

Sanjay Gupta

Sanjay Gupta put a pause on his passion for painting to pursue banking, and a few years back, returned to his craft full time. He tries to portray the dynamism of nature, with its myriad hues and moods serving as his main inspiration.

"Things in nature and our surroundings leave a strong impression on my mind. Over a period of time, the memory of the object morphs into an image. And if I find this image interesting enough, I try to transpose it to a canvas. I do not take photos of these objects when I see them, neither do I go back to look at them again...I prefer to paint the image in my mind to the real life image."

A contemporary artist, Sanjay lives and works in Hong Kong.

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Barbara Scott**, curator
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Hello Sanjay and welcome to ARTiculation. Before starting to elaborate about your artistic production we would like to invite our readers to visit <http://www.sanjayguptaart.com> and we would start this interview with a couple of questions about your background. As you have remarked in the introductory lines of your biography, you put a pause on your

passion for painting to pursue Banking, and a few years back, returned to your craft full time: are there any experiences that did particularly influence your return to art making, as well as to your evolution as an artist? Moreover, how does your cultural substratum direct the trajectory of your current artistic research?

Sanjay: Art was my passion from a very young age; however, I always wanted to draw objects in shapes and forms a little bit differently from what



was being taught by the art teachers. At the same time, I was very good at Mathematics and Science. My school teachers soon declared that I did not have any aptitude for art and should stick with Mathematics and Science.

After my Masters in Business, I became a banker. The passion for art was still alive but the early verdict on my ability was a big mental block. One day I decided that I am just going to paint for myself - no one is going to see my paintings but, I am going to paint none the less. And I started painting in my garage. I would paint whenever I had any spare time, which unfortunately was in serious short supply. I loved the process of creating art and a few years back I gave up my full time banking job for art.

The body of works that we have selected for this special edition of ARTiculAction and that our readers have already started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article has at once impressed us of your work as an artist is the way you sapiently combined geometric and abstract sensitiveness to capture the calm and lyrical qualities of nature on canvas, providing the viewers with such multilayered visual experience:

when walking our readers through your usual setup and process, would you tell us how do you develop your initial ideas?

Sanjay: Over time, the memory of an object or an experience morphs into an image in which certain aspects get more prominence than the others. And if the image remains strong and vivid over time and also happens to be about a happy experience, I try to transpose it on to a canvas. I do not take photos, nor do I go back to look at the objects again...I prefer to paint the image that is in my mind. Consequently, the elements that leave a stronger impression on my mind are more enhanced than others in my works.

New York City based artist Lydia Dona once stated that in order to make art today one has to reevaluate the conceptual language behind the mechanism of art making itself: do you create your works gesturally, instinctively? Or do you methodically transpose geometric schemes? In particular, how do you consider the role of chance and improvisation playing within your artistic practice?

Sanjay: Usually once I start a painting, my instincts take over. I do not make a conscious effort to introduce any particular shapes or forms in my work. Some shapes and patterns are all around us in nature - we see them in planets, in flowers, in leaves.

Sometimes we notice them and on other occasions we focus on some other aspects instead. I do not make an effort to introduce any particular shape or form in my work.

I just paint whatever leaves a stronger impression on my mind. May be it is all the geometry I ended up learning!

Your artworks are carefully detailed, and the vibrant colours that marks out them — as well as the textured effects that you sapiently create using acrylic paints — communicate sense of dynamics: how did you come about settling on your colour palette? And how does your own psychological make-up determine the nuances of tones that you decide to include in your works in order to provide the viewers with such immersive visual experience?

Sanjay: For me the choice of colours is very instinctive. I think my mood or psychological make-up has a lot to do with the colour palette.

I also find more enjoyment while





painting when the colours are not predetermined. New colour combinations bring a smile to my face and I hope that they will to the viewers too.

As you have remarked in your artist's statement, you do not take photos of the objects when I see them, neither do you go back to look at them again: you prefer to paint the image in your mind to the real life image: how do you consider the role of memory playing within your work? And how do you consider the relationship between the real and the imagined playing within your artistic practice?

Sanjay: I never wanted to draw anything in a photo like fashion. I even got kicked out of art classes as a kid for refusing to even try it.

I think imagination can make the real appear even more interesting but in my case the slowly deteriorating memory is doing the job of making the real more interesting by itself!

With their unique visual identity, your artworks seems to aim to look inside of what appear to be seen, rather than its surface, providing the spectatorship with freedom to realize their own perception. Austrian Art historian Ernst Gombrich once remarked the



importance of providing a space for the viewers to project onto, so that they can actively participate in the creation

of the illusion: how important is for you to trigger the viewers' imagination in order to address them to elaborate



personal interpretations? In particular, how open would you like your works to be understood?

Sanjay: If an artwork gives me pleasure when I am making it and it brings a smile on my face when finished, I hope

that some of the viewers may like it too. Mostly being abstracts, my compositions leave a lot of room for interpretation and imagination. I am always open to explaining what was going through my mind when I was creating the artwork.

At the same time, I have always enjoyed the personal interpretations by viewers of my paintings. I feel when viewers indulge in elaborate personal interpretations, it is a sign in most cases that they find it interesting and if it can also remind them of a happy event from their lives, I consider the painting an absolute success.

How do you consider the relationship between cultural heritage from traditional painting practice and contemporary sensitiveness? In particular, how does your artistic research reveals a point of convergence between Tradition and Contemporariness?

Sanjay: Art has been part of the lives of human beings forever.

The art form, the surface, the materials, the subjects and the styles keep changing but in essence all art represents artists' point of view or interpretation of things and events around them.





You are an established artist and over the years you have exhibited your works at the prestigious Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre, and very recently, you were a finalist in The Royal West of England Academy's 165th Annual Open Exhibition: how do you consider the nature of your relationship with your audience? Is audience engagement a critical consideration for you, and is there a particular way of engagement that you seek to encourage? By the way, as the move of Art from traditional gallery spaces, to street and especially to online platforms — as Instagram <http://instagram.com/SanjayGuptaart> — increases, how would in your opinion change the relationship with a globalised audience?

Sanjay: The audience engagement is an affirmation that I was not the only person who found the work engaging! I have been very fortunate that my artworks have been accepted in a few Juried exhibitions in the US and the UK. I live and work in Hong Kong and therefore naturally more people in Hong Kong are familiar with my art.

Juried exhibitions have been a very effective and efficient way for me to showcase my works in other countries.



I also love the opportunity that platforms like Instagram have provided artists. I have recently started using

instagram (SanjayGuptaart) and love the ease with which you can reach viewers globally.





We have really appreciated the originality of your artistic production and before leaving this stimulating conversation we would like to thank you for chatting with us and for

sharing your thoughts, Sanjay. What projects are you currently working on, and what are some of the ideas that you hope to explore in the future?

Sanjay: Thank you. My current series is



based on childhood memories of firecrackers - "Catherine Wheel" is part of this series. I remember playing with Kaleidoscope as a kid - the beautiful shapes and colours, changing at the slightest movement. I loved most of the images and was torn as a kid in trying to

figure out which image did I like the most. I hope one day soon I can create a series with that as the theme.

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