

# Art Observer

Monthly Art Reflections

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## Artistic Festivity of Kumortuli

Joyita Basak  
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Ask a fellow Bengali, "What is so special about Durga Puja?" He will laugh out and would obviously ask you back- "What is not special about this puja?" Yes, its surely the best, we, Bengali are welcoming Maa Durga with excitement and nostalgic memories to commence once again.

And when the Durga puja is few months away, how can I miss the name of Kumartuli, which is associated with the authentic art of idol making and sculpturing. The area in North Kolkata, nearest to the Ganges is possibly the purest traditional hub of Bengali culture. Inheriting the artistic 'Kumor', this term potter basically defines the work of making god and goddess, and reframing the crafts of artistry, the artists from Kumartuli are genuinely gifted with aesthetic and attractive originality. No wonder the clay models come alive with delight.

Being in the periphery of the actual heart of Kolkata, Kumartuli is specifically the best place to make and sell clay idols worldwide.



Throughout the whole year, one can surely spot how craftsmen mould the clay from Ganges on bamboo structures to frame models and idols. And not just only for Durga idols, this place is the cultural hub to maintain the consistency of "Baro mashe tero parbon" with quite delicacy.

Walking through the narrow lanes of Kumartuli, a nostalgia engulfs

with a fine taste for aesthetics immersed in devotion. Tucked inside North Kolkata, this place with combination of lanes and by lanes offers a magnificent era where the artist's hands mould clays to build the shape of divine. After the hard labour for almost three months, we can finally witness our favourite Ma Durga, standing with her slaying pose to destroy the evil

power of Mahishasura. Turning simple clays into divine shapes, it's obviously their creativity to turn clay into gold. Colouring and fashioning the entire idols by hand, its their imagination and innovation with a total devotion that has managed this art to be one of the best throughout the world of idol making.

### Art and Culture

# Masan Chitrakala by Madhusudan Das

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Masan Chitrakala The state of West Bengal and Assam. The word "Masan" has originated from "Shashan" meaning the cremating place in Bengali language. It is a tribal art form of mainly north Bengal and Assam. The Rajbanshi tribe found in interior jungles or in remote and rural villages of Jalpaiguri, Mainaguri, siliguri and Coachbihardistricts, were the main patrons of this art form. In this art form different motifs or structures are created using "shola" (a hydrophyte found in West Bengal) or on plane white sheets using handmade brushes and natural colours extracted from plants. This art form is of immense cultural and religious importance. The people who used to make these motifs were called "Malakar" probably meaning garland makers. These shola motifs were of special importance to this tribe as they used these motifs for curing the sick members of their community or at auspicious occasions such as the birth of a new born and in marriages for making "Topoor" (headwear for groom) and "SithiMukut" (headwear for bride). Shola motifs were mainly used for people suffering from high fever, fits, etc. The priests called "Ojha" were called by the household having the patient and the ojha then performed some ritual on the shola motif and chanted some mantras or precisely performed tantra mantra on the motifs. It was believed that this would cure the sick and bring



Madhusudan Das 'Masan Art'  
Acrylic on canvas 54x42 Inches



Madhusudan Das 'Masan Chitrakala-3'  
Acrylic on Canvas 60x36 Inches

welfare to the household. All the Masan motifs had different figures and creatures having different purposes.

**Madhusudan Das's Aim Towards Masan Chitrakala :** I strongly feel that the prestigious Masan art needs to be preserved to keep the essence of our Indian culture alive and to do so, I want to take certain measures. I want the craftsmen and artisans of this chitrakala residing in backward rural areas to be brought forward to



Madhusudan Das

towns and cities where they can exercise their talent in a much larger horizon and spread the word about an art which is close to extinct in today's world. Teaching the methods and showcasing the ancient traditions by conducting art workshops for the same in educational institutions, especially art colleges in developing towns and cities is another way of making the common man aware of the Masan chitrakala. Publicizing the works and paintings through not only mass media, but also museums

and public centers will inspire people all over the world and will give a new meaning to art because of its history and uniqueness. I want to encourage their pieces of work and give them opportunities in the society which will help in throwing light at this beautiful art and talent of artisans to keep the core Indian values from dying.

**Madhusudan Das :** Artist, Mr. Madhusudan Das was born on 18th December 1973. Completed B.F.A (Hons) and M.F.A (Hons) from Kala Bhavan, Visva-bharati University, Santiniketan, West Bengal. He was a National Scholarship Holder by Ministry of H.R.D. In 1995, He was awarded a Gold Medal in All India Art Festival at A.P. He got Merit Scholarship from Kala Bhavan, Visva Bharti University in 1992-94. He had his somany Group and solo Exhibitions In India and Abroad , excellent solo Exhibition of American Embassy, New Delhi, 2017,

He has Tremendous International Solo Exhibitions at well-known places- Singapore, London, New York (1997) and at National Museum; Dhaka Bangladesh (Organized by Indian High Commission, 2017) Solo Exhibition at NSCBICC (ICCR) High Commission of India Malaysia 2019. Some collections of his Excellent, Nehru Centre High Commission of India LONDON in 2019

Online Art Exhibitions  
[ARTinfoINDIA.COM](http://ARTinfoINDIA.COM)



Exhibit in Craft Museum New Delhi

Picture Courtesy : www.wikipedia.org

# Traditional Indian Embroidery Art Forms

## Crossword Puzzle

Pooja Gupta  
pooja2607@gmail.com

### ACROSS

2. – Indigenous to West Bengal and Odisha, a simple yet elegant style of embroidery is mainly done by rural women. The form employs regular running stitch with intermittent small gaps displaying variable motifs of flora, fauna, geometric patterns, celestial bodies and day-to-day activities. Extensively done on dress materials, sarees, bed covers, cushion covers, furnishings, upholstery and much more (6)

4. – The fine form of embroidery that is done using a hooked, sharp needle, from which its name is derived. Also known as crewel

work, in this technique chain stitch loops are made in combination with beads and sequins. Originated in the Mughal era, today it is practised largely by the artisans of Kashmir, Lucknow and Rajasthan (4)

6. – One of the most popular hand embroidery art forms originated from Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The delicate embroidery started as white embroidery on a white cloth but nowadays a variety of fabrics and coloured threads are also used. The famous intricate style is considered to be patronaged by Nur Jehan, the wife of Jahangir, the Mughal emperor (10)

7. – An absolute stunning craftwork from Gujarat and Rajasthan, this is also popular as shisha. It employs embellishment of mirrors of variable size and shape along with colourful threads to create wonderful patterns on

fabric. It is very trendy in dresses such as lehenga-cholis, accessories, bags and decorative items (10)

9. – The effluent gold and silver embroidery where metallic threads are used primarily on silk and velvet with pearls and some precious stones. Believed to be originated from Persia, the art form is a mark of luxury and was earlier exclusively made for the rich. Today, copper wires with golden or silver polish and silk or synthetic threads are also used to make it more affordable (7)

motifs are created using long and short darn stitch for modest look. A light coloured, hand-spun or natural-dyed khadi is usually embroidered with bright coloured threads in vertical, horizontal and diagonal arrays. The characteristic work symbolizes happiness and prosperity and is an integral part of prevalent state culture (8)

8. – Native to Rajasthan, the technique uses gold and silver ribbons or its strips to make elaborate patterns on fabrics and allied wear. Currently, these ribbons are substituted by a polyester film coated with copper or silver. Perfect for traditional and festive occasions, the saris, lehngas,



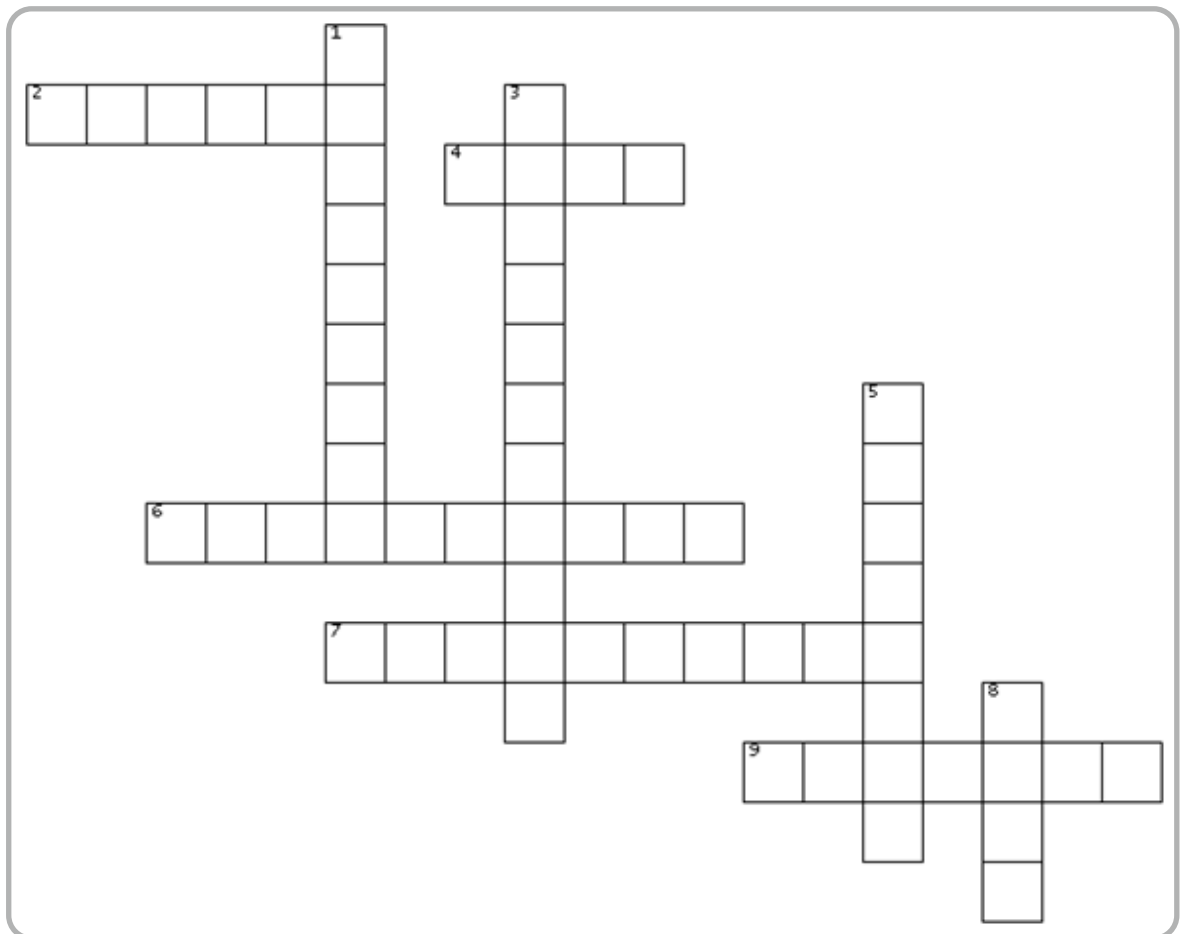
Rajasthani clothes

Picture Courtesy : www.wikipedia.org



Blue mural embroidery, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India

Picture Courtesy : www.wikipedia.org



work, in this technique chain stitch loops are made in combination with beads and sequins. Originated in the Mughal era, today it is practised largely by the artisans of Kashmir, Lucknow and Rajasthan (4)

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7. – An absolute stunning craftwork from Gujarat and Rajasthan, this is also popular as shisha. It employs embellishment of mirrors of variable size and shape along with colourful threads to create wonderful patterns on

### DOWN

1. – The beautiful craft from Rajasthan that produces an exquisite pattern by stitching many small pieces of different fabrics together. The resultant creation, whether hand or machine embroidered, gets an altogether distinct look (9)

3. – Widely known as Kashmiri embroidery, it is a skilled craft that hails from Kashmir and draws its inspiration from heavenly beauty of the valley. It mainly involves simple chain stitches and usually a single stitch is chosen to complete a design. Done extensively on silk and wool, the embroidery uses mostly plant and floral motifs (11)

5. – Literally meaning flower craft, the traditional embroidery art is identified with Punjab. Colourful geometric designs depicting floral

odhnis, turbans, etc. with this embroidery look elegant and rich (4)

Use the clues to fill in the words above. Words can go across or down. Letters are shared when the words intersect.

Answers:  
Across  
2 - KANTHA  
4 - AARI  
6 - CHIKANKARI  
7 - MIRRORWORK  
9 - ZARDOSI  
10 - PATCHWORK  
11 - KASHIDAKARI  
Down  
1 - PHULKARI  
3 - GOTA

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# Ramgarhia's Virasat - A Prodigious Treasurer

D S Kapoor

kapoords@yahoo.com

Coffee table books are fascinating literary creations. 'The Ramgarhia's Virasat' is an exceptional coffee table book that is an inspirational collection of immense heritage and legacy that stimulates positive thought and self-reliance. This book has covered the conversations about legendary persons in the community, offers valuable intuitions, and adds a splash of colour to reader's gathered information.



Jaitegh Singh Anant  
Water Colour by Amar, Artist

engineering, entrepreneurship, economics, fine arts, architecture, performing arts and sports. The Author Jaitegh Singh Anant has not only enthusiastically supported this work but has also done an important and commendable job of making the book a historical document by providing his invaluable services and able guidance for which the Ramgarhia Society will forever be indebted to him.

The Coffee table book "Ramgarhia Virasat" was released in Punjab, India by Bibi Jagir Kaur, President, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar at Sri Guru

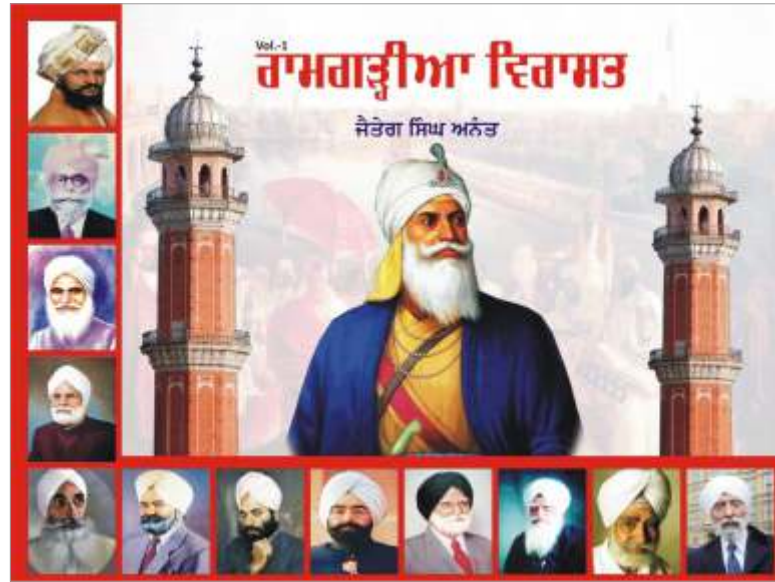
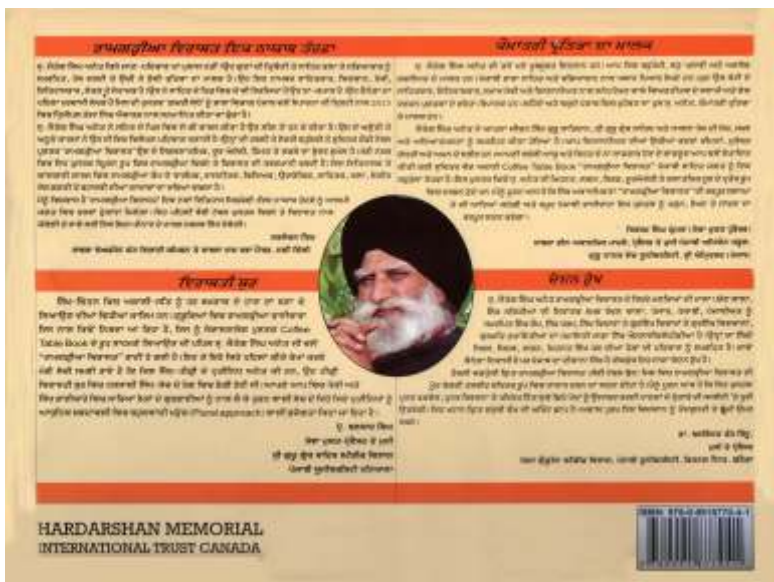
a ceremony was officiated by Surrey, Newton, MP Sukh Dhaliwal, Canadian Ramgarhia Society President, Surinder Singh Jabal, speaking on the occasion Chief Guest Sukh Dhaliwal praised Jaitegh Singh Anant for his tireless work and dedication. He said that this book has been made available in Canada, England, Africa, Library of Indian Parliament, National Library, Calcutta, Sikh Reference Library, and Libraries of all the Universities of Punjab for the benefit of interested readers and students are able to learn about their heritage and make this book the source of their research work.

and cash awards. Dharam Singh Panesar, Vice President, Canadian Ramgarhia Society praised Jaitegh Singh's scholarly wisdom.

There are about 1000 notable persons in the book. There are about 450 coloured pictures of leading personalities (writers, poets, lyricists, journalists, politicians, freedom fighters, religious leaders, ragis, academicians, industrialists, artists, sculptors, musicians, sportsmen, and many more. However, I like to mention only a few of them whose contribution to the humanity is incredible in the various fields, they are -Bhai Ram Singh Sohal, world famous Architect; Mohan Singh Hadibadi, Founder Ramgarhia College, Phagwara; Munsher Singh Dukhi, most active freedom fighter and leader of Ghadar moment 1915; Famous artist of Punjab SG Thakur Singh; Renowned painter Sardar Sobha Singh; Giani Zail Singh, Former President of India; Sardar Karnail Singh, Chairman of Railway Board in Indian Government; Trilok Singh Chitrakar, Saint artist, Patiala; Sarup Singh Khalsa, Founder President, All India Sikh Student Federation; Giani Gurdit Singh, eminent writer and scholar; well-known portrait painter Mehar Singh; Sir Mota Singh, Justice U.K. Jaitegh Singh has won numerous national and international awards and honours in photography, art, and Literature at the national and International Punjabi Conference held at Chandigarh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Lahore (Pakistan) United Kingdom, Canada, United States of America, and Hong Kong. Some of the important awards adorned him. He was privileged with the Lifetime achievement award for his valuable contribution in the field of art and Literature by the Indian Buddhist Society, Vancouver, Canada.

He has indeed done a noble task in compiling the contribution of 'Ramgarhias Community across the globe.

This book will certainly make its mark by becoming a part of History.



## Who are the Ramgarhias?

The Ramgarhia is a community of Sikhs from the Punjab state of northwestern India, very skilled, creative and accomplished artisans, known for their traditional skills like furniture designing, construction of buildings, metal crafts, stonework, and of course painting and portraiture. Moreover, they have a resourceful approach to problem-solving. They are named after Jassa Singh Ramgarhia of Ramgarhia Misl, which was a sovereign state in the Sikh confederacy of the Punjab region in present-day India and Pakistan. The misl's name is derived from Quila Ramgarh, a place near Amritsar which was stimulated and redesigned by Ramgarhia Misl chief Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. The Ramgarhia misl was one of the 12 major Sikh misls, near Amritsar.

Their artisan skills were noted by the British, who encouraged many Ramgarhia to move to colonies in East Africa in the 1890s, where they assisted in the creation of that region's substructure and became Africanised. The British authorities also encouraged and motivated Ramgarhias to migrate within India during the first quarter of the 20th century. Ramgarhia groups are also running their own

educational and socio-religious institutions as well as mobilizing their diaspora and any prominent individuals who might assist in enhancing their identity.

## Ramgarhias Virasat - An exclusive Publication

The Author Jaitegh Singh Anant is senior alumnus of the esteemed Government College of Art, Chandigarh. He has involved himself very actively and enthusiastically in various activities of art and literature in Canada, he continues to work for the growth of Punjabi culture and Punjabi culture all over the world through many channels in India and abroad to participate in online interviews, debates, and discussions on Punjab and Punjabi Virsa and its expansion. This prestigious book is an important document of the glorious history, eminent personalities, achievements, and deeds of the Ramgarhia community. This meaningful book will be very useful for the young generation. This book is one of its kinds that contains the life sketches, photographs, and other details of Ramgarhia personalities who made the history and heritage. This is an illustrated and well-designed work having more than 1000 entries of Ramgarhias from the field of religion, history, politics,



Jaitegh Singh Anant being honoured in a Book launching ceremony at Canada

Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College, Anandpur Sahib on April 21, 2021. The second launching of the book was at Ramgarhia Gursikh society, Edmonton, Canada by Chairman, Bhai Balbir Singh Channa on May 9, 2021. Further, the book was released by Lachhman Singh Bhabra, Public Relation Officer of the Ramgarhia council, at Guru Ka Niwas, Ramgarhia Gurdwara, Wolverhampton, the United Kingdom on May 16, 2021. The foremost launching of the book was by the Canadian Ramgarhia Society Canada, at Gurdwara Brookside, Surrey, May 16, 2021, in

He thanked all the office bearers and committee members of the Canadian Ramgarhia Society for their support and patronage in the publication of this first coffee table book published in Gurmukhi. Speaking on the background of the book, Surinder Singh Jabal, President, Canadian Ramgarhia The society said that the book was launched on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Maharaja Jassa Singh Ramgarhia at 2020 Ramgarhia World conference, Surrey. On this Occasion Jaitegh Singh Anant was honoured with titles, commemorative mementos,



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A Glorious Past An Essential Present A Promising Future

## Editorial

## Visuals of the Month



Goldy Malhotra

Goddess Durga descended the Earth on Mahalaya which is celebrated by Bengalis all over the world. The festival is associated with different practices like invoking the goddess 'Mahisasura Mardini' with mantras- 'Jago Tumi Jago', giving bhog to Brahmins and tour to the picturesque winding lanes of Kolkata where the potters paint the eyes on Durga's face on this day. This is called 'Chokkhudaan'. Our first article takes you to Kumortuli where artists get engrossed in this labour for divine creativity and turn clay into beautiful 'murtis'. Very soon the month of celebration will come and there could not have been a better opportunity for us to share the most colourful display of pictures of Kumortuli. India is very proud of its heritage and crafts associated with the same.

Embroidery is one such craft that reflects the diversity of cultures in our country. Every state has its own style of decorating the fabric with colourful threads and needle that shows the variations in skill. These embroideries also seem to weave the stories of culture and make it rich. This art had started dwindling in the past but fortunately many NGOs have taken the initiative to keep it alive, pass it down to the younger generation and provide some livelihood to the craftsmen (many are women). An article on Ferozshah village competition named 'Mrs Joginder Kaur Memorial Handicrafts Competition' organised

by Mrs Harjeet Kaur throws light on the same. A book has also been authored by Isha Jaiswal that has compilation of the pictures of handicrafts that is a great source of reference material for researchers to learn and explore more than just Phulkari of Punjab. To enrich the issue by adding related information on embroideries, a Crossword is specifically provided for readers to feel proud of exceptional crafts of our great nation.

Artist Madhusudan Das's contribution to Masan Chitrakala by revealing the ancient traditions and conducting workshops for the educational institutions is worth the appreciation. He is taking a courageous step to encourage the traditional artists and save some Indian values from dying by publicising the works and paintings through mass media and museums. Our coverage on this art also deals with the purpose of this art that goes beyond its aesthetic value.

D S Kapoor's scholarly inputs are always unique and full of information. His article on Ramgarhia's Virasat not only makes us proud but also puts Indian cultural contributions on an elevated international platform. Many would like to treasure this article and share with others.

In this 21st century we have seen Art marrying Science and during pandemic, it opened many portholes/windows.' Art Courses for the New Age' is a step forward to guide the youngsters to bring scientific approach to their art and meet the demand of the day. The Digital Art and Illustration courses are answer to many who are trying to keep pace with the technology in changing times.

Once again, we bring to you a rare and versatile personality who has made name in the field of theatre-

Harish Bhatia. I have had the privilege of working with him on stage and can boast of picking up many nuances on acting from his vast experience. Acting and directing come to him with equal spontaneity'. In the Conversation' permitted me to ask all related questions and his honest replies are enough to invoke the interest in theatre in many youngsters. What makes him truly versatile is his interest in music and poetry. Having been a professor at the Engineering College, he continued his quest for theatre and made it fruitful.

Art Observer believes in genuinely observing the on-going art scenes and give special coverage to the contemporary artists. Shalini Singh's works depicting love for Khadi and linking it with Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan is interesting. Her colours are harmoniously well balanced. Virender Goyal's simplicity in mono chromatic water colours is without any pretensions.

World University of Design, a university that has made a name in the field of Arts in a short period of time is doing a great service by recognising the eminent artists. Naresh Kapuria, known for his paintings, sculptures and installations was specially honoured by the university. Balvinder's very candid and honest opinion about Virtual and Real art shows makes us understand the pros and cons of these different ways of showing the art works to public.

Culture, theatre, traditional crafts, art education and heritage, we have layered it all for you to read and enjoy.



Sanjeev Verma 'Red Tape' Acrylic on Canvas 60x60 Inches



Dr Vimmie Manoj 'Blue City' Acrylic on Paper, 29x21 cm

## For Your Collection

## Cartoon Column



Smita Jain

Shelter

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Manjot Kaur

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Smita Jain

Fortress

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Salvador Fernades

Universe

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Unnati Singh

Untitled

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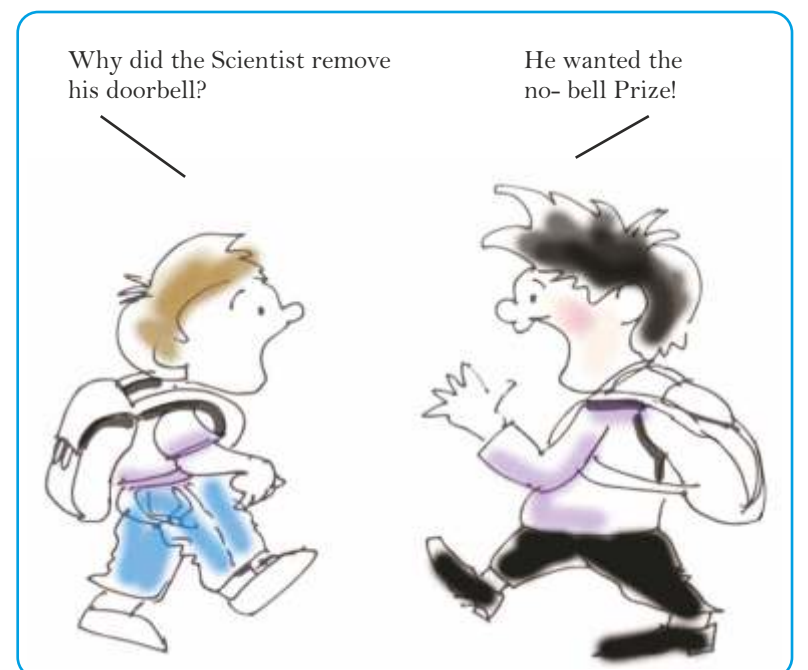


Mukesh Kumar

Fantasy Landscape

Acrylic on Canvas  
48x36 Inches Rs 40K  
Contact 9910999689

Jaswinder Raja ————— jaswinderaja@gmail.com



<https://www.youtube.com/user/chawlaks>

# A Versatile Theatre Personality

Goldy Malhotra

goldymalhotra@gmail.com

*Harish Bhatia is well known personality in the field of theatre. Rarely one finds a person who is teaching pure Sciences at the engineering level and seriously involved in acting and directing at the same time. Yes, Harish wears many hats. Though not professionally trained, he has gained a lot through exposure, experience and self-study. His love for music and poetry has given him an urge to keep on exploring several related fields. Believing in perfection, he is admired for hard work and commitment. Having contributed a lot to theatre in Chandigarh, Harish has made a niche for himself. His unforgettable roles in many plays produced by 'Abhineta' have made him a mentor for many youngsters.*

**GM:** *When did you first feel the urge to act on stage? How old were you?*

**HB:** In my growing years, I was fascinated by watching great actors in films (Daag, Andaz, Barsaat, Nagin, Anarkali and Baiju Bawra). Would mimic their acting in the household. But I found myself really interested in acting during my Engineering student days (1958-1963) at PEC, Chandigarh when I got an opportunity to act in three Dramatic Club plays.



Harish Bhatia

**GM:** *You have been a Science student and had a wonderful career as a reputed Professor in a leading Engineering College at Chandigarh. Did this not come in your way to pursue your love for theatre?*

**HB:** No, in fact it was at age 21/22 after I did my MS in Engg. with First position (1963) and was immediately offered an Asstt. Prof. position at PEC that I felt an inner calling to pursue theatre as my intense passion. From 1964 to 1968, I acted in important roles in Plays staged by The PEC Faculty and Ladies Dramatic Club. This further propelled me to taking up serious theatre. My teaching job gave me lot of free time in the evenings to do theatre.

**GM:** *Did you have any formal training in acting or theatre? Do you feel that it is essential for an actor to be trained formally before stepping onto a stage?*

**HB:** I have had no formal training in acting/directing in theatre. My inspiration came from watching great actors like Balraj Sahni, Dilip Kumar, Charlton Heston (Ben-Hur), Marlon Brando, (A Street Car Named Desire) and others, some of whose films I would watch a number of times. Somewhere inside I had a latent talent which gave me the ability to essay any role effectively with amazing spontaneity. Also having spent my childhood in UP (Meerut) I had been exposed to and mastered speaking Urdu/Hindi, I memorised my dialogues in all plays that I acted in without ever forgetting/faltering in all plays that I acted in my lifetime. I would even remember the lines of my co-actors/the whole play.

**GM:** *Tell us about your involvement with the 'Abhineta' group at Chandigarh.*

**HB:** With my limited theatre background before 'Abhineta', but looking for a serious Professional approach group. I was introduced to Dr V. Mehndiratta in 1973. He and I became close friends and would often talk of plays and theatre. Eleven of us (incl. V Mehndiratta NC Thakur, Aditya Prakash, SS Dawra, Surinder Pal Kaur, Champa Mangatrai, BP Sinha, Atulvir Arora, Usha R Sharma, Sheila Roy and I) finally formed 'ABHINET' in 1974 and it was registered to pursue serious theatre. Our first staged play was Mohan Rakesh's modern classic 'ASHAD KA EK DIN' in which I played the central role of Kalidasa. The play was very successful and we got press and public accolades. Thereafter there was no looking

back. We would do on the average 2 plays a year. In the very next play, as you know 'Lehron Ke Rajhans', You also joined in the central female role. I and Atul switched the main male role on alternate days. This play was also widely praised. From 1977 onwards I also started directing plays. Nearly 60 plays done by ABHINET from 1974 to 2006, I acted in 18 plays and directed 21 -a record in ABHINET. I must make an honourable mention of late Nemi Chandra Jain, whose encouragement, inspiration and advice was instrumental in furthering and honing my theatre work. He often came to Chandigarh as an examiner for viva exam of Department of Theatre students.



Mohan Rakesh's 'Lehron Ke Rajhans' 1975  
Directed by Virendra Mehndiratta  
Nand-Harish Bhatia; Sundari-Goldy Malhotra

He would invariably ask me to spend some time with him at PU Guest House where he stayed. In 1979, he came to watch my directorial work while we were rehearsing the musical; 'Dulari Bai' and also next year again in 1980 when we were rehearsing 'Aala Afsar' and was much impressed by my insight of musical theatre idiom and stylised direction of the play. It was he who got Abhineta selected by Bharat Bhavan Bhopal, for presentation of 'Aala Afsar' in A National Festival of 7 Best Plays of the Year. His words encouraged me to study forms and treatises on theatre for gaining deeper knowledge. From then onwards I read in depth selected great World Plays/Greek Theatre/Sanskrit Theatre and most importantly

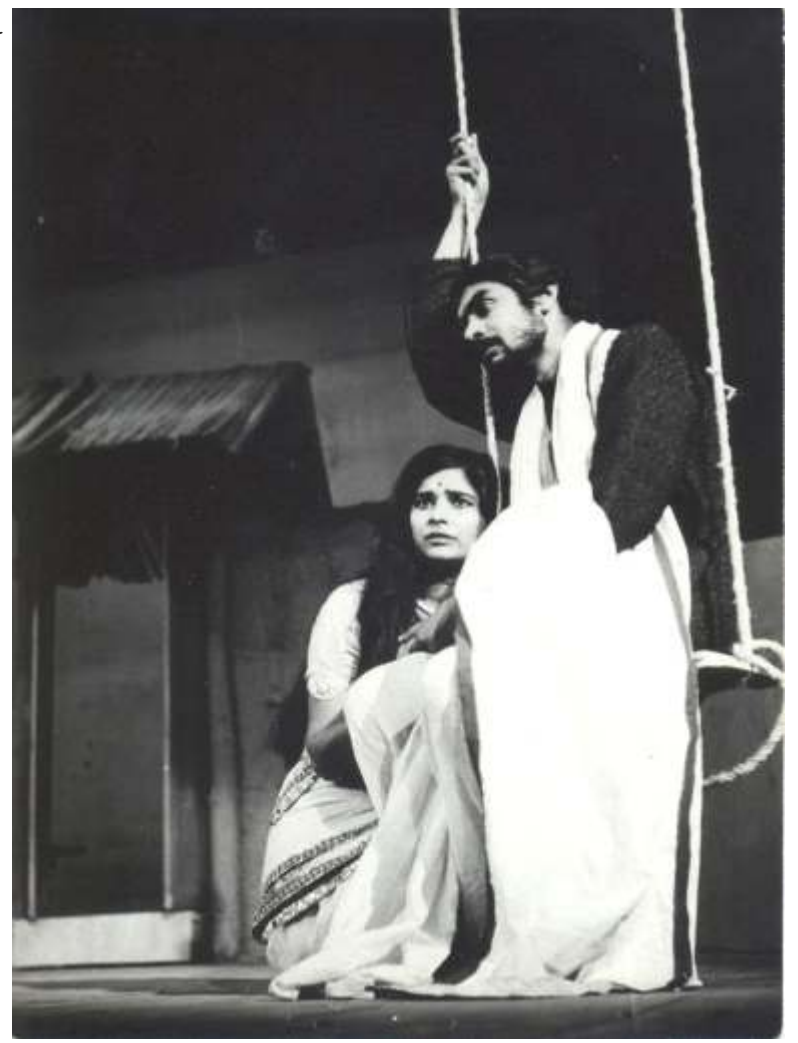
Bharata's Natya Shastra, theory of Rasa and the central importance of Equipose/Balance in Theatre/all Art Forms and Life, It was his encouragement and mentoring which made me select formidable Sanskrit plays like MUDRARAKSHASA and MITTI KI GADI very soon in 1982/1983.

**GM:** *You have acted as well as directed several plays. What has been more fulfilling as an artist?*

**HB:** I have equally enjoyed both Acting and Directing. In this, you will bear me out having worked with me in landmark plays like 'Mitti Ki Gadi' and 'Adhe Adhure'. In both these plays I acted as well as directed. Every member of ABHINET unanimously agrees that 'Mitti Ki Gadi' has been the best production of ABHINET. It is a matter of pride for both of us.

**GM:** *Panjab University Theatre department had not even started when your group of like-minded people initiated a sort of awareness of theatre appreciation. Share some of your experiences of that period. What were the main challenges?*

**HB:** Yes, our seniors like NC Thakur, Aditya Prakash and V



Mohan Rakesh's Modern Classic 'Ashadh Ka Ek Din' (Tagore Theatre, Chandigarh 1975)  
Directed by Kumara Verma  
Mallika-Usha R Sharma; Kalidasa-Harish Bhatia



Edward Albee's Modern Classic 'Whos Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?' (Hindi transl)  
Directed by Harish Bhatia (Chandigarh 2004)  
Martha-Shivali Chauhan; George-Harish Bhatia

**GM:** *Mention some your favourite plays that have given you a sense of achievement or creative fulfilment.*

**HB:** Some of the plays, in my humble opinion, which have become memorable landmark productions of ABHINET, (by unanimous verdict) are ...'Ashadh Ka Ek Din' (1974-dir NC Thakur); 'Dularibai' (1979-dir Harish Bhatia); 'Evam Indrajit' (1976-dir Atulvir Arora); 'Aala Afsar' (1980-dir Harish Bhatia); also invited to Bhatrat Bhavan, Bhopal to be staged in a National Festival of 7 Best Plays of the year in 1980. 'Andha Yug' (dir NC Thakur/V Mehndiratta); 'Mudrarakshasa' (1982-Sanskrit Classic -dir Harish Bhatia); 'Mitti Ki Gadi' (1982-Sanskrit classic-dir Harish Bhatia); 'Adhe Adhure'(1984 -dir Harish Bhatia); 'Kanchghar (1982-dir Atulvir Arora); 'Hayavadan' (1985-dir Harish Bhatia, selected for staging at the North Zone Sangeet Natak Akademi) Festival held at Chandigarh; 'Jarjar Haveli' (1986-dir Harish Bhatia); 'Death of A Salesman' (1992-dir Atulvir Arora); 'Waiting For Godot' (1993-dir Harish Bhatia) and 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' (2004 and 2005-dir Harish Bhatia). This was the culmination of my theatre output... a milestone for ABHINET. The American Center/Embassy, New Delhi invited/financed two stagings of the play in Sept 2005 at The India Habitat Centre to resounding success. Greatly impressed, the American Centre

gave us a generous grant to stage Miller's 'The Price' in English in 2006 at Delhi, Jaipur and Chandigarh. This, in short, is my rich enviable output for ABHINET.

**GM:** *Do you have any unfulfilled desire in theatre production?*

**HB:** I am fully satisfied with my theatre oeuvre. Of course, if I come across some great world plays with a small cast, good actors willing to work with me and sufficient funds/sponsorship, I will take up any new assignment

**GM:** *You have been very actively engaged even after your retirement and been a role model for many. How are you able to inspire the younger generation?*

**HB:** I was fortunate to draw upon young keen actors from the PEC students during my active years in ABHINET. As you know many of the smaller ensemble roles in large cast plays like 'Mitti Ki Gadi' and 'Mudrarakshasa' were played by them in multiple roles. Many of them drew further inspiration from me and have continued working in theatre in their later lives too. Other young aspiring students preparing for their competitive IAS exam interviews have been coming to me to get an overview of Indian and World Theatre. A memorable example is that of Prerna Puri a brilliant MA Psychology student

Continued to page 6

## A Versatile Theatre Personality



'Adhe Adhure' 1984 Directed by Harish Bhatia  
 clockwise from left: Arvind Nanda (Purush 4-Juneja); Harish Bhatia (Purush 3-Jagmohan);  
 Ravindra Kumar (Purush 2-Singhania); Kamal Arora (Purush 1-Mahendranath)

who was selected in IAS around the year 2003/4. She had worked under my direction in the Girish Karnad play 'Agni aur Barkha' in 2002, and became genuine admirer of my work and approach. Before her IAS interview, she came for tips on of great plays/essentials of acting and direction. In the interview she was asked to speak on her most passionate interest aside from academics/and IAS. She spoke to the interview committee brilliantly on Theatre and was selected.

**GM:** Have you ever thought about or planned for producing a play or short film for the small screen?

**HB:** Yes, after such a rich and vast experience in Theatre, I have been planning to prepare videos of short classic plays, short stories adapted as plays, and monologues for YouTube. My wife Usha is working with me on producing such videos. Time will tell when our efforts will succeed.

**GM:** You have been a good singer and now your love for poetry has pushed you into translating poems from Hindi to English that many readers are appreciating a lot. When did this creativity start?

**HB:** In 2011, after realising I had done significant theatre, having acted in and directing nearly 20 great World/Indian Plays and also having retired from my Professor's job from PEC, I turned to my first interest \_SINGING, especially when recording with excellent karaoke from Meragana.com were available, I zealously prepared a list 500 great songs from the Golden Era of Indian film music and then rehearsed ,sang and recorded 400 Songs-during four years 2014 to 2017. I then uploaded all my recorded songs on YouTube and also starting sharing them on Facebook.

In 2017, I searched another area of Arts...Poetry. My wife was writing poems and Haiku in English in

those days which also I typed her poems on my laptop. (Later A Book of 50 of her poems and Haiku 'titled 'In Mind's Petri Dish' was published in Jan 2020 by Authors Press New Delhi.) First, I recorded Poetry Reading of 500 select Great Hindi poems and shared/uploaded about 50 on YouTube. Then, getting a fillip from Usha's writing of poems, I decided to translate those 500 poems in English. I have been enjoying this work since Aug 2020. Have shared with Facebook friends about 300 of my translated poems till date.

**GM:** Any tips for the young actors who are interested in making stage acting their first love before finding their way into films.

**HB:** Tips for Young Aspiring Actors-take up Professional Theatre and Films ONLY if you think you have the inner talent and calling and are prepared to take the long protracted grind to success. Otherwise choose a more fulfilling professional field like Engg. Medicine or Management and when settled in a good earning career, start pursuing your theatre/film interest.

**GM:** Lastly how can a seasoned person like you teach theatre appreciation to a common person?

**HB:** I am planning to start acting workshops in theatre/films in the near future. I hope to rope in Atulvir Arora and Kamal Arora, who also live in Panchkula, in this joint venture.

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Beckett's Modern Classic 'Waiting For Godot' 1993 (Hindi transl. by K B Vaid)  
 Directed by Harish Bhatia  
 Estragon-Rana Nayar; Lucky-JK Singh; Vladimir-Atul Arora



Shudraka's 'Mrichhakatikam' great Sanskrit drama 'Mitti Ki Gadi' 1983  
 (Hindi Trnsl. Mohsn Rakesh) Direction: Harish Bhatia & Aditya Prakash  
 The Heroine Vasantsena-Goldy Malhotra; The Villain Shakar-Kamal Arora

# Handicraft Competition in a Village in Punjab

Isha Jaiswal

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This is another step in culturally rich state of Punjab to bring out the best in art and craft. Particularly the rural belts have a lot to offer and make us proud.

People from rural villages of Punjab create a lot of handicrafts. They may be professional handicrafts artists just amateurs; unfortunately, they largely remain unnoticed in the metros. As a result, these handicraft persons remain bereft of their due publicity, creative exposure and the much-needed sales. Though several organisations are arranging the art melas or festivals to bring their works in the market, yet it is a very tiny effort compared to what is really needed. Recently, Mrs Harjeet Kaur Jaiswal in the memory of her mother Mrs Joginder Kaur, along with Mr Rajinder Singh Raja, President Dashmesh Youth Club at District Ferozepur, organised, Mrs Joginder Kaur Memorial Handicrafts Competition - 2021. This program filled the much-needed gap which has been identified in the creative realm of rural Punjab.

The aim of this competition was to document the diverse kinds of Crochet, Knitting and other thread-based handicrafts, which, were being made by handicraft persons, during the lifetime of Late Mrs Joginder Kaur, who, actively patronised these handicrafts from the year 1926 to 26 May 2021, when



The Prizewinners with the Organisers



Left to Right: Mrs Harjeet Kaur Jaiswal the Patron, an award winning lady,  
 Dr Paramjit Singh Jaiswal Retd Professor from Delhi University and  
 the Chief Guest of Honour, Mr Rajinder Singh Raja, President Dashmesh Youth Club

she breathed her last.

The humble hallmark of this competition was meant to document for posterity, the diversity of handicrafts being made, as also, to provide a recognition, motivation, publicity and encouragement to the handicraft persons. It also endeavoured to successfully provide experience credentials, certificates and awards to handicraft persons by Mrs Harjeet Kaur Jaiswal and Dashmesh Youth Club, a registered body from Ferozeshah Village, so that, these crafts persons are given due recognition can further compete at the state and national level. These credentials will also act as a stepping stone for these handicraft persons to showcase their skills at Handicraft Trade Exhibitions cum Trade Events and other places to earn money and fame. The first prize was won by Ms Paramjeet Kaur, the second by Ms Naseeb Kaur and the third prize was won by Ms Manjeet Kaur. An award for special recognition was presented to Ms Kuldeep Kaur for her active and outstanding contribution for promoting handicrafts in three different handicraft centres in

Ferozepur District.

On behalf of Dashmesh Youth Club, Ms Isha Jaiswal the Chief Executive Officer and incharge of Mrs Joginder Kaur Memorial Handicrafts Competition 2021, has also authored an e book which contains all the photographs of these handicrafts that were received as part of the competition. This dated visual compilation will be a great source of reference material for researchers and sociologists who wish to study the handicraft designs of Punjab other than Phulkari. A copy of this book can be obtained on request from hhandicraft1@gmail.com. It was particularly thrilling to see the excellent bonhomie and mirthfulness that bonded the organisers, the participants and the winners at this function. This association will continue in future t on a personal one to one level. Mrs Joginder Kaur Memorial Handicrafts Competition - 2021 indeed became a great social event in Ferozeshah Village and the message for such a purposeful endeavour has already spread far and wide. Now people are looking forwards to the next event.

**CREATIONS**  
 &  
**EXPRESSIONS**  
 Online Art Exhibition

# World University of Design Celebrates Renowned Artist Naresh Kapuria

Art Observer Syndicate

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The famous Pablo Picasso once said, "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life" and in today's context what could be a better way to replenish the battered soul if not with an exquisite piece of art! Renowned artist Naresh Kapuria did exactly that by presenting his work to the connoisseur of the creative field, World University of Design. His artwork is a unique piece engraved on burnt wood that reverberates the essence of Kabirdas' doha:

'Lakdi jal koyla bhai, aur koyla jal bhayo raakh; main paapan aisi jali, jo koyla bhai na raakh'

His doha implies that even wood and charcoal on getting fully disintegrated are still of use, unlike humans who with a heart full of desire end up being of no use to anyone. The lines urge one and all to understand the concept of being of use to the world that envelops them. Artist Kapuria has used it to bring out the ideology of "Teacher and Taught Relationship" that follows the very concept – So long

as the teacher is alive; they surround the world of their students with every element of the knowledge they possess. They widen their students' horizons and enrich them with the wisdom that will trickle down onto generations, making it certain that even when the teacher has completed their worldly journey, they will still be of significance and living through their teachings.

Both entities have a lot to give to each other in their honored symbiotic relationship. To learn from and to be of use to humanity so long as they coexist, they must be of significance to each other and the world around them must benefit from them. The very spirit of the revered concept was celebrated in a closed event at World University of Design in an Artwork Presentation by Naresh Kapuria in University premises who was present along with Art Critic Qazi Raghbir.

Very aptly, Dr. Sanjay Gupta (Vice Chancellor, World University of Design), who felicitated the celebrated artist shared his joy



Dr Sanjay Gupta Vice Chancellor felicitating Mr Naresh Kapuria at WUD campus

saying, "Art can speak things that can't always be said with words. Through his craft Mr. Kapuria has helped us teachers evoke and validate our emotions and prompted us to see the world from a different point of view. I thank him for sharing his work which will inspire many generations of artists"

Amongst the universities that bow down to creativity, World University of Design in a short period of time has come to enjoy a special place amongst art, design and other creative industry enthusiasts for its zeal to recognize and identify pure talent in the related spheres. With the felicitation of Naresh Kapuria, the University has underscored its attraction among top artists of the country that are connecting with the university

**Create**  
**COLLAGE '21**  
Online Art Exhibition

# Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan

Art Observer Syndicate

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Dr Shalini Singh

I have depicted Umbrella signifying "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan" where 'Make in India' and 'Vocal for Local' initiatives will help millions of people prosper by selling local made diverse products. This will help in overcoming this global pandemic situation arisen due to Covid-19 by creating more jobs, strengthening local business and helping to build country economy.

I have shown Khadi production under Atmanirbhar Bharat programme in my Painting under Umbrella. Khadi as a textile has a strong character of its own and is absolutely apt for our country. Khadi development will also help in reducing the pollution caused by man-made fibre (synthetic clothes). Tons of these fibre is dumped into

ocean and it never biodegrades. Whereas khadi is 100% biodegradable and sustainable. It also conveys Gandhiji's thoughts and philosophy of simple lifestyle and his vision for khadi due to self-reliance. What started as a symbol of swadeshi movement should remain as a symbol of self-reliant Atmanirbhar Bharat.



Shalini Singh 'Lockdown 1' Acrylic on Canvas, 24x24 Inches



Shalini Singh 'Make in India khadi' Acrylic on Canvas, 24x20 Inches



# A Multifarious Personality

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Virender Goyal took to sketching and painting at a very young age. Though opted for a legal profession, his love for painting compelled him to complete a brief course in Art Appreciation at the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi.

Virender has exhibited his works at Lalit Kala Akademi and participated in the Antarrashtriya Kala Mela organised by Lalit Kala Akademi. Has participated in several group shows at Hungarian Art and Culture Centre, AIFACS and India Habitat Centre.

Virender Goyal is also a poet and writer having published eight books of anthology of poems and short stories.

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# Virtual Online-Art-Shows vs Real Ones!

Balvinder

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One must enjoy a work of art by seeing it, in actual shape and size, through ones open eyes and minds, and not through ones ears! Virtual art representations, wrapped in high-sounding narratives, often mislead and restrict one from enjoying its real visual pleasures! The ongoing Corona pandemic has changed the day-today living of everyone, all over the world, considerably. Apart from facing scary health issues, the claustrophobic and uncertain long lockdowns have resulted in miserably painful economic crises as well. The job market has shrunk to an unimaginable low. Those few who survived the job-cutting guillotine are made to work from homes, a new work culture, through electronic online media. Seminars have become 'Webinars' and classroom teaching has also gone 'virtual'. The fact remains that these new platforms have harmed our educational structure in a very gradual manner, almost like slow poisoning. More so because the new media are not available to a majority of poor Indians. They can neither afford to buy the gadgets nor be tech-savvy to meet the performed virtually through internet portals. The visual-art world has also not been spared and has suffered a severe blow due to the shutdown. Holding real art shows, seminars

and workshops, like every other cultural activity, being restricted, so to curtail the spread of the deadly disease, has forced the artist fraternity also to take to the virtual platform options.

No wonder there has been a spate of virtual online art shows on the net now a days. In fact, even those artists who earlier never had the courage or resources to hold individual shows have jumped happily into the new computer-generated art field. It is easy and inexpensive at the same time. The reach to the masses is huge and quick.

Thus, there seemingly is every possibility that this virtual art exhibiting trend that is conveniently fast and inexpensive, would grow many folds, during the coming days. Yes, it might just stay on as a new invention out of necessity.

Art market nowhere in the world has ever been a big bazaar. The few pasts and present big names in the art world that occasionally sell for big money often creates a big illusion of a vibrant art market. In the present unhealthy pandemic-struck environment the art selling, already a low priority investment platform, perhaps has had to accept the hardest hit.

But can real art shows ever be replaced by the virtual medium is a big and valid question? The answer, to my mind, is an equally big NO!

The reason for this is that every work of art has its own intrinsic value. For example, one can't enjoy



the subtleness of a miniature work of art if it is presented through a projector on a big-sized wall. Similarly, a large wall mural/fresco shown on the small screen of a smartphone loses its artistic enormousness and gaiety. In fact, the actual size of every work of art, well presented in an arty environment gives the onlooker its real and aesthetically satisfying feel. The ambiance has to provide the necessary features to compliment the work in size and proportion.

All the art lovers appreciate Van

Gogh's 'Dry Sunflowers', a world-famous painting. I too have been one of its ardent admirers. Like most of us I had seen it, umpteen times, but only in print. A few years ago, while visiting an art museum in London I chanced upon to see one of the original Sun-flower paintings, which Van Gogh had executed in varied sizes and was part of a traveling show of post-impressionist painters. Fed always on bookish viewing I was simply shocked to see the original painting that was of quite a big size, approximately 4'x 5'. It had such an

imposing and mesmerizing effect on me that I sat motionless on the bench before the painting for about an hour or so. This taught me a new lesson of differentiating between seeing an actual artwork and its published/virtual image.

In the case of sculptural art in particular, being three-dimensional in nature, a normal viewing of an actual sculpture gives one multiple visual experiences. For this art form, apart from the size of the work its viewing angle, display and lighting play dominant roles that provide a much satisfying visual experience of the artwork than of its virtual one-sided representation of a limited given size. It simply falls flat minus all the required depth and bulk.

Theatre artists know pretty well the face of a person looks serene if the light is coming from above and the same face provides a villainous appearance if it is lit from below. How one sculpture can display altogether different moods when set under different lighting positions, can well be gauged by looking at the accompanying photographs of a replica of a Kushan period bust of Mahavira. Thus one can safely conclude that virtual online art shows may remain in fashion in the future as well (more as a matter of convenience) but can never replace the real ones, for sure!

Rightly said, "seeing the real is viewing with feelings".

# Art Courses for The New Age

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Have you ever wondered how the art world would look like in another 5 years? Will it even remotely resemble the art world we knew before the pandemic? What sort of trends and tendencies will dominate the scene? How about the influence of innovative technologies or the evolution of virtual art galleries and museums and exhibitions and auctions? Advancing technology and the internet have enabled access to intuitive computer apps for every other person on earth. Social media is enabling reach to a wider audience even in the most distant corners of the world. Contemporary artists are experimenting eagerly with artificial intelligence (AI) as well as virtual and augmented reality (VR, AR), biology, science, and ecology even. Art transcends into the territory of generative art, bio art, game art, app art, three-dimensional mapping, AI or mind-controlled installation and sound generative sculpture. Unprecedented changes are taking place and newer art forms are emerging. The visual arts of the future might be making full use of present and future, augmented and virtual, reality technologies. The education for this emerging new age would also need to change with immediate effect. Students entering a BFA or a BVA today would graduate in times which would be very different. Courses and their pedagogies need to change. World University of Design, anticipating these changes introduced two course last year



Assignment done by Students

itself. The undergraduate course Digital Drawing & Illustration is specially designed to keep pace with changing technology. The curriculum integrates traditional drawing and illustration with digital technologies that further the dimensions of these mediums by developing a variety of software-based skills, while constantly being exposed to traditional media methods and conceptual drawing skills. Students are taught to integrate their works with photography and animation. Critical thinking, innovation, self-assessment, and presentation techniques are an important part of the course along with direct industry exposure. This is the only undergraduate course in India, looking at drawings in a holistic

and futuristic way. Another undergraduate program Creative Painting moves away from stale habits & conditioning, and studies virtually every approach to painting and drawing, from traditional oil painting to digital, graphic and 3D spatial installation. The technical, formal, and conceptual skills get developed through focused studio production and instruction in theory, art history and cultural studies. One gains the ability to think creatively and critically and to materialize ideas in visual form. These skills set, along with the development of visual literacy and expertise, can be applied to multiple professions in the visual arts. One graduate with an understanding of own intentions and visual language,

strategies for sustaining an artistic practice, critical thinking skills, an understanding of historical context and an understanding of contemporary possibilities of painting and drawing. The post graduate course Contemporary Art Practice merges genres and media and creates new contexts for the expanding field of art practice. The Master's program emphasizes on art meeting the public and creation of a framework for an individual history of practice. Regular dialogues with faculty, practitioners from around the world, architects, scientists, designers help develop a platform for building life-long art practices and networks. Making and critical thinking are fundamental to the aims of the program. The studio-

based program encourages practices that are speculative and reflective, encouraging work in a range of media & adapting approaches drawn from an increasingly wide array of subject disciplines, including AI, AR/VR, intermedia, time-based arts, performance, installation, social-practice, education and art writing. The idea is that true digital & contemporary arts education needs to be collaborative—something that commercial technology spaces idolize above all else—which is perhaps why some of the most successful digital art is coming from groups or teams of artists, rather than individual practitioners.

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