

Artist Interview | SoghraKurasani

1. Please tell us a little about yourself, what brought you to the world of art and how did you start? (Objective is to publish your bio as a story in your own words)

I remember my childhood was rather diverse; I was more of a tomboy and would prefer playing on streets with boys, skip homework and household chores, while my sister went for painting classes. I would often accompany her as a bodyguard but after a couple of months I gravitated to art and its creativity. Few years later, I was admitted into the fine arts faculty for my bachelors at Andhra University, Vishakhapatnam and soon after pursued my post graduate degree in print-making from M.S.U, Baroda. I have been a practicing print-maker ever since.

2. What is the primary role of an artist? How do you describe yourself in the context of challenging people's perspectives via your work and art? (Motivations and philosophy)

I think artists' play a very important role in society because we don't only work for ourselves but connect our viewers towards important and relevant issues. We cannot change each and every person's thought, but we can raise our voices and create awareness that may directly or indirectly connect to the viewer.

3. How do you deal with the conceptual difficulty and uncertainty of creating work?

My work is mostly based on social and political issues, and the medium of woodcut prints gives me more freedom to express myself; it's a long process where one work takes an entire month to complete. It's a big challenge for me to carve the woodblock and transfer the image on paper manually. Most of my woodcut works are in a large format, and this medium helps me in producing the size as per requirements as compared to other printmaking mediums.

4. Is there any topic lately that you would like to be mentored on?

I would prefer working on broader issues of society and I would like to connect my work with history in coming years.

5. What would you call your style?

I work in several forms of printmaking as well as new media, through which I explore and express the ideas of beauty and violence. The subject matter and political nature of my work is influenced by my own personal experiences around gender, aesthetics, and the role of woman. Personally, landscapes play a major part in my works as those are the places where we get inspired and are free to wander.

6. Let's talk about the evolution of your practice over the years. Tell us about your commitment to your current medium.

My print works include the use of the woodcut, etching and digital techniques. I have been working with these mediums for nearly a decade and my temperament goes very well while handling the tools and its hard matrix. Text in digital and videos helps me minimize my ideas and sometimes allows me to think out of the box.

7. Let's talk about your career, or if you prefer artistic journey. What were your biggest learning and hiccups along the way? (Memory/anecdote)

After my masters, it was not easy to continue as a freelance artist. I faced some struggle during my early years but never stopped my work; I would always save one edition of my work so that I could show all works together whenever I had my solo show. In 2014, TARQ gave me that opportunity to showcase my old and new work together, that's when "One day it will come out" happened.

8. How does your audience interact and react to the work you put out into the world? What are you looking for when you look at other artists' work? Which shows, performances and experiences have shaped your own creative process? Who are your maestros? Whose journey would you want to read about? (your perspective when you are on the other side, in the audience)

Most audiences are not familiar with the printmaking medium, hence in solo exhibitions, we prefer to show prints along with woodblock to help the audience understand the process better. I find that the audience really enjoys and appreciates the work upon understanding the process.

9. What was your first sale? Do you handle the commercials yourself or is it outsourced to a gallery/agent

I used to earn at very early age, doing realistic portraits before joining my bachelors program. However, my first sale was during my masters' final year display. The buyer not only purchased my work, but also sponsored my art practice for 6 months after I graduated. Today, all my sales are handled by TARQ.

10. Think of the biggest professional risk you've taken. What helped you take that risk?

While most people settle down and buy a house, I took a risk, along with Shaikh Azghar Ali, my husband, who is also an artist, and built a large studio space outside Baroda. This space is envisioned to not only help our professional growth but also be a space to host residencies and bring together artists from various parts of the world, to create and work together.

11. What is the best piece of advice you've received? Why was it helpful?

I have received a lot of advice with regard to my practice; most of it has been positive and helped me move forward. I think the immense encouragement received from many to continue working in printmaking has been the most helpful to me.

12. Tell us about your studio, what kind of place is it? Could you describe your usual work day in the studio?

I work within two studio spaces, one is in my home in the city and the other is my own print studio located on the outskirts of the city. I spend most weekends outside the city, where I try to take prints, work in my garden and spend time with nature.

13. The Duality; artists often experience contradicting motivations (commercial v/s creative). How do you strike a balance? How does your interaction with a curator, gallery or client evolve from the (brief) initial interface, to the working-involvement-relationship?

My interaction with a curator, gallery or client grows over a period of time. They are important relationships, not only for me but also conveying my works.

14. Let's talk about your frameworks, references and process. What inspires you? (vision, ethos, values)

I was and continue to be inspired at various stages of my life. During my education, I was very keen on readings about art history, particularly the Renaissance period and Impressionist paintings. Later, my focus shifted on new media art. I have a long list of artists who inspire me spanning different topics and ideologies.

15. Are you more of a studio artist or naturally collaborative by nature? How do you feel about commissions? (Links to any formative creative associations)

I am more of a studio artist, wherein my thought process, imagery and memory aids me in composing my works. Sometimes I directly draw sketches and forms from nature. I never tried any commission but in future if I feel to have a hand on it I will surely try.

16. What are you working on now? What's coming next season? (themes and shows we can look forward to, links and dates)

I will be doing a solo exhibition in the following year (2021) with TARQ, focusing on some new areas and materials. It will cover more on forms, important topics and voices that are meant to be heard. I am excited to see what will come out of it.

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