

DESIGN INDIA

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Nishma Pandit pg 14 | *Photographed by Balkrishna Mahajan*

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'Different Viewpoints' – paper pulp and terracotta

that one makes is an expression of how one feels at that moment in time and it feels beautiful to see it completed and displayed and that is where one detaches from it. I guess the achievement for me is more in the process than the final work, and that joy continues as long as the process is on.

Tell us about your time in China.

MB: I was one of 18 artists selected for a 40-day residency in China and the



'Suspended'

work we made there was supposed to be part of the Fule Indian Ceramic Museum. It was the first time I was working alongside Indian potters with international acclaim and though it was a bit daunting in the beginning, there was a great energy there. What I enjoyed most were the gigantic production units and the trolley kilns that produce roof tiles. It was amazing to get out of our own little studio comfort zones and make something within a given



'Cluster'



Untitled



Panchatantra series – 'The Lazy Lion and the Clever Hare'

timeframe with materials we were not familiar with. We worked alongside their technical team and there was a huge communication gap as neither of us was familiar with each other's language. Soon we didn't need words; we were communicating through sign language and it was wonderful to work with them.

What has been your experience of art residencies?

MB: I feel art residencies are a gift especially now when most artists work from their own homes and studios. It's a great place to meet and work with other artists, interact and see what's going on in other parts of the world. It is also a great format for some real concentrated work. One can get completely involved in one's work, uninterrupted with no distractions or without worrying about the 'to do' list of our everyday lives.

Different residencies have different formats. Some have all the facilities for the work one is doing and some don't; some have all the artists working with the same material and some are multidisciplinary. It's a wonderful way of getting out of one's comfort zone and working with the materials that are available there itself.

One of the most interesting residencies for me was ShopArt/ArtShop 2 where everyone had different projects from different disciplines. My project was in clay. This residency was in a remote village called Gunehar in Himachal Pradesh and there was no infrastructure for ceramics. The whole idea of the residency was to make work in the village, for the village and with whatever is available in the village. It was an amazing experience...from bringing clay from the hills to making work on the floor, making a kiln there itself and firing



'Cluttered Silence'

the work for a large outdoor installation. This residency in particular was also aimed at getting the villagers involved in the processes of various projects. For me this experience was especially memorable. In our urban lives we feel so many things are not possible without modern infrastructure and there I was only with some very 'jugadu' things and that was just enough. It felt so light to let go of so many ideas of dos and don'ts in ceramics. This is why residencies are very important and a beautiful way to explore, expand and untangle oneself from fixed ideas.

What are you currently working on?

MB: I'm working on a project called 'In The Woods' curated by Frank Schlichtmann, who also curated Shop Art/Artshop 2. It is an exhibition of sculpture, painting and installation by three artists including me. The idea is to explore how art can be brought out of the gallery space into a natural open hilly area. The focus will be not on creating work for that space but on how the work that has been created can be displayed in an unassuming open hilly space without any doors or windows,



'Nowhere to Walk' – earthenware and iron sheet



'Within'



'Pressured Lives'



'City of Dreams'

Work done in iron
at Daly College
Indore

without any entries or exits... the gallery begins from where the work is displayed with no formal boundaries.

How do you see Indian ceramic art changing in the future?

MB: It's going to get very exciting. Not only are we now seeing more people opting for ceramics but the viewer is also getting interested in it. It's wonderful to see that within one medium there can be artists doing production pottery and working as serious art practitioners too.

What would you advise young ceramic artists?

MB: I feel everyone can discover one's own language and it's really important to find that. Technique is just a means for some beautiful effects. It's wonderful when a work can speak



'Trapped' – terracotta and copper wire, rods

through to the viewer in totality; it's not just the techniques that comes through but something more sensitive, more subtle, something that moves the viewer from within.

How would you describe your design journey so far?

MB: My journey has always been very experiential, in the sense that it was always based on being drawn to what I enjoyed doing and what I felt in sync with and that kept opening its own path. It was mostly out of instinct than a well thought out plan. In future I hope to be able to listen to my instinct and remain open to follow it...

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'Jungle of Roads'



'My Little Peaceful Planet' – stainless steel rod and terracotta