

## Artist Interview | Boshudhara Mukherjee

- 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)*

Being an artist was never a plan, it just happened. I grew up surrounded by art, crafts, music, drama, writing and poetry, hence ending up in the Fine Arts department of M.S. University, Baroda just seemed predestined. As a child, I always enjoyed working with my hands, learning to sew and crochet. In college, I realized painting as a medium was a little too passive for my nature. After the initial struggle with painting, I slowly found a way to merge my love of craft into the work and this led to the creation of my woven canvases.

I was lucky to find support and encouragement from my professors, scholarships and grants namely, the Nasreen Mohamedi scholarship while in college; grants from the Inlaks Shivdasani foundation and Pollock- Krasner foundation, which gave me the confidence to continue exploring and creating my work.

In 2010 I had my first solo show, 'Painted Veil', followed by 'Dangling Conversation' in 2012 at Volte Gallery in Mumbai. Later, in 2014 I had a solo show, 'Soliloquy' at Gallery Sarah in Oman and in 2016, 'Canticle' at TARQ, Mumbai. I have been part of several group shows; the most recent being 'Mother tongues' curated by Jones John at Pepper house, Fort Kochi in 2019.

- 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)*

Personally, the primary role of an artist is being true to oneself and doing what comes naturally. I find that while I am very organized, I cannot make detailed future plans or stick to a recipe. So my work does not have a frame or a fixed shape. In addition to that, I do not necessarily plan the work beforehand, but allow the canvas to slowly morph into the piece. Therefore, my work is more a reflection of who I am.

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

Uncertainties, crisis of faith and self doubt are an everyday battle but I have learnt that the best way to fight is to keep working. While the uncertainty resides in my head, my hands know exactly what to do. So I often find it best to keep my thoughts aside and give my hands control to take the lead, irrespective of whether I like or dislike the work. I see it through to the end and quickly move to something new, continuing the cycle.

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

There are always many different things I want to learn, at any given point in time, particularly crafts and skills ranging from stitching to gardening to furniture making.

- 5. What would you call your style?**

My style is associated with the technique I use, wherein I cut and weave large free hanging pieces of canvas. Though the style has evolved the basic technique has stayed the same with additions and alterations made to this base.

Since I started teaching, I am slowly beginning to realize that one's style is mainly one's temperament, it is who we are and that is what shines through in the work. While teaching, I focus more on my ability to challenge conventions while working successfully within a prescribed framework. The ability to find inspiration in the mundane, my eye for details, patterns and the spirit to work freely and spontaneously embracing accidents and change is what I could also more rightfully call my style.

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

I have been working in this style since 2007. Over the years, while the technique and materiality has not changed much, the temperament of the work is significantly different. With time the pieces have moved further away from a rectangular structure towards an organic rounded form with no clear top, bottom, front and back.

My colour palette constantly goes through phases, which are strangely reflected in my clothing choices as well. They have ranged from pastel to bright multi-coloured works, whites and monochromes back to more basic colours. Lately, I seem to prefer using ready coloured fabrics instead of painting the canvas.

**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)**

Art, like life involves good days, bad days and crisis of faith days. So far, I have been lucky to have had only minor hiccups, not any large anecdote worthy incidents. I hope it remains that way.

**8. How does your audience interact and react to the work you put out into the world?**

Most people want to touch the work and feel the material. They always have a lot of questions regarding the material and technique; and it feels like the only way they can believe it is canvas, is by touching it.

**9.**

**i- What are you looking for when you look at other artists' work?**

I find that I am a person who reacts to art more intuitively. With some artists' work, it is simply love at first sight.

**ii- Whose journey would you want to read about?(your perspective when you are on the other side, in the audience)**

I love to read, but I do not particularly enjoy biographies. When it comes to art, I prefer looking at the artists' work and letting it unfold its own story. This extends into my own practice too, where I prefer the audience engaging with the work directly, to find their own story and meanings; keeping my role to the minimal.

**iii- Which shows, performances and experiences have shaped your own creative process? Who are your maestros?**

I admire a lot of different artists for different reasons, sometimes for the usage of the lines, colours, patterns, scale, and energy. I am slightly partial towards abstraction, and tend to prefer two dimensional works. Everything I see, feel, experience gets absorbed, filtered and eventually appears in my work. It is impossible to deny the influence of everyone or everything that came before me or surrounds me but consciously I don't have a particular mentor when it comes to my process.

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

I do not quite remember my first sale; it was probably while I was still in college. The one that I do remember clearly, was a work named *Red Dragon*, at my first solo show at Volte Gallery. The reason I remember is because I did not want to exhibit that work but was eventually talked into doing so by a friend. We placed the work away in a corner and when the show opened that was the first work to sell. In retrospect, I do quite like the piece, and I do not know why I hesitated to show it.

Generally, I prefer to leave it to the gallery to handle the commercial aspect, but on occasion I have dealt directly with a buyer.

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

There is not a singular example of risk-taking that comes to mind but every work created is a risk to me. I take off the conventional framework, cut and tear, and somehow weave it back together. With each work, I push my own limits as well as that of the material. You risk it all collapsing and disintegrating and hope that it will somehow hold up, and so far the work has cooperated and has survived the test. You do it, take the risk of failing, because that is what it means to be an artist.

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

I tend to be my harshest critic, so a gentle reminder, '*To be kinder to yourself*', from Hena Kapadia, Tarq Gallery Director, Mumbai who I have known for the last few years, has definitely been one of the most intuitive and helpful pieces of advice I have received.

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

As a friend once commented, "you don't work from home; instead you live in your studio". One thing I have learnt about my work is that, it refuses to be separate from the rest of my life. Initially, I tried to have a designated room as my studio but realized that I worked in every room except that. I finally gave in and dragged my work onto my living room floor.

I share my space with two cats, who think it is their right to have an opinion about my work and are often seen taking a nap or playing on the work. Besides them, I have a constant stream of friends and family who tip toe around the chaos of cut canvas and strips of fabric, trying not to step on any of it.

An ideal work day for me involves working through the day and late into the night, while simultaneously doing various chores around the house. Essentially, life and work naturally flow together.

**14. The Duality; artists often experience contradicting motivations (commercial v/s creative). How do you strike a balance?**

For me, in order to balance the commercial and creative, I lead two roles, namely the artist and the teacher. I have been teaching design in colleges for nearly five years now. While I love teaching and being in a classroom, it also keeps art free from commercial pressures.

**15. How does your interaction with a curator, gallery or client evolve from the (brief) initial interface, to the working-involvement-relationship?**

It is a very instinctive decision to trust certain people. I would say, it is very much like a first date, where you simply have an instant connection that continues to grow into a long term working relationship.

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

Inspiration for me is usually very tactile. I find it in my material- canvas, fabric, colour or pattern, which often serves as a starting point for my work. I see or touch something and an idea begins to germinate and eventually demands visual representation.

For me, discipline and routine plays a bigger role in actually creating a work. Inspiration is complicated thing, you cannot work without it, nor can you simply wait for it to strike. My process is intuitive and spontaneous as well as labour intensive, demanding and slow. Each piece takes several months to complete, thus inspirations are found and evolve during the process of the work. It is like a diary, consisting of a patchwork of ideas and moods woven together.

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

While I am by nature more of a studio artist, I do not mind working collaboratively occasionally. Given the nature of my work, the display plays a crucial part in 'finishing' the work. I create the work in my studio but

do not have a complete picture of what the work truly looks like till it is displayed in the gallery. Each time the work is different depending on the space, display and lighting. Hence, the gallery and curator become an integral part of my process to successfully present the piece to the audience. In that sense, every work is a collaborative process.

As long as I have artistic freedom, commissions are interesting to me. I enjoy being able to work with a site-specific space, where one can play with the surrounding; and the physical space is an active part of the work.

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

This season, life has become more dangerous for the men in my world. In the past, my material and fabric exploration led me to the women in the family, especially, my mother, grandmother, and aunt's saree cupboard. In my most recent artwork, I have cut up and incorporated my father and my partner's jeans and trousers. Henceforth, no cupboard is safe.

There has also been a slight shift in terms of my technique, or rather a combination of skills. In the newer work, crochet and patchwork have merged with weaving to add more texture to the surface. While the difference may not be clearly evident to the audience, this new marriage of techniques is intriguing to me as it is the first time my childhood skills are entering my art space. This opens up possibilities for my future artworks, leaving my brain happily buzzing with ideas for my next (fifth) solo exhibition, later in the year with Tarq gallery, Mumbai.

For enquiries contact –

Vanessa Vaz at [press@tarq.in](mailto:press@tarq.in) or [vanessa@tarq.in](mailto:vanessa@tarq.in)

Website: [Boshudhara Mukherjee](#)