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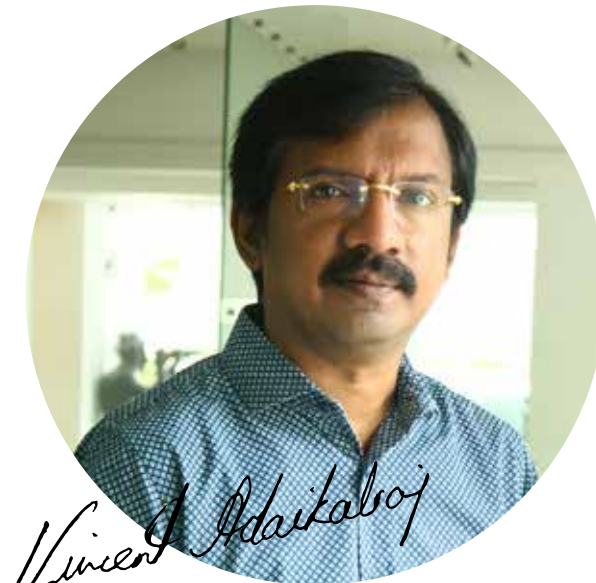
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Publisher's note

The earliest symbol for division is the rigid line with two dots on either side, never moving, never meeting, never crossing over. It is seared in our brains that the idea of division is sacrosanct – you pick a side and you stay there.

Thankfully, the arts give us a fluid construct from which to view 'division', our theme for this issue. We look at artist(e)s who structurally or ideologically engage with this great divide – sometimes by intention, sometimes by circumstance, and sometimes by coincidence – giving us new ideas, perspectives and the possibility to change the stories we have heard and symbols we have grown up with. And, most importantly, to re-negotiate this intensely polarised world with its seeming allure of connectedness.

Vincent Adaikalraj



Vincent Adaikalraj

Editor's note

The theme for this issue arrived with Norwegian-British documentary film-maker Deeyah Khan's 'White Right: Meeting the Enemy'. The film, which traces the rise of white fundamentalism, has some disturbing interviews with neo-Nazis as Khan asks quite simply 'I am a woman of colour, I am the daughter of immigrants, I am a Muslim, I am a feminist, I am a lefty liberal, and what I want to ask you is, am I your enemy?' By the end of the film, you are surprised and overwhelmed with how a simple act of crossing the divide with no judgement, no prejudice or bias or expectation, and by purely listening with the need to understand, change begins.

We knew instantly this was what our theme should be this issue: Of humanising divisions that by virtue of their separateness allow us to build bridges. It was a hard issue to work on because it meant meeting head-on the divisions in our minds, in our cultural contexts, our social-political realities and questioning the parts that make us individuals without leeching the individuality of the other. We had a heightened sense of awareness and consciousness while putting this issue together, but, as always, the magazine took a life of its own, choosing the stories it wanted to tell. (For instance, despite several e-mails to Deeyah Khan, the interview we wanted never happened. But the magazine, smug in its all-knowing avatar, continued nonetheless. Sore point, obviously, for me.)

But the stories that did make this issue are each mini revelations of what deep convictions can do and undo, of what art can create and destroy, and how ideas, simple in texture, can have profound implications. And, how, everything begins with a question.

How will we cross the ocean? We will build a bridge of stones...oops, sorry, wrong example, clearly, for the statuesque times we live in.



Praveena Shivram
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Cover Artist



The original photograph used for the cover



Whenever my father travelled on work, *Amma ji*, our old landlady, would taunt my mother, '*Ghiya ji ki bahu, mero miyo ghar nahi, mujhe kisi ko dar nahi*'. It literally translates to – 'I fear nothing, because my man is not home'. When the men were at work, the women were free to do as they pleased. They could step out, meet up with friends, hang out. Much like in the photograph that I chose to create the cover image for this issue of Arts Illustrated. Three women posing with two children...I could not help but imagine them to be my mother, my *mausi* (my mother's sister) and my *maami ji* (my mother's sister in-law), and the children as though they were my brother and I. I recall going to places with them as a child, to the beauty parlour, the blouse tailor, the temple, walking narrow lanes, eating *paani poori*, and orange candies. And *Amma ji*'s prying eyes at the end of the day.

I grew up believing that women must remain scared of their husbands. That is why they step out only when the men-folk were not around. For most of my life I have witnessed issues about liberty for women around me. I have questioned their relationship with men – with their

fathers, husbands, co-workers, or mere co-passengers in public transport. I assumed that I would grow up to be more empathetic.

The cover of this issue is about this strange dichotomy that a woman's life is. Between time and space where she can be as she pleases to be, and where she must conform to forced rules. Between a virtual world and the real one. Between tradition and modernity. Between what is intimate and what is public. And often this divide does not exist in the physical space. It is intangible, one that is born in the mind, constantly fed to the heart through centuries of cultural conditioning.

And now, in my work, she ushers in a new era through some kind of a Blue Screen – embracing and rejecting, adapting and shifting through a multitude of dimensions. In a state of transit. Painting a reality that she likes, finding a safe space, escaping into nothingness. Celebrating the divide that has been a foundation of sorts. Resetting. Refreshing. Rebooting.



Nandan Ghiya

Studio assistants: Mukesh Vijay and Sitaram Jangid
Profile photograph: Vigyan Anand
Cover page curated by Rahul Kumar



Collective Commons

The Middle Ground

An applied artist by education, a print-maker at heart, Amit Kumar Jain always wanted to be an artist. It was only after two attempts at the National Institute of Design (Ahmedabad), one at the Faculty of Fine Arts (Vadodara), and three at the College of Art (New Delhi), that he could pursue his dream. Passionate about modern and contemporary art, as-well-as living traditions of India, he calls himself a middle-class collector, with a modest aim to “bust the notion that only big monies can buy art”. I met him at his Noida home, when he was in between jobs after leaving his role of Associate Vice President with Saffronart (the largest Indian auction house) to join the upcoming Museum of Art and Photography in Bengaluru as the Head of Exhibitions.

RAHUL KUMAR

Photographs by Shantanu Prakash





I inherited aesthetics from my maternal side of the family. My father studied law but ended up joining the family business. My mother comes from a culturally inclined, Mumbai-based family. We grew up in a joint family, with practically one room for us. So, there was no question of art on walls. My summer holidays were spent with my aunts. One of them was into textiles and another is now a renowned artist. It was there that I was exposed to the visual arts and held my first book of Nicolas Roerich, at the age of eight. My mother is the backbone of my career, ensuring that I always had a sketchbook and colours with me, a practice that I now follow with my daughter.

My consulting firm took birth and was named at a tea shack in 2001. Although I had deepest passion for it, I realised that being a visual artist was not my thing, but I felt the need to contribute to upcoming artists. In a conversation with friends over tea, I decided to launch my consulting outfit Navsar. This initiative made me look out for emerging talent, something I thoroughly enjoyed. It was around 2005 when my visa to the United States did not come through for a photography course in New York that Anupam Poddar called me to get involved with his Devi Art Foundation. I believe my experience there was the most enriching one. I call this my foundation training that allowed me to appreciate the

contemporary arts and build an understanding of our living traditions, which have now become part of my expertise. It was a dramatic learning curve and I got paid to do exactly what I was doing for personal pleasure, that is travel and meet young artists. I still carry the passion and values that were imparted by Lekha and Anupam Poddar, who have contributed so much to my career.

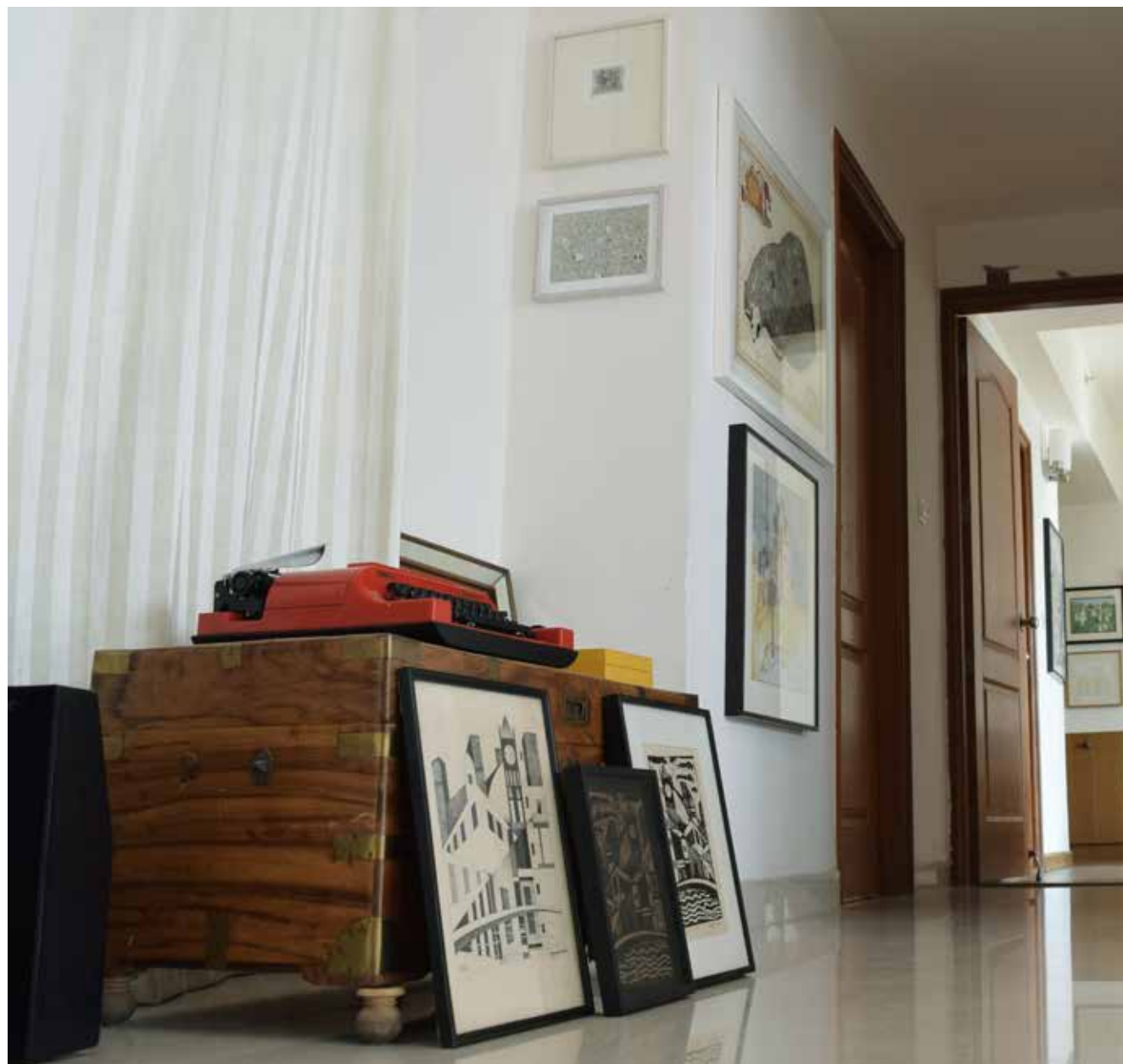
The next two roles helped fill the gap of modern art in my sensibility. My short stint with the Savara Foundation for Arts taught me nuances of the Bengal school and the modern masters of India. I became a lot more sensitive to works by Gaitonde, Raza, Somnath Hore, Meera



Mukherjee and Ganesh Pyne, amongst others. My exposure to international museums allowed me to appreciate how the Western world collectors approached our (and also their) heritage and built collections. Having worked with the Poddars before, and then Roohi and Rajiv Savara, I became interested in collector psychology, which assisted in my recently concluded role at Saffronart.

My own collection reflects my understanding through my formal work-life. I started collecting handmade prints like etchings and lithographs since they were affordable and I had a natural liking for the minimalistic and monochromatic palette. It was during many research visits that I started buying works of young and emerging artists. These works became a kind of memory of the time I spent in their studios. Most interestingly I never spent more than Rs. 10,000 early on. It was never about the monetary value that drew me towards a work; it was always the emotional and conceptual framework of it. Soon, portfolios started filling up and framing and restoration expenses started biting into my budgets.





Editing my collection became equally important as adding new works to it.

There were works with me that did not fit anymore. I started to wean my collection and mostly gifted them to friends and family. I am now conscious of what will add to my story through my collection. I literally want to be able to plan my curation on the walls of my home when I add any work. Sometimes, I place a new work on an easel in my study till the work tells me where it would like to be placed. Since I work on a limited budget, curating the collection is an important

aspect of the way I look at this journey.

Buying art is like a marriage; it's far beyond love at first sight!

For me, I must be excited to live with the work, every day. I encourage young buyers to make sure they spend time with a work and connect with it. It is not tough to collect art with less money. Start with paper works, prints and photographs. Most galleries are willing to work out an instalment payment plan. I see so much art and want to own it all. But the works that drive me to a level of madness to



own them enter my collection. Of course, sometimes, with it comes living on a tight budget for months.

My Instagram page is my extended collection.

I regularly post images of works in my collection. But there are so many that I cannot afford to buy. I make myself happy by posting images of those works, as though my Instagram page is reflective of my collection itself! My daughter, Anushri (now seven), has been with me to all the major art events in India since she was three. Her perspective makes me look at the works differently. In fact, her room has art that she has picked and that makes it my favourite space in our home.

There is no single work that I will pick as the 'best' that I have.

I enjoy the process of collecting and then living with it. I have no interest in taking away anything, and the core collection will be given to my daughter when she turns eighteen. It will be her choice to carry on with this journey or to end it. Collecting is one aspect, but I am happy to give works away. I feel letting go is equally important. I do, however, have a long wish list... a significant wall in our dining room lies vacant, awaiting a Mehli Gobhai work. His was the first studio I visited as a student and since then I have been saving up for a work. He went away too soon, but I know the wall will get his work at some point.





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