

Artists Statement

In the early eighties, the concept of design in India was so nascent that one could not specialize; I had to be able to design anything and everything and have worked with woven, printed, tufted, and hand-knotted (carpets) and painted textiles. I did a lot of designing for printed silk sarees, where after a couple of years a client commented that although the designs looked good on paper, their production team could not translate the same quality onto fabric as the colours were too specific and it was not possible to be so particular in their factories. As he put it: "we have 20 buckets of dye in the factory and these colours are used verbatim for the entire days' production. We cannot have a yellow that is just slightly green or another that veers towards pink or a little orange. A yellow was a yellow and the same yellow; green or red was to be used in all the designs scheduled for the days' work." I tried to accommodate these limitations but found it reduced the scope of creative excellence in designing considerably, which led me to explore hand-painting where I had greater control over the product, and could experiment more freely with designs and colours.

The quest for creative excellence brought the dimension of textile as art into focus. It was very stifling working within the constraints of an industry that was so limited in production capabilities and one that did not have much understanding of design nor really comprehend its value. Painting textiles allowed me to explore design with much greater freedom but beyond a point it too did not suffice. My experience in weaving, printing and painting evolved into an embroidered language that encompassed the abstract qualities of thread with their remarkable capacity to colour in a subtle, yet luminescent, scintillating manner; along with the narrative notions of painting. Thus the idea of painting with the needle emerged. I also work with multimedia, but this is generally to 'frame' the idea.

For me the process of textile making is as sacred as is the expression. Textile is not the medium that suits an idea, but textiles are being explored to convey more than just a visual idea where the essence is my work as an artist/designer/craftsperson. Working in India, brings into focus various facets of the crafting dilemma in a country that has a rich and living tradition in hand-crafting which is paradoxically also languishing for lack of enlightened patronage, in this age of instant gratification and communication, that renders painstaking work of the hand almost redundant. It is this very dilemma that frames the purpose that inspires and motivates me.

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