

THE SUNDAY READ

# Art in isolation style

Owing to the lockdown, many artists have gone back to the drawing board and are creating stunning pieces of art. 10 prominent names share their work

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Perhaps the words of Elizabeth Broun, former director of Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Renwick Gallery in Washington, best sum up the purpose of contemporary art. She says: "Art is not always about pretty things. It's about who we are, what happened to us, and how our lives are affected."

Locked down in different parts of the world as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, few prominent artists — who would otherwise spend their time shuttling between biennales, art fairs and museum shows — have been interpreting the world as they see it.



**Dhruvi Acharya** | Isolated in Mumbai

I didn't have a plan to paint about the coronavirus, but the stress was getting to me. So, on the day of the Janta Curfew, on March 22, I decided to go to the studio and just paint whatever was on my mind. I continued making watercolours daily. The works are about the psychological impact of the pandemic — the social distancing, loneliness, fear of the virus being transmitted via a touch, sneeze or cough, fear of the disease, news of death and illness around the world and the hungry migrants in India.



**“ The works are about the psychological impact of the pandemic — the social distancing, loneliness, fear of the virus being transmitted via a touch, sneeze or cough**

— Dhruvi Acharya, artist



**Parul Thacker** | Isolated in Mumbai



Skimming through the atmospheres of the conscious and subconscious, I circumnavigate around the overarching interest of spirit, matter, and everything in between. I work within a vein that combines traditional lyric as well as more experimental forms. They incorporate various theologies and esoteric philosophies in building the process and the core of the work. I have been editing these photographs that represent exactly these thoughts.



**Poonam Jain** | Isolated in Bangalore



I have been in Bangalore since March 20. I came here from Mumbai with few papers and pens. Boredom

gave me time to clean the excess messages and emails from my phone. These texts have inspired a series of drawings. I am using the law of conservation of energy. So, in these drawings, virtual trash becomes material to fill space in twisted architectural spaces that resemble crumbled paper.

**Rewati Shahani** | Isolated in London



This ink on paper, 'Exodus', is based on the mass migration currently taking place in India, as people escape the

lockdown in the big metros to return to rural areas. In many cases, they are returning home. This movement of people within the country is possibly the biggest since Partition. Rarely do Indian cities shed residents — this flow of people away from urban areas reverses a trend that has in large part characterised modern India.



**Manisha G Baswani** | Isolated in Gurgaon



As I sit quarantined in my home/studio — preparing for a solo show — I wonder if the use of red as a base for my upcoming series of pin drawings on paper is, indeed, instinctive. The act of piercing the red sheet of paper with varying sizes of sharp pins seems too much of a coincidence. Each insertion — made by a firmly gripped pin — makes a distinctive sound. This is followed by a continuous spade of insertions — similar to Morse code — revealing itself to its creator. It is almost like a pierced symphony.

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**Jitish Kallat** | Isolated in Mumbai

I returned to Mumbai from the US on March 14, but didn't visit my home until the end of the month. I was in self-imposed isolation at the studio across the street from my home at Pall Hill. I created one watercolour, in which fragments of sculptures sit atop the drawing, and lines freely run over the various elements in the work. I may never end up exhibiting this work, but it allowed me a degree of creative non-conformity, a small step towards realising a body of work.



**“ Like a fruit that takes its time to ripen without counting days, weeks or months, going through a difficulty is a journey that must be made, one with no shortcuts**

— Sakshi Gupta, artist



**Sudarshan Shetty** | Isolated in Mumbai



In my work, I am deeply interested in the ideas of representation, the politics of display and of the eventual demise of perceived functions of objects around us. The drawing here is the recollection of an old idea for a mechanical object that I was planning to make, which never got realised. The toy-like mechanical dog is to emulate a biological/physical movement of a dog. It's a representation of the possible movement of a dog that oddly attempts to emulate the natural. The early robotic experiments in emulating the natural and the biological movement have been of a great interest to me. That even a simple physical act of lifting a teacup can be a complex one to mechanically emulate. The field of robotics in some way represents a human need to 'alternate' or to 'extend' human possibilities — both mental and physical.

**Sunil Padwal** | Isolated in Mumbai



The representation of objects in this series is purportedly drawn from memories of Mumbai. The drawings show my style of mark-making, while maintaining my preoccupation to see things and document them in my way — the things we ignore because they are inconsequential to us. I'm interested in a certain emotion, which one can't express in words. The emotion transcends into a drawing or a photograph, a kind of poem without words. The labyrinths of my memory are inseparable from the labyrinthine bylanes of old Mumbai, given shape by objects, accumulated layers of discarded things and, in their midst, the many forms of life struggling to connect with its environment.



**Sakshi Gupta** | Isolated in Mumbai

The work (watercolour on paper) is about trusting that which may seem difficult, confusing or unresolved. I am trying to not be in a rush to find solutions. Now may be the time to understand the questions and confusions. Like a fruit that takes its time to ripen without counting days, weeks or months, going through a difficulty is a journey that must be made, one with no shortcuts.



**Manish Nai** | Isolated in Mumbai



When the 21-day lockdown was announced, it was frustrating in the beginning. But then I picked up my son

Deep's watercolours and paper, and started drawing his beautiful eyes. Throughout my art school days, I would obsessively do facial studies. This forced downtime made me return to it. Besides, I have been taking a lot of photographs from my window. Since I live in a high-rise apartment in Borivili, I have access to the views of terraces of smaller buildings around, and I have been photographing the isolated activities that happen there. In a strange way, they serve as studies of the city in the present times.

