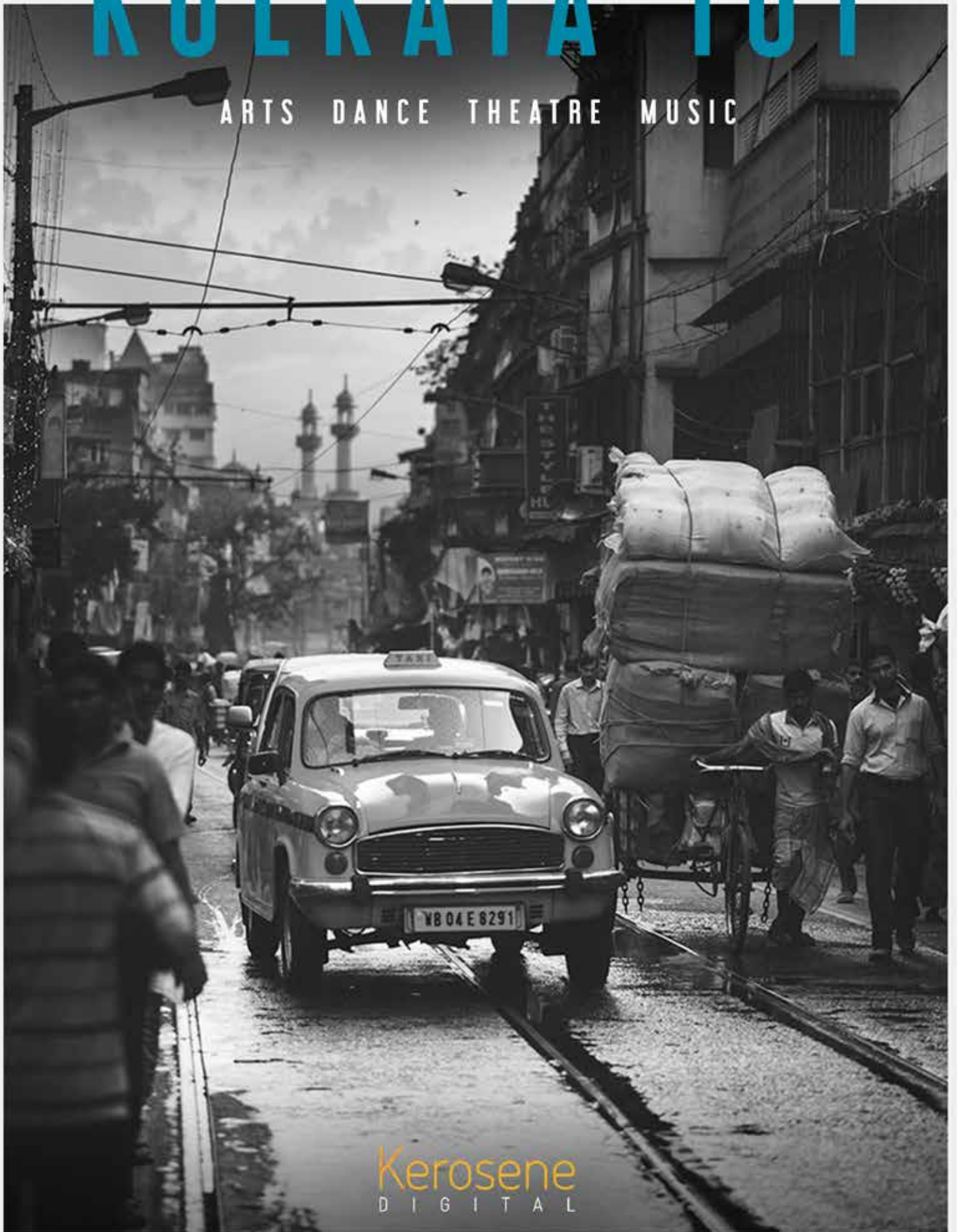


# KOLKATA 101

ARTS DANCE THEATRE MUSIC

Kerosene  
DIGITAL



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

05 Interview: Suyasha Sengupta

Profiles:

09 Parekh & Singh

11 The Ganesh Talkies

13 Blood

15 Saturday Night Blues

Galleries:

17 Calcutta School of Music

19 Academy for Musical Excellence

Festivals:

21 CICGF

MUSIC

THEATRE

25 Interview: Ayan Bhattacharjee

Profiles:

29 Shriek of Silence

31 Nandikar Theatre

33 Usha Ganguli

35 Meghnad Bhattacharya

Galleries:

37 Mad About Drama

39 Hypokrites

Festivals:

41 Short + Sweet Theatre Festival

DANCE

45 Interview: Mr. Tapas Das

Profiles:

49 Dr. Mitul Sengupta

51 Goutham Upadhyay

53 Rupa Upadhyay

55 Peddro Sudipta Kundu

Galleries:

57 Twists N Turns

59 Rhythmosaic

Festivals:

61 Dance Bridges Festival

ART

65 Interview: Reya Ahmed

Profiles:

69 Alisha Dutt Islam

71 Manimanjari Sengupta

73 Debanjali Das

75 Swati Pasari

Galleries:

77 Experimenter Gallery

79 Aakriti Art Gallery

Festivals:

81 Kolkata Street Art Festival

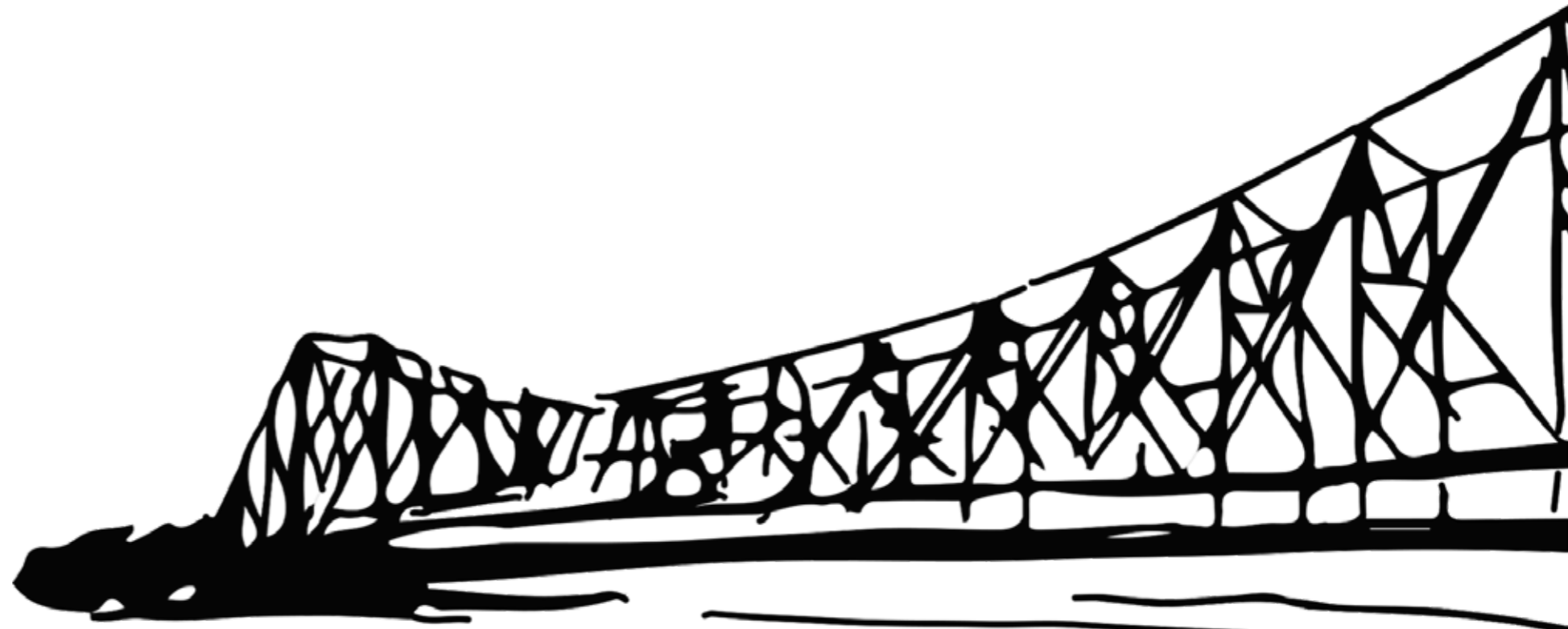
# Introduction

If you set out on a stroll around your house, passing children singing Rabindra Sangeet and street vendors selling maach, spying colourful artwork on the street walls, and encountering festival frolic everywhere, you're definitely in Kolkata.

This city is perhaps the most important cultural centre in India; the birthplace of modern Indian literary and artistic thought. It is from here that many of the country's most notable artistes, legends of literature and creative masterminds have come.

In this guide, we present the city's notable musicians, artists, dancers and theatre personalities as well as troupes, galleries and cultural festivals keeping the artistic charm of this city alive.

**TEAM KEROSENE**



# MUSIC

If you have heard songs by musical geniuses such as Rabindranath Tagore, Kishore Kumar and Ravi Shankar, you'll already know that Kolkata's musicians are some of the most revered all around the country. Here is a sneak peek into the Kolkata music scene today.



In conversation with

## SUYASHA SENGUPTA

Sexuality and mental health are two of the most taboo topics in India right now. To talk about it we need guts and to sing about it we need Plastic Parvati aka Suyasha Sengupta.

Suyasha, a member of the Kolkata band 'Ganesh Talkies' recently released her solo album 'Songs About Lovers', an exploration of the masculine/feminine dynamic through sexuality and her struggles with mental health. We spoke to Suyasha about the story behind her new moniker, her album and singing about taboo topics.

**1. What's the story behind your artist name – Plastic Parvati?**

Parvati is the Hindu goddess of love; and the main essence of my solo project is to chronicle my experiences with love, sexuality and mental health. Plastic signifies, well, modern life and all the works. Hence the name 'Plastic Parvati'.

**2. What inspired you to release a solo album?**

I think it came out of having all these feelings inside me which I just wanted to get out of my system. Miti Adhikari who's a mentor to me, helped me arrange, produce and finish my songlets.



### 3. How is the music you write for the Ganesh Talkies different from your solo stuff?

When the band is involved, I'm essentially the mouthpiece for an idea that all of us have collectively whereas with my solo record, the feelings are intimate and very personal.

### 4. Did you get any flak for writing and singing about taboo topics like sexuality and mental health?

I've reached a point where I don't necessarily care about the opinions of strangers. These are the thoughts in my head and I'm only saying them out loud. The only way to normalise so-called "taboos" is to talk about it till we reach a point when it no longer makes people uncomfortable.

### 5. Tell us a little more about your songs 'Head' and 'Straight Outta Coshba'

'Straight Outta Coshba' is an introduction to who I am. I have lived and grown up in Kasba, Calcutta and the environment around me influences me greatly. The song is an homage to the crazy/beautiful vibe of the place. It's a place where all religious and socio-political classes co-exist in harmony; it's a sort of lesson for the country considering the current atmosphere of intolerance. My space allows me to contemplate, and the musings that come out of it are usually the songs that I write.

'Head' is a slightly naughty song where I'm thinking out loud if a previous relationship failed because of something I did wrong or because I wasn't good at giving oral sex.

Again, when it comes to female sexuality, it is very difficult to find music by women who are empowering themselves. It's very easy to fall into



*Stand your ground.  
Find your courage  
from within.*



a trap of self-objectification, something that I have consciously tried to avoid in this record.

### 6. What advice would you give to young girls going through the struggle of expressing themselves

Stand your ground. Find your courage from within. Also, never compromise on your ideals, who you are as a person.

Plastic Parvati or Suyasha Sengupta, she doesn't fail to impress us. And she plans to release more music soon, with songs that are dirtier and more personal. It's clear we need more musicians and artists to be open about taboo topics because we're loving it.

You can listen to 'Songs About Lovers' on [Soundcloud](#) and follow Suyasha on [Instagram](#) for updates.

In Profile

# Parekh & Singh

Nischay Parekh and Jivraj Singh, the musical geniuses behind the hit single 'I Love You Baby, I Love You Doll' which received over a million views on YouTube, are one of India's most popular dream pop duos. Their stage name was inspired by world-famous acts, Simon & Garfunkel and Hall & Oates.

*India's most  
popular dream  
pop duos*



Parekh was introduced to pop music by his mother and went to Berklee School of Music before coming back to Kolkata to pursue music. Meanwhile, Singh grew up with musician parents who would often tour with cover bands.

Their eye-popping suits, addictive melodies and their connection to their lives in Kolkata sums up their signature style. According to them, the atmosphere of Kolkata is extremely soothing from an artistic perspective as it's an easy city where one can afford to be lazy which reflects in their music. They consider their music, suits and videos an ode to the City of Joy.

To stay updated on Parekh & Singh's new music and gigs, visit their [website](#), [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) pages.

Photo Courtesy: Parizad D

In Profile

# The Ganesh Talkies

The Ganesh Talkies (named after a defunct movie theatre in Kolkata) is a punk rock band from Kolkata known for putting a unique Bollywood twist to their music. Their musical influences have no particular origin as they range from Bappi Lahiri to Nirvana and Radiohead.

*This 'kitschy dance pop' band's mission isn't over until every single audience member starts dancing*



The band came together when two musicians left their cover band Pseudonym to create original compositions. After recruiting two more members, the band decided not to follow one musical genre and have fused psychedelic rock, pop, Bollywood and more in their music - a very bold move by any Indian band.

This 'kitschy dance pop' band's mission isn't over until every single audience member starts dancing and grooving to the tantalizing beats of their singles such as "Dancing! Dancing!", "Fight Club", "Rum and Coke" and much more.

For more information on the Ganesh Talkies, follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Soundcloud](#).



## In Profile

# Blood

Blood is an alternative metal/post-grunge metal band. Post 2012 was an era where a number of bands were entering the Indian rock scene such as Delete, Revolution, Cross Chords, Dialect, Road Roller, Alo, Mysterious M and Adhyay. However Blood has managed to stand out with their many achievements along the way.

*They associate their music with blood as they believe that one cannot survive without either*



Blood has performed, placed and won in over 20 different music competitions all over India. The biggest hits by this 4 piece band include Mogoj, Hinomonnota and Sorbohara which have received rave reviews.

Especially notable is 'Azadi' was a track which was released along with a Hindi/ Marathi film "Bachpan Ki Azadi" (Freedom of Childhood) which was directed at motivating people to fight against child trafficking and brutality.

To stay updated on new music or gig dates, visit Blood's [Facebook](#) page.

In Profile

# Saturday Night Blues

The Saturday Night Blues Band is a blues band from Kolkata which has been performing at Someplace Else at The Park Hotel for over a decade. The vocalist, Jayanta Dasgupta, has been performing for over 25 years and has been playing blues with the band since January 2000.

*Their latest accomplishment was opening for the living legend of the blues, Buddy Guy*



The band covers include Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Elmore James, Albert Collins, Albert King, Koko Taylor, Freddie King, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Johnny Winter, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Bonnie Raitt, B.B. King, Eric Clapton, Robert Cray and Susan Tedeschi and have performed gigs all over the country. Their latest accomplishment was opening for the living legend of the blues, Buddy Guy at The Mahindra Blues Festival, Mumbai in 2011.

They are known for their energetic sound and informal, interactive approach to the audience.

You can find more information about Saturday Night Blues on [Facebook](#).

## Places to Learn

# Calcutta School of Music

The Calcutta School of Music is one of the premier music institutions in India. The school helps shine a spotlight on the talent of their students, especially through performing in public places such as their Annual Concerts, Jazz Concerts and the Young Talent Contest. Plus, there's an additional incentive of winning prizes for performances which keeps students motivated.

The school offers theory classes which helps students get a better understanding of music, its history and the working of different instruments. The school covers both Western and Indian disciplines.

In addition to a learning experience through their mix of theory and practical

approach, they also conduct regular masterclasses featuring experts from the music community, both Indian and international.

For more information on classes, courses and performances, visit their [website](#) or their [Facebook](#) page.



## Places to Learn

# Academy of Musical Excellence

The Academy of Musical Excellence is a music school in Kolkata which offers training in western classical, piano, keyboards, violin, guitar, vocals, drums, Indian music and more since 2010.

There is one stand out feature of this school which is the programmes directed towards mothers and their offsprings.

AMEC believes that music is very beneficial for a newborn's developing brain and helps in creating new neural pathways and helping to enhance the parent-child bond.

For this purpose, they have created

different programmes for specific age groups; Music for Mothers and Infants, Toddlers, Preschool and Kindergarten. As the children grow older, they are introduced to rhythm and pitches through fun activities and singing games which helps develop their motor skills and memory.

For more information on the Academy of Musical Excellence check out their [website](#).



## Festivals

# Calcutta International Classical Guitar Festival

The Calcutta International Classical Guitar Festival is one to watch out for in December. This 3 day festival includes competitions, workshops, masterclasses and concerts from acclaimed guitarists from all around the world. For the past 8 years, this festival has played host for Grammy award winners and GFA (Guitar Foundation of America) winners such as Nikita Koshkin, Roland Dyens and David Russell.

This festival is powered by the Calcutta Classical Guitar Society, the Indian Guitar Federation and Siddha Live In Series.

Whether you are looking to show off

your skill with the guitar, learn how to play or watch guitar maestros at work, this festival is one event you can't miss.

Keep checking the festival [website](#) for new information and notifications.



# THEATRE

Kolkata boasts a vibrant mix of commercial theatre groups and unconventional troupes who educate and entertain audiences throughout the year with a variety of shows.

Plays address everything from the stories of Indian forefathers to societal issues in modern India. In this section, meet the 'who's who' of theatre personalities in Kolkata.



## In conversation with Ayan Bhattacharjee

Ayan Bhattacharjee is a creative producer, actor and light designer at Mad About Drama (M.A.D.), a performance art theatre in Kolkata which specialises in 'mad theatre'. M.A.D. is always pushing the envelope to challenge the status quo.

Here, Ayan talks to us about his passion for the performing arts, his views on theatre and its technicalities, the upcoming theatre culture in Kolkata and more.

### 1. Tell us a little bit about yourself and your background.

I started out with theatre in my school days itself, in Don Bosco. It was since then that my passion for the performing arts began and later on inspired me to start Mad About Drama. We have been running for over 7 years now. It started

out as a hobby which developed into a profession.

### 2. What sparked your interest in theatre and what does the stage mean to you?

I was pretty much involved in theatre activities in school. Sometime in primary school, there was an elocution contest



where a teacher really liked the way I spoke and I consider that as my starting point. It was a very step by step process. I started in school and built on from there. When I started college, I started watching plays and doing plays. Once you go up on stage and start performing, it becomes addictive because you can really feel the audience's presence, feelings and reactions. It's very different from media like film.

**3. In your experience as a light designer, could you please shed some light on how the lighting of a stage plays a role in setting a scene? (Pun intended)**

Without lights, whatever happens on stage cannot be seen. It is meant to sensuate a production rather than add to it. The purpose of lighting varies from production to production and play to play.

**4. Is there a particular play, musical or movie which inspired you to start acting? What was it about that play/musical/movie which spoke to you?**

No particular film as such but to an extent, The Godfather, way back when I was in high school. But back then, I really hadn't watched a lot of plays, it was just that we really enjoyed watching good acting in movies. It started from there and that's where I truly got into the idea of the performing arts.

**5. Why do you think the world needs theatre?**

Some plays are meant to be socially relevant, meant to bring awareness and promote social causes. This relevance of theatre is very geographical and very circumstantial. For instance, in countries like Dubai, theatre is considered a luxury, where tickets are costlier than movies. An example would be Hamilton, the most expensive play as of now.



*Some plays are meant to be socially relevant, bring awareness & promote social causes.*



**6. What do you think of the theatre culture in Kolkata and where do you see it heading?**

Definitely improving. It was booming in the 70's, 80's and 90's. It died down a bit during the millennial age for a while. Over a period of time, with the advent of smartphones, there was an influx of Western ideologies and a lot of Western practices in Kolkata. There is still a very distinct commercial theatre circuit and a very distinct parallel theatre circuit and MAD tries to balance between the two.

**7. Any words to inspire those passionate about pursuing theatre in Kolkata?**

It's not going to be easy, certainly not. But when you are into it at a point of time, you realise that everything you work for is worth it. When you go up on stage and when the production is going on, that feeling of joy and everything makes all of it worth it.



In Profile

# Shriek of Silence

The Shriek Of Silence is a youth theatre group formed in 2012 by a group of college students and professionals from Ashutosh College (Calcutta University). Suprovo Tagore, Anirjit Hore Roy, and Amalika Ganguly were a few of the initial members.

*The group staged a production of Eve Ensler's Vagina Monologues in 2013*



The group marked their first anniversary celebrations in 2013 by staging a hugely successful production of Eve Ensler's Vagina Monologues. Their other notable productions include Portia, Jawab and Merchant of Venice.

S.O.S. is particularly special as they represent the youth and how they want to change the world and make it a better place. They started by becoming an 'Awareness Partner' with One Billion Rising, a global movement founded by Eve Ensler to end rape and sexual violence against women.

To learn more about the group, head on over to their [Facebook](#) page.

## In Profile

# Hypokrites

Hypokrites is a drama troupe, which originated in Asutosh College. Their motto is "Our Dream, Our Theatre", with the ideology to promote theatre and encourage the younger generation to take up theatre.

*Their plays are multilingual as they don't believe in language barriers*



Their drama is modern and unconventional, looking to challenge orthodox notions, while keeping their core principles and structure intact. Their plays are multilingual as they don't believe in language barriers.

Hypokrites has produced 13 plays exclusively in the last year. They have also collaborated with other theatre groups in Kolkata and produced over 5 plays.

The troupe will stage their latest play 'Picnic on the Battlefield' this June, restructuring the play to subtly highlight its dark humour.

To stay updated on auditions and productions, check out their [Facebook](#) page.

In Profile

# Usha Ganguli

Starting out as a lecturer in Hindi language and literature from Bhawanipur Education Society, Usha Ganguli started the Rangakarmee theatre group in 1976 dedicating her time and effort into her first passion, theatre.

*She is one of the recipients of 'The Telegraph She Awards 2018' for her work in the field.*



Trained as a Bharatnatyam dancer, she brings her choreographic skill set to the stage in many productions, including two famed shows which were centred around the life and works of noted playwright and author Saadat Hasan Manto.

Usha is one of the recipients of 'The Telegraph She Awards 2018' for her work in the field. She believes that the younger generation is becoming more interested in theatre since they understand that the power of theatre can change society, create social awareness and make them fighters.

Click here for more information on Usha, head on over to this [Facebook](#) fan page.

In Profile

# Meghnad Bhattacharya

Meghnad Bhattacharya is one of the founding members of Sayak, a theatre group which has become a household name in Bengali theatre. He has shown his acting prowess in 22 productions & 7 short plays, which has helped Sayak reach the pinnacle of the theatre scene in Bengal.

*He is the mastermind behind the continuous full house shows of Sayak for the last 36 years*



He is the mastermind behind the continuous full house shows of Sayak for the last 36 years. His productions have also been shown on the international stage, having been performed in the United States, Canada, Bangladesh and Kuwait.

More recently, his latest production, Punoruthan (based on a novel), has also been selling out shows in Kolkata. The play discusses the wrongful alliance between illegal coal mine owners and administration, where there is no safety and security for tribal workers. The play is about the rise of the workers against the system.

## Places to Learn

# Mad About Drama

M.A.D. is a theatre organisation which does not follow normal conventions and aesthetics and is always pushing the envelope to try the untested and making their productions a 'mad' theatre experience. From promotional campaigns to training programs and their plays, Mad About Drama believes in exploring contradictions in our time.

Other than putting on productions, they also have workshops and projects to promote the idea of 'mad theatre', including a kids programme. Their Youtube channel also has humorous content which includes parody news shows, social experiments and music.

They even have a radio show on 91.9 Friends FM every Sunday from 3 to 4 pm, where they perform skits with the use of just dialogue.

For more information on Mad About Drama, check out their [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.



## Places to Learn

# Nandikar Theatre

Nandikar can be considered as the 'Mecca' of the theatre movement in Kolkata. Since its inception, 58 years ago, Nandikar has produced about 80 plays and performed approximately 8500 shows around the country. Their logo was designed by veteran Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray.

A few of their productions such as *Natyakarer Sandhane Chhati Charitra*, *Tin Poysar Pala*, *Bhalomanush*, *Football*, *Antigone*, etc., have been performed for more than 400 nights each. Nandikar has also been organizing a film festival every year for the last 33 years.

Although they are an award-winning theatre powerhouse, they have also

opened an institute for the theatrical arts with training programs and workshops with the ideology that anyone from actors to regular college goers and kids can hone their skills.

To learn more about the theatre, visit their [website](#) and their group on [Facebook](#).



## Festivals

# Short + Sweet Theatre Festival

Short + Sweet is an event which happens all over the world. It was founded in 2002 in Sydney, with just the theatre component being active. Since, Kolkata is one of the most culturally diverse cities in India, the Short + Sweet Theatre Festival was introduced there in 2016.

Its unique concept and popularity has spread throughout and as a result, has brought participants from different places and countries like Mumbai, Dubai and Bengaluru.

The idea is simplistic, yet unconventional in nature. The participants have to perform a 10 minute play to provide a platform for theatre groups to showcase their acting and directing skills as well as to test

their ability to write a 10 minute play. It consists of a preliminary round and one gala curtain raiser. It has different categories mainly; actor, script, theatre group and director. It features a variety of plays and are performed in English, Hindi and Bengali.

For more information about the festival, check out their [website](#) and [facebook](#) page.



# DANCE

Dance, the language of expression, is not only elegant and powerful, it's an eloquent way to narrate thousands of stories. Kolkata's dancers express themselves through various dance forms which range from ballet to Bharatnatyam. In this section, discover the personalities and companies at the forefront of dance culture in the city.





In conversation with

## Mr. Tapas Das

Tapas Das is a prolific dancer born and brought up in Kolkata. He is the founder of Twists N Turns, Zumba Kolkata, ArtistWala.com and India International Dance Institute. He began with Twists N Turns back in 2005 with just 40 students and has come a long way since.

Originally a hip hop dancer, he has also been active with the Salsa Indian Congress and various International Salsa Congresses. Here is what he had to say about his journey as a dancer.

**1. Tell us a little bit about yourself and your background.**

I was born and brought up in Kolkata, and have been dancing since the age of four. I learnt jazz/modern and contemporary dance and built my dance career from there. I went to the Broadway Dance Center, Alvin Alley and Steps on Broadway, all in New York to

expand on various dance forms. After that exposure, I studied how to be a dance teacher, which helped me impart this knowledge about dance. I started Twist N Turns in 2005 as I wanted to start my own, one-of-a-kind dance academy.

**2. What is your favourite style of dance and why?**



Old school Hip Hop. I started my journey as a hip-hop dancer, hence it is my favourite form.

**3. Where does the passion for teaching dance derive from?**

It is the contentment I get from dance, which keeps me going and helps me in taking it further for generations. Teaching itself is very gratifying. The satisfaction and thrill of achievement is right in front of me: my students.

**4. Any words for those looking to pursue dance as a career?**

Savage rivalry exists among expert artists for occupations, and work hours are very unpredictable and may incorporate days of practice taken over by nights of execution, and at times seven days a week.

Artists must show inventiveness, collaboration and tirelessness.

**5. What do you think of the dance culture in Kolkata and where do you see it heading?**

The dance culture in Kolkata is growing day by day. Kolkata, being the hub of talents has one of the finest dancers and artists. The city is now open to new dance styles. Thanks to the reality shows, people nowadays know the different dance forms better than before. The parents are also expanding their horizons and letting their

children explore theirs.

Plus, the youth in Kolkata right now, is mostly attracted to the hip hop culture. Many underground battles and dance fests are organised to showcase the hidden talents of the city.

**6. You are the founder of a few prominent**



*It's important to express through art because it's a piece that stays forever.*

**dance institutions in Kolkata. What inspired you to start all of these institutes?**

I started Twist N Turns so that people can come and learn the techniques of the dance forms, which makes their base strong.

When I felt that there should be trained teachers to guide the children about the minute details of the form, I started India International Dance Institute. The motive of this was to train dancers in different dance

forms like hip hop, salsa, bachata, jazz etc. who would later become certified instructors.

The course has been designed keeping every detail in mind for the betterment of the dancers, so that they will be able to complete the certification, and they will be eligible to take classes in any dance institute.

In Profile

# Dr. Mitul Sengupta

Dr. Mitul Sengupta started her dance career at the age of 5 and has been taught by Kathak dance prodigies such as Birju Maharaj, Madhumita Roy and Chetna Jalan. She was the recipient of National Nritya Shiromani Award for her contribution to Kathak dance.

*She was the recipient of National Nritya Shiromani Award for her contribution to Kathak dance*



She has conducted workshops and master classes in over 20 dance institutions and dance companies, performed at events around the world and collaborated with Indian as well as international artists.

Presently she is the guest lecturer in the Performing Arts Therapeutic Division and Examiner of Choreography in Rabindrabharati University. She is an international member of the American Dance Therapy Association. She is also a teacher, choreographer and the director of Rhythmosaic Dance Co.

Visit this [website](#) to watch videos of Dr. Mitul's performances and to stay updated, follow her [Facebook](#) page.

In Profile

# Goutam Upadhyay

Sri Goutam Upadhyay is an established Bharatnatyam dancer and a 'Chau' dancer which is a dance form which incorporates three different styles of dance; Mayurbhanj, Seraikella and Purulia. It mixes semi classical Indian dance with martial, tribal and folk dance

*Srijak can be considered as his testimony to his devotion to teaching the art form to his students*



Before starting Srijak, the contemporary art centre, he was a faculty member of the Ananda Shankar Centre for Performing Arts from 1988 to 2011. In this period, he has performed in USA, Russia and Qatar. He has also assisted the renowned Bengali dancer, Smt. Tanushree Shankar, in many of her creative compositions at various national-level youth and folk festivals, as well as in the National Games.

His reputation as a classical dancer and choreographer is known throughout the Indian subcontinent. Srijak can be considered as his testimony to his devotion to teaching the art form to his students.

In Profile

# Rupa Upadhyay

Not unlike her husband, Rupa Upadhyay is one of the most creative minds in the Kolkata dance circuit. She is the co-founder of Srjiak, an institution which specialises in creative dance and elocution.

*Rupa is a true believer in the dance style of Uday Shankar and incorporates it in her choreography*



Rupa is a true believer in the dance style of the legendary dancer Uday Shankar and incorporates it in her choreography and performances. Among her memorable performances, one that stands out was the one aired on Kolkata Doordarshan, when she performed at the Wills World Cup, Youth Festival, Kolkata in 1996.

Other than being a gifted dancer, she is also a brilliant elocutionist and has taken the institution to new heights with her vast experience in the field. She also represented the National Cadet Corps (NCC) that won the 'Best Turn-Out' award at the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi in 1989.

In Profile

# Peddro Sudipta Kundu

Sudipta Kundu is the founder of the dance institute Peddro's Salsateca and a member of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, London for Latin American Dance. He is a senior fellow in the ministry of culture for his research in dance theatre.

*What makes him truly unique is that he doesn't stick to just one form of dance.*



What makes him truly unique is that he doesn't stick to just one form of dance. He has a wide range of dance forms under his belt, which include the Eastern forms such as Kathak, Bharatnatyam, Chhau and Kathakali as well the Western forms like Salsa, Rumba, Samba and Paso Doble.

He teaches salsa, Latin American dance forms, ballroom, contemporary and hip-hop. Additionally, he has choreographed in several movies, theatre productions, reality shows, corporate shows and stage productions.

For more information on this salsa community, visit their [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

## Places to Learn

# Twists N Turns

Twist N Turns is a dance institute franchise located all over Kolkata. They believe that dance helps in our everyday life with life skills such as confidence, teamwork, stress relief as well as keeping fitness levels on a high. According to them, dance is a form of expression and that anyone can take it up.

Twist N Turns have differentiated their classes for people of all age groups and dance experience. Their ideology is to show that dance is elemental, and that the knack for it exists in everyone (might be hidden in some more than others).

They pride themselves in the diversity in the forms of dance that they cover.

From Bollywood to belly dancing, Twists N Turns is sure to keep you grooving at all times.

Visit their [website](#) for details on classes, events and shows and you can also follow them on [Facebook](#).



## Places to Learn

# Rhythmosaic

Rhythmosaic is an institute of dance and the movement arts in Kolkata. This institute uses a 'Thinking Approach' method to address expressional and experimental issues. It covers a lot of western dance forms such as classical ballet, classical jazz dance, contemporary dance, tap dance and also has a rigorous training program in Kathak, one of India's most famous classical dance forms.

This dance institute has been initiating workshops, seminars, outreach programs and training with the help of many organisations, local and global to promote dance education.

Aside from the practical aspects of dance, Rhythmosaic also focuses on the theory of dance which include topics such as dance history,

dance psychology, anatomy, dance management and choreography. Their vision is help create artists with strong technical abilities in the field with a deep understanding for addressing creative endeavours.

To learn more about Rhythmosaic, check out their detailed [website](#) as well as their page on [Facebook](#).





## Festivals

# Dance Bridges Festival

Dance Bridges Festival is an international dance festival held in Kolkata every year. The goal of the festival is to act as a platform for dance, artistic exchanges, collaboration and performance for the development of the cultural sector in Kolkata.

The Dance Bridges Festival is held as a biennial international dance festival in Kolkata.

The festival hopes to expand and increase opportunities for artists and dance companies, thereby promoting the performing arts and cultural sector in India on a global stage.

This is achieved through showcasing

contemporary choreography through live performances and film screenings and by providing dance training opportunities through workshops, speeches by artists and other outreach events.

You can find details on the festival each year on the Dance Bridges [website](#) and on their [Facebook](#) page as well.



# ART

Kolkata's art community is avant-garde, constantly innovating and inventing, pushing the boundaries of creative expression through their canvasses, paintbrushes, and installations. Here are some of the city's most notable talents



1  
2  
3  
4

## In conversation with Reya Ahmed

Reya is an illustrator and a student of architecture in her third year. She is the founder of the Saintbrush Artzine, an artzine looking to integrate different forms of creativity and thinking mainly through art and writing.

Although she is young in years and still starting out, here she is taking us through her story; sharing her experience as an artist, her efforts towards trying to promote the art scene in Kolkata, as well as her interpretation and relationship with art.

### 1. Tell us a little bit about yourself and your journey as an artist.

I am an illustrator and a graphic designer based in Kolkata.

I have been painting since childhood. I started illustrating for books when I joined college.

I started Saintbrush Artzine in 2015 to help people sustain the love for art.

### 2. What inspired you to launch the Saintbrush Artzine? What do you hope to get back from this?

After the advent of pages like Berlin ArtParasites, the whole concept of pairing a picture with a piece of writing



took over social media for a while.

We wanted to do something similar. We needed a narrative similar in Kolkata, which would essentially bring together the artists, writers, poets and photographers.

It was started with my group of friends, who were artists, jamming together to create something.

What I hope to get back from this is collaborating with like minded people and seeing the art culture develop in Kolkata.

### 3. Is there one particular piece of artwork on your site which spoke to you?

There was a piece called "In Defence of Pineapple on Pizza", which was featured from the first print issue, which dealt with identity issues and alienation. It spoke to me because of how people hate on other people who prefer pineapple toppings on pizza. This irony works on so many areas.

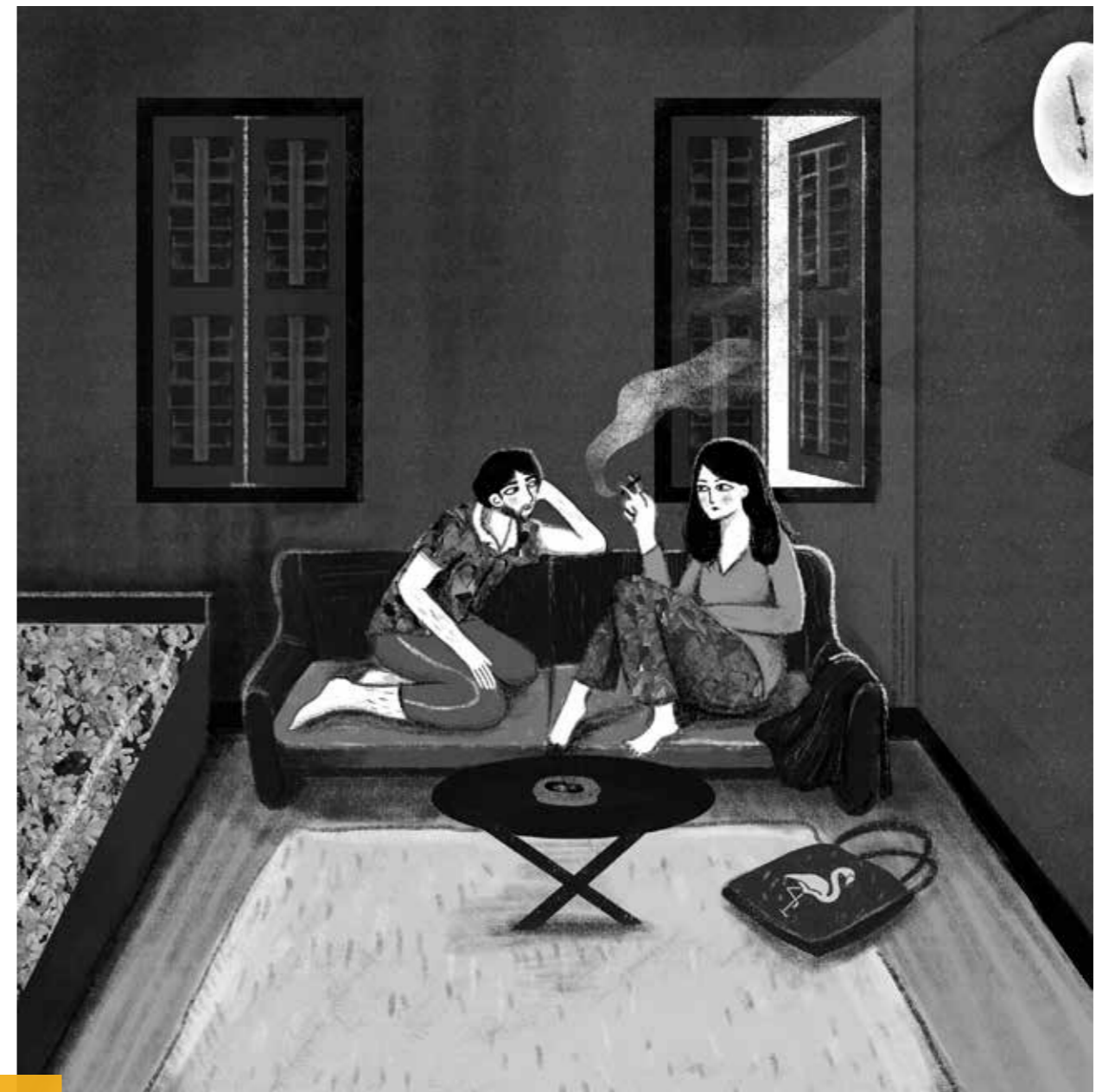
In this age, where there is so much spoken about on what kind of meat a person prefers to eat and a particular meat which one is not supposed to eat as directed by a particular political party, it's essential to notice that even in our most liberal spaces, we make fun of someone who prefers pineapple toppings on pizza but at the same time we are also standing up against our freedom to eat when politics is concerned. This piece was very interesting piece and it made me reevaluate my political stance.

### 4. Why do you think it is important for people to express themselves and their thoughts through art?

It's important for people to express themselves through their art because it's a piece that stays forever. Whether you create a piece of art, or write something, or even put up something on social media, it stays forever. What you are



*It's important to express through their art because it's a piece that stays forever*



feeling in the moment and the thought behind any piece of art sticks with you through that piece of art. In today's day and age, it's important to mobilise artists and let them express their views and their political stances because art does have a larger impact than just generally talking about it.

### 5. What is your advice to up and coming artists?

I'm also an up and coming artist as well, by the way. I think it is important to understand

that each person has an individual style and an individual taste and an individual way of expressing. That originality and individualism shouldn't disappear. But a little general advice to illustrators, realism is very overrated. Everyone has their own style and they should run with it.

Check out more of Reya's work on her [website](#), and you can follow her on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to keep your timelines colourful and thoughtful.

In Profile

# Alisha Dutt Islam

Alisha Dutt Islam is an illustrator, graphic designer and an art teacher whose speciality is botanical art. She started out with this unique form of art when she was in Bangalore in Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology.

*Alisha started studying plants to help her become more adept at her art*



KING VULTURE

*Sarcorampbus papa*

The beauty of the botanical spectacles in the Garden City opened up her thoughts and views on nature and started studying plants to help her become more adept at her art. She moved back to Kolkata but she was still able to appreciate the wonder of nature there even though it was more of a concrete jungle.

Today she is spreading her love of art by working as an art teacher in a middle school. She has been keeping her followers hooked on to her Instagram page with new artwork in her collection.

Browse Alisha's artwork on [Behance](#) and on [Instagram](#) as well.

In Profile

# Manimanjari Sengupta

Manimanjari Sengupta's artwork is unabashed and bold in the topics they address, such as a woman's sexuality, which is usually a topic spoken about in hushed tones in the country.

*She wants to change how society perceives gender with the help of her innovative pieces*



After completing her graduation in Sociology, she considered taking up law as a profession and went to law school. This was when she realised that she wanted to change how society perceives gender. She decided to use canvases, pencils and colours to achieve this goal.

To browse Manimajari's work, simply head on over to her [Instagram](#) page.

In Profile

# Debanjali Das

Debanjali Das is one of the first female tattoo artists in India. Debanjali founded 'The Guiding Monk Tattoos' studio with an aim to push originality and creativity in the tattoo scene.

*She strives to break gender barriers in the male-dominated tattoo industry with her original work*



She pursued her initial interest in graphic design from the prestigious Government College of Art and Craft and landed a job in a multinational company. She was in for a disappointment when she realized that they were encouraged to play safe. Stunned of creative expression, Debanjali chose to make a switch in her career.

Today, she strives to break stereotyped gender barriers in the male-dominated tattoo industry with her original work.

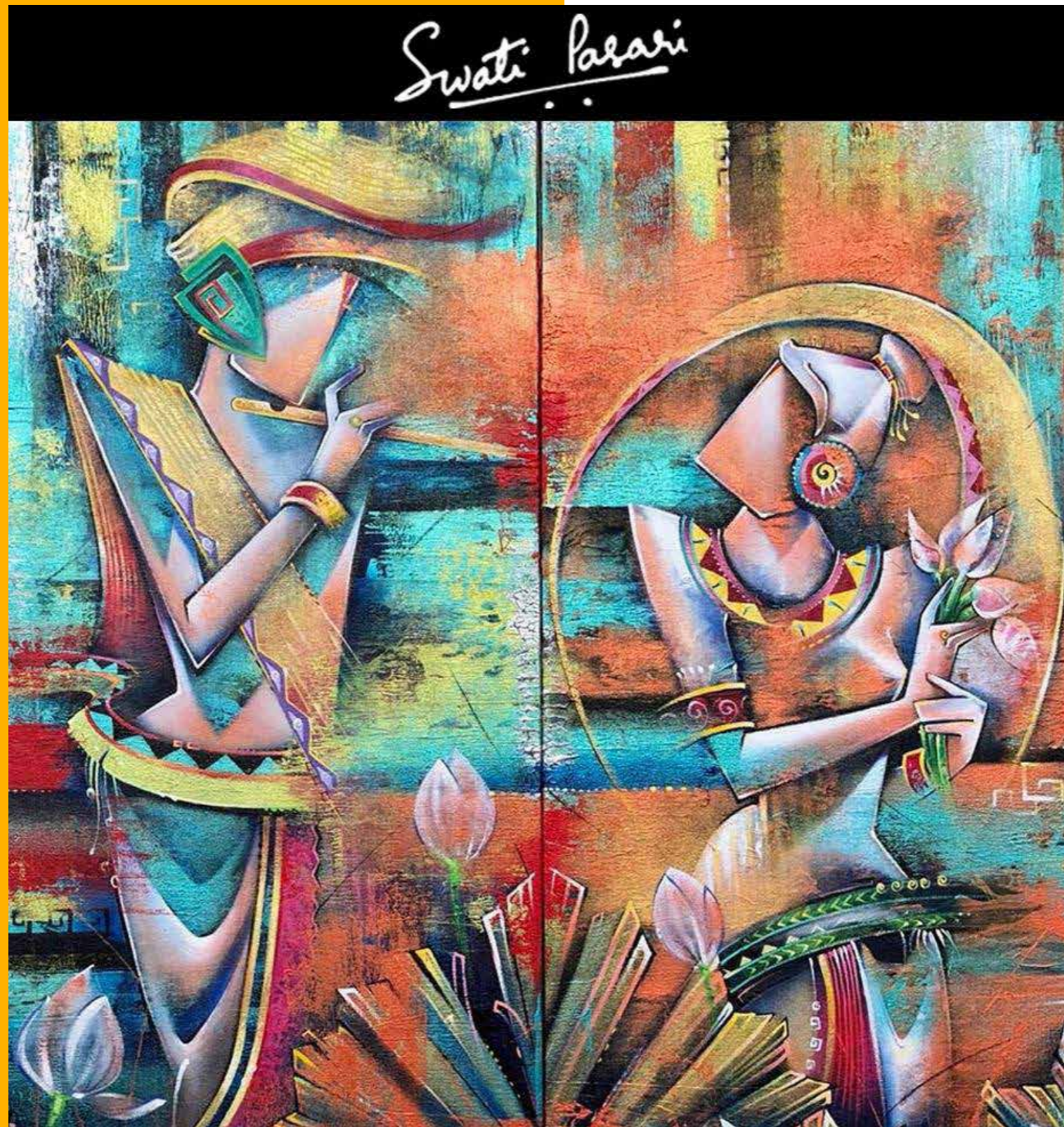
To check out Debanjali's beautiful body artwork, visit the Guiding Monk Tattoos [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

In Profile

# Swati Pasari

Swati Pasari is an artist and sculptor. She started out in the field in 2007 with the intention of striving for inner peace, and started using art. She enters 'a new dimension' when she paints and she generally doesn't know how a painting will turn out until she completes it.

*Her paintings portray the joy of life while her knowledge of color palettes shines through her work*



With many exhibitions to her credit in India and several other countries, her work has a distinct style and shows artistic maturity with concepts like immortality, timelessness, inner stillness, peace, and meditation. Her paintings portray joy and a celebration of life while her unique knowledge of color palettes shines through each of her works. Her sculptures thrive in detail and form.

Visit Swati's [website](#) and her [Facebook](#) page to browse more of her work.



## Art Galleries in Focus

# Experimenter Gallery

The Experimenter Gallery is a contemporary gallery which showcases artists and works use their art as expressions to challenge the status quo. Past exhibitions have been very bold, such as work by Shilpa Gupta and Iman Issa addressing issues with India's armed forces.

Experimenter also runs an annual 'Curators' Hub', providing a platform for critical engagement and discussion of the curatorial aspirations in Indian contemporary art.

The Gallery focuses on pushing the boundaries of visual arts and featuring artists with a similar vision. Each of its exhibitions have a different theme, but all aim to provoke and kindle debate and

discussion. Some exhibitions feature art which are political and challenge aesthetics.

For more information on upcoming shows, follow Experimenter Gallery on [Facebook](#) and swing by their [website](#) as well.



Experimenter - I Wish To (Chap 2) Rathin Barman -...e; side angle  
Experimenter - I Wish To (Chap 2) Ayesha Sultana '...as' sculpture

## Art Galleries in Focus

# Aakriti Art Gallery

The Aakriti Art Gallery is committed to showcasing contemporary visionaries and young upcoming talents. The gallery regularly holds an exhibition called 'GenNext' to promote innovative and revolutionary young talent.

Aakriti has hosted workshops, art camps, talk shows and seminars and has been successful in promoting Indian contemporary art at the global level.

What makes this gallery so innovative is the diversity of the forms of art featured such as traditional paintings, sculptures,

printmaking, graphics, conceptual art, video art, installations and experimental art.

Visit Aakriti's Art Gallery [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page for details on artists and exhibitions.



## Festivals

# Kolkata Street Art Festival

The Kolkata Street Art Festival is an initiative by Berger Paints. The idea was to create vibrant, meaningful and thought-provoking artwork to brighten the walls, as well as showcasing the talent of artists. Changing the city's landscape is arguably India's biggest street art project and it is fitting that it has taken place at the most culturally-rich city in India.

Member of Parliament Prof. Jogen Chowdhury (who is also a prominent artist) founded this initiative and has coordinated with a team of 20 artists which was led by senior artist Mr. Barun Saha and the late Mr. Rintu Roy to launch the festival.

The art on the walls address a variety

of topics, from environmental issues to Indian athletes. This art festival has put Kolkata on par with Brussels, Lisbon and Atlanta with regards to innovation and appreciation of street art.

For the latest updates on the festival, visit their [website](#).



# KOLKATA 101

ARTS DANCE THEATRE MUSIC



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