

Rubric



gallery-g

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Pillars Within Jay Varma. Coloured pencil on paper 16" x 20". Winner, Sanford Award for Exceptional Merit 2000 Colored Pencil Society of America

Welcome to Issue 8. August is upon us and we take quick looks at some wonderful painters: two legendary old masters, the high priest of Surrealism, the curator for the next Kochi Biennale (and at what the Biennale's founder has been up to). There's also a piece by an upcoming member of our Artist Initiative Programme.

ALL TOGETHER

The Surrealism piece is by a friend of **Gallery g**, Indukant Gautam who's with Citibank, Singapore. Next issue will carry a piece on the Venice Biennale by another friend and writer-at-large. Rubric is a true collaboration, where art-lovers like you share what they think and feel, see and hear. If you've something to say, this is not just your magazine but your platform too. We

look forward to your inputs.

PRINT BREW BEGINS

Some exciting news: the launch of our sister concern **Print Brew**. For a while now, we've been seeing a need for a boutique publication house to design and produce interesting solutions for art industry stakeholders. These range from artist catalogues to archival publications like coffee table books. **Print Brew** is now in operation and will also cater to the brand communication and family history segments.

As a boutique operation our approach will be very personalised, focusing on those handpicked projects with which we can make a difference. Come and see what we're doing. But first, enjoy this issue.

WORDS AND PIX: JAY VARMA

Our Artists' Initiative Programme (AIP) features the people we want to work with. Looking well ahead, our cover story this month features Jay Varma, our projected AIP artist for 2018. We look forward to what he will add to his already extensive oeuvre by then.



Jay Varma combines a dramatic sense of colour with extraordinary realism in detail. Essentially self-taught, he continues a rich artistic family tradition: his great-grandfather Raja Ravi Varma, is one of India's most highly-regarded

artists and his mother Rukmini's work hangs in private collections around the world.

Varma won the 2000 Sanford Award for Exceptional Merit at the Eighth International Colored Pencil Competition in Birmingham, Michigan and the Best in Show in 2003-2004 at the International Art and Sculpture Exhibition hosted by the Mid-Michigan Art Guild. His work has been featured in *The Artist's Magazine*, *The International Artist* and *Detroit Free Press*, to name a few.

EARLY DAYS

A fleeting memory from when I was really little is of being carried by a gentleman who was the chief administrator of the household. I can remember thinking what a long way down it was to the ground. I was rather fat as a child and didn't walk till well past my second birthday. Kunju Krishnan Pillai was the one person who did carry me around and he was fairly tall. Luckily he didn't let go of me, or my memory would've been that of finding out precisely how far it was to the ground.

Home was, in those days, a sprawling four-acre compound with its own little forest and gardens: there were no TVs or computers and we kids grew up literally living out our made-up stories. It was then that I started associating emotions, places, names and a lot of other stuff with colour. Even numbers and days of the week had their particular colour and when I talked about this with the other kids, they thought it strange, so then I largely kept it to myself.

BEING ROYAL

It was when we started going to school that we learnt we were somewhat different from the other kids. I couldn't ever reconcile myself to the fact that ours was a 'royal' family, what with the jokes made at my expense. I thought being royal was something everyone made fun of, so in college I tried my best to hide that. However, I must add that since reading and hearing a bit about my family, I'm proud to say that I belong to it.

INFLUENCES AND METHODS

I remember watching my mother paint even before I learnt to write. She'd spend hours on her canvasses and could sometimes be engaged to talk about them. I never knew about Raja Ravi Varma until much, much later. As an artist, I'm just beginning my journey into that world.

Most of the time what I choose to draw comes randomly. Years ago I wanted to write a children's book, about people in Southern India, using the river Cauvery as the thread. I visited an old Brahmin household with a very interesting back-story and decided to draw it. The finished piece won an award in the US.

Now, however, I have thought much about my first exhibition and am working on a theme. So I guess there isn't any given method I follow.

The biggest struggle is sitting in front of my work not knowing what to do next. Over the years though, I have become a bit better at it. The US has been a very big influence as I was at an atelier where I learnt a lot about drawing and painting. This energy fuels me to do my best. However, whenever I come back to Bangalore, I just want to laze around and am never serious about working. It must be something in the air.

THE US EFFECT AND OTHERS

I'm very impressed with the work ethic I had the privilege of seeing at the atelier: its founder, Nelson Shanks, is a great inspiration.

Meghna graphite on paper 23" x 29"





Swarnathe Mane (Golden House) 18" x 28" (colour pencil on arches paper) The title refers to a story about Sage Shankaracharya, who while going door-to-door for alms, came to this house, where the inhabitants had fallen on somewhat hard times. The grandmother of the house is said to have given him a bunch of gooseberries, which was all she could spare, rather than send him away empty-handed. The legend goes that since that day, the household has been showered with golden gooseberries in blessing.

This pencil work is especially significant because it won a Mid-Michigan International Art Award, for which paintings, sculptures and pencil works are submitted from around the world.

I've come to understand that an artist mustn't get too involved with just one piece, lest it consume him or her. I'm also hugely and endlessly inspired by such maestros as Rubens, Bouguereau, Alma-Tadema, Gérôme and Lord Leighton, some of whom were my mother's and great-great-grandfather's favourites as well.

Hopefully I'll be lucky enough to establish myself. These days it has grown increasingly difficult with so many fantastic artists. It's my dream to build a body of work that can hold its own and be relevant in any age.

EMOTIVE APPEAL

The inherent appeal of any work is indefinable. It sets the stage and when the viewer looks at it next, he or she will connect it with its original impact. It forms a linked impression. This process is also subject to the emotions the viewer is experiencing at the time, similar to association of emotion through fragrance, hearing or taste.

The old masters didn't have photography or tools such as computers, so they relied on representational art. What they saw, they painted; sometimes what they imagined as well. These days, things have changed but for me, what's important is the finished piece, more than how an artist got there.

SPACE CARDINAL

Studio space is cardinal. For me, a good easel and

the best quality paints and drawing material are also imperative. Available natural light is, however, something that one has to make compromises for. Having said that, the best light is considered to be from the north.

SHUTTER CREED

Photography's one of my passions. I view it as a separate medium, as standalone art. However, I do use photos sometimes to finish portraits, figures and other objects for drawing and painting.

Photography does bleed into painting and drawing and this is something I'm exploring. Still, one tends to visualise a bit differently, looking through the camera eyepiece as a painter. But it must be said that drawing and painting from real life is considered traditionally the best and supposed to produce the most emotion.

HYPER-FUSION

Hyperrealism is becoming quite sought-after in India. What I strive to achieve is not quite hyperrealism but a fusion of softer lines and surfaces blended with detail and clearly delineated light and shadow. A lot of patience is required to layer the artwork: knowing your subject is also a pre-requisite.

– Interviewed by Gitanjali Maini

HELLO DALÍ:

A DAY OF SURREALISM AT THE DALÍ THEATRE-MUSEUM, FIGUERES, SPAIN

It was a sunny and crisp summer morning when my wife and I took a two-hour train ride from Barcelona to Figueres – a small medieval town that is Salvador Dalí's birthplace, in Spain's Empordà region, close to the French border in Catalonia. We were going to visit the Dalí Theatre-Museum, inaugurated in 1974.

Salvador Domingo Felipe Jacinto Dalí i Domènech (1904-1989) was baptised, next to the museum, in the Church of Sant Pere, also the site of both his first communion and his funeral.

EXCESS IS MOOR

Dalí was a skilled draughtsman, best known for the striking and bizarre images in his Surrealist work. His painterly skills are often attributed to the influence of Renaissance masters. His best-known work, *The Persistence of Memory*, was completed in 1931. Dalí's expansive repertoire included film, sculpture, and photography, in collaboration with a range of artists. He attributed his 'love of everything that is gilded and excessive, my passion for luxury and my love of oriental clothes' to his ancestors having descended from the Moors. His eccentric, attention-grabbing behaviour sometimes drew more attention than his work, to the dismay of those who held it in high esteem, and to the irritation of his critics.

Car Naval. Rainy Taxi. *Courtyard installation, Dalí Theatre-Museum.*



Eyecatching: *Salvador Dalí*

MONUMENTAL GENIUS

The Dalí Theatre-Museum rises on the remains of the former Municipal Theatre of Figueres and is considered to be Dalí's last great work. Everything in it was conceived and designed by him. The project started at the beginning of the '60s. Ramon Guardiola, mayor of Figueres at the time, asked Dalí to donate a work for the Museu de l'Empordà.

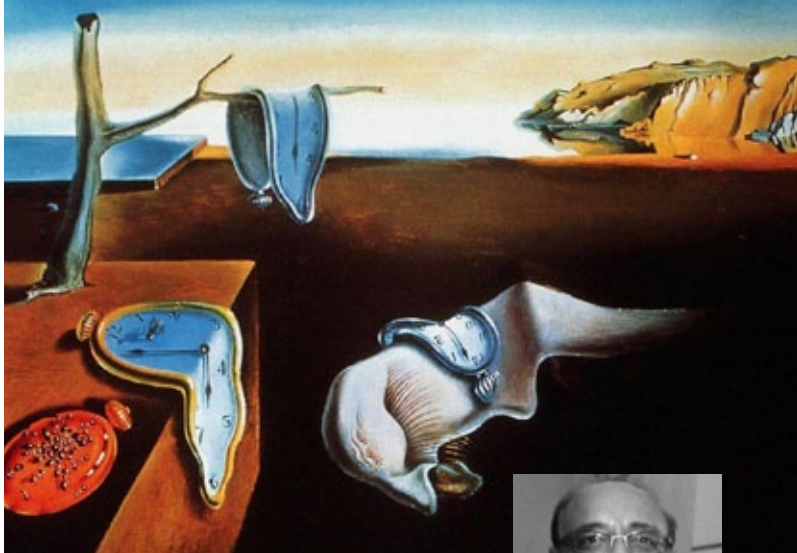
Dalí's reply came quickly: he would donate to Figueres not just a single work, but an entire museum: 'Where, if not in my own town, should the most extravagant and solid of my work endure? The Municipal Theatre, or what remained of it, struck me as very appropriate for three reasons: first, because I am an eminently theatrical painter; second, because the theatre stands right opposite the church where I was baptised; and third, because it was precisely in the hall of the vestibule of the theatre where I hosted my first exhibition.'

The building had been destroyed in a fire at the end of the Spanish Civil War. The ceiling of the orchestra pit had collapsed; of the boxes there remained only the access corridors to them and to the stage, the arch of the stage mouth and the side stores; the entrance hall and the rest room were the parts more or less intact. Dalí took advantage of the ruins' spectral charm and was involved in designing the future museum's tiniest details. One of its most noticeable features, the transparent, reticular geodesic dome, by the Murcian architect Emilio Pérez Piñero (1935-1972), has now become an icon for the city of Figueres.

The Theatre-Museum's collection captures Dalí's artistic journey through nearly 1500 paintings, drawings, sculptures, engravings, installations, holograms, stereoscopes and photography. The rooms allow visitors to take in his first artistic experiences, surrealism, nuclear mysticism and his passion for science, and so on, to his last works.

It's a unique experience; in Dalí's words, 'It's obvious that other worlds exist; but, these other worlds are inside ours, they reside on earth and are precisely at the centre of the dome of the Dalí Museum, which contains the new, unsuspected and hallucinatory world of Surrealism.'

Indukant Gautam



The Persistence of Memory Museum of Modern Art New York. Right: the author



BOSE LIVE

BLUE FROG PUNE. When **Gallery g** friend and well-wisher Anil Sanghvi turned 60, the celebrations were topped off with an on-the-spot painting done by Bose Krishnamachari who, as Kochi Biennale founder-President, and a highly-regarded curator, is of course a **Gallery g** friend, too.

Bose is known for his 'striking and dynamic abstracts, seen through saturated lenses'. Even in his photography and multi-media installations, he says, 'I refine my color to brightness. I learnt this from the alternately subdued and lavish colours of Indian ceremonies and ritual performances; the costumes, the gestures of enactment...'

Biennale, art and photography apart, Krishnamachari curates exhibitions and projects and wholeheartedly supports the younger generation of Indian artists.

A rapt audience cheered as he brought the four-foot square canvas titled *Anil's Canvas of Colours* vividly to life. This was a first for him and he finished the painting in a record one hour. Amidst the general approbation, he said painting before an audience was a first for him and something he thoroughly enjoyed.

Art adds so much meaning to a celebration and being privy to the creative process is always memorable, especially when it's watching a painter start and finish a canvas. Besides, like in any live event, there's always a sense of the unexpected and with a painting this striking, I'm really glad to have had a ringside seat. It would be wonderful to have more performances like this.

<http://www.aicongallery.com/artists/bose-krishnamachari/bio/>

Hues who: Bose's living colours



CURATE EXPECTATIONS: SUDARSHAN SHETTY

Sudarshan Shetty is the curator for next year's Kochi Muziris Biennale, which will be the third. He was unanimously chosen by a committee that included Atul Dodiya, Bharti Kher, Kiran Nadar, Riyas Komu and Bose Krishnamachari.

Together, the first two Biennales drew nearly a million visitors, their quality of content automatically raising the bar for the third edition. Sudarshan Shetty has long been acknowledged as one of his generation's most innovative artists: Biennale fans are already curious to see how his avowed eclecticism will take the Biennale artist-curator tradition forward.

An important voice in contemporary art, Shetty paints and sculpts and also works in installation, video, sound and performance. He's exhibited widely in India and abroad: at Fukuoka's Asian Art Museum, and the Tate Modern, London, the Centre Pompidou, Paris, the World Economic Forum in Davos and at the Guggenheim Museum, New York among others.

He's had solo shows in Vienna (2012), Bangalore (2011), Paris (2011), Mumbai (2010) and New York (2010). His enigmatic sculptural installations are part of many important public collections here and abroad.

Thiruvananthapuram July 15 2015. From left: Riyas Komu & Bose Krishnamachari, KBF Secretary & President, Sudarshan Shetty, Shashi Tharoor, M.P., K.C. Joseph, Minister for Culture, Kerala, K Chandrika, Mayor of Thiruvananthapuram and M.A. Baby, former Minister for Culture, Kerala



Shetty was born in Mangalore in 1961, where his father was a Yakshagana performer. He studied painting at the Sir J J School of Art, Mumbai, but found himself more engaged with sculpture and installation. He honed his knowledge of the relationship between sculpture, design and architecture in Ahmedabad's academic art, design and technology milieu.

Experimenting with innumerable materials and mediums, his installations and assemblages juxtapose everyday objects, ranging from those in a typical household to ones in a window display, in ways that also contrast the mechanical with the kinetic to create what he calls fairground spectacle, 'seducing with the familiar.'

Shetty lives and works in Mumbai. Most of 'the information for my work' comes, he says, 'from my day-to-day negotiation with this city.'

<http://kochimuzirisbiennale.org/sudarshan-shetty-is-curator-of-kochi-muziris-biennale-2016/>
<http://kochimuzirisbiennale.org/announcement-of-curator-of-kochi-muziris-biennale-2016/>

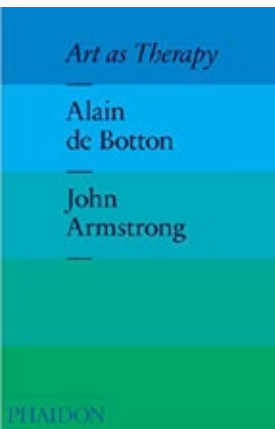


ART'S SEVEN PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS

ART AS THERAPY

Alain de Botton and John Armstrong

Aakash Menon presents his take on the book by philosopher Alain de Botton and art historian John Armstrong that's had art circles talking.



Art has many therapeutic uses. It helps calm the onlookers' spirit and allows them to break free from social dogma. Art can be used as a stressbuster. There are many psychological uses for art. As author Anaïs Nin once said, 'Art can be a way to exorcise our emotional excess.'

1. Remembering The fear of forgetting is extremely distressing for us – forgetting a moment, a scene, a smell,

a sound and even sometimes a feeling. People love to remember. Art is a way of preserving experiences. Good artwork pins down the core of significance. It helps people remember. It takes them back to a familiar feeling or makes them go through certain forgotten emotions. This is very beneficial for our minds and can be extremely therapeutic.

2. Hope The differences between success and failure is determined by nothing more than our sense of what is possible and the energy we can muster to convince others of our due. We are doomed usually by the lack of hope and not by the lack of skill.

Paintings stimulate hope in the onlooker. We should be able to enjoy an 'ideal' image or a pretty image without regarding it as a false picture of how things really are in our world. This gives us a sense of hope, and is extremely good for our psyche.

3. Sorrow The word 'fulfilling' doesn't only mean positive. It also means negative. We should be able to see the good in the bad and the bad in the good. Art can help us be more whole by not only expanding our

capacity for positive emotions but by also helping us to fully inhabit and metabolise the negative. This reminds us of the 'legitimate place of sorrow in a good life' and helps us realise that in order to truly appreciate the light, one must go through bouts of darkness.

4. Rebalancing Art can put us in touch with concentrated doses of our missing dispositions, and by doing so, restore a measure of equilibrium to our inner selves. We hunger for artworks that compensate for our inner fragilities and help return us to a viable mean. Art holds out the promise of inner wholeness. We usually regard a painting as ugly if it forces us to go through certain moods or emotions we feel threatened by and we call a work beautiful when it supplies the virtues we are missing. Therefore the task of artists is to find new ways to open our eyes to familiar but important ideas on how to lead a balanced life.

We usually want to make more of ourselves, but lose motivation at a critical juncture. Art is very handy in this case. We can derive enormous benefits from works of art that encourage us to be the best version of ourselves, something we would resent if we thought of ourselves as already perfect.

5. Self-Understanding Art can help shed light on those least-explored nooks of our psyche and make palpable the hunches of intuition we can only sense but not articulate. Art helps us in our desire to communicate the subtleties of who we are and what we believe in, in ways that words never fully capture.

6. Growth Art helps us live more richly by inviting the unknown. It helps us expand the boundaries of who we are by helping us overcome the fear of unfamiliarity.

7. Appreciation Our attention usually blinds us to so much of what is around us, but art can help lift these blinders so we can absorb not only what we expect to see, but also what we are not expecting to see.

<http://www.brainpickings.org/2013/10/25/art-as-therapy-alain-de-botton-john-armstrong/>

REMBRANDT

LIGHT AND NIGHTWATCH

Rembrandt was a 17th century painter and etcher who was known for his self portraits and biblical scenes. He is considered to be one of the greatest painters in European history. His mastery over the use of shadow and light in his works is well known. He was born in the city of Leiden, Netherlands in 1606.

During the years from 1625 to 1631, the works he created were small but rich in detail, with religious and allegorical themes quite prominent. It's also noteworthy that during 1626, he worked on his first etchings, which would get him international fame.

SCALE, DETAIL

Starting in 1628, he started taking on students or pupils who knew of his fame and wanted to learn by his side. From 1631, he began to paint large-scale, dramatic biblical and mythological scenes using his high-contrast method of light and dark. He was known for his ability to render the human figure and its emotions. His eye for detail was extraordinary and in his renderings of



The Nightwatch: Rembrandt's most famous painting

women, children and landscapes, this was evident, but he noted these details with freedom and economy.

Rembrandt was known to live beyond his means, which eventually led to a court arrangement to avoid his bankruptcy in 1656, by selling his paintings and large collection of antiquities. After the death of his lover Hendrickje Stoffels in 1663 and the death of his son, Titus, in 1668, Rembrandt continued to paint. His last self-portrait was dated 1669. He died on October 4th, 1669, in Amsterdam with a painting left unfinished on his easel.

<http://www.notablebiographies.com/Pu-Ro/Rembrandt.html>
<http://www.biography.com/people/rembrandt-9455125>

Articles on this page: Aakash Menon

VAN GOGH

STORMY GENIUS

Vincent Van Gogh was born in the Netherlands on March 30th 1853 in a town called Groot-Zundert. He is considered to be the greatest Dutch painter after Rembrandt. His works influenced 20th century art to a great extent. He was a post-Impressionist painter and his works were notable for their beauty, colour and emotion. Emotionally and psychologically he was a troubled person. He fell in love and was attracted to women who had their own issues to deal with and so these relationships were inevitably stormy and short-lived.

His art was the only thing that helped him stay emotionally balanced and somewhat sane. Some people say he was also known to have sipped on turpentine and eaten paint. This was mainly due to the fact that all the money he had, he used to spend on paint, bread and absinthe. He never ate much food which led to his physical weakness as well. He was quite suicidal and made many attempts to take his own life. In the end,



on July 29th, 1980, he died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound at the age of thirty seven.

Today, many years later, his works are sold for millions. His fame only came after his death. Johanna, Van Gogh's art dealer brother Theo's wife, then collected as many of his paintings shortly after his death and on March 17th 1901, his paintings were shown in Paris, after which his fame grew enormously.

<http://www.biography.com/people/vincent-van-gogh-9515695>

Van Gogh: one of a series of self-portraits



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