is again being recognised. Of course, digital production will be here to stay, but art itself will see a movement of 'back to the basics'.

KK: The future will encompass a lot of what has happened in the past and all that will develop in the future. Digital photography will stay, but a lot of analogue will come back. There will be a mixture of both because there is a certain charm in films which people seem to be missing now, and they are all heading back towards it. There is a kind of retro amalgamation of the past and what is happening today.

DD: As a sculptor I am optimistic. It will take some time, maybe a decade or so, but ceramics will be considered in the mainstream. It has started already. The art and craft will be separate spaces. All the media hype and technology are momentary. It will get filtered and only the genuine will remain.

AB: I agree. My wish is that the artist's place remains his studio. His *dharma* is to create. Others

will come forward to make a positive contribution for the rest of it. From role of sellers, media, and social media as well.

KK: See the funny side of social media – people think that my father has only made bandwalla series all his life. The fact is that he made it only in the last 10 to 15 years of his 70-year practice. But because social media came into being now, only his new work is promoted. And all buyers want him to make the same thing.

IP: This is what I meant when I said the decisions will be made outside our studios.

KN: Well, I live day-to-day and work-to-work. I see nothing; it is a total blank, but ideas keep coming and I inculcate them into my work. Technically, I will remain a painter and print-maker at the core; but then, my practice will definitely move... hopefully, forward!



Anandamoy Banerji

Ananda completed his B.F.A in painting from College of Art, Delhi in 1980 and M.F.A in printmaking from Kala Bhavana, Shantiniketan in 1985. Later, he completed advanced research in autographic printmaking from the Camberwell College of Art and Craft, UK. His works are part of significant collections, including the NGMA, Delhi. Ananda has been part of Biennials and has exhibited extensively in India and abroad.



Dipalee Daroz

Dipalee completed her Master's in painting but pursued ceramics as her medium of expression. She has held numerous exhibitions, including solo shows at Gallery Nvya and Art Alive Gallery, Delhi, Pundole Art Gallery, Mumbai, and Alliance Francaise, Bhopal. She assisted Jane Perryman for the book 'Traditional Pottery of India'. Dipalee has been an artist-in-residence at Jingdezhen, China and has assisted in the making of several documentaries on ceramic-art.



Ingrid Pitzer

Ingrid studied art at the University of Fine Arts, West-Berlin and has been on several study trips to Africa, Latin America, and various countries in Asia. She has extensively shown her works at significant group shows and solo shows at Tao Art Gallery, Mumbai, Gallery Sumukha, Bangalore, and Art Heritage, Delhi, and at several locations internationally. She received the Edward F. Albee Foundation award, USA, and Wiepersdorf Castle award, Germany, amongst others.



Karan Khanna

Viewing the world through the lens of a camera started as a school hobby and gradually spiraled into a passion. In 1982, Karan gave up his advertising career and took to photography full time. His works have been exhibited at various shows and are in private collections in India and abroad. Karan has auctioned his photographs at Sotheby's, in London and New York, and at the Borabour Auction, Singapore. He has had solo shows in India and abroad.



Kavita Nayar

Kavita obtained her Bachelor's from Santiniketan, followed by Master's at College of Art, New Delhi. She has received various awards including the French Government scholarship to work in Cite internationale Des Arts, Charles Wallace fellowship at Oxford University, England, Creative Fund fellowship, Luxembourg. She is the recipient of the Senior and Junior fellowship from the Ministry of HRD, India, and Research Grant from Lalit Kala Akademi. Kavita has extensively shown her works in India and abroad.



PUBLISHED BY VINCENT ADAIKALRAJ AND OWNED BY VINCENT ADAIKALRAJ AND PUBLISHED FROM
#127, TTK ROAD, ALWARPET, CHENNAI - 600018 AND PRINTED BY SRINIVASAN K AT SRIKALS GRAPHICS
PRIVATE LIMITED, #5 BALAJI NAGAR, 1ST STREET, EKATTUTHANGAL, CHENNAI - 600032. EDITOR - PRAVEENA SHIVRAM
RNI reg no. TNEG/2013/51944

