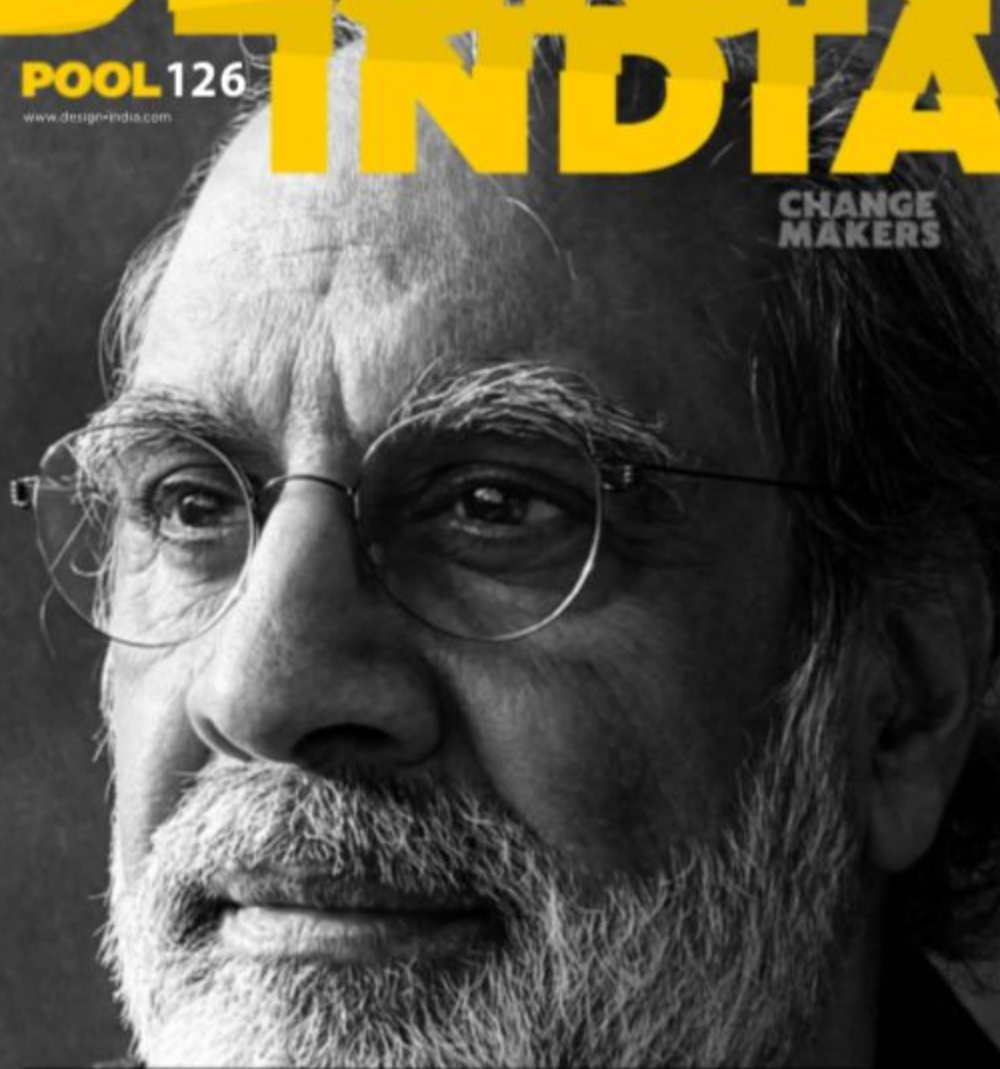


DESIGN INDIA

POOL 126

www.design-india.com

**CHANGE
MAKERS**



Verendra Wakhloo pg 10 | *Photographed by Nundrisha Wakhloo*

Jasjyot Singh Hans **02** Aditi Sarangi **24** Sreesha Shetty **30** Bharath Murthi **36**
Archana Jaju **44** Ashima Gandhi **50** Sameer Kulavoor **58**



Born out of the mundane

Inspired to create by everyday life, Sameer Kulavoor turned his back on an established design career to give all his attention to art



Viral Content, 2019



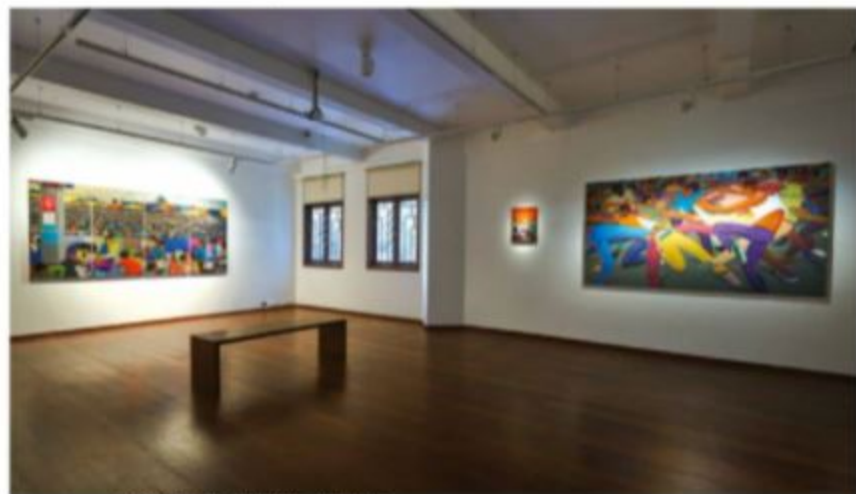
How do you describe yourself in the context of challenging people's perspectives via your work?

SK: I work at the intersection of art, graphic design and contemporary illustration and my work has taken the form of paintings, murals, books, zines, prints and objects. As a keen observer of contemporary life I am interested in why things look the way they do; I am constantly exploring and understanding the impact that time, culture, politics and socio-economic conditions have on our visible and invisible surroundings. In this age of visual overload, my work involves filtering, dissecting, documenting and defamiliarizing commonly seen subjects through the act of drawing, painting and design.

What brought you to the world of contemporary digital/visual art?

SK: When I was at Sydenham College in Mumbai and later during my BFA at JJ Institute of Applied Art in the early

2000s, I began drawing/illustrating for college magazines, student publications, websites around the dotcom boom, and advertising agencies. Later I worked on music videos and motion graphics for independent bands and music channels like MTV and Channel V. Around 2008-09, I felt like the existing opportunities weren't enough for the kind of ideas and concepts that needed to be expressed. Self-publishing was a great outlet to put out those ideas the way I wanted. In retrospect, self publishing helped me transition into contemporary visual art - painting, drawing, sculpture - and show my work in galleries.



YOU ARE ALL CAUGHT UP, 2020

Let's talk about your frameworks, references and creative process.

SK: I am drawn to the present - the everyday. I am genuinely interested in things that are commonly considered mundane or common. With my current show at TARQ - YOU ARE ALL CAUGHT UP - I am looking at the personal, political and the ongoing pandemic and the role of social media and devices. Representing space and time with marks on a flat surface is an unending challenge and it keeps me going.

How would you describe your style?

SK: Content precedes style for me. I don't consciously think of style when I am making work.

Tell us about your commitment to your current medium.

SK: Painting (with acrylic) has been my go-to for the last four to five years and I feel I am getting deeper into it as I learn more about the medium. However, I don't like to limit myself to a medium. I made smaller watercolor works during the pandemic and that was a great experience. Different mediums and scale require different temperaments and body postures and that keeps one from getting stagnant or too comfortable.



Series 1 -B, 2017

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

SK: I guess that is a permanent state of being for any artist. For every piece of work that goes out into the world there are works that stay in the confines of the studio permanently, or maybe they get painted over or destroyed. One learns by doing, by trying things and failing every now and then, and perhaps looking at it much later and seeing if it still works.

What is your source of creative inspiration?

SK: The everyday, the mundane, the present, my immediate surroundings and people.

Which shows, performances and experiences have shaped your own creative process? Who are your favorite contemporary artist maestros?

SK: Early on, during my graphic design years, the work of Milton Glaser and Alan Fletcher was very influential. In India, Kunal Rawat was doing some great work in music and typography. On one particular trip to the UK in 2009, I got to attend a number of live music shows and see some terrific album art and also discover the world of self-publishing and zines. In fashion, Paul Smith's eccentric work really speaks to me. During my travels across the world, I keep rediscovering Mughal miniature art, Japanese rice paper scrolls and art from the Renaissance in museums. Kathy Bradford, Salman Toor, Grace Weaver, Louis Fratino, Kerry James Marshall - all fantastic painters in their own ways. In 2018, while in NYC, I got a chance to see the early works from the Bombay Progressives at Asia Society New York, which was quite an experience. I also remember Picasso's sculptures at MoMA. I love the work of Bhupen Khakar, K G Subramanyan and Sudhir Patwardhan.

What are you looking for in the work of other visual artists?

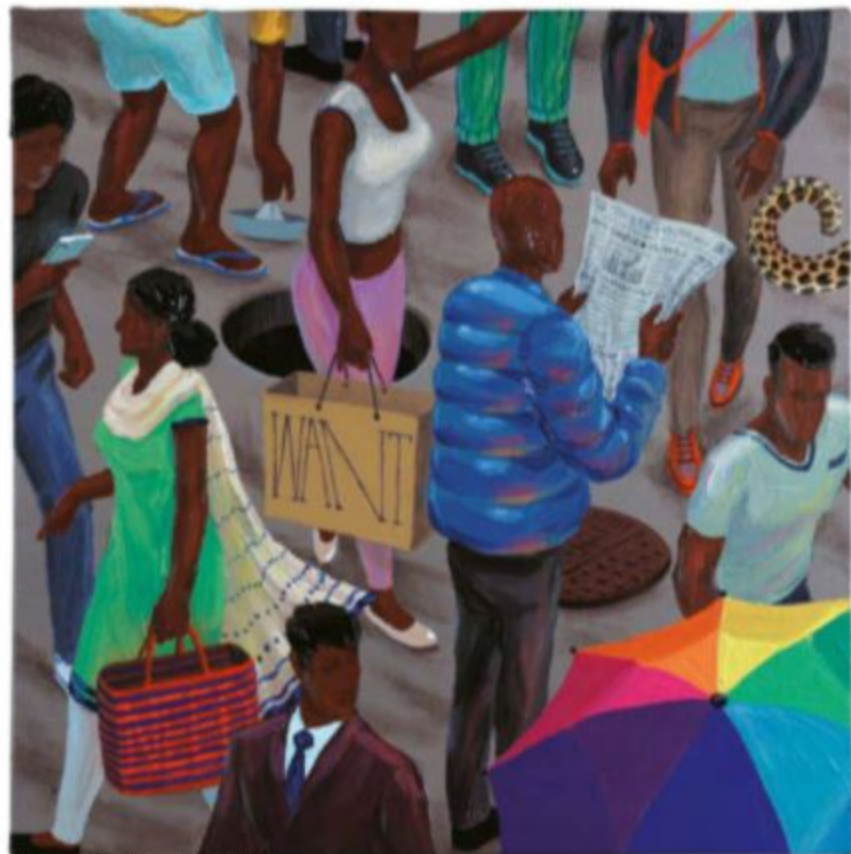
SK: Newer ways of seeing, new perspectives, new thoughts.

Recommend any art books, writers or blogs of note.

SK: K G Subramanyan's *The Magic of Making*, John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, and Tara Books' *I like cats*.

A Man of the Crowd (TARQ installation), 2018





Above & Below: Series 3 detail, 2017



Fear of Missing Out, 2019

Do you recall a professional risk that you took?

SK: To put the brakes on a lucrative and fairly established career in illustration and design in order to delve into my art practice full time - the transition was a lengthy process but I knew it was the only way to move forward and grow, work independently and freely. Typographer and designer Zeenat Kulavoor (my sister) was able to take control of our design studio Bombay Duck

Designs and that helped ease things out. Hena Kapadia (my gallerist and founder of TARQ) has also been hugely helpful with everything I have been doing over the last three to four years.

Are you more of a studio artist or naturally collaborative by nature?

SK: I need both environments to have some sort of balance. After being in the studio for days or weeks working on a particular piece, it feels good to work on collaborative projects like public art and large scale murals that have potential for great interactions and learning.

Tell us about your art studio.

SK: There is a work called '58' in my ongoing show 'YOU ARE ALL CAUGHT UP' at TARQ, which is a pretty accurate expression of my previous studio (which I had to give up in September 2020). I am currently in the middle of shifting studios. An ideal space for me is one that is in the heart of a city - close to an active street, with decent daylight and high ceilings, where I can work on a large scale. All of those boxes are hard to tick in a city like Mumbai where space comes at a big price but I will try to be optimistic!

theindiancurator@gmail.com



2020 - I, 2020



(Sonalee Tomar studied at NID and worked as the Editorial Director of Pool Magazine before founding 'The Asian Curator', a platform to support creative outliers with liberating resources)