



ANJANI KHANNA



ARTIST STATEMENT

I remember, as a child of 6 or 7, watching a village potter squat on the ground, effortlessly throw terracotta cups off a hand spun potters' wheel. I remember fearfully crouching over the wheel opposite him, while his fingers guided mine as I tried to make a pot. I remember listening to stories about the gods Krishna, Rama, Shiva, Ganesha, of the struggle for India's freedom, of the exploits of my grandfathers' and the lives of my extended family over seven generations. Myth and memory merged in my mother's telling and with each retelling they became a part of my everyday acquaintance. I remember watching my mother pray each morning at her small shrine in our home, and adorn the baby Krishna idol with jewelry, clothes and flowers. I remember my agonistic father and me tolerantly sitting for annual prayers, participating with bemused detachment. I remember traveling across rural India as an environmental journalist, discovering my land as a young adult.

These memories and the constant confrontation with contradiction, which is a part of everyday living in India, have an influence on my work. While the written word and ideas fascinate me, clay allows me to explore subliminal and oftentimes not easily articulated intuitions in a tactile and visual way. My "yalis", as I refer to my figurative sculpture, begin to live for me and tell their stories in their living. Their stories reflect my search as they grapple with the modern and the ancient, the personal and the universal, the male and the female, the east and the west, the spiritual and the profane, the rational and the intuitive, the animal and the human, the religious and the secular, and the political and the non partisan.

My large figures with stylized human bodies and animal heads are made in stoneware paper clay. I build up the sculpture using clay coils and slabs which are paddled into form. I usually make and fire the sculptures in sections which interlock. My work is mostly unglazed and the settling ash from the wood fire breathes life into it. I use dark and white slips, which are sprayed on to the clay, often over graphic and text stencils. I sometimes sponge on patterns much like a traditional textile block printer. I am drawn to repetitive design and usually treat the entire piece as a single surface. I also use textile and alphabet blocks to emboss the clay. The work is usually fired slowly in a wood kiln. I enjoy "dressing up" the fired "yalis" with fabric, ribbons, garlands, mirrors, brass and shell ornaments used on cattle.



PUBLIC ART CONTEMPORARY CERAMICS IN COLLABORATION



DEKHA UNDEKHA



A collaborative project with the potters' community in Dharavi Kumbharwada, Mumbai, introducing traditional terracotta artists to glazes and ways of expressing themselves conceptually





STUDIO
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