



*An intimate conversation with Savia Mahajan, where she reflects on porcelain, paper, and the quiet power of working within life's in-between moments.*



**You explore the liminal state, the in-between of life and death, sleep and wakefulness, grief and healing. What drew you to investigating these suspended moments specifically? Why not work with states of arrival or completion?**

The spaces of in-betweenness is where my deep interest resides as an artist, it is drawn from my own lived experiences and observations of people and life that surrounds me. The state of arrival or completion to me is transient and never a permanent one. Blooming of a flower is a perfect or a complete moment to some, but to me it is fleeting. The idea of beauty is wholesome and only complete when I observe its blooming, wilting and decaying it is all a continuum, a series of constant creation and constant destruction, with intermissions



**2. When you create these ghost-white, frozen-looking objects, you're asking the viewer to feel uncertain, suspended. Why is discomfort necessary? What does a viewer learn from being deliberately disoriented?**

I don't think artists make art keeping an audience in mind or what it could do to them; shock, ecstasy, calm these are the feelings that get evoked when the art seeps in deeper than just a visual to its audience. Like Oscar Wilde's famous phrase, "All art is quite useless," art transcends utility for something far more deeper if there is something powerful embedded in an artwork, it can help brim our emotions. Sometimes a very colourful looking art work can repulse and a grotesque work can bring about calm to some viewers. I remember seeing Monet's water lilies in Musée de l'Orangerie and could not help but tear up. I had one viewer who went through a sever loss in his life and he visited one of my shows during that phase, seeing my porcelain works gave him a sense of tangibility of a specific emotion he was going through. When the work speaks loud enough or contains a space for silence it does embrace the viewer.

**3. You work with porcelain and paper fibres together, both materials with opposite natures. One is precious and permanent, one is fragile and temporal. What happens when you combine them? What are they revealing to each other?**

Porcelain and paper both are extremely important mediums in my practise. Very rightly stated, one is precious and permanent, one is fragile and temporal. Both materials are mixed at a wet stage in my studio and are extremely mouldable to create just about anything, the term for this amalgamation is called paper-clay, a medium not used in traditional pottery but has great importance in contemporary pottery and ceramics. It is known specially for its tensile strength and to make large structural works.



I have devised my own methods to work with paper-clay, using paper sheets, books, paper off cuts and several organic additions to the clay. The exciting part is when these two materials are heated and fired in a Kiln at high temperatures, that is when paper gets mineralised and looks like porcelain. One material mimics the other and in the end the sculpture is a fossilized version of itself.

**4. Many of your works reference the body like hands, shadows, silhouettes, and natural cycles like decay and weathering. How does the body enter ceramics? What does it reveal that abstract form cannot? And what draws you to processes of transformation?**

The hand for me is our first tool and clay a primordial and one of the first materials used by man for expression, utility, construction, as we know it looking at the evidences of our civilization.

I don't think one can really learn to work with clay, it is an inherited human instinct to engage with. Clay is definitely a makers material, how your hands tend to move in a certain direction when clay is cupped in your palm, how you hold your posture while making, how you breath around the material, it is all got to do with the body first and its sensorial aspects, the rest of the bigger aspects like expression, vision, form follows later.

Speaking of natural cycles like decay and weathering, clay in all its varieties and variations along with its ancient and modern methods of cooking and firing, is the ideal material that can express these thoughts or philosophies, from moulding and polishing it to perfection to bringing out fissures and cracks it is an all-encompassing medium of transformation, as an artist I find myself with my subjects and mediums go hand in hand and totally aligned.

**5. Looking forward, what is ceramics still asking you to explore? What questions do you have for Clay that you haven't answered yet?**

Clay is a brutal teacher and hard task master, the more questions I have, the more it is ready to slam me for my intellect, more I renounce the more it reveals itself to me.

Clay to me is elemental and an animistic medium, when I begin work, an inner state that I hold on to is surrender!

In Conversation

