



HER VOICE

The family of *The Voice* star Christina Grimmie (pictured) has released a video by the singer that she had been working on, before her death. The video *Snow White* is about a girl's journey of self-discovery.

ON THE RECORD

The Memory of Design

Italian designer Giorgio Galleani talks about the need to have design museums in India



Giorgio Galleani

SHINY VARGHESE

IF INDIAN designers have been plagued by questions on what is Indian design, Italians too have been asking themselves just that. A few years ago, they found a way to explore the idea through "The Seven Obsessions of Italian Design", an exhibition at the Triennale Design Museum, Milan. From the sacred luxury of the Byzantines to Pompeii and objects of contemporary theatre, democratic design to futuristic instability, these explorations were the start to many more editions at the Museum. Giorgio Galleani, Head, Italian Design Collections and Archives, at the museum, was in Delhi as part of a country tour. The 48-year-old spoke about design museums, India's relevance on the global scene and the shift away from patronage. Excerpts from an interview:

What is your role at the Triennale Design Museum, seen both as a scientific and emotional space?

I am the conservator of the collections at the museum and I help external curators create exhibitions. I try and create a bridge between the past and the present. Our exhibitions are based around themes. The most recent one is "W.Women in Italian Design". The story is told through the metaphor of a river that runs through the whole of the 20th century.

How does a product become part of the collection? And why are design museums important?

It's usually about memory and what it means to people. For instance, when people see the Graziella bicycle, it's an instant recall, it takes you back to your childhood. Everybody in Italy has some association with it. Of course, we also have products in our collection that is based on science and shows how industries have developed. Museums tell your story, they also present a point of view about your culture.

In the nine years of its existence, tell us about an exhibition that you found interesting?

There have been several but for a travelling exhibition on New Italian Design, we presented products on a conveyor belt, like at a sushi bar. There were these tiny objects that were placed on plates, Federico Fellini's movie clips playing on a loop and circus music in the background. We collected these products with the help of experts from the fields of fashion, industrial design and product design. One such object was this bird feeder, which comes with an integrated wooden pusher. Once you've eaten your bread, you can brush the crumbs right off the table into the box and place it by the window to serve it up for the birds.

Do you advocate patronage to promote design these days?

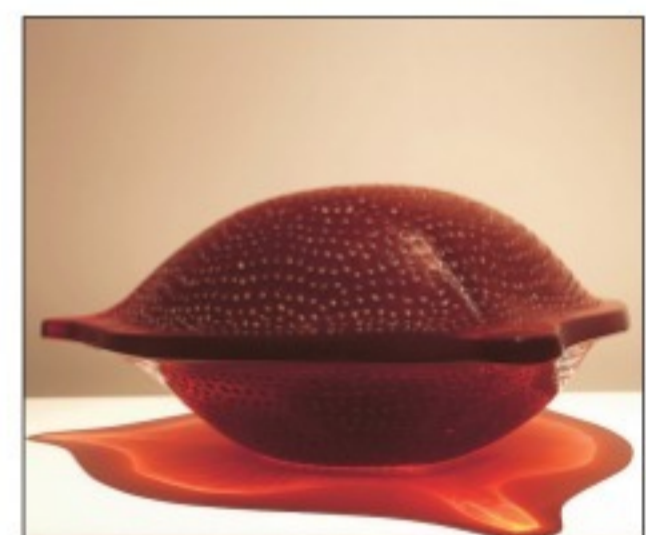
We don't believe in patrons. Today, those who have the money won't give you something without telling you how to do it. At the Triennale Design Museum, we often have manufacturers who want their products to be displayed because then they use it as an advertisement. We don't put any such products on display.

Do you think India's time for a design museum has come?

Of course! In India, when you have a problem, and need a solution, everyone has a different answer. The idea of the design museum must start from here. Look at all the solutions that people have given in the last 50 years to a problem and how they have solved it. After this, you can start to create your style and identity. The ability to do this is your biggest strength and what the world needs.



(Clockwise from above) Fibreglass sculptures of the Olive Ridley turtle; works from the 'Memory' series; a work from the 'Extinct Form' series; the artist



Once Upon a Time

Artist Parag Tandel's third solo shows how urbanisation has changed the character of Mumbai water bodies

POOJA PILLAI

THERE WAS a time when dolphins, known to the Koli community as *eda masa* (mad fish), used to swim up the Thane creek, much to delight of those who lived along the banks. "They don't come anymore, of course," says Parag Tandel, adding, "I also used to see a lot of mudskippers when I used to go swimming in the creek as a child. But those have disappeared too." These changes have steadily turned the verdant environs of the creek into an unfamiliar, rapidly-urbanising area. For the 37-year-old artist, it was important to capture his memories of what once was, thus leading to the creation of a series of works which are currently on display in the exhibition, "Chronicle" in Mumbai.

A strong sense of history, both personal and communal, pervades the works, as Tandel attempts to catalogue the changes in the marine ecology that he himself has experienced, as well as the larger changes experienced by the Koli community that set-

led in and around the seven original islands of Mumbai, a few centuries ago.

The homage to this history of the community — and the history of Mumbai, in a sense — begins with a set of 12 fibreglass sculptures of the Olive Ridley turtle, which nests *en masse* along the Konkan coast, although it's been years since they've done along the shores of Mumbai.

"This turtle is a migrant, just like my community. My ancestors migrated from Ratnagiri nearly 500 years ago and settled here, so we know that migrants have always played a big part in Mumbai's history," says Tandel, adding, "Even the man who cast these turtles for me is a migrant. He's from Uttar Pradesh, where he used to be a farmer, and hard times forced him to move to Mumbai for work. He is incredibly skilled but, as he says, he needs to be this skilled in order to find employment here. And that's the story of everyone, including people from the Koli community. We're traditionally a fishing community, but we've all got different occupations now."



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PARAG TANDEL

The turtles are also a reference to all the freshwater wells that were once found across Thane. "Thanks to our geographical location, Thane has always had a very high water table. Almost every house had a well and in each well, you would find a turtle," he says.

The story of the Koli community continues with "Trap 1", a set of resin sculptures, which look like the swell of the sea, frozen for eternity. Trapped inside these bulbous shapes are what look like drops of blood, a nod to the ancient method of fishing where the catch was often beaten with sticks when it was still in the water.

Given how memory gets distorted over time, Tandel was not interested in creating exact replicas of the marine life that is slowly disappearing in and around Mumbai and thus chose to give the works in the "Extinct Form" series a more primitive, protozoan shape. The colours he used, he explains, are a reference to the various shades of effluents that he has seen in Thane creek over the years. But it is in "Memory" that he makes his most direct reference to his own personal

memories. In the luminous shadows that are cast under these sculptures, when the light falls on and through them, one can almost see the flickering shapes and colours that Tandel may have once seen.

In the same series, there's also a set of distorted shapes made of copper-plated aluminium that closely resemble the rows of Bombay Duck fish, often found drying along the shores of Mumbai and Thane. "My mother used to sell fish and she taught me how to count using bunches of these fish. Each bunch had about a 100 dried Bombay Ducks," he says.

Urbanisation and pollution may have irreversibly changed the character of Mumbai and Thane's water bodies, but that didn't stop Tandel from buying a house on Thane creek a few years ago. "My wife had insisted that if we buy a new place, it would have to be near water. That's how it is for us Kolis. No matter what, we need to be close to water."

"Chronicle" is on display at Tarq, Colaba, Mumbai, till September 10

SNAPSHOTS



A Love Affair

ZEENAT AMAN, the Bollywood diva of the '70s and the '80s, will be seen playing a role of a single woman in the upcoming web series *Love, Life and ScrewUps!!!*. Kapil Sharma, who featured in the 2010 film *Dunno Y Na Jaane Kyon*, has directed the series. It's about eight friends and their approach towards relationships. Zeenat's character has a look inspired by the '70s and is a woman who is friendly with the younger generation. The series will be released soon with English subtitles.



Living Legend

TO CELEBRATE the 50 years of director Adoor Gopalakrishnan in the film industry, the Kerala branch of the Federation of the Film Societies of India has organised a three-day film festival in Thiruvananthapuram. The festival is screening some of his popular films such as *Nizhalkuthu*, *Vidheyam*, *Mathiukal*, *Elippathayam*, *Anantharam* and *Swayamvaram*. The event also marks the 75th birthday of the Dadasaheb Phalke-awardee.



Shining Bright

AMERICAN ACTOR Robert De Niro, known for his roles in films such as *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull* and *The Godfather Part II*, has been awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Sarajevo film festival. The 72-year-old also inaugurated the festival. He will be next seen in the HBO film drama series *The Wizard of Lies*, based on the life of the convicted former stockbroker Bernie Madoff. Michelle Pfeiffer stars as Ruth Madoff in the series.

Poll Position

Filmmakers Khushboo Ranka and Vinay Shukla on how their documentary *An Insignificant Man* is a record of Indian electoral politics

POOJA PILLAI

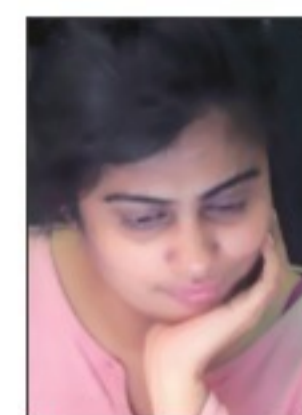
BY CALLING it a "non-fiction political thriller", filmmakers Khushboo Ranka and Vinay Shukla show how aware they are of the significance of their documentary, *An Insignificant Man*, which follows the Aam Aadmi Party and its leader Arvind Kejriwal. The film attempts to offer a glimpse into the incomparable spectacle that is Indian electoral politics, and will premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival next month.

"With this film, we've probably only unearthed the top soil. There's scope for so much more, as far as documenting our politics is concerned," says Ranka. The documentary, produced by filmmaker Anand Gandhi, was initially called *Proposition for a Revolution* but Ranka, who co-wrote *Ship of Theseus*, says they felt the need to change the name for the very practical reason that *An Insignificant Man* rolls off the tongue more easily. "It's cleaner and more poetic. We also realised that people have very negative associations with 'revolution', as most identified the word with something violent," she says.

In the beginning, all that the two filmmakers were sure of was that they wanted to make an election documentary. This was in 2012, as Delhi was preparing for a significant assembly election in the following year. "We had this idea for making a documentary that contrasted the war rooms of the different political parties as they planned their election strategies. We didn't get any response from the Congress or the BJP, but we had good access to the Aam Aadmi Party, so we decided to follow them for a year and make it about them," says Shukla, who has previously written and directed the award-winning short film, *Bureaucracy Sonata*.

The party itself made sure that the duo had full access, including to Kejriwal himself. Shukla explains, "At that time, nobody else was interested in them. They weren't taken seriously. But we made it a point to turn up everyday and that convinced them that we were in it for the long haul. We ended up with 400 hours of footage."

Their fly-on-the-wall approach ensured the duo captured some truly unguarded mo-



(Clockwise from left) A poster of the film; Vinay Shukla; Khushboo Ranka; a still from their film, *The Insignificant Man*



ments. Shukla says, "We tried to get some interviews initially, but then they started giving us the usual spiel that they had obviously rehearsed many times before. So then we decided to just shoot what was happening, without asking any questions." It helped that they were using only a DSLR to shoot; they were able to disappear into the background and record more authentic footage of AAP and Kejriwal.

"Initially, we didn't know what we would do with the footage, whether it would even be useful, ultimately," says Ranka, adding, "It felt like a sensory overload because we had never seen anything like what we were recording." But they found their audience

even as they continued shooting. The few friends that they showed the footage to were quick to point out the importance of their documentation.

The documentary has already won some very prestigious grants, including the Sundance Fund and the Busan Fund, and the TIFF premiere could be the beginning of a successful round of the festival circuit. Ranka says, "One of our friends from Egypt who had been one of the activists at Tahrir Square, wanted the footage because it showed how a popular movement can transition to electoral politics in a democracy. That's when we realised that *An Insignificant Man* could be a manual for such movements."