

eclectic LEANINGS

THESE ARTISTS ARE USING EVERYTHING, FROM CLAY TO PLASTIC SHEETS, TO GET THEIR POINT ACROSS

BY NIKITA JAIN

Breaking the shackles of conventional art, multimedia artists are expressing their thoughts over the modern world in a unique manner. They are working on installations using plastic, soil, lasers and video technology to create solid three-dimensional art. Installations are their tool to communicate thoughts effectively. SIMPLY MUMBAI talks to artists who have carved a niche for themselves in the medium.

SHILPA GUPTA, 32

Hundreds of whistles, used for regulating masses or warning, hang onto a security belt, almost rising into a pile. This is how Shilpa Gupta's installation makes a comment on the rising fear of security experienced by the common man. She effectively uses interactive videos, websites, photographs and sounds to examine subverted themes such as desire, love, tradition, religion and security. "I like to explore things that affect everyday life. They inspire me."

Gupta, 32, was inclined towards fine arts since childhood. She started working on installations in her first

year while studying sculpture at J.J. School of Art. She has shown at prestigious galleries, such as Tate Modern in London, Queens Museum in New York, Tamayo Museum in Mexico City and Chicago Cultural Centre. Her work has also been showcased at the Lyon Biennale in 2007 and Liverpool Biennale curated by Gerardo Mosquera. Gupta effectively uses the Internet as a strong medium to showcase her art. "I have worked as a web designer earlier, so the Internet became a handy tool to reach out to people," she says.

A people's artist, Gupta does not want art to remain confined to galleries. By organising group shows on video art, she tries to educate the masses about the language of art. "My work has no boundaries. It can be understood by a four-year-old as well as a 60-year-old," she says. For now, Gupta is all set for her solo show, 'While I Sleep', at Galleria Continua, Tuscany, and Le Laboratoire, Paris.

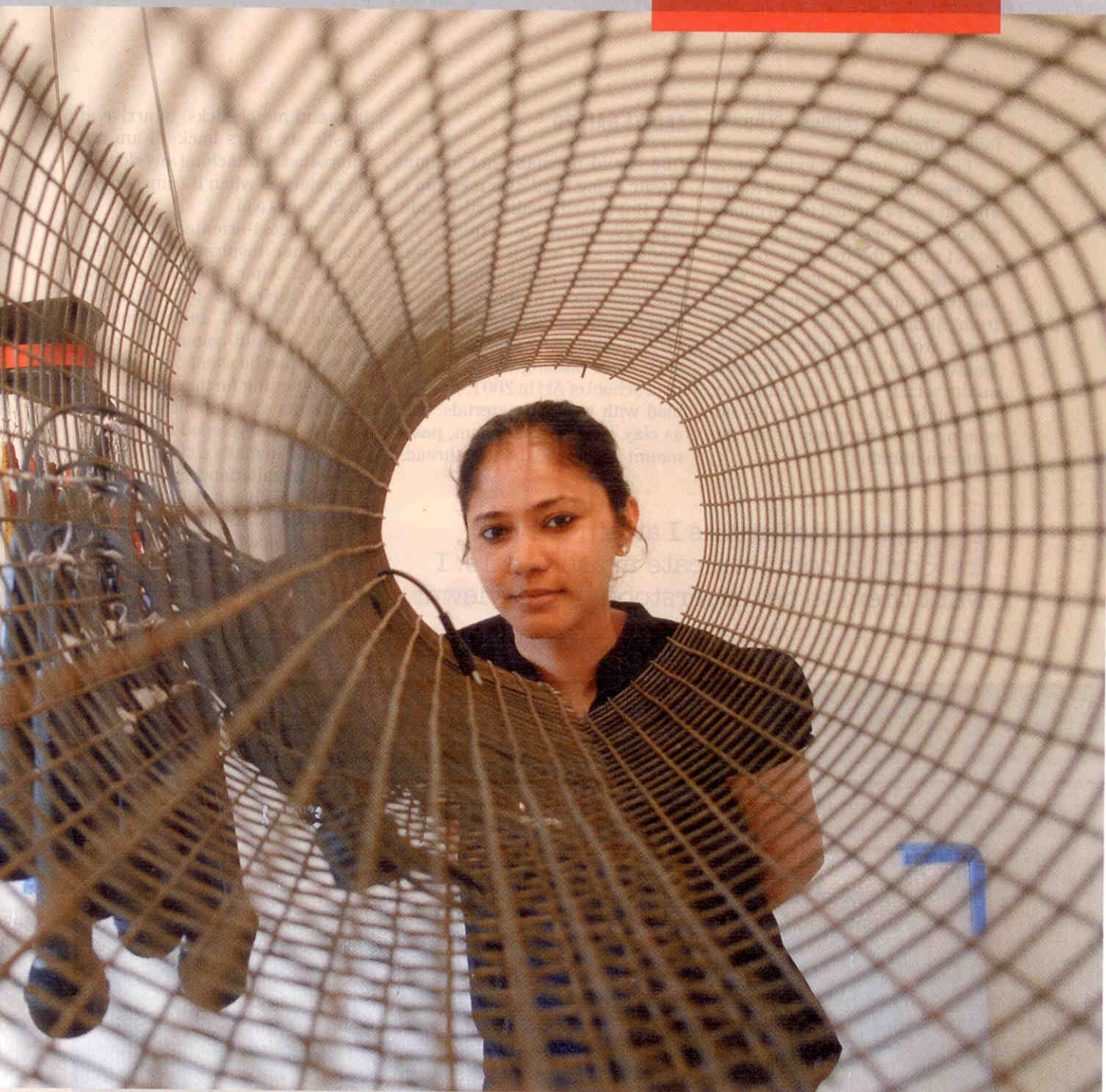
NARENDRA YADAV, 44

He almost gave up the thought of taking up art seriously and switched to advertising for a career. Fortunately for the connoisseurs of art, Narendra



I like to explore things that affect everyday life. My work surpasses all geographical and cultural differences.

SHILPA GUPTA



MANDAR DEODHAR

Yadav took his friend's advice seriously and started working on installations three and a half years back. Today, he is successfully managing both careers simultaneously.

Coming from a family of artists, it was not difficult to venture into the creative field. He works as an advertising professional in the day and becomes an installation artist during early mornings, late evenings and

weekends. "For me, art is almost therapeutic. It is the most effective means of communication," says Yadav, who is the group creative director at Lowe. He made his debut with a solo installation art show at Museum Art gallery in 2006.

Whether it's the communication of thoughts, ideas or social themes, Yadav manages to do it effectively through his interactive installations.

In one of his favourite works, titled *Stress release toys for instant justice*, he effectively engages his viewer in the art. He gives the liberty to his audience to topple a figure like Saddam Hussain, or George Bush, placed on top of a box, by rolling the handle on the side of the box. "I don't want my art to be hybrid. I want it to be understood by my viewer," says Yadav. Ask him what interests him the

most, and he replies, "Human failings inspire me."

For him, art is an extension to express his thoughts. "In advertising you are restricted to the choice of your viewer. Through installations I attain the freedom to communicate my thoughts," says Yadav. He draws his inspirations from situations that affect the larger world. Through his work, Yadav wants to make a comment on the society in an insightful way. No wonder the theme for his upcoming show happens to be 'human conditioning'.

AADITI NAI, 29

One would normally not imagine plastic being used as a medium of art. But mixed-media artist Aaditi Nai, 29, chose to explore the medium and use it in different ways to create conventional art. "I am mesmerised by the unexplored characteristic and aesthetic beauty of this everyday material," she says. After passing out of L.S. Raheja School of Art in 2001, she dabbled with various materials, such as clay, paper sheets, gum, paste, mount board, boxboard, threads,

bits and matchsticks, to arrive at plastic six years back. "I am not interested in attaching any slogans or pretences when it comes to my work," says Nai.

A process-oriented artist, Nai draws her inspiration from her medium. After her debut show, 'Zero Opacity' in 2005 that displayed a small installation in peeled, multi-coloured, compressed plastic sheets, she started experimenting further by creating tiny works with thin plastic sheets. Slowly, she developed her art and managed to make a six-by-six feet plastic installation by joining thin plastic bags burnt with candles. A perfectionist, she now works with a sealing machine that helps her seal the bags with finesse. In her quest to attain perfection in the medium, Nai is currently working on creating a six-by-ten inch plas-

Through installations I attain the freedom to communicate my thoughts. I want them to be understood by my viewer.

NARENDRA YADAV

SHRIYA PATIL SHINDE



SIMPLY MUMBAI

tic installation, using more than 2,000 plastic bags by keenly arranging these bags in different angles. "I want to make my work technically and visually strong. It drives me towards perfection."

N.G. BITYUT SINGHA, 30

One could easily call N.G. Bityut Singha a people's artist. From ideating for his installations to making them, he enjoys art as a

community issues.

Unlike other artists, Singha does not preserve his art installations. He prefers to dismantle his works to create better pieces in future. "Every art piece has a time span. It will lose its beauty if it's permanent," he says. Singha made his first installation in his third year of college, by wrapping a banyan trunk with silver foil to draw people's attention towards it. After

I don't want to attach slogans or pretences when it comes to my work. I want to make it technically and visually strong.

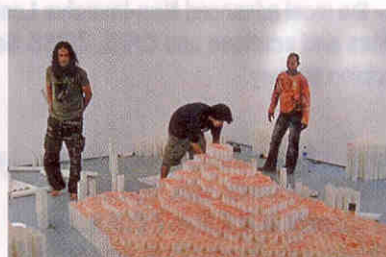
BHASKAR PAUL

AADITI NAI



We are so used to the fake things around us that we do not realise that we are missing the real pleasures of life.

N.G. BITYUT SINGHA



(Clockwise from above) Nai with one of her works; Bityut Sinha; Sinha working on a piece with a group

group process. What sets him apart from other artists is that he prefers to involve people, rather than working in isolation. "I call in a lot of friends to work with me. It helps me do better and develop a bond with them," he says. For him, his works are a process through which he can communicate his thoughts to his audience. Singha started by spreading environmental awareness but gradually moved towards

graduating from J.J. School of Art in 2000, with a major in mural design, he started experimenting with paper, soil and cow dung. He has participated in various group shows, such as Kala Ghoda and Khoj, and held three solo shows. To fund his art works, Singha works as a tattoo artist during the day. An open-minded artist Singha thinks criticism is the best teacher if taken positively. He keeps his work open

to interpretation. Once he made a comment on human nature by creating an installation called *Fragrance*, by making several steel flowers and placed them in a garden. Though the audience knew the flowers were fake, they still questioned the absence of fragrance. "We are so used to fake things around us that we do not realise that we are missing the real pleasures of life," he says. ■