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Cholamandal's legendary artists revive the radical spirit of the Madras art movement **P2**

WHY ED SHEERAN LOVES THE INDIAN GHATAM **P4**



A jazzy weekend

Listen to jazz performers and bands from across South India at the J4JAZZ Weekender - Edition 2. This three-day festival will feature Duo Jazz Band, AV Trio and DRIP on September 19, Duo Jazz Band, Akshada Krishnan Trio and Kirtana Krishna Kvartet on September 20, and Bossa Blue on September 21.

@Hyatt Regency, Teynampet from September 19 to 21. Tickets at ₹3,500 for singles and ₹6,500 for couples. For more details, contact 9790787813.



Deepavali-ready

Over 40 designers and brands from across India will be a part of the Arti Bagdy Fashion Collezione (ABFC) Diwali Edit 2025. "We want every visitor to find something unique, whether it's a timeless sari, a trousseau essential, or a handcrafted piece of jewellery that travels with them wherever they go," says curator Arti Bagdy. For jewellery, Pradeep Poddar Jewellers, NAC Jewellers and Amazing Jewel will be a part of the showcase. Sona Agarwal, Amrisha J Designs. Summer by Priyanka Gupta, Label Asya and The Print Factory are among the line up for festive, bridal, and everyday wear. The showcase also has a Deepavali decor and wedding favours section.

On September 23 and 24 at Hyatt Regency, Teynampet from 11am to 8pm. Entry is free



On weaving one's heritage

Kachchi Mitti, a curated exhibition, will spotlight Indian crafts and heritage weaves including kutchhi embroidered jackets, Assam weaves, lambani embroidery, kantha hand embroidery, Benaras weaves, handcrafted bed linens, khadi jamdani, block-printed menswear, needle shibori and more. Participating brands and designers include Hastkaar, Nira, Red Ochre, Triparna Batik, Indikaari, Penna Luxe, Surih and Earth Route.

On September 18, 19 and 20 at CP Art Centre, Alwarpet from 10.30am to 8pm. Entry is free.

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Vijay Antony's interviews are free therapy sessions. The way he looks at life is starkly different from how other film stars view it. His is a simplistic, non-materialistic point of view.

The actor-composer lives it. He prefers walking around barefoot, a trait that he is known for among his fans. He vouches that he has no big ambitions in life. Heck, he even states that, despite his overwhelming success, he has little clue of what acting or music direction actually is.

"I still maintain that I don't know acting. But I'm successful because of habit. Anyone who accepts what he or she doesn't know and then takes it up sincerely can achieve success," he says.

That he has. This September 19, his *Shakti Thirumagan* hits screens. It is a significant project in his filmography as it marks his 25th outing as an actor - a journey that started in 2012's *Naan*. "It was a great introduction," he says, referring to *Naan*. Vijay followed that up with films like *Salim* and *India Pakistan*, but his breakout film as an actor was *Pichaikkaran* (2015). Playing a billionaire businessman who leads a secret life as a beggar, Vijay Antony's performance and the film's novel idea catapulted his stardom. "It gave me a firm place in people's hearts. But I did not know how to handle that success... probably because I am the first actor in my family and don't have any film industry backing. After that success, I did my share of mistakes and learn what not to do. I feel I'm now on a new journey," he says, referring to his last few successful films including *Romeo* and *Maargan*.

Next up in that journey will be *Shakti Thirumagan*, his major

Life is calling Vijay Antony.
SHIVARAJ S. LOCATION: I CONVENTIONS, ADYAR.



With his 25th film, 'Shakti Thirumagan', set for release, the actor-musician talks about the secret of his success and his life philosophy

Pursuit of happiness

box-office test this Friday. What did he like most about this script? "Its director, Arun Prabu. I loved his earlier works, *Vaazhl* and *Aruvi*. Even before he narrated the storyline, I had made up my mind to take it up." The trailer also suggests the protagonist donning some shades of grey - with the words 'hustler', 'trickster' and 'gangster' prominently used whenever Vijay Antony appears on screen. "Yes, he does have a lot of shades, like all human beings. Just like you and me."

Realistic goals
Vijay Antony burst into the scene as a music composer in the 2000s, dishing out fast hits like 'Naaka Muka' (*Kadhalil Vizhunthen*) and 'Aathichudi' (TN 07 AL 4777). "I came in blind. I overrated myself, but after watching the workings of the music

industry, it was overwhelming," he recalls.

In a music industry dominated by AR Rahman and Harris Jayaraj - much before Anirudh broke into the scene, in 2012 - Vijay Antony managed to carve a niche for himself. "I worked on the projects that came my way, without aiming too high. Over time, I've realised that having a target is unnecessary. I believe that if you set stressful life goals, you will lose sight of what you currently have, for which you have to be grateful."

Vijay Antony comes across as a person who approaches his work, be it acting or music direction, in a 'methodical' manner. Does this take away from the passion behind the work? He answers, "Take one of my songs, 'Suppose Enna' (*Sukran*), for example. I composed the tune in hardly 10 minutes, but the end product that you hear - which includes sound and orchestration - would be 10 days of work. In most jobs I take up, it is responsibility and process than drives me, and not passion. I value responsibility more than being passionate."

Currently, Vijay's responsibility is towards ensuring that his landmark 25th film, *Shakti Thirumagan*, gets good buzz. Apart from that, he also has his hands full in production, backing projects like *Lawyer* and *Pookie*. But the news that he is most excited about - like most Tamil cinema fans are - is his teaming up with *Pichaikkaran* director Sasi yet again, for a new project titled *Nooru Saami*. "When I heard the story narration of *Nooru Saami* for over two hours, I broke down at least 15 times. It deals with a lot of emotions and values."



To watch the video interview, scan the QR code.

Shelf life for self-expression

Kannadi Cupboard hosts a book fair for self-published work by non-traditional publishing houses and creators

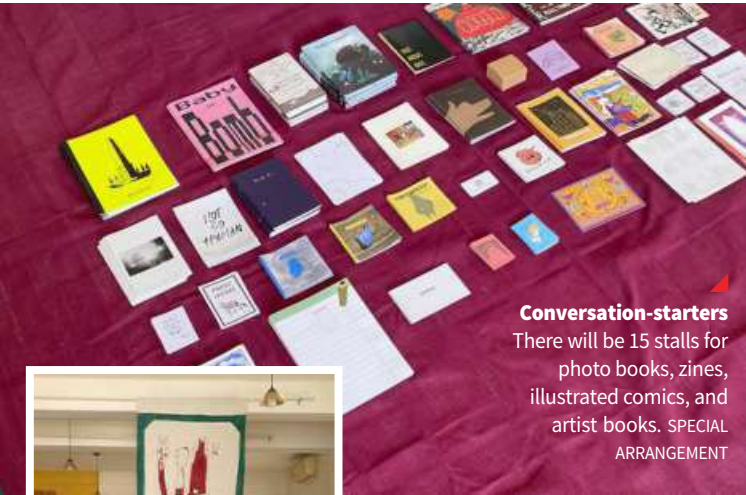
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Every year, the sprawling grounds of YMCA in Nandanam come alive with the Chennai Book Fair. The annual event sees a footfall of thousands every day, and is a platform for traditional publishers to reach out to readers across genres and ages. This weekend, a quieter alternative to the bustling event is set to unfold at a gallery space in Tambaram for everything self-published.

Kannadi Cupboard is set to host Padithavudan Kizhithuvidavum, its first book fair for self-published work. Prasanna Venkatesh, who put together the space along with his sibling Keerthana Alageshan, says that the fair will be "on the diametrically opposite direction of the traditional book fair, where everything is done by the artist or a self-publishing house."

The event will have 15 stalls displaying not just books, but photo books, zines, illustrated comics, and artist books by small non-traditional publishing houses as well as the creators who have put the work together. Names include Blaft Publications from Chennai, Rainy Day Studio, Chennai, Editions Jojo from Mumbai, Luru magazine from Bengaluru, and Untitled Kitchen, apart from Sriram Rajkumar, Malvika M, and Aparna Sibi.

Getting a stall allotted at a traditional book fair is not easy



Conversation-starters
There will be 15 stalls for photo books, zines, illustrated comics, and artist books. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



for small, self-publishing firms or artists, points out Prasanna. "Whereas here, everything is simple. You get to show your work, which people can buy. It's the work that matters," he says, adding that pricing too will be such that it is a win-win for both the creator and the buyer. "Zines, for instance, will be priced from ₹200 onwards to ₹600, which is easy on the pocket for the person making the zine and the one who is buying it," he says. "They are able to express themselves, and get their work across to people and strike a conversation."

The format of the works on

display too, Prasanna says, will not necessarily follow a definitive structure that traditional publishers expect. "Some are self-expression where they go on to write a lot; some others have proper story lines; whereas some are just photographs."

The fair will have books displayed on mats on the floor like in a *sandhai*, where people can walk by to seat themselves, pick up a book and talk to the creator. Prasanna says that the book fair will be a yearly affair, one that will bring together the best of self-expression in a format that is accessible and grounded.

Padithavudan Kizhithuvidavum - A self published book fair is on from September 19 to 21, Kannadi Cupboard Gallery, Tambaram. Entry is free and is open to all. For details, visit them on Instagram @kannadicupboard.



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A return to Cholamandal

How do artists survive? Ashvita's show at Lalit Kala Akademi traces the unique history of Chennai's utopian art commune where the Madras Movement was forged

Sujatha Shankar Kumar

One day, mid-April 2017, S Nandagopal tried to reach me. A day later I heard he had died. It was Sankranti, a joyful day, ending with his unexpected departure, Kala, his wife, told me. Why had he called, I wondered, with deep regret. Kala said, "He probably wanted to tell you that Paniker's work sold at Osian's auction for a record." A whopping ₹1.8 crore, in fact, from his Words and Symbols series, acknowledged as one of the finest paintings of Indian modernism sold that month. It was 40 years since KCS Paniker, Nandagopal's father, eminent artist,

lead proponent of the Madras Movement, and founder of Cholamandal Artists' Village, passed in 1977. Art appreciates in value, but what of the artist? Cholamandal, an ongoing show by Ashvita Gallery in the city features 22 artists from the group and 51 works, half from Ashvita's non-commercial collection, and the rest on loan from private galleries and collectors. Curator Ashvin Rajagopalan emphasises, "The reason we did this show is because it is relevant today. The problem that Paniker addressed in the 1960s is a continuing problem: How do artists survive?"

Art, industry, craft
"I was really intrigued by how they combined art, craft and batik", says

Sruthi Srinivasan, co-curator, Ashvita. We see humble scenes from everyday life – C Dakshinamoorthy's cat with a fish, M Senathipathi's woman doing her hair in front of a tiny folding mirror, and KV Haridasan's Gustav Klimt-ish Embracing Couple. The craft is definitive, unquestionably Indian, exquisitely detailed. Beyond 'art for art's sake', monetary returns are needed, not just for success but sustenance. The mid-century Madras artists faced another confounding dilemma – how to be a true modern "Indian" artist. Paniker, the visionary with two decades of experience, resolved these anxieties in one masterful stroke. The Artists Handicraft



Art and artists
(Clockwise from far left) Installation of sand pit at the Cholamadal exhibition; Early days at Cholamandal; TRP Mookiah; Senior artists P Gopinath, M Senathipathi, C Douglas, PS Nandhan and Selvaraj. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Association founded in 1963 paved the way for Cholamandal Artists' Village in 1966 with his credo, "The greatest craftsmen are the greatest artists." Art and craft would go hand in hand, as they always had in India, with the rigorous training at the Government College of Arts & Crafts (now Madras College of Art) – the oldest surviving art school in the country.

TACEL, Tamil Nadu Ceramics Limited, established in 1974 by the TN Government in Vriddhachalam, fostered a local ceramic hub. In Madras, artist S Kannappan set up Tadel Art Pottery, reputed for its studio pottery. These mid-century modern ceramic pieces with abstract motifs are unique and central to the Indian modernist landscape. Craft, practised across generations, sets this exhibition apart but also begs

the questions: Is there a high art and low art? Does art get devalued when it is commercialised?

A village in the city
The Akademi spurred the artists' village, which, in a surreal way comes full circle at the new Lalit Kala with this show. In the 1960s, it was in a three-storied building in Vepery, near the College of Arts. Paniker allowed the artists to camp



overnight. A camaraderie began that flowed into the idea of a commune: a place to live and work in an environment that supports and energises creative exchanges freely. Why at all, did these artists turn to abstraction? In his essay *Why I paint*, Paniker writes of how he came across a maths student's notebook full of symbols, equations and geometric notations. The imagery of writing presented the possibility of expressions that were agnostic. Gopinath does this with vivid colours and geometric forms, Haridasan with his esoteric Neo Tantric expression, while Akkitham Narayanan renders sophisticated hues in calligraphic gestures and subtle geometry. Without meaning attached to symbols, we only see images. It is a path that has allowed the artist's genuine expressions, free from realist associations, using symbols without specific leanings. Rajagopalan hints at another level, suggesting, "Paniker wanted to create a space where art should thrive, a utopian space of no language, no caste, no state. Which is why, when this show came together – I had this 'aha' moment – If you take words and make them into design, it does not have meaning anymore." A distinctive style emerged – one that drew from indigenous sources of tribal, folk, mythology, and tradition evolving into its own modern element as we see in SG Vasudev's copper relief Tree of Life from 1977. 'Madras Metaphor' a term coined by critic SV Vasudevan in 1991 is evident in Nandagopal's Acrobat on Wheel that recalls tribal art forms, the acrobat balanced on a modern mechanical wheel – a metaphor of the new carrying the old. At their idyllic artists' village by the sea, each artist forged their own identity, united by a love of line.

Cholamandal is on at Lalit Kala Akademi Chennai till September 25.



Rhythm fest
Soul and funk take centre stage on September 20, as The Nook Lounge takes over The Spotted Deer, ECR, with Room Service bringing a set that slips from Michael Jackson to

Erykah Badu. Alongside, themed cocktails and a curated menu set the mood for an Oktoberfest evening where sound and flavour move in sync. Tickets are available at ₹500 on urbanaut.app plus ₹500 cover, redeemable on food and drinks.

SOUTHERN LIVING

Write of passage

Author Prajwal Parajuly learns that comma splices, cupcakes and semi-formals can turn an end-of-term showcase into high drama

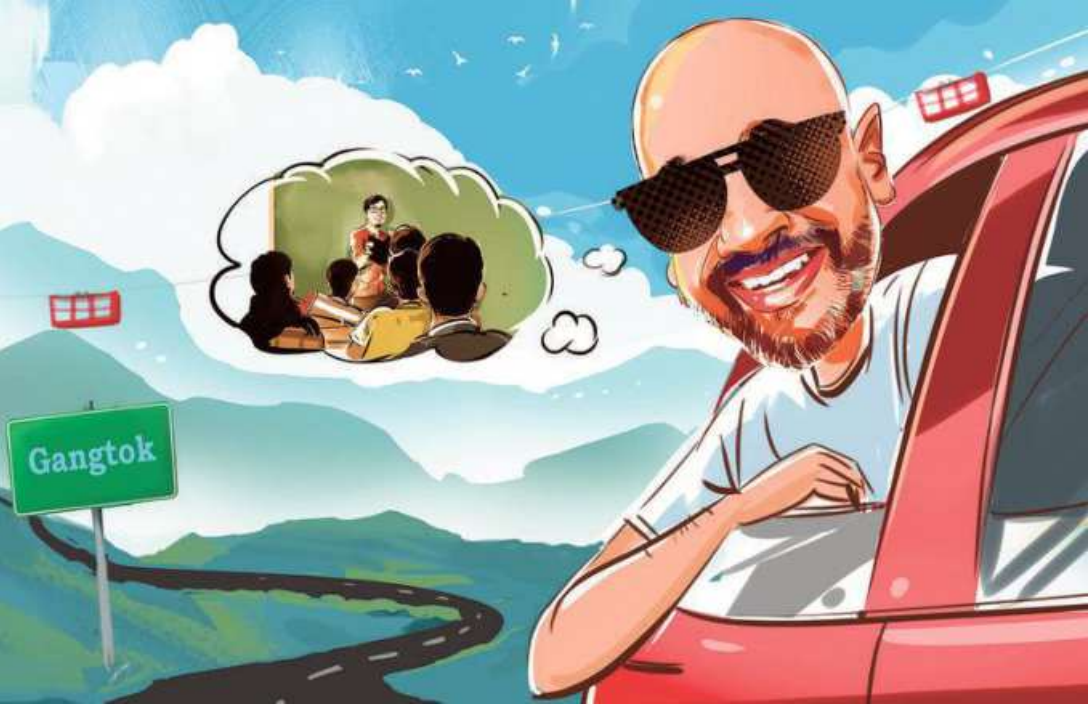


ILLUSTRATION: SWAI

fast. "Commatose," a trio wrote in. "The Write Voice," said someone. "In Short" and "A Short Stop" were banded around. "A Short Stop" abbreviated to ASS, which, of course, tickled this juvenile professor. Ultimately, "What We Wrote" won for its panache. I have always had zero patience for book readings. I loathe attending them only slightly more than I loathe giving them. But what was not to love about the innocence of a dozen or so 20-year-olds organizing their own reading? Their nervousness was endearing. Seemingly shy writers metamorphosed into emotive powerhouses (in semi-formals) on the microphone. A couple of students were away for health reasons. Their friends read for them. A generous audience took videos, clapped and cheered. Tutors looked on proudly from the back. If book readings captured a quarter the warmth of "What we Wrote," some of the issues plaguing modern-day publishing would be obliterated. It was a fitting end to the term. Teaching does fulfil me in a way that writing does not, but that's neither here nor there. For at least a few days now, I shall swap the idli for the momo and the sambar for the thenthuk. The Kanchendzonga has still not deigned to make an appearance in Gangtok, thanks to the rains. Some weeks after I return to Krea, the winter monsoons will commence. It is my favourite time to be in Sri City. The rains pattering on the roof should provide the perfect soundtrack for yet another student-led reading. Perhaps we could even get gyozas from Asagao for snacks.

Prajwal Parajuly is a novelist. Karma and Lola, his new book, is forthcoming in 2026. He teaches Creative Writing at Krea University and oscillates between New York City and Sri City.

METROPLUS QUICK CROSSWORD #20
(Set by Doppelganger)

1	2	3	4	5	6
7				8	
9			10		
11	12				13
15		16		17	
20				21	22
23				24	

Across

7 Space occupied by 3D object (6)

8 Systematically (6)

9 Pay honour to (4)

10 Not involving violence (8)

11 Coming into light contact (7)

13 Vessel mostly propelled by sails (5)

15 One who takes part (5)

17 Exceptionally clever people (7)

20 Maths, Physics, Chemistry etc (8)

21 In a different direction (4)

23 Avoided answering directly (6)

24 Issued 4 times in a month (6)

Down

1 Relocate (4)

2 A borough of New York City (6)

3 Single portion of food (7)

4 Tell on (5)

5 Lights, _____, Action (6)

To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

6 Tilled (8)

12 Not protruding beyond (8)

14 Type of puzzles (7)

16 Focus of attention (6)

18 Flabbergasted (6)

19 Sour-tasting substances (5)

22 Shaft connecting wheels (4)

Solution No. 20

E	O	S	M	J	O
A	T	E	E	S	O
X	Z	V	I	E	O
A	V	M	S	L	O
W	S	I	R	E	S
S	O	R	V	I	M
E	O	V	A	R	O
L	H	O	V	A	S
O	R	X	I	N	E
L	N	E	O	V	E
O	W	E	T	E	A
A	T	E	N	E	A
E	O	S	H	O	W

A loom, a story

Laya, a portmanteau pop-up, tells a heart-warming tale of weaving sarees that signal celebration, from loss



By the border
Neela Krishnamurti and Vidhya Srikanth modelling the sarees they are ready to display. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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Cousins Neela Krishnamurti and Vidhya Srikanth grew up watching the likes of Rekha, Raakhee, and Sharmila Tagore, waltz across the silver screen in drapes of different hues. “Back then, those were our influencers,” says Neela, a former advertising filmmaker.

But there were some others who informed the style choices of this fashionable duo too. “Our mothers and aunts would wear the simplest of saris and look stunning in them. It had more to do with their demeanour and smile than their sari itself. I remember how they would all gravitate towards earthy tones in silk saris,” Neela says, reminiscing. She adds that the sisters grew up wearing each other’s saris, blouses, and clothes, and were always supported by their mothers when it came to their fashion experiments.

“I was unmarried and wanted to wear a white sari to Vidhya’s wedding. You know what the elders say about the colour during a wedding. Although some people chided me, my mother told me to do as I pleased and always supported me. Vidhya and I both lost our mothers recently. The loss was immense, and I am still dealing with it. We wanted to do something together during this time. That is when we thought of saris,” says Neela.

Between September 18 and 20, Neela and Vidhya, will display over 200 saris in Kotturpuram. They will include

saris from the Benarasi tissue, Benarasi tussar, Chanderi, pure tussar and moga tussar. “Vidhya has been running a clothing design studio for years and has the knack of putting together some of the most unusual colours together in the fabric. In order for the saris to shine, we’ve also put together interesting contrasting blouses,” she says. Expect to see traditional block prints and jamdanis; and also some gold in the border as Deepavali approaches.

In order to experiment, the duo are playing around with the motifs in the border by taking inspiration from their South Indian roots, particularly in mythical Tamil creatures like yazhi and berunda. The borders have been sourced and printed in West Bengal, while the saris have mostly been sourced from Chennai and Mumbai.

Back in 2005, when the two cousins set up their first such exhibition, they called it ‘nv’, a word play on ‘envy’ – a portmanteau of the names. This time though, they have decided to flip it a little and call it ‘laya’, a combination of the last two parts of their name. “Laya also means rhythm and flow. We want to keep this venture fluid and see how this show goes and want to ensure that we get it right. Our next such experiment is likely to be something very different, perhaps some indo-western wear,” she says.

Laya is on September 18, 20, and 21 at No 5, Ambadi Road, Kotturpuram between 11am and 7pm.



Stripes on the runway

Vino Supraja has reimagined the Bhavani jamakkalam as handbags for the London Fashion Week

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Designer Vino Supraja is all set to present her collection Weave: A Bhavani Tribute at the London Fashion Week later this month. Her line will feature handbags made using handwoven jamakkalams known for their bold, rich stripes in reds, blues, and greens, apart from western silhouettes made with patch-worked fabrics inspired by the rugs. The collection is the result of a journey that Vino took to Bhavani in Erode district two years ago.

“I wanted to explore the region’s handwoven jamakkalams,” says Vino, who has also worked with a weaving cluster in Chennimalai for her line inspired by the folk art form of therukoothu. At Bhavani, Vino saw broken and dusty looms covered in cobwebs. “I did not meet many young weavers, with the existing seniors themselves not getting much work,” says the designer who is now based in Dubai.

She feels that the rug format

may not do much to revive the craft. “Jamakkalams were traditionally spread on the floor for special occasions,” she says: “But people have stopped sitting on the floor these days.” Vino wanted to reimagine the rug as a fashion product. “The striking patterns are on a par with the Gucci stripes or the Burberry pattern,” she says.

While jamakkalam bags are not new, Vino’s idea was to craft premium products that she can market in Dubai and Singapore where she retails. “I wanted to label and package it well,” she says. “The story that most luxury brands promote is that their products are entirely handmade. How is the jamakkalam any lesser? It is a heritage product, and I wanted to do my part for it,” she says.

The research and development (R and D) took almost a year, with challenges in working with the fabric. “The way colouring is done has changed over the years,” points out Vino: “In the jamakkalam, horizontal lines are coloured and vertical lines are white, but in the end product, weavers employ a technique such that the white is not visible.”



Threads of life (Clockwise from left) From the J Collection by Vino Supraja; Bhavani’s weavers; and the designer. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

a little over a minute, has been choreographed by Palani Murugan, a therukoothu actor from the Purisai Duraishami Kannappa Thambiran Therukoothu Manram, to music composed by Paul Jacob.

“In keeping with the folk beats of the track, I have picked foot movements from devarattam and thapattam for the piece,” says Palani, adding that the dancer will be holding the fabric in hand.

When she conceived the show, Vino looked for music rooted in Tamil folk traditions. “I also wanted some English rap on top of it,” she says. She spoke about this to Paul, who offered her a track he had composed years ago, featuring the voices of Chinnaponnu and Anthony Daasan. “He has used instruments such as the parai and kombu in it, and the lines are inspired by a Bharati poem that talks about the environment and saving our forests,” she says.

Vaanmadhi, who visited Bhavani with the designer, came up with a motif for the piece that was inspired by the meditative, rhythmic clackety-clack of the loom. “The visual score for the performance is based on the swing of the straight lines and colourful bands of the jamakkalam,” she says.

Takers for the jamakkalam may be on the decline; perhaps the fashion world will turn the tide.



The striking patterns of the Bhavani jamakkalam are on a par with the Gucci stripes or the Burberry pattern

VINO SUPRAJA

The London Fashion Week is on from September 18 to 22. Bags in the J Collection are priced from ₹9548 onwards.



Art beyond ornament

Contemporary design, handmade craft, and stories come together in this exhibition of sculptural furniture and everyday objects

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When designer Vikram Goyal speaks of his work, he often brings up three anchors: contemporary design, handmade craft, and stories drawn from India. Those ideas come together in his latest exhibition in Chennai, where his brands Vikram Goyal Studio, known for its sculptural furniture; and Viya, his label of everyday objects, come together.

“I want visitors to experience the breadth and depth of India’s cultural heritage as told through craft and design,” he says. The presentation brings together Vikram Goyal Studio’s furniture and panels made using repoussé (a technique in which designs are hammered into metal sheets

from the reverse side to create raised relief); alongside Viya’s artisanal lifestyle objects in metal, cane, textiles, and soft furnishings.

Among the highlights from Vikram Goyal Studio are the deity panel of Lord Balaji, a cabinet with peacock motifs, and the dreamscape coffee table. “I love this 17th-Century Rajput manuscript called the Book of Dreams. Each miniature painting depicts different talismans or elements of good fortune. Bringing those elements into my furniture pieces was joy,” Vikram says, referring to the table. These are complemented by Viya, the lifestyle label, which brings the same attention to material and story into everyday

objects such as soft furnishings, brass and metalware, cane furniture, block-printed textiles and lighting.

Each piece at Vikram Goyal Studio begins as a concept developed collaboratively between designers and artisans. “We have a large number of designers and artisans. When we ideate, we make wooden



God in details (Left) Decor pieces from Viya; and (inset) Fort Kochi side tables. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

samples, then metal samples. Once approved, we make a larger prototype and then the final piece,” Vikram explains. Traditional methods such as hollowed joinery or pietra dura inlay (a technique of fitting coloured stones into metal or marble to form detailed patterns) are combined with experimentation in scale and finish.

Vikram has a long association with Chennai, dating back to his college days, and work with clients in the city. He has designed interiors for private homes here and presented his book Shringara of Shrinathji at the Boat Club and Madras Club, cultivating a familiarity with its cultural landscape. “Chennai is a real bastion of tradition and culture,” he says. “Many people here have a great appreciation of craft and design, and I’ve been fortunate to see how well they respond to work that blends contemporary form with Indian narratives.”

Next month, Vikram will present a series of animal-inspired sculptures at an exhibition in Paris. The works continue his exploration of form, craft, and narrative. “We are always experimenting with scale and material, whether it’s a large sculpture or a functional object,” he says.

The show is co-curated by Preethi Krishna, Ranvir Shah, Sharan Apparao, Soumya Keshavan, Vikram Phadke, and Vikram himself.

The Vikram Goyal Studio and Viya showcase will be on view at The Folly, Amethyst, from 22 to 25 September.

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Global rhythm
Ganesh Murali
Iyer; (below)
with Ed
Sheeran.
SPECIAL
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Just play it

In between a jam session with Ed Sheeran in Goa earlier this year, 24-year-old Ganesh Murali Iyer whipped out his phone and opened YouTube. He played a solo mridangam piece performed at a concert by his guru, the renowned Umayalapuram K Sivaraman. “Ed Sheeran flipped hearing that. He was zapped by the possibilities of percussion instruments,” says Ganesh.

In the popular English singer-songwriter's latest album, *Play*, Ganesh's percussion work is showcased in eight tracks, including in 'Old Phone', 'Azizam' and 'Symmetry'.

“This is a big win for Indian percussion. A lot of Gen-Z people might have heard the sound of the mridangam or ghatam in popular film numbers, but they might not know exactly know much about the instrument. Earlier, I was viewed as a Carnatic musician, but after playing with Ed Sheeran, new doors have opened. People are looking at newer ways of incorporating

Indian percussion instruments in popular music,” says Ganesh, who plays the mridangam, ghatam and kanjira.

Play is opening exciting possibilities for this Mumbai-based musician, but it all started when he got a call to attend a music recording camp in Goa. Interestingly, he had no idea who the main artiste was. “I was blown away when I was told it was Ed Sheeran, because I am a huge fan. He was aware of how the tabla sounds, but instruments like the mridangam and ghatam were new to him.”

At the end of the recording

sessions, Ed was so taken in by the ghatam that he wanted to buy one and take it home. “Sensing his interest, I gifted him a ghatam. I hope he plays it often.”

A different beat

Growing up in Chembur in Mumbai, Ganesh took to percussion when he was seven. "As my parents had South Indian roots, they pushed me to go to mridangam classes. I was one among many players in a cramped room then," recalls Ganesh.

Coming under the tutelage of Umayalapuram Sivaraman, he says, was a “big dream come true”. Apart from his incredible achievements in the Indian classical scene, Sivaraman himself has been doing international collaborations for a long time; his fusion with European jazz band Aka Moon being one of the big highlights. “He has a big fan following in Belgium,” says Ganesh, “We are all following in the footsteps of percussion legends like him and Vikku Vinayakram.”

With increased awareness about what Indian percussion has to offer, post the Ed Sheeran collab, Ganesh is looking to tap into various arenas. “I see Ed’s visit to India and his video of ‘Sapphire’ as a big step in taking Indian music to the global arena. I am sure many more international artistes will visit India to do something similar, with their own flavour. I also hope the rap scene internationally wakes up to the sounds of the *konakkol* and ghatam, because we have a lot to offer in terms of rhythm.”



***Kushi* is back**

Kushi, a fan-favourite romance drama that completed 25 years in May, is set to return to the big screen. The SJ Suryah-directed Tamil film, starring Vijay and Jyothika, will be re-released in theatres on September 25. Distribution company Sakthi Film Factory announced that it has partnered with AM Rathnam to re-release the film. Notably, Sakthi Film Factor had also re-released Rathnam's 2004 Vijay-starrer, the blockbuster *Ghilli*, in 2024, which turned out to be one of the most profitable re-releases in Tamil cinema. The story of *Kushi* follows two young college-goers, Shiva (Vijay) and Jenny (Jyothika), whose love-hate friendship blossoms into romance. The film's soundtrack by music composer Deva has a following of its own.



Slaying it

Demon Slayer: Kimetsu No Yaiba Infinity Castle released in India on September 12 and has stormed the box office, setting new records for an anime release. It has the highest opening weekend for an anime/animation of all time. *Demon Slayer* was in cinemas in close to 600 cities, with 480 new cities that had never seen a theatrical release of an anime movie. The film was available across the country in multiple languages — Japanese, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and English. Directed by Haruo Sotozaki, the film revolves around Tanjiro and the members of the Demon Slayer Corps finding themselves in an epic battle.



What writer-director Jeetu Joseph, whose *Mirage* is set for release, wants to explore in his storytelling ways



Cracking the clues
Asif Ali and
Aparna in
Mirage; (below)
Jeetu Joseph.
THULASI KAKKAT

For Jeethu Joseph, there is no escaping the fact that, despite what he might wish for, the *Drishyam* franchise is his calling card. His movies are synonymous with thrillers despite the many genres he straddles. With his latest film *Mirage*, he will add another to the list of his thriller/mystery movies. It is a thriller, but there is action and mystery too, says Jeethu, as he settles down for the chat.

Mirage is about a woman seeking answers to certain questions. She is joined by two other people and they embark on a journey to find answers. That is all Jeethu will reveal about the movie, which releases on September 19.

Jeethu has co-written the script

with Srinivasan Abrol, while the story is by Aparna Tarakkad. *Mirage* comes even as work is underway on *Drishyam 3*.

Aparna Balamurali essays the lead character with Asif Ali. "Aparna's character is trying to solve a puzzle; Asif joins her on that journey." Choosing the two actors was easy because the pair is a favourite among the audience, especially post *Kishkindha Kaandam* and *Sunday Holiday*.

“Aparna is a very talented actor. This is a complex role which demands the actor travel through several emotional stages. It needed a seasoned actor, and she fit the bill. Besides, Aparna and Asif are loved as a pair. The central character, however, is Aparna.”



He says his decision to make a film with a woman at the centre of it was not deliberate nor is it a statement of any kind.

"I don't believe in doing something because it is the perfect time to do it. If the character is good, it engages the audience. It is all about the content. If the success of a film depended on the gender of the lead, then why do movies by big names – read male actors – flop?"

The *Drishyam* films have ensured that he will forever be the guy who made 'that thriller movie' that broke BO records of the time across languages. A few of his movies, right from his debut *Detective to Memories*, *Oozham*, *12th Man*, *Neru* and *Koومان*, are variations of the thriller genre. Jeethu, however, confesses he did not set out to make films in that or any specific type. "I didn't start my career deciding on a genre, let alone mysteries and thrillers. I used to read investigative novels by authors such as Agatha Christie, Sherlock Holmes, Alistair MacLean... so, in that sense I am interested in similar content. My first film, *Detective*, began with an idea that developed into an investigative thriller. My second, *Mummy and Me*, was completely different – I wanted to prove that I could make other kinds of films as well," he recalls.

"After *Drishyam*, I was labelled a 'pan Indian' director. But for me, it is about telling stories. The size of the canvas on which a film is mounted does not matter. When I made

Nunakuzhy, people asked why I was making a 'small film'. As far as I am concerned there are no big or small films. I look out for interesting stories and engaging ways to narrate it," says Jeetu, who is also busy working on *Ram (Part I)*, an action thriller starring Mohanlal, and *Valathu Vashathe Kallan*, starring Biju Menon and Joju George.