ART

Never out of style

As you contemplate the fashion must-buys of the season, cast your eye on five young artists who are creating bold but affordable art that deserves a spot in your home, says RAJESH PUNJ

ASTHA BUTAIL

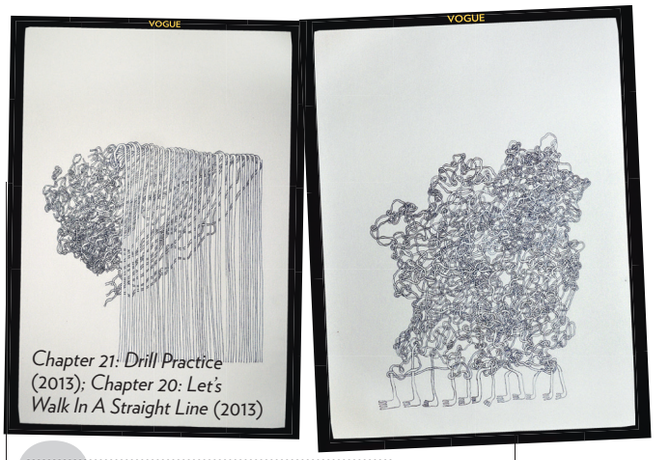
39, DELHI

DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE EVERYDAY

Astha Butail employs the same kind of eclectic energy as her husband, the artist Jiten Thukral, one half of the duo Thukral & Tagra. Creating sculptural works that are attractive material objects, she investigates art as a set of interchangeable disciplines. *A Story Within A Story* (2016), for instance, reads as a picture-book puzzle that becomes animated in the hands of the audience, with small and intricately coloured cuttings neatly sitting one upon another, akin to something the Dutch design movement De Stijl might have produced. Another work, *Dwelling Houses* (2012), borrows from the principles of social design to create freestanding architected objects for modern living. Acknowledging the complexity of an overpopulated city against the plight of the individual, Butail applies her analytical upbringing and fashion school education to draw out solutions.

Where to see her work next: A solo show at Gallery SKE, Delhi, this year; *Galleryske.com*

Dwelling Houses (2012)



Chapter 21: Drill Practice (2013); *Chapter 20: Let's Walk In A Straight Line* (2013)

POONAM JAIN

26, MUMBAI

FINDING FAITH IN THE FABRIC OF LIFE

Sequences of numbers and letters act as the constituent parts of a majority of Mumbai-based artist Poonam Jain's works. Holding a diploma in fine arts from Rachana Sansad Art Institute in Mumbai, Jain endeavours to create works that are saturated with information while appearing minimal. Whether it's using the book form or writing directly on white walls, Jain is interested in the discipline and rigour of religion, especially her own Jain faith. Key works include *Evidence Of Hope/ Infinity* (2012), which appears as a textbook work of neatly correlated numbers that she has applied by hand in a machine-style aesthetic. *Let's Walk In A Straight Line* (2013) is another work that evokes the Swiss-German artist Paul Klee. Here, Jain replaces her more organised ideals of hope with the chaos of humour.

Where to see her work next: Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin this month; *Imma.ie* >

A detail of Jain's *Evidence Of Hope/ Infinity* (2012)

Kam-ati-bagh (2012)

Untitled (2011)

MEENAKSHI SENGUPTA

29, MUMBAI

TURNING THE EROTIC INTO THE ATTRACTIVE

Meenakshi Sengupta's works plunge the erotic into the realm of the creative. Borrowing from more established schools of thought that include miniature painting, Sengupta creates amusing antidotes to the situation and circumstance of being a young woman living in contemporary India. With painting degrees from University of Calcutta and Baroda's Maharaja Sayajirao University, Sengupta is unlike other artists employing the tidiness of painting on a small scale, seeking to shock and surprise the viewer instead. *Kam-ati-bagh* (2012) is a painting of a woman's vagina in which Sengupta replaces pubic hair with a miniature scene from nature. Sexually subversive, Sengupta's picture-postcard images appear as a decorative montage of male and female body parts that challenge the idea of two genders, as everything is open to interpretation.

AADITI JOSHI

36, MUMBAI

SEEING THE CITY AS HER CREATIVE CANNON

Zero Opacity (2005)

Using trash to create impressive sculptural installations, Aaditi Joshi's artworks challenge the space they occupy. With a diploma in painting from the LS Raheja College of Arts and Commerce in Mumbai, Joshi, like the late Hema Upadhyay, borrows from the detritus of the metropolis to create large-scale installations. Using plastic bags in a vein similar to the French artist Jean-François Boclé, she removes them from their utilitarian context to create abstract objects of beauty. Joshi compresses and collapses plastics and thereafter applies paint to create fragile sculptural works that rest on the gallery floor or hang from the ceiling as colourful cloud formations. Other works, such as *Untitled* (2011), are more intensely layered—an installation visualised as a dramatic diagonal bolt of street litter that might well have come together because of tornado-style strong winds.

DAVID DESOUZA. COURTESY GALLERY MASKARA; RAVI SHEKHAR

RADHIKA AGARWALA

31, KOLKATA & LONDON

SEEKING BEAUTY BENEATH THE SURFACE

As an accomplished painter and sculptor, Radhika Agarwala's works have an earthy aesthetic about them that is as much to do with her Kolkata background as her interest in metamorphosis in nature. Having studied painting at Goldsmiths University of London, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and College of the Arts at University of Florida, Agarwala creates works that replicate animal and human forms in attractive configurations of detail and colour. With the living organism as central to her canvases, Agarwala's mythical creatures appear in mosaic-style backgrounds awash in gold leaf. *After The Wilton Diptych* (2013), for instance, is a work of gold leaf and oil on canvas, derived from a 14th-century altarpiece of the same name. In the diptych *7 Days To Dusk I, II* (2016), Agarwala juxtaposes very disparate elements, such as a banana tree and an acorn, into a series of paintings that are meant to read as parables. ■

Where to see her work next: The Space at 9/2, Kolkata, this month; *Thespaceat9by2.com*

7 Days To Dusk II (2016)