



ARTS ILLUSTRATED



Editor's note

While working on this issue, and now on this edit note, it comes to me slowly, like a ball rolling to a stop at my feet, that this word 'reverse' is a clever little word. It asks you to do two things – one is to go back in time (walk with forward steps or backward steps, your choice, it tells you generously), and the other is to re-look or maybe re-do whatever was done before, but with a dramatic shift in perspective, and a hyper awareness of time and space. In our otherwise very linear lives, reverse is like the walls you hit in a maze, making you change direction till you find the next opening, and the next, and the next, till you realise your steps are moving to an altogether different rhythm. Like I said, clever.

Initially, we tried to ride this unpredictable wave with what we thought was us being clever – consciously reversing our interpretations, trying hard to break linear structures and sequencing, thinking of ideas too big for their own boots – and then quickly gave up. The only way was a reversal of our roles – we had to submit, meekly, to its many whims and fancies and trust in that process.

Our stories, therefore, have marched to entirely differing tunes, swirling and twirling around dots we see every day and yet drawing completely new patterns each time. This issue was a breathless experience of being mere spectators, watching and observing and marvelling, and knowing through it all that without this boundary of an audience, the stage would become non-existent. I suspect that the thing called reverse, being clever and all, knows it too.



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Cover Artist



My paintings are like a memoir. I reference stories from the ones I heard as a child, the games we played to my life in a rural setting (I was born in Sanjaya, a small village in Gujarat). Inspiration from folk and tribal traditions can also be seen in my renditioning. Motifs, symbols and an overall sensibility of design, like borders to my frames, emerge from the decorations of a typical courtyard in a village home or handmade textiles.

I began exploring painting in reverse on a glass sheet in 2006. I saw works of KG Subramanyan and Nalini Malani. I was very curious to try it for myself. Soon I realised that it was very different from painting on paper or canvas. On paper, the paint gets absorbed and adheres quickly. In contrast, on a glass surface it remains wet and catches every stroke of the brush. Plus, one had to think in reverse

too. What I paint first will be most visible on the other side, unlike painting on canvas, where the first layer becomes the background and what I paint on it shows as the final image.

For the cover of this issue of Arts Illustrated, I used the reverse technique to paint a work titled 'The Magician'. Various elements emerge from his headgear and he appears entertaining and amusing. As a child, I never missed the opportunity to see the *Ram-Lila* performances. The over-the-top costumes they wore were fascinating. Every evening we used to wait for snake charmers and monkey trainers, and would run after the *beheroopiyas* (impersonators). Those vivid memories never leave my mind and I continue to draw my inspiration from them.



Madhvi Parekh

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