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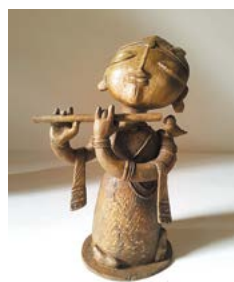
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When we approached artist Subramanian Gopalsamy to design our cover for this issue and told him the theme was, 'Other Side', his first response was 'Oh! That's always there. And we have to be open to it'. And that

sums up not just Subra's dialogue with our theme but each and every story that makes up this issue. And if the stories give different meanings to the journeys we take to the other side, then Subra's cover for the issue, a bronze sculpture of Krishna in his trademark style, presents the 'Other Side' of many things – of history, of mythology, of tradition, of art, its practice and the many perceptions that make up the whole.

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Seema Prema Bhagyam Massot has been navigating the waters of cultural management between France and India since 2009 and is now writing about experiencing art.

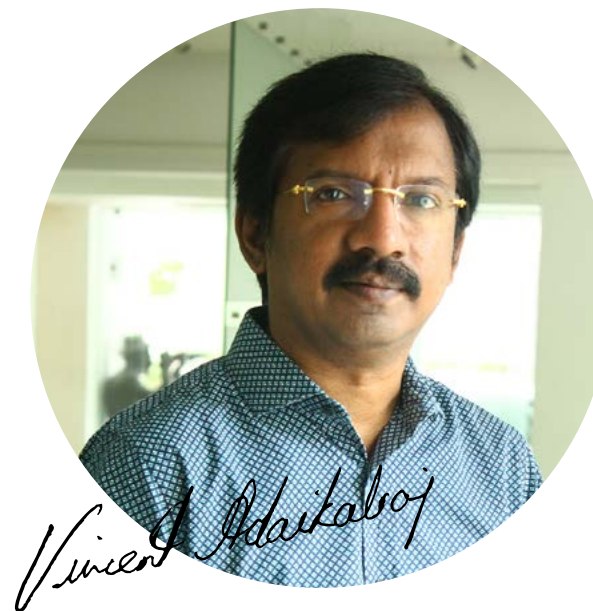
Susan Mathen is a brand strategist, deeply passionate about colour semiotics, design thinking and art history, and is the co-founder of www.hueandwhy.com.

Publisher's note

All things come in pairs – that's a Chinese proverb. Everything has two sides – a riveting story, a difficult decision, your favourite cassette from when cassettes were a thing... They all carry in them a promise – a promise of more, of revealing that which is still unknown, or simply, the truth. The first step is always the most difficult, but the lure of the 'other side' is strong. It drives us forward, urges us to take that leap of faith; and if we are lucky, find those greener pastures.

So, with this issue on the 'Other Side', we do just that – shed the cloak of the visible, the known and the familiar and take that 'ride to the other side'. This issue looks at artist(e)s meeting the unknown and bravely venturing into newer, bolder perspectives, yes; but also, at artist(e)s who revel in those unexpected stories that quietly bring about change – stories that are so unimaginably different from our own that they get segmented into the B-side of everyday hustle; stories that unbeknown to us remain an indelible part of our realities.

Vincent Adaikalraj



Moving through Body and Space

In an exclusive interview, designer-dancer Miti Desai shares the nuances of body, form and space and the many stories they narrate

Seema Prema Bhagyam Massot

The design of an art exhibition to me is indispensable, especially if the viewer is to meet the art in front of her and not just look at it unseeing. It is not only the visible elements that frame and surround the art work but also the invisible touches. When it is thoughtfully spaced, it gives the viewer a bit more time and incentive to move from one piece to another – a silent nudge to go near or take a step back; subtle changes in colour create a crescendo of sorts. All an undisputable necessity for audience experience!

Illustrated words, drawings that speak, illuminated sounds and the immersive experience of all of this in a fluid space – that is how I would describe Miti Desai's exhibition designs that elevate the mise en scène of the art works and the curatorial intent. A designer, dancer, educationist and the founder and creative head of Bengaluru-based Miti Design Lab, her holistic approach and interest in pedagogy converge, and the result is *Deep Design* – intent, thought, aesthetics, sensory elements and functionality layered together to bring forth a wholesome experience.

'As a designer, I found the need to extend further than the conventional "brief" – to engage with design in greater depth and seek the "truth in design". This led me to the legacy arts and the aesthetics that have emerged in history. And that manifested through my practice as a Mohiniyattam dancer. I believe that the original intention of these art forms was to immerse in it as a way of life, to engage and elevate, and not just entertain. The forms were ways to explore the imagination and sink back into the self,' she said over an e-mail interview where she spoke, in-depth, about the many choices, circumstances and conditions that continue to nurture and shape her works, both as a designer and a dancer.



First Step is the Last Step, Installation View.



Artist S.G. Vasudev's retrospective exhibition at NGMA, Mumbai, Installation View.



Artist S.G. Vasudev's retrospective exhibition at NGMA, Mumbai, Installation View.



First Step is the Last Step, Installation View.

Excerpts from the interview

You chose to study and practice dance as a way to engage with design. How do these two practices influence your work today, especially in exhibition design?

The urge to study dance came about 20 years ago, when I felt the need to experience design more holistically. Dance and design are the sources of my creative and artistic practices. They are the fundamental facets of my identity, my pathways of expression, and also the means through which I seek clarity and equilibrium. By exploring both, the traditional and the contemporary forms, I interrogate existing practices with an intention to possibly evolve a language that bridges the 'then' and the 'now'.

As for exhibition design, I must say that I am not an exhibition designer by training, but by happenstance. I was trained in communication design. To me, it is a very personalised process – watered with an experience of a physicality of form and movement in space. Dance, with its movement and stillness, with its body (form) and formlessness, has the potential to create magic in space, an experience of physicality.

What elements do you find essential in an effective exhibition?

For me, exhibition design is like story telling. Like any story, there is a sequential manifestation, and through it, I address three core aspects – space design, structural design and surface design. The story is woven with these facets. Like any good story, there is a beginning, middle and end; and I engage with the flow and content of the exhibition through this peephole and the conscious pauses in between. Space is living and has a voice. I like to listen to that voice and design in tune with it. When I design exhibitions, I try to create an experience.

In your recent design for the Krishnamurti Foundation India 'The First Step is the Last Step', you were able to illustrate words, visually represent philosophy and the exhibition at Vasant Vihar where Krishnamurti lived and

taught was immersive, to say the least. Can you tell us more about it?

That exhibition was not for any product/ service, but more an exploration in space and experience. The brief was to visualise the deep philosophical teachings and the life of the world teacher. The design solutions unfolded like a story as one walked through the exhibition space – *The Voice, The Life, The Teachings* and *The Study*. Each aspect was defined in such a way that the space in itself became an essential design element and the visual interpretation layered itself on top of it.

The starting point of the creative exploration drew from the essence of what the teacher stood for. So, space, texture, materiality and colour were important elements in the conception and design, but Krishnamurti's persona and perspective formed the basis of the design framework, the tonality and the flavour of the entire exhibition.

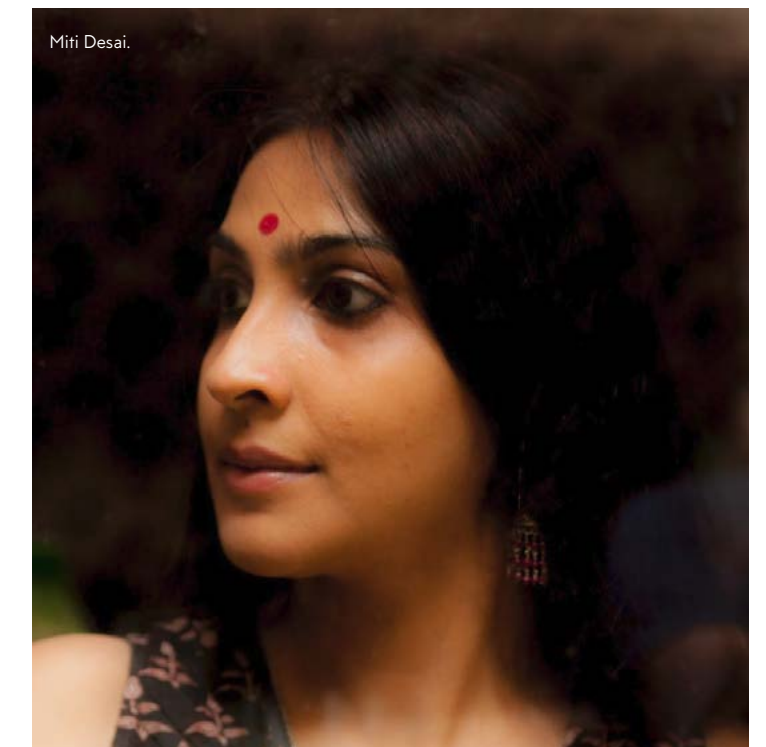
The SG Vasudev retrospective that also toured to several cities in India had an incredible five-level exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Mumbai. How did you engage with this space when essentially the art had to remain stationary but the people witnessing it have to move? Did your dance/movement practice come into play here?

Yes, the NGMA Mumbai is quite a stunning space. It was a tough spatial design challenge. Here, the only way to engage structurally was to surrender to the building. The flow and movement were conceptually visualised, in collaboration with curator Mr. Sadanand Menon, based on the different mediums of the arts work.

As for whether my dance/movement practice comes into play – well, I cannot pinpoint to specific decisions, but, like I said, the play of movement versus stillness is something that does play a vital role in the creative process. And my artistic practice of dance most definitely feeds into me as a whole, and sums up my overall aesthetic understanding.



Photograph by Santosh Kumar Janardhana.



Miti Desai.

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