# Artists Anonymous: From Banksy's London statement to India's street voices

Written by Vaishali Dar

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The creators speak loudest when they remain unnamed and unseen

A sculpture attributed to Banksy, a pseudonymous England-based street artist and political activist, in London; In Mumbai, street artist Tyler has built a reputation for his sharp political stencil work; An artwork by Princess Pea, who, after more than two decades of working anonymously, chose to reveal her name as Gurugram-based artist Natasha Preenji lastyear

In April, London gained a striking new presence, one that stops passersby mid-step and, perhaps more importantly, mid-thought. A sculpture attributed to Banksy, depicting a man blinded by a flag blown across his face, now stands in the ceremonial heart of the capital. Stark, political, and open to interpretation, the work has already ignited debate

Some see it as a critique of blind patriotism; others prefer to take it in purely as visual spectacle. City authorities have chosen not to remove it, instead welcoming it as "a striking addition" to London's ever-evolving art landscape.

The timing is telling. The sculpture marks Banksy's first public artwork since a March investigation by Reuters shed new light on the artist's long-guarded identity, which claimed to unmask the elusive artist as 52 year-old Bristol-born man Robin Gunningham .

Yet, as always, the mythology endures. Banksy remains less a person than a phenomenon, proof that anonymity, in an age of hyper-visibility, still holds power

He is not alone. The literary world has long been captivated by figures like pseudonymous Italian novelist Elena Ferrante, whose global acclaim has only deepened curiosity about the person behind the prose

**A deliberate artistic tool**

Across disciplines, anonymity has become less a shield and more a deliberate artistic device, one that invites audiences to engage deeply with the work than the maker.

Indian streets tell a similar story. From Mumbai's dense urban sprawl to Kochi's heritage walls and Delhi's political corridors, a generation of street artists is reshaping public discourse, often without revealing their names.

In Mumbai, Tyler has built a reputation for sharp political stencil work. Inspired in part by the persona of Tyler Durden from the movie Fight Club, his art leans into themes of anti-capitalism, corruption, and social unease. His widely recognised Walk of Shame series exemplifies his style — a series created on a road in Mumbai's Malad area, specifically targeting individuals he deemed responsible for spreading misinformation or fostering divisiveness.

The installation named figures from journalism, Bollywood and politics. "I work with stencils. They are direct and leave very little room to overthink," he says. "But the pseudonym is mostly practical. When the cease-and-desist letters show up, they're addressed to a ghost."

There's no grand manifesto behind his works. "I don't approach it like I'm addressing anything. I put something out there in a way that's hard to ignore. What people do with it after that is up to them," Tyler tells FE, who has been working as a street artist since 2017.

Meanwhile, in Kochi, CuessWho merges global and local iconography with wit and immediacy. A mural like Frida Kahlo in a Saree, set against the textured walls of Fort Kochi, captures this blend, collapsing cultural boundaries into a single, striking frame Delhi, too, has played host to powerful anonymous voices. The late artist Daku, who was later known as Hanif Kureshi, a former ad man and multidisciplinary artist, known for works like Time Changes Everything, transformed everyday sign age into philosophical prompts, using both Hindi and English to disrupt routine perception His works addressed Indian hand-painted sign-boards and letters, colourful typographic artworks that evoked the vibrant character and playfulness of Indian street signs and letters

For instance, one of his depictions in 2014 was about the general elections in New Delhi where the artists' wordplay on the Hindi words with four large monochrome paste-ups of a middle finger marked with an indelible ink blot, and captioned the Hindi phrase as Mat Do across New Delhi

In Chennai, Lotuzhead pushes the form further, merging live painting with music to create immersive urban experiences.
Together, these artists form a decentralised movement, one that thrives outside galleries, institutions, and often, legality.

If anonymity protects one artist, for many others, it evolves. For Princess Pea, it evolved into a living, shifting form, one that carried her across performance, painting, and photography as she explored women's identities across generations. Her journey began in 2009 at the India Art Fair in Delhi, where she first appeared wearing a large, cartoonish headpiece. It functioned both as shield and symbol Over time, that headgear transformed into the now-recognisable oversized, anime-inspired form — curious, disarming, and magnetic.

It drew people in: passersby, children, women, many eager to speak with her, to be photographed alongside her, to engage with the character as if it were both real and reflective.

Behind the mask was Gurugram-based artist Natasha Preenji, who, after more than two decades of working anonymously, chose in 2025 to reveal her name. "We outgrow parts of ourselves, and something new takes shape within us. There wasn't a single moment when I decided to reveal my name. The answer lies in the many selves of Princess Pea," she says. These "selves," she explains, are not imagined but inherited: "echoes of daughter, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, shaping both perspective and practice in my works".

The decision to step forward, then, was less a revelation and more a continuation of that evolution. "Once I understood this, keeping a distance no longer felt necessary. But I stepped out of the character because, in many ways, the character had already transformed," says Preenji

Through her work, she has cultivated spaces where women across ages and experiences can speak openly, often beginning with a question that seems simple but carries weight: How do you really feel?

These exchanges, she says, build into something larger, a shared emotional archive. A "collective consciousness." "It was the headgear that emerged as a symbolic container: small in form, yet expansive enough to hold these voices," she says

**Cost of being unseen**
For many street artists, anonymity is less philosophical and more practical. Working in the margins, often at night, under the risk of legal repercussions, they occupy a precarious space between expression and enforcement. Yet, the same works dismissed as vandalism can later resurface as high-value collectibles. Tyler is aware of this contradiction.

"I've been doing this long enough to know attention comes and goes. If something I make actually stays with people, even for a bit, that's enough. But there's this strange shift where vandalism can be repackaged as high-end collectible design, and suddenly context matters more than the act itself,' he says

For Pea, women remain central to her practice. "I engage with their lived experiences through themes of identity, and representation, often rooted in shared histories of craft. The sculpture head is a tool that helps me and others take a pause in the brutal reality we live in.

By handing over the headgear, anyone can be Princess Pea. For many women, it becomes a safe space for reflection. Working closely with specific communities, I try to create environments of trust and openness," she says.

While their works continue to draw crowds, and questions, who made it may no longer be the most compelling mystery. What it means, and why it resonates, feels more urgent. In a world obsessed with identity, many such anonymous artists remind us of something radical: sometimes, not knowing allows us to see more clearly.

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