

an WHERE ONE LIFETIME OF DISCOVERY FALLS SHORT

# INDIAN

## Journey

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**Churches and  
Convents of Goa**  
UNESCO World Heritage Site

**Paragliding in  
Bir-Billing**

**Indian  
Contemporary Art**  
Alive and kicking

*New Year, New Beginnings*





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Dear Readers,

First of all, we wish all our readers a Happy New Year. After bidding a fond farewell to 2010, we welcome 2011 with hope and optimism. In this first issue of the year, we take you on a nostalgic journey to the past, to the days of Portuguese rule in Goa and the magnificent monuments constructed during this period. But Goa is not only about churches and convents but also temples and museums and we invite you to enjoy the rich heritage of the place with us. For our adventurous readers, we bring alive the magical moments of sporting in the freezing climes of Himachal Pradesh. January is a significant month for India as she became a republic in this month 61 years ago. We bring you a glimpse of the Beating Retreat ceremony that marks the formal conclusion of the Republic Day Celebrations in New Delhi. Art connoisseurs can immerse themselves in our feature section where we talk about the changing face of Indian Art. People planning a trip to Gujarat can check out our take on the Darbargarh Palace, a recently opened Neemrana property. Health enthusiasts must definitely try out our special section on healthy winter recipes and illustrated yoga workouts. And, don't forget to take a peek at the International Film Festival of India. January is also the month for the famous Kite Festival of Gujarat and we have taken the opportunity to bring this colourful festival to the living rooms of our readers. Besides this, our regular features and sections are bound to keep our readers engrossed.

Read on and embark on a journey of discovery to fascinating India.



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# THE CHANGING FACE OF INDIAN ART

TEXT BY: JAHNAVI SARMA



Indian Art has undergone a major transformation in recent years. What was once the exclusive purview of elitist business houses and royal families, has today entered the drawing rooms of middle-class buyers. Not only that but Indian art is now travelling offshore to fetch immense, and often astronomical, prices. Subodh Gupta became the toast of the international art world, with his *Melting Meteor*, a sculpture using brass and stainless steel utensils that fetched \$80,000 at Christie's. Artists today experiment with many media simultaneously instead of confining themselves to a single medium like oil, acrylic, water, terracotta sculptors, installations artists and so on. And, this trend has led to the gradual blurring

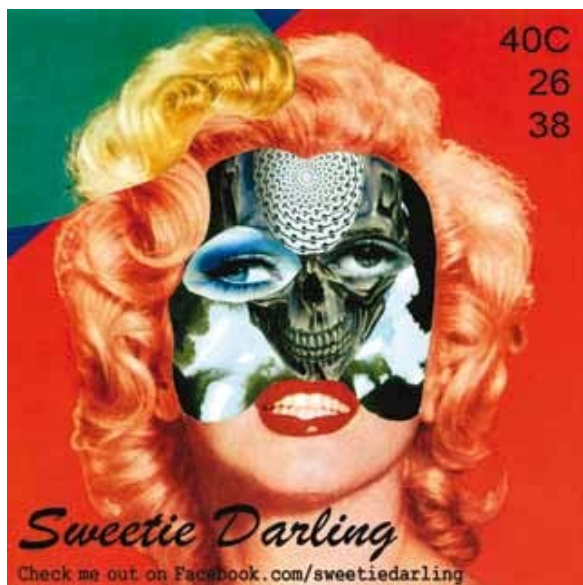
of the distinction between paintings, assemblages, installations, collages and sculptures

Art has always been an integral part of Indian life and excavations of art objects from historical places have shown that Indian art has flourished since ancient times. Many artists of present times use these historical styles in their art. Similarly, there are artists who draw their inspiration from the rich folk traditions of India. But the one thing that has stood the tests of time is the distinct Indianness of Indian art. This is despite the fact that newer forms and styles, which actually cannot be categorised into any specific existing genre, are emerging in the Indian scene.

Indians today are willing to spend lavishly on art. According to Anita Kataria of *The Right Address*, "Indians generally go in for large pieces of art be it a vase or a framed painting. Smaller filigrees are usually not preferred." And, a limited edition art object can easily fetch about ₹50 lakh.

Bhupen Khakkar, Paritosh Sen, Krishen Khanna, Bikash Bhattacharya, Dharmanarayan Dasgupta, Sunil Das, Sudhir Patwardhan, Shyamal Dutta Roy, Ghulam Mohammed Sheikh and Jaideep Mehrotra are some of the artists whose works reflect a personalised illumination of objective reality which is sometimes accented with oblique, humorous or satirical social pointers. Jogen Chowdhury beautifully transforms realism to fantasy with linearity and surreal forms while Sanat Kar's work reflects romantic tenderness. And, when it comes to Manjit Bawa, one can be sure of a heightened sensory experience.

Indian art engages the natural world at many levels. This is evident in Paramjit Singh's light sculpted landscapes, Madvi



Facing Page: *Man in the Mirror* by Uday K Dhar  
Left: *Sweetie Darling (Exquisite Corpse Series)* by Uday K Dhar  
Top: *Atomsphere (Breath of Life collection)* by Prenita Dutt



Above: *Meandering Pillar*- Acrylic on Canvas by Kazi Nasir  
 Below: *Jehangir Sabavala's carpet for the Fly A Carpet to Your Wall fundraiser*



Parekh's illuminated folk motifs and Ganesh Haloi's abstracts which are spiritualised forms of art and Pyne's reveries drawn from mundane experience to name a few. Spiritualism, symbolism and surrealism are also reflected in Indian art. Cosmic and 'Tantric' symbols are evident in the works of Biren De, Panikar, Haridasan and Om Prakash. The video installation 'Touch IV', whose central protagonists are sex workers and members of the third gender community, is a culmination of Navjot Altaf's three-decade-long preoccupation with representing the voice of the subaltern in art. Shail Choyal, highly acclaimed in the 70's and 80's of the last century for using miniaturist motifs in his paintings, combined strong musical quality with an evocative visual imagery and used fantasy as a metaphor in his art. Akash Choyal, son of Shail and Surjeet, pursues a peculiar logic to alter his motifs in an anti-natural sense and exquisitely combines his objects in an unexpected manner.

The Indian art scene has been riding the fast lane for some time now and one of the emerging players seems to be kitsch art, which is getting more and more popular with each passing day. Till recently, kitsch art was considered an inferior



From Left to Right: *Breath of Life* collection by Prenita Dutt  
*Extreme Right: I see trees everywhere* by Nandita Kumar.

Below: Designer autorickshaw auctioned at Wills Lifestyle India Fashion Week 2010

copy of an existing style. It was also used to refer to any art that is pretentious to the point of being in bad taste, and also commercially produced items that are considered unrefined. But the *desi* and uncool art of yesterday is suddenly uber cool today. This can be credited to changed perspectives of young people. More people today want to bring a bit of Indian street flavour into their everyday lives through home décor, garments and accessories. Why only art, even items like kitsch note books, key chains, badges, coasters, cushions, trays and so on reflect the colourful streets of India.

Earlier this year, graphic artists and designers romanced the autorickshaw or three- wheelers as seen in the Wills Lifestyle India Fashion Week 2010 held in the first half of last year. Auto-rickshaws painted by well-known artists were auctioned and the proceeds went to NGO Khushii that works for the upliftment of the poor and destitute in rural and urban areas. The artists who participated in the initiative were George Martin, Hindol, Brahmhatt, Dilip Sharma, Farhad Hussain, Jaishree Burman, Jagannath Panda, Paresh Maity, Sanjay Bhattacharya, Satish Gupta, Sudhanshu Sutar, Yusuf Arakkal and Nitin Bal Chauhan.

A wide range of street imagery is being translated onto various fashion and lifestyle arena. Scenes from congested streets and a bustling day is now doubling up as imagery for kitsch art. Even old dilapidated buildings and film posters pasted on old chipped walls can be the inspiration for art today.

Expressing art through a completely new medium, People for Animals and Kingfisher came up with Fly A Carpet To Your Wall, a fundraiser to build veterinary shelters for needy animals. Limited edition collection of hand woven carpets featuring selected works by contemporary masters of art and design were exhibited and the reaction of people to this was ecstatic. The best part was that each carpet came with the painter/designer's letter of authentication as well. S.H. Raza, M.F. Husain, Ram Kumar, Manjit Bawa, Jehangir Sabavala, Manu Parekh, T.Vaikuntam, Chitravanu Mazumdar, Senaka Senanayake,





Manish Pushkale, Jayasri Burman, Paresh Maity, Thukral & Tagra, Sujata Bajaj, GR Iranna, Binoy Varghese, Farhad Hussain, Rohit Bal, Manish Arora, Rajesh Pratap Singh, J Valaya and M by Madhu Jain and Milind Soman were the participating artists here.

Here, we can also mention US-based artist of Indian descent Uday K. Dhar, who presented his first solo show in India, curated by Dr Alka Pande, titled *The Exquisite Corpse*. He uses kitsch elements such as mobile downloads, fashion advertisements, newspaper articles and flashy web content to highlight the consumerism overdose that afflicts the entire world today. Using portraits of Marilyn Monroe, altered imagery of human profiles and much more, he creates interesting collages of pop culture and global human decay. Speaking about this exhibition, Dhar, who is also a member of the Asian American Arts Alliance, said, "One might call them 'self-portraiture' without the portrait. It comments on how identity is forged through the consumption of specific images, products that define who we are, and what we are engaged with. It is the nature in the age of globalisation and information access, that where one is located does not restrict the exploration of other experiences at other locations. i.e. geography is not a restriction as it was

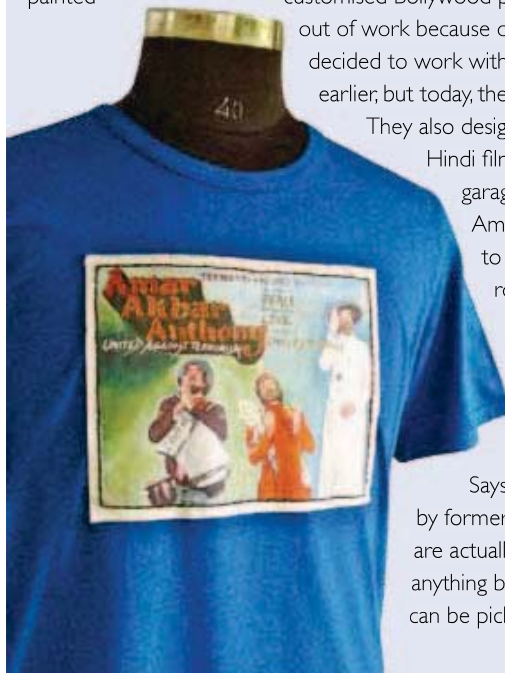
before air travel, internet." He further adds, "My art focuses on the common ground between diverse cultural experiences and backgrounds. The works are the result of research into various things, Indian and American magazines, survey of fashion ads, research and reading of newspaper article, art history books and so on. One theme links all my works - a deep conviction about translating my Indian heritage and reinterpreting that for a new context with new feeling."

In another ongoing exhibition titled *Let the Brain Fly*, Nandita Kumar charts a surreal course of a psyche's evolution within the invisible neuron-scape. In her paintings, the white cube encompasses a labyrinth of manifestations in terms of mixed media works on canvas, animated video and installations. A visual story-board, created in tandem with the movement of the defining premise, 'the brain' leads through processes of evolution and mutation, beyond the constructs of the material world. The artist, through these renditions, culls collages of the timeless world and poetically draws inherent correlations between the self and the various dimensions of the cultural spectrum. 🌟

*Top: I want to live the glamorous life (Exquisite Corpse Series) by Uday K Dhar  
Below: Limited edition T-Shirts by Indigreen*

### Bollywood Calling!

Bollywood is the biggest kitsch flavour that 'brand India' has in its big bag of goodies. Posters of old film hoardings find place on the walls of select art galleries in Delhi and Mumbai. Mumbai-based Hinesh Jethwani started Indian Hippy, providing hand painted



customised Bollywood posters. He says, "I read a news report on billboard artists who were out of work because of posters going digital. I managed to source a few of these artists and decided to work with them to keep the art alive. Film posters may have served as advertising earlier, but today, they are considered art. We get orders from within India as well as NRIs."

They also design hand painted bags, clutch purses, wallets and so on, all painted with Hindi film motifs and costing ₹5,000 upwards. Next on the list are wall murals and garages, which will soon get a kitsch facelift. New Delhi-based Julian Parr's old Ambassador's shows his love for Hindi movies. The car exterior is devoted to movie memorabilia and this has certainly earned him a few stares on the roads. In fact, he was once stopped by the police for commercial advertising on his vehicle. Another name that must be mentioned here is Indigreen which tries to put across a social message through kitsch. Last year, their theme was 'Going green Bollywood style' with cheesy lines and posters hand painted on t-shirts, tunics, belts and bags. For instance, a belt reads, "Piya tu ab to aaja, global warming se earth bahke, Ab to bacha ja!"

Says co founder Nidhi Singh, "The poster art in all our collections is painted by former Bollywood poster painters. Our t-shirts grace the walls of people as they are actually pieces of art." Their limited edition Bollywood poster art tees can cost anything between ₹2,400-2,800. A dialogue tee can be sold for ₹800-1200 and belts can be picked up for ₹1,500-2,400.