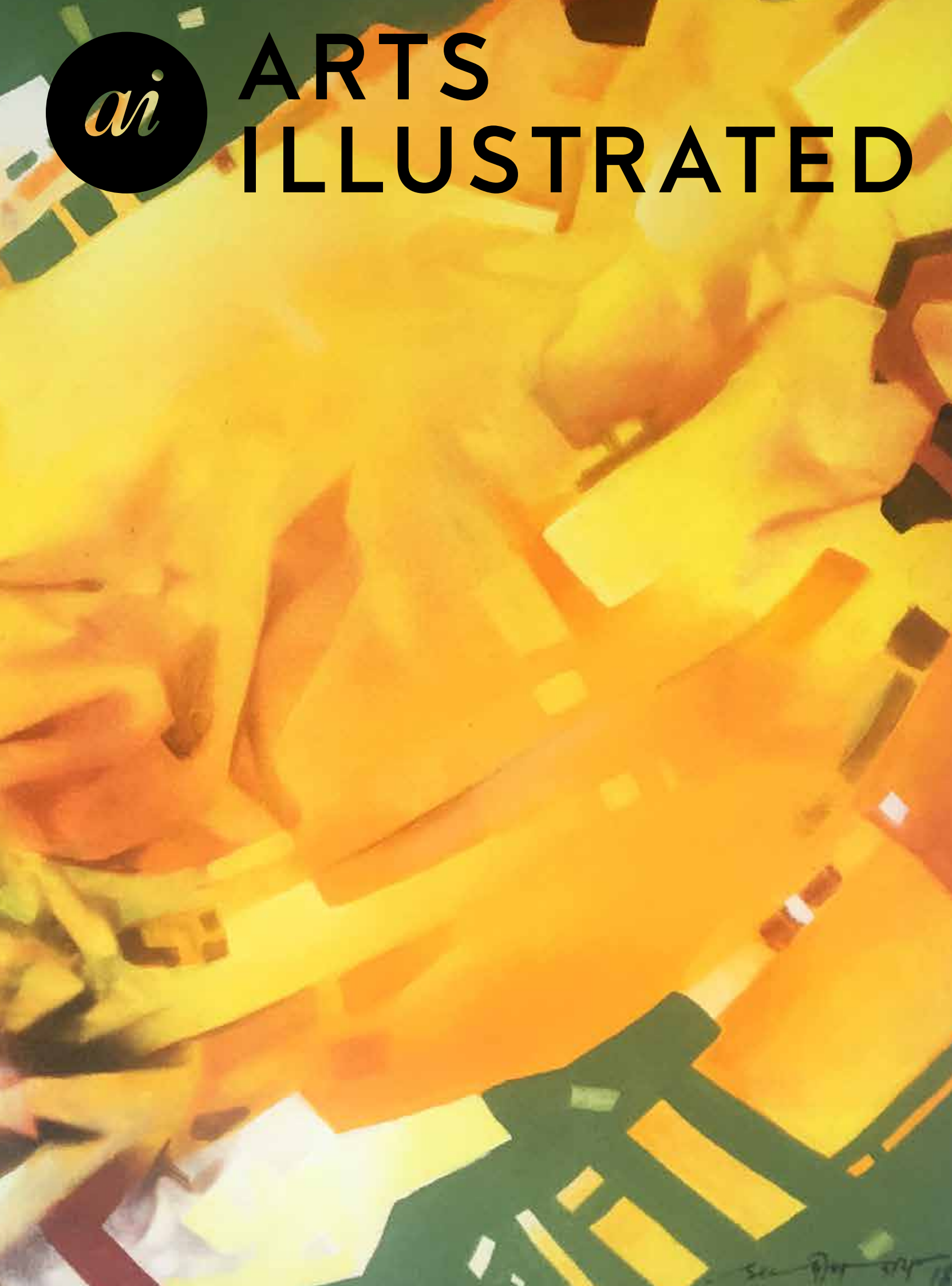




# ARTS ILLUSTRATED





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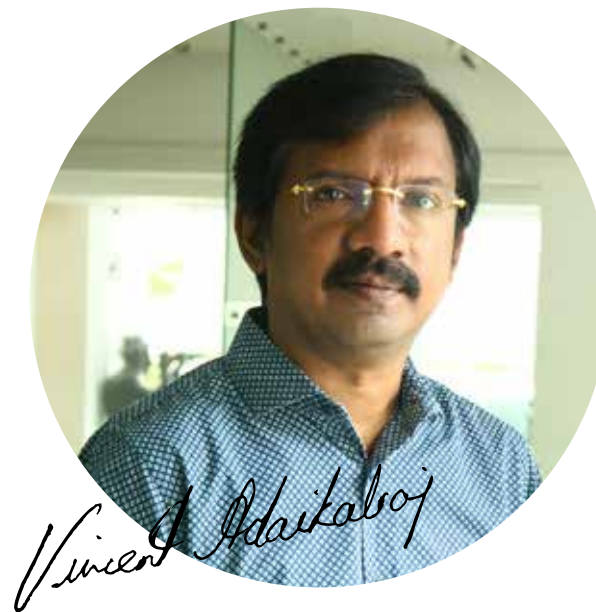
## Publisher's note

Arts Illustrated turns five, and so, the theme for this anniversary issue is simply the number '5'. What are the different, quirky, literal, unpredictable, far-fetched, believable ways in which this number of balance can be interpreted? How far is it going to take us; and, more importantly, how delightfully fun is the process going to be?

In the past five years, we have looked at various themes and met artists who gave us surprising perspectives, but one common thread that bound them all together was that we kept the themes relevant to the reality of our times, and that's how we defined the 'contemporary' in the art. With '5', too, no matter how we choose to interpret it, it will continue to deeply question, engage and deliberate over the things that shape our world.

A big thank you to all our artists, writers and advertisers who continue to support and encourage the work we do at Arts Illustrated, helping us move forward with grace and humility in this journey.

Vincent Adaikalraj



*Editor's note*

The five things you won't find in this issue:

- The five elements
- Anything to do with anything 'five' in religion
- The five Olympic rings
- The five senses
- The phrase 'High Five'

The five things you will find in this issue:

- Openness
- Inclusivity
- Quirkiness
- Unpredictability
- Dialogue

So please do read, yes?



Praveena Shivram  
praveena@artsillustrated.in



*Don't hold the movement of time. Instead, give it more speed (translated Bengali proverb)*

I graduated from the Government College of Art and Crafts in 1984. I was extensively trained in the craft of realistic painting, as was the tradition of the typical Bengal school style in my college. I continued to make realistic works for almost three decades after completing my formal education, although I always had the urge to break away from the formal qualities of the recognisable. Only in 2004 did I produce my first body of abstract works. For me, what the eye sees is represented in realistic works, but abstraction is the voice of the soul. It involves a lot of emotion and sensitivity to sentiments. The process is that of giving form to our innermost feelings – the formless.

All my abstract works associate with a time of the day (or night). All life around us moves in a ritualistic way. The environment around us changes by the minute and that has a direct bearing on our emotions and thought processes. My abstract works are an endeavour to express these very emotions, of a moment in time. My thoughts are manifested into a form, but I allow my viewers to interpret the renditioning. There are no rules in doing that.

For the cover of the fifth anniversary issue of Arts Illustrated, I chose to create a work titled 'Five A.M.' I have used five colours in the work to interpret this time that is a sacred moment of transition from night to day, from stillness to action.



*Sudip Roy*

Cover design and sub-covers  
curated by Rahul Kumar.





Collective Commons

# *Art is All I See*

At Dr. Pradeep Chowbey's four-storey house, there is art in every nook and corner. A laparoscopic surgeon by profession and Chairman of Max Institute of Minimal Access, Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery, Dr. Chowbey says he has a heightened visual awareness. With some of the most significant works of Indian modern masters like M. F. Husain, S. H. Raza and Ram Kumar adorning their walls, I met Dr. Chowbey and his wife Susmita over a cup of coffee at their beautiful South Delhi home

---

RAHUL KUMAR

*Photographs by Shantanu Prakash*



*It has been a long professional journey spanning five decades*

I was born in Bilaspur (now in Chattisgarh) and studied in Burhanpur where we lived after my father, a civil surgeon, got transferred. My primary education was in a municipality Hindi medium school. The city is historically known for the presence of the first tomb of Mumtaz Mahal, where she was buried for months till the Taj Mahal was completed. In 1968, I moved to Jabalpur for my MBBS and MS and then moved to Delhi for my practice. I attended an international surgery conference in the United States where minimally invasive surgical technique was being shown, live. That was probably the turning point in my career and I was determined to bring this technique to India. There has been no looking back ever since.

*My bonding with art*

I used to paint casually with water colours when I was young, but during my MBBS I noticed

my inclination towards art was inbuilt and natural because I thoroughly enjoyed drawing the human body anatomy diagrams. And now my surgical team sometimes sends me images on phone during surgery for guidance and I am easily able to tell where to probe by just seeing the image!

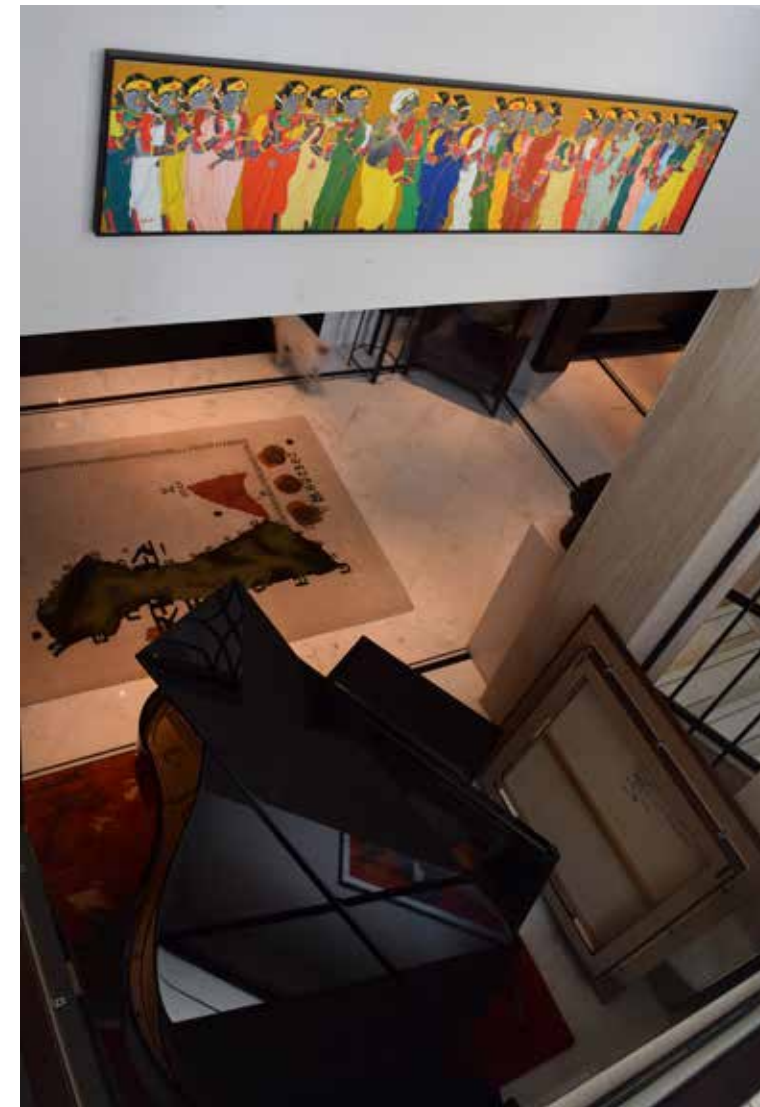
*A work of N.S. Bendre was the first ever art acquisition*

I bought my first art work from a gallery in Delhi's Connaught Place in 1978, a Bendre work

framed by the famous Chemould Framers. I had absolutely no knowledge of art then, but I liked the work so much that I bought it for Rs. 500, which was half my monthly salary. Much later we realised that it was the work of a celebrated artist. This work still occupies prime position in our home.

*Buying art requires money, and our collection grew slowly*

We earnestly started to buy art only in the past 20 years. But there were times when we were







monetarily restricted. The collection did not build up overnight. It has been a slow yet a steady process. Now, we acquire works from galleries, occasionally from artists directly, and often significant and important works from auctions in India and abroad.

*My visit to Triveni Kala Sangam in Delhi made me sensitive to good art*  
My wife, Susmita, was trained at Triveni under the able guidance of Rameshwar Broota and K Khosa. I had a two-wheeler then and used to pick her up from her

classes after work. Occasionally, I had to wait and that's when I saw exhibitions at the galleries there. That exposure led to developing my sensibilities to appreciate art and differentiate good from average work. We would go for shows of friends as a gesture of support, but now we travel the world to see museums and private collections.

*Visual impact and renditioning of the work is still primary for us*  
We are captivated by bright vibrant colours and joyous

expressions. Almost all the works we now acquire are either abstracts or have elements that are open for interpretation. There are, however, a few exceptions. For instance, a work of Ambadas has dull tones but has academic importance. It is very enriching to live with such works and figure out why they are significant or what may be the thought process of the artist when he/she conceived the work.

*Personal relationships have governed our love for Husain and Raza*

We relate to the works of artists more when we have an emotional connect with them. We were very close to Raza saab and, in fact, were instrumental in bringing him back to India. We became friends with him through a common acquaintance 20 years ago. As we got to know him, we grew deeply fond of him. We used to visit his home in Paris at least once a year. Listening to him was like listening to a spiritual speaker. It was most refreshing and energising. Similarly, we met Husain saab at his home in Dubai. A morning breakfast meeting continued till lunch. He signed a copy of the *Tehelka* magazine with him on the cover and gave it to us. The issue has the lead feature analysing the controversy of his art that led to his exile. It is a precious memorabilia in our family now.

*Colour palette of Raza is a prized possession*

I saw him starting off a work on a large blank canvas. I followed the work closely and saw it grow. When the work was completed,

I asked him if I could buy it. When he agreed, out of sheer love and affection and attachment to the work, I asked him if he would also let me have the colour palette he used. He accepted the request, and the palette is now placed right next to the canvas in our living room.

*From what began as our passion, it's now shared by the entire family*

While the primary buying decision remains with the two of us, our children take active interest in our art collection now. Going forward, the aspiration is not to increase the quantity and number of works we own. Rather, we would like to pursue significant quality works. As we have evolved and gained knowledge, our preferences in art have also evolved over the years and that is clearly reflected in our choices now.

*Our investment is the art on our walls*  
Our friends and family invest in property and other valuables. But our safe is empty. What we have is all on our walls. We believe that it is a perfect win-win situation wherein we enjoy the works and they also appreciate in value. For us, this is our investment.

*'La Terre' by Raza is our absolute favourite*

If we had to pick one work from the entire collection, it will have to be the Raza canvas titled *La Terre* made in 1960. It is a much-talked about work and had a huge significance in his career since this was right before he discovered the *bindu*. The other work we feel emotionally attached to is the *Krishna* by M. F. Husain.



Dr. Pradeep Chowbey and Susmita Chowbey



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