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## Gleaming with passion

Aruna Chandaraju, June 15, 2014, DHNS:



**To play with fire means to create beautiful, thematic ceramic ware for artiste Vinod Daroz, writes Aruna Chandaraju, introducing the aesthetic and utilitarian aspects of this art form.**

Many creative people have been fascinated by fire, its beauty, and its power to transform mud and

metal into objects of beauty.

That includes ceramic artistes.

Like Vinod Daroz, who lives and works in Vadodara and hails from the former undivided Andhra Pradesh.

He is recognised as one of India's most accomplished ceramic artistes of his generation.

His works are part of important public and private collections in India and abroad.

Vinod's works of art have graced the homes and offices of the Ambani and Jindal families, the RPG group, Adani Group, Ranbaxy Group and Menaka Gandhi, well-known art collectors like Pheroza Godrej Rakesh Aggarwal, as well as famous film stars.

Scholarships, awards, artist-in-residency programmes, world travel and critically acclaimed solo shows have marked his journey as an artiste.

Vinod's ceramic art is known for its technical finesse and creativity.

His clean, graphic patterns are admired by many. He works with a mix and match of several materials, always proving his versatility and command over his chosen medium of artistic expression.

He works with stoneware, porcelain (high temperature clay bodies), and metallic oxides like copper and cobalt for colouring, real gold and platinum (for lustre) and also thread and wood.

He makes his own clay bodies and colours.

### Watch & learn

The small-town boy has indeed come a very long way. And his simple, unassuming manner and down-to-earth demeanour reveal that his fame and fortune sit lightly on him.

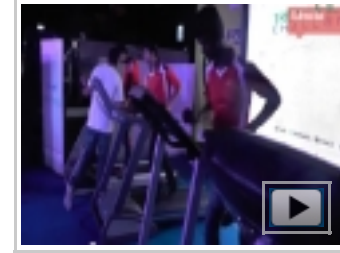
Vinod was born at Kalawakurthy in Andhra Pradesh into a family of jewellers.

"I grew up watching my father create beautiful gold ornaments with fire. I would even help him in his work, in small ways. I would be fascinated by how you could use fire to create artistic objects. My passion for clay began during this period, when I helped my father and elder brother create gold jewellery for their local clients," he reminisces.

After this childhood exposure, he resolved to make a formal study of art. He completed a degree in Sculpture and post-graduate studies in Ceramic Sculpture from the Faculty of Fine Arts, M S University, Vadodara.

"During my graduation years, I was drawn to the colourful and glossy surface of ceramics. It was not part of our course, but I was decided on them. When we had the option of attending a 15-day workshop, I took one on ceramics under Jyotsana

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### Photo Gallery

Bhatt. She has been an influence on me. Hans Cooper and my own uncle, the celebrated artiste P R Daroz, also influenced my artistic thinking. In fact, I would have become a jeweller like the others in my family... But I saw my uncle creating a mural at a well-known Hyderabad hotel and then I decided I would become an artiste!”

He also worked in ceramics at Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal. In 1998-1999, he went to Pondicherry to work under Ray Meeker and Deborah Smith.

“Here I learnt the technical aspects of working on the elements vital to my ceramic art — kiln building, glaze development and large scale application.”

In 2004, he spent a few months in the UK on a scholarship.

“I apprenticed with British potters Peter Ilsley, who worked on crystals, and Sandy Brown, known for her bold strokes. And it was more learning about techniques as I observed them work.”

He adds: “In all the years since, I have continued to learn. The technical aspects — the firing, the temperatures, the combination of materials, getting the perfect colours, the right finish, glaze application, and what is the ideal fuel for my kiln... I have learnt a lot by trial and error.”

And how much of learning has happened along with his innate creativity and what it has all fructified into can be gauged from his works.

The double-walled pots, bowls with their very narrow bases and flaring walls, murals for private spaces, sculptural pieces etc.

There is a discernible path that his art has taken. Vinod’s earlier work was mostly utilitarian and today, form is more important than functionality for him.

### Ceramic themes

In 2004, the anguish he felt at the tsunami expressed itself in the creation of the Buddha series titled Peace and Harmony to The World.

Among his most celebrated work is the Temple series, which includes the Mandala series and the Silent Shloka. The creations are stunningly beautiful.

When visiting Kancheepuram and seeing the temples there, he was fascinated by the design and architecture.

“We were not allowed to take photos, so I imprinted the forms in my memory and came back to the Vadodara studio and developed the series.”

This resulted in sculptures and relief works interpreting everything there from the gopuram to garbha griha.

The Srisailam Temple of Andhra Pradesh inspired the Mandala series and has symbolic depictions of the male and female divine forms instead of any particular deity.

Later followed the Silent Shloka series, what he calls a silent prayer theme.

It also has garbha griha interpretations and the male and female principles in creation.

The aesthetics of his work have been admired widely. However, he laughs off this reference to his reputation: “Oh, I am just a simple jeweller’s son who loves to play with clay. I find it very exciting and challenging.”

This play, however, indeed calls for intense hard work and minute attention to detail. Ceramic art is a truly tough job.

“I use a gas-fired kiln and over the years have experimented a lot and learnt to make the perfect clay and glaze right from scratch.”

He regrets that ceramic artistes in India are hard-pressed for raw materials given that in there is no steady or dependable supply of clay and colours for ceramic art. “So each of us has to come up with our own recipe.”

He explains the process of his art, promising not to get too technical: “I first make a clay body easy to mould or handle. Then I make a form with the clay body having made a sketch earlier.

I leave it to dry. I then bisque fire it to 1000 degrees Celsius. I apply glaze and fire it to around 1300 degrees Celsius.”

more

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As for colours, Vinod is quite the perfectionist here too, mixing glazes of different hues and firing them, until he arrives at the precise colour in his mind.

### Artistes unite

He is now a permanent resident of Vadodara. Of course, Gujarat remains one of India's ancient centres of pottery, so it is a fitting choice for a ceramic artiste.

“Every other day, we have these artiste get togethers, where we discuss our art and related matters. I find these artistic addas very stimulating.”

But he also does miss home. “I keep watching Telugu films and listening to Telugu songs whenever I can. Also, I love rustling up my home state's cuisine too. In fact, cookery is a big hobby of mine, and of course, I love travelling,” he reveals.

Vinod now has his own studio in Vadodara and dreams of setting up one in Hyderabad in the near future.

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