

VOGUE

INDIA

MAY
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Love from Sangli,

Amy

VOGUE

INDIA



**BEFORE IT'S IN FASHION,
IT'S IN VOGUE!**

May June

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RUDE AWAKENING



PAST FORWARD

Test-driving standouts from Louis Vuitton's spring/summer 2026 collection while souvenir shopping in Singapore's Chinatown.

Of all the humbling moments in this snakes-and-ladders cosplay we call life, being flipped off by your own middle finger... well, that finds top ranking. In 2024, a proximal interphalangeal joint on my right hand decided that its time had come. I woke up to an angry balloon where my knuckle had been, one that refused to bend or make contact with any surface without shooting

arrows of pain in every direction. For a part that I didn't know how to spell without consulting Google, it suddenly controlled my life.

That's the thing about this flesh suit we wear from the cradle to the grave—the vast majority of its bits and bobs go unnoticed and uncared for until they decide to malfunction. Before my knuckle went rogue, it was a faithful participant in many simple joys. Scratching my cat under the chin. Refusing a man's offer to help open the tight lid of a pickle jar. Holding my partner's hand. Hammering out a

ZANTZHAN (DRESS, MULES, SUNGLASSES, BAG; LOUIS VUITTON).



PLAY DATE

Left: A group of school kids from Nav Krishna Valley School, Smriti Mandhana's alma mater in Sangli, shares a light moment with the cricketer during the Vogue India cover shoot.

blistering email in 30 seconds. All of which I suddenly needed to navigate anew.

Thanks to modern medicine, my prodigal appendage has now returned to 85 per cent of its original usefulness. Sure, I had to give up learning Muay Thai and find new ways to channel my rage. But I have a more robust appreciation for how my body has stuck by me, no matter how many portions of peri-peri fries and 3am nights it has to endure.

Sadly, it's a lesson most of us learn the hard way. We poke at cellulite dimples, erase laugh lines, remodel noses and pour ourselves into suffocating shapewear that has no respect for our mothers' cooking. Our inner monologue—verbalised in front of the bathroom mirror—is usually a litany of complaints and criticisms. We think of the body as a servant, not as our only real ride-or-die. Until the rug gets pulled from under our feet.

Since the flirtation with autoimmune-induced inflammation, the way I talk to, and about, my body has changed. The self-deprecation reflex is now tempered with a healthy self-awareness. I have learnt to take genuine pride in what it can do, rather than ruminate over how it looks. To this end, I stand in the shadows of giants.

Like the female mountaineers who have conquered the planet's most unforgiving terrains, one

even doing so while being five months pregnant. A line from one of the adventurers we spoke to, the first female bilateral amputee to summit Mount Kilimanjaro, stays with me: "It's important to show what the human body can do on its own."

I suspect our cover star Smriti Mandhana is driven by a similar instinct. The girl from Sangli has tasted vertiginous highs and debilitating lows and learnt to carry both extremes with ease on her muscular shoulders. Does her world number one ranking stop complete strangers from weighing in on how her body looks, rather than what it can do? No. Does a champion allow herself to be affected by the noise? Cue Mandhana with the mic drop. "These biceps win matches for India. I think they look pretty good on me, actually."

Tell us about a moment that made you embrace your body for what it is.

Zantz Han

Photographer, 'Crosswalk', page 22

"I used to feel self-conscious about how quickly I would turn red after drinking. Then I experienced alcohol poisoning and had to confront the fact that my body had been warning me all along. Since then, I have learned to stop fighting it and start listening."

Based in Southeast Asia, Zantz Han's work is known for rich cinematic tones, layered depth and an evocative, moody sensibility.

Avantika Shankar

Writer, 'In absentia', page 46

"I had already been vaccinated twice when I got Covid. I had been waking up every morning with a sort of 'ugh, not again' vibe that I would swiftly shut down and power through. So when I got Covid, it felt like... relief. It was my body forcing me to take the break I desperately needed."

Avantika Shankar is an independent journalist who reports on architecture, design and contemporary culture.

Surbhi Shukla

Writer, 'Handle with care', page 54

"I'd been working out since my early 20s, chasing a shape marketed to all women. At 28, I was handed an endometriosis diagnosis that was debilitating for a time, but changed my relationship and perspective on health, food and fitness."

A Mumbai-based stylist, creative director and the founder of School Studio, Surbhi Shukla's work is influenced by cultural sensibilities and the people she works with.

Suprita Das

Writer, 'All about that base', page 72

"Some of my longest days have unfolded under a harsh sun, in stadiums, often while dealing with debilitating period pain. My body finds a way to hold up. So I stopped trying to fight it, and began to see it with a little more kindness for everything it carries me through."

Suprita Das has spent close to two decades, between newsrooms and locker rooms, driven by the belief that women's sports stories are not footnotes, they belong on front pages.





VOGUE

INDIA

BEFORE IT'S IN FASHION, IT'S IN VOGUE!



Room with a view

The idea of 'home' can expand or contract, shape-shift or travel with us. Sometimes, it's as simple as an everyday bag—holding the essentials of our daily lives. Photographed by XUBO. Styled by YANG YI.

ALWAYS AT HAND
Pink-orange shirt, burgundy
train skirt, two-tone
off-white pointed-toe shoes,
black calfskin bucket bag,
CHANEL. Opposite page:
Black faux crocodile
envelope bag, CHANEL.





CHILD'S PLAY

Brown-and-white cashmere-blend sweater, brown cashmere-blend jogging pants, Dior Cigale bag (small), Dior Bow black calfskin pumps, Icon bag charm, DIOR.

ON THE HOUSE
Bolero bowling bag (medium),
BALENCIAGA.



MODEL: LI YUYU, HAIR: YUWEI WONG, MAKEUP: LOLI, PRODUCTION: SUMMER GUO, SET DESIGN: LU XIAOHE, FASHION COORDINATION: KUIWEI FASHION, ASSISTANT: XIAOHE, LOCATION: INSTUDIO.

The snob reboot

In the age of hot takes and democratic fashion, MANGLIEN GANGTE revisits *The Devil Wears Prada*, 20 years after its release and with a sequel around the corner, to track down the many mini Mirandas it birthed.

A few months ago, a male colleague who'd just joined the *Vogue India* team told me he'd seen *The Devil Wears Prada* for the first time. "It's basically *The Wolf of Wall Street* for women (and the gays)," he said, like he'd stumbled upon an industry secret. He wasn't wrong. Leonardo DiCaprio's Jordan, in a way, hoped to be the Miranda Priestly of Wall Street. A few days after that, a friend looked at an expensively dressed woman on the street and remarked dismissively, "She looks like she doesn't thrift."

Between those two remarks sits the modern fashion snob. Not the old archetype who makes you feel poor with one withering look. The updated version is more efficient. She doesn't just care what you're wearing. She wants you to justify it and cite the reference. Whether you know the backstory of your split-toe hoofed shoes or nylon bag.

With one devastating monologue about a cerulean sweater 20 years ago, Miranda Priestly—the original prototype of the fashion snob—taught us that nothing is random, everything has lineage, and your "personal style" is, at best, a trickle-down effect of a collaborative effort between a designer whose name you can't pronounce and a merchandiser you'll never meet. The scene's enduring impact comes from being correct and condescending at the same time, a response that has aged well online.

In the mid-2000s, the fashion food chain was easy to trace: runway to magazine to retail to real life. A small circle of editors and insiders acted like translators of the fashion gods, deciding what mattered and what didn't.

Now, anyone can preach that gospel to a willing audience. Fashion shows are livestreamed, clipped and litigated before the final look has even left the runway. While commentary accounts on Instagram like Style Not Com have become fashion week darlings for their on-the-spot reporting, Inside The Mood

and Atlas of Shows are our Wikipedias for which designer referenced what. Red carpets and fashion weeks are treated like group projects: we all gather for fashion critic Elias Medini's La Watchparty to zoom in, identify the reference, decide if it's "on theme", deliver a verdict.

In these circles, it is no longer enough to say you like something: you have to know why and you must know it on the spot. You must know the lore, recognise a neckline from 1997 and simply praise the lord that Isabella Blow once walked the earth.

The new flex is being able to look effortless—or

indeed, anti-trend—while still signalling that you are in the know. For me, that's a monotone look often layered with a chikankari gilet or a handloom overskirt to establish some craft literacy, a few spritzes of Another 13 by Le Labo and shoes that can survive Mumbai pavements while still implying I am familiar with a particular subculture.

Who taught us all this? You don't need an MFA when you have a wi-fi connection, a working attention span and enough breakdown videos to make you say things like "he's just not able to crack the house codes" with a straight face.

But here's the twist: 'democratic taste' didn't end snobbery. Now it is disguised as irony, the nonchalance of "I'm not trying." The snobbery moved from 'expensive' to 'correct'. Taste now comes with the pressure of who's consuming wrong, who's performing identity or who's trying too hard. Sometimes, that even means judging someone for looking too polished, too "doesn't thrift".

Twenty years ago, Miranda may have accidentally trained us to weaponise knowing fashion, but the fashion snob has since evolved into a character far more complex than someone who'd starve herself to fit into a Valentino "for crying out loud".

She's just got a Substack, a ring light and wears a pyjama suit on her couch while she decides if that Met Gala outfit was on theme or not. And quite frankly, she's the gatekeeper now. That's all.

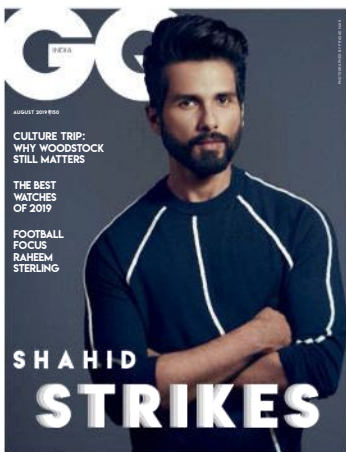


BETWEEN THE RACKS

This still from 2026's *The Devil Wears Prada* sequel captures what the fashion closet is meant for: last-minute fittings and existential dread.



IT'S WHAT'S NEW NOW





Touch me not

Vigilant shoppers are beginning to question the chemicals in clothing, tracing their impact on health and hormones. RUSHMIKA BANERJEE follows the science and explores cleaner alternatives.

When Siya Gautam first showed up on my feed, she was throwing away all her polyester activewear. What a waste, I thought. Then the caption piqued my interest: “My very first investment in cleaning up my activewear with skin-healthy fabrics.” The content creator picked Tencel Modal instead, which, she noted, is made from wood-based fibres and certified environmentally safe.

As a dancer, I’ve worn similar stretchy, sweat-proof clothes to my classes every day. Curious, I opened her page, and discovered a series of videos in which she routinely recommends non-toxic swaps for intimates, sleepwear and gymwear. Alarmed, I wondered, Were these everyday clothes causing unseen harm to my body?

Like Gautam, a growing corner of self-appointed investigators on social media is questioning what they put on their bodies. Almost all of them highlight the endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) used in processing synthetic fabrics—petrochemical derivatives like polyester, nylon, acrylic, spandex and elastane, commonly found in activewear, swimwear, innerwear, jackets, sweaters and blended fabrics—and are committed to making their wardrobes plastic-free. It isn’t just fast fashion, they point out: those wool-blend sweaters and starchy cotton skirts at the upper end of the market almost always have a touch too much acrylic, polyester or acetate mixed in. Consumers have begun to ask: does premium pricing align with material integrity, and are we really paying the price with our health?

The Endocrine Society, a leading organisation studying hormones, defines EDCs as chemicals from outside the body that interfere with how hormones work, often by imitating or blocking them. A 2020 report, ‘Plastics, EDCs & Health’, highlighted that plastics are a major concern because they contain many of these chemicals, which can leak into our bodies and the environment. In the 2026 documentary, *The Plastic Detox*, environmental and reproductive epidemiologist Shanna Swan explores a potential link between chemical additives in plastics and infertility.

For many, the first signs appear on the skin. Dr Kiran Sethi, a dermatologist and the medical head of Isya Aesthetics,

frequently sees patients with mystery rashes on their thighs and waistbands. These can often stem from the chemicals used to dye, treat and finish textiles, she says—the kind that can be found on a new pair of performance leggings or a non-wrinkle shirt. “The skin’s primary defence is a brick-and-mortar structure of dead cells embedded in a lipid matrix,” she explains. “Many textile additives—such as wrinkle-free resins, antimicrobial treatments and stain-resistant finishes—are fat-soluble or have low molecular weight, allowing them to bypass this skin barrier under heat, sweat and friction.” While skin reactions are visible, EDCs’ interference with the body’s hormone system makes them more difficult to trace.

Over the years, concerns have surfaced repeatedly. In 2014, a Greenpeace report, titled ‘A Little Story About the Monsters in Your Closet’, drew attention to hazardous chemicals in children’s garments, pushing many major athleticwear and fast fashion brands to re-evaluate their toxic discharge. Journalist Alden Wicker’s book *To Dye For* brought the topic back into public conversation in 2023, tracing how modern garments involve a complex mix of performance treatments that can potentially affect the body’s wider systems, including reproductive, immune, respiratory and neurological.

Fabrics are often treated with chemicals to make them stain-resistant or fireproof, to increase softness and flexibility, says Piyush Mohapatra, a senior programme officer for chemicals and health at Toxics Link, a Delhi-based environmental not-for-profit organisation.

All of that sounds nice on paper, but there’s a catch. “Chemicals are not permanently bound to fibres and can leach

while washing or wearing,” notes Mohapatra. Your skin can absorb them, you can inhale volatile compounds. Endocrine disruptors in particular, writes Wicker, follow a ‘dose-response U-curve’. Think of it in terms of sunlight: too much can cause

sunburn, but little doses, if repeated over time, can still lead to pigmentation.

Mohapatra suggests the BIS-endorsed Ecomark and zero-discharge of hazardous chemicals (ZDHC) standards are good markers to understand limits placed on certain EDCs used in textile production.

At the same time, not all medical experts are sounding the alarm. Embryologist Dr Tanaya Narendra believes that “the hierarchy of advice always follows the magnitude of evidence”,

“If a fabric is supersoft, it can’t be all-natural. Anyone who wears 100% linen knows that it wrinkles”
—CHAITANYA ARORA



Consumers have begun to ask: does premium pricing align with material integrity, and are we really paying the price with our health?

adding that “stressing too much about a very small contribution of dermal transfer from textiles can ironically wreak havoc on someone’s hormonal health”.

So, as research continues and in the absence of any clear consensus, what are our options?

You could look at the emerging band of independent labels in India dedicated to working with natural fibres. Delhi-based 11.11/Eleven Eleven practices a slow, process-led approach to fabrics that includes the rigorous vetting of farmers and vendors that they source their textile and ingredients from. “At one point some of our questions weren’t getting answered,” designer and founder Shani Himanshu tells me. “So we ended up growing and cultivating our own indigo.”

In the middle of the brand’s studio stands a large cylinder. As we talk, Himanshu walks up to it, opens it and dips his hand into the vat filled with indigo dye that had been sitting there for the last 10 years—to demonstrate how indigo appears green in its natural state. “All our colours come from 100 per cent natural dyes,” he says, encouraging me to dip my hand in too. “Many of them also have healing properties. If you have a cut or wound, indigo helps it heal faster. There is an almost insane body of knowledge behind natural dyes.”

As he talks about the detailed “recipe cards” the team uses to document colour formulations with natural dyes, Himanshu points to my cotton block-printed shirt and observes how it has become more absorbent after repeated washing. As someone who has worn handloom and naturally dyed clothing for a long time, Himanshu muses, “It breathes differently. The whole energy is different.”

Textile entrepreneur Chaitanya Arora believes perceptions around ‘natural’ need to shift. “If a fabric is supersoft, it can’t

be all-natural. Anyone who wears 100 per cent linen knows that it wrinkles. But people assume that creasing means poor quality,” says the founder of Delhi-based A&A Eco Products. On his company website, a page lists the properties of all the natural fabrics it works with, including hemp, flax linen, cotton waffle, canvas, peace silk and organic cotton jute, to name a few. Arora notes, “I am wary of these fad fibres that are marketed as derived from natural sources, but require heavy processing like soy, corn, banana and aloe vera.” Instead, he suggests, scanning clothing labels for globally recognised certifications like GOTS and Oeko-Tex that restrict the use of certain hazardous substances in textiles. Dr Sethi also urges people to pay attention to marketing language that talks of fabric treatment or enhancement.

Reading labels is a good starting point, but even small, practical precautions can make a difference. Dr Narendra suggests washing new clothes to remove treatment residue, avoiding synthetic underwear in hot climates to reduce moisture build-up and checking intimate products for PFAs.

In other cases, gaps in labelling often lead to shoppers educating themselves. “I keep myself updated through EU regulatory news, because that’s where the first changes come,” says Gautam. “In India, we really don’t put all the information out there on clothing labels. If brands are not transparent about the fabric compositions of garments, then it’s a red flag for me.”

I think of her words as I browse for a pair of linen pants at a fast fashion house. The label tells me it’s only about 20 per cent linen with 80 per cent being semi-synthetic materials like viscose. I leave it behind—just as I’ve also left behind my spandex for cotton tees and trackpants for dance classes. If the sweat marks show, so be it.



SAFE MODE

A growing number of independent labels in India are dedicated to working with natural fibres and non-toxic dyes.



CROSSWALK

Between Chinatown's bustle and pastel streets in Singapore, the Louis Vuitton spring/summer 2026 collection takes the scenic route. Photographed by ZANTZ HAN. Styled by MANGLIEN GANGTE.



Coat, pants, shoes; (opposite page) pullover, skirt, necklace; LOUIS VUITTON.

For many, when asked what they'd like to spend their lives doing, the answer comes easily: travelling. Experiencing the unfamiliar, wandering down unexplored alleyways. It's no wonder—travel changes you. Every time you visit a new place or brush shoulders with a different culture, you carry a piece of it back with you. Without quite realising it, you become a mosaic of everywhere you've been.

Few cities capture that sense of longing quite like Paris—suspended between fantasy and reality, and long considered one of the world's most coveted travel destinations. It's the city of love, croissants, wine and leisurely lunches that stretch just a little too long. With its cobblestone streets, Haussmann façades and the Seine cutting through it all, it remains the birthplace of luxury—and the home of Louis Vuitton.

So when the brand invited us to shoot Nicolas Ghesquière's spring 2026 collection in Singapore, it felt almost contradictory. Inspired by the summer apartments of Anne d'Autriche—the queen of France from 1615 to 1643—restored and displayed at the Louvre, the collection might seem out of place in a near-futuristic city defined by glass towers and constant motion.

But the collection doesn't cling to history. While its origins lie in opulent interiors, the pieces feel light. Silhouettes are fluid, with loose drapes in clean, solid hues. Textures nod at craftsmanship from another time without being bound to it. Paired with sleek slip-ons and sneakerinas, these are clothes designed to be lived in. On the streets of Singapore, they find an unexpected harmony.

The city itself mirrors the modern traveller—carrying fragments of everywhere, cultures overlapping and histories intersecting. If Paris is a hopeless romantic, then Singapore is a relentless logician. Together, they make for a compelling conversation. And perhaps that's what travel and fashion do best: allow different worlds to exist at once.



TEXT: THEA MULCHANDANI/HAIR: KEN HONG, MAKEUP: VICTORIA HWANG, BOOKINGS EDITOR: ALIZA PATMA, MODEL: ASLESHA WILLIAMS/AVE MANAGEMENT, PRODUCTION: DAVID BA, ASSISTED BY: DENNIS ED (PHOTO), MEGAN LIM (STYLING), JASLEEN NARANG (BOOKINGS).



*Dress, sunglasses, earrings,
LOUIS VUITTON.*

Hymns for the weekend

Why are young Indians turning to bhajan clubbing, tarot and ritual-led gatherings? SIYA BHAMBWANI explores the new social language of spirituality.

The stage was awash in indigo and magenta, lighting up an eclectic mix of instruments—electric guitars and drums, but also a harmonium at the centre of it all. Over the next hour, the percussion hit with the insistence of a club beat and each chant seemed to gather pace the way a rock band’s viral chorus does. Around me, people were swaying, clapping, singing back, some with their eyes closed, others serenading each other. Except, the band’s setlist had no rock anthems. Tonight, they were singing bhajans like ‘Achyutam Keshavam’ and ‘Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram’.

At St Andrew’s Auditorium in Mumbai, the energy of a rave met the soundtrack of a puja at home. Surreal on paper, but oddly convincing in person, a Gen Z coded version of spirituality that comfortably straddles kirtan gatherings, tarot circles, bhajan clubbing and crystal exchanges. Barkha Punjabi, a shamanic facilitator with a large Gen Z client base, says, “This generation is more spiritually curious and less inclined to follow beliefs simply because their parents or grandparents did.”

For many young people, practices once tied to family or community structures are now approached almost like creative disciplines: something to explore, test, remix and personalise. “They are questioning and trying to make sense of spirituality in ways that exist outside what is prescribed,” Punjabi adds.

In recent months, chant-led concerts have begun drawing unexpectedly young audiences. Events featuring London-based kirtan artist and bhakti yoga teacher Radhika Das, the Mumbai-based collective Backstage Siblings and platforms such as

Kirtan Mumbai have helped move the format from intimate living rooms into ticketed venues.

For Meghna Siraj—the founder of Megh, a wellness initiative, and co-creator of Kirtan Mumbai alongside musician Baldev Maheshwari—this reflects a generation searching for steadiness in an unstable world. “Many young people today feel unmoored—socially, politically and emotionally,” Siraj explains. “Ritual and collective chanting offer a shared moment of grounding. When hundreds of voices chant together, the mind quiets and a

“This generation is more spiritually curious and less inclined to follow beliefs simply because their parents did”
—BARKHA PUNJABI

natural sense of belonging emerges.”

As these gatherings move from backyards into sophisticated venues, the sound is changing with them. “Blending modern music with kirtan doesn’t mean diluting lineage, if it’s done with awareness and respect,” says Maheshwari. “It can allow people who may never enter a temple or satsang to still find a way in. In this newer format, spirituality can feel immersive and accessible without demanding strict adherence to tradition.”

Not all of this new spirituality arrives with a mic check though. Some of it takes shape in smaller rooms: gathered around a deck of tarot cards or at crystal pop-ups where stones, rings and candles are chosen as much for how they look as for what

they supposedly do. If kirtan offers the charge of the collective, these spaces offer symbolism and the small relief of feeling momentarily less untethered.

Ishita Bangera, a 24-year-old tarot and reiki enthusiast and the founder of Auraish.co, recounts her introduction to spirituality as a teenager, when constant phone usage, television and the pressure of having everything figured out left her feeling disconnected from herself. Reiki taught her an important lesson in self-attunement: that she could not truly care for anyone else if her “own cup wasn’t full”. Tarot, meanwhile, helped her with self-reflection. “There’s comfort in turning to something that has existed for years. In the midst of constant noise and negativity, these practices offer an overwhelmed generation a sense of calm.” According to a survey conducted by Tinder, 16 per cent of Gen Z singles are turning to tarot to guide their love lives, while 30 per cent check a match’s star sign before the first date. On Astroyogi, career-related consultations rose during appraisal season, with Gen Z making up 90 to 95 per cent of those consultations, and tarot readings accounting for 60 per cent of queries.

Living as we do under conditions of climate anxiety, economic precarity, digital hypervisibility and constant comparison, the desire for grounding is hardly surprising. Punjabi describes a pattern she often sees among seekers. “Many people who begin exploring spirituality are people who have already experienced conventional success,” she says. “They achieve the milestones they were told would bring happiness, only to realise the deeper joy is still missing.”

The conversation around mental health—supported by meditation apps, therapy culture and breathwork practices—has made emotional self-regulation a

central part of life today, allowing spiritual practices to sit more comfortably within that ecosystem. “Spirituality is being explored alongside logic and science, rather than in opposition to it,” Siraj says. If the past decade belonged to mindfulness apps and self-help podcasts, the coming one

may tilt towards something more communal. Collective chanting and sound gatherings offer an experience that the digital world had nearly wiped out—being completely present with others in real time.

The satsang my grandparents once took me to when I was a young child and

the bhajan clubbing I experienced years later did not look, sound or feel alike. But both, in their own way, were asking for the same things: attention, surrender, belongingness. What has changed is the aesthetic, the setting and the language. What has endured? The impulse to seek.



THE MORE THE MERRIER

For an increasing number of young Indians today, spirituality is finding expression in shared experiences and communal joy.

Muscle memory

One adorns the body, the other documents it. Designer Rohit Mane and photographer Keerthana Kunnath discuss re-drawing the contours of femininity.

By MANGLIEN GANGTE.

Watching his mother shop for saris in Satara, Maharashtra, sparked a lifelong fascination for clothes in Rohit Mane. Originally bound for a career in medicine, he eventually managed to convince his parents to allow him to study fashion design at Pearl Academy in Delhi, before heading to Nottingham Trent University as an exchange student.

Keerthana Kunnath made a similar journey. Leaving her hometown of Kozhikode, Kerala, to study fashion and lifestyle accessory design at NIFT Bengaluru, before arriving at image-making while at the London College of Fashion. Today, both live in London and have built practices that centre the body as a site for self-definition. Mane, whose work fuses South Asian references with dystopian aesthetics, often uses his own body as the canvas for his hyperfeminine designs, heavily inspired by his Indian heritage. Kunnath, through her ongoing project *Not What You Saw*, turns her lens towards female bodybuilders in South India, documenting the female form beyond conventional ideals of femininity. In a conversation that oscillates between banter and heartfelt confessions, the two London-based creatives trace the roots of this preoccupation.

Vogue India: You centre the female body from very different angles in your practices. What compelled you to explore it?

Rohit Mane: I grew up in Satara with just my mother and my sister, spending a lot of time together in a society that was very controlling about what women wear. I always had a rebellious streak. I wanted to create something that represented my

art but also made a statement against those standards.

Keerthana Kunnath: I grew up in Kerala, watching Malayalam cinema and reading local magazines, and so many of the narratives were demeaning towards women. They gave us this template of what a 'good woman' was supposed to be, which never aligned with my own understanding of womanhood. Photography became the medium through which I could explore these questions I had. I was scrolling through Instagram when I came across a female bodybuilder from Kerala. Coming from that environment and pushing against everything you are meant to be felt radical. I wanted to know more about their journeys, and



TRUE BLUE

From Mane's *Queens of the Cosmos* collection, this look channels the rhythm of ocean waves, as if the body itself were caught mid-tide.

that's how this series began.

Vogue India: How do you navigate the line between appreciation and objectification when working with the female body?

RM: With most of my subjects, I always have an open conversation about what I want to create and whether they're comfortable with it. When I say I like to show skin, it comes from reclaiming a space I was told I couldn't occupy—that I wasn't allowed to wear certain things or present myself in certain ways. For me, a garment really unlocks its final form when I wear it, because it's everything I was told not to be. At the same time, I'm very aware of the world we live in and how it can sometimes be unsafe for women. So I build that awareness into the garments. Sheer can be approached thoughtfully. I design with the idea that it can be styled differently depending on the wearer's comfort.

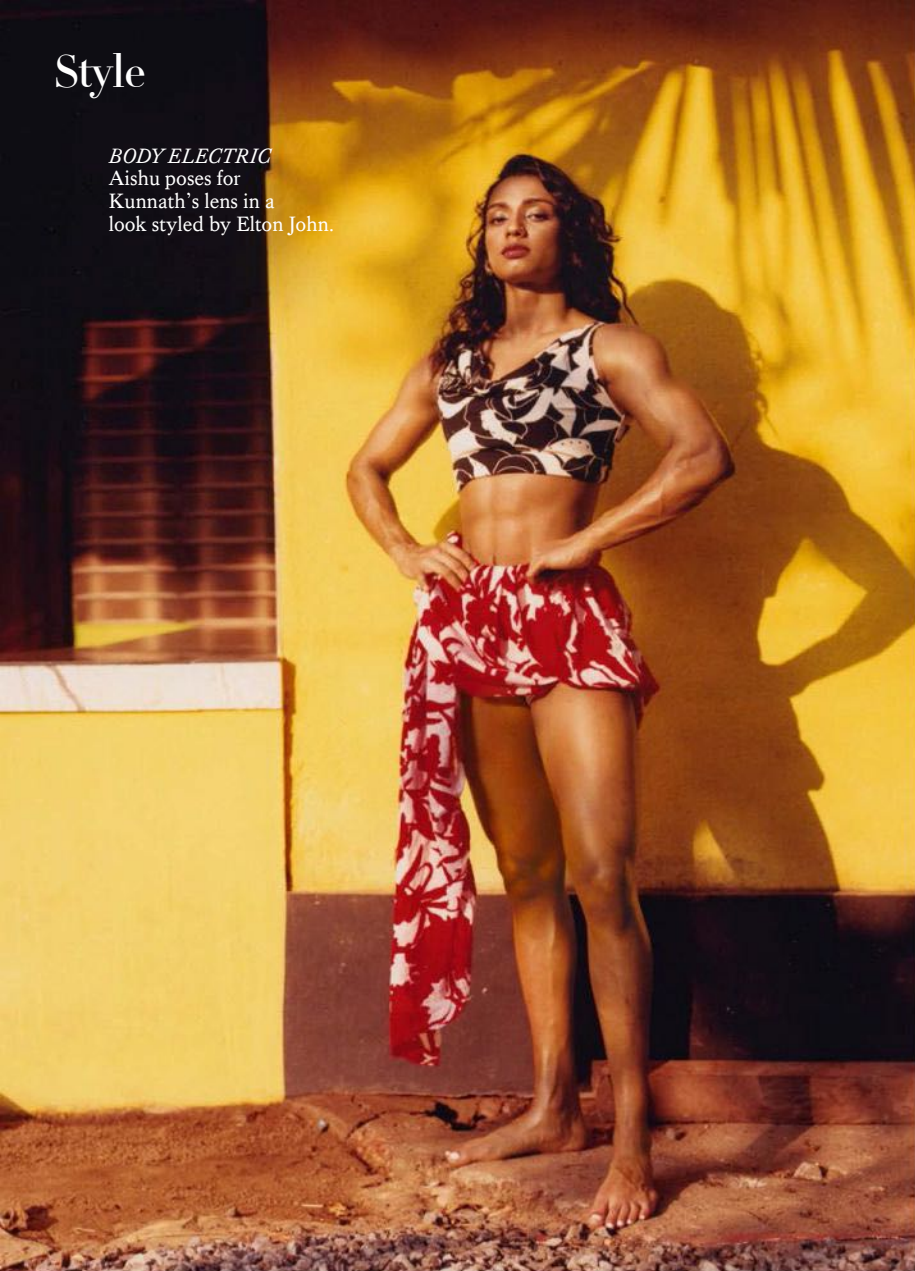
KK: Before shooting the series [*Not What You Saw*], I had conversations with the bodybuilders about what they were comfortable with and what they wanted to explore. They saw this as an opportunity to express their beauty, to wear garments they wouldn't otherwise—created by the incredible stylist Elton John. Even in their day-to-day lives, through bodybuilding, they've already taken control of their bodies.

This series was built on mutual understanding. For instance, the bodybuilder Sangeetha is comfortable competing in a bikini on stage. But in everyday life, she didn't want to wear short clothes or show her legs. That was completely fine: her decision, her body. When that space is created together, it's no longer a question of objectification. It's about people exploring their bodies, taking control and owning their narrative.



BODY ELECTRIC

Aishu poses for Kunnath's lens in a look styled by Elton John.



“Coming from India, we’re often taught not to ask for help and to figure things out ourselves. It’s really hard to unlearn that”
—KEERTHANA KUNNATH

Vogue India: Who were your role models growing up?

RM: My mom, because I get everything—my sense of style, my taste, my understanding of colour—from her. But also because I saw her go through so much. She’s a housewife, but she can design, make saris and do everything. She just never got the chance to explore any of it because her role was to look after the kids while my dad worked.

KK: I didn’t really have a role model. I think that’s one of the biggest reasons I became a rebel. But I should say that my father gave me a lot. When we were growing up, he didn’t restrict us in terms of what to wear, even though he was a strict father. When I moved to Bengaluru to

study, I think he realised that I knew what I was doing. He has always trusted me to figure out my own life.

RM: I was quite controlled growing up because I love dressing; I’m very feminine in nature and love wearing feminine clothes. My father is still not very open to it, so I have to hide that part of myself. But when my mom visited me in London two months ago, she watched me make garments, which isn’t something I thought could ever happen. Earlier, she was scared for me and would make sure nobody saw me designing clothes, but in London, she helped me. I even made a collection inspired by her while she was here, and she was fully involved in the process.

Vogue India: Do you have any advice for each other?

RM: I think you’ve already got it, but I would just say, when the journey gets hard, remember how far you’ve already come. Coming from a small town and making it this far is huge. You’re going to go so much further.

KK: One thing I’ve learned is that, coming from India, we’re often taught not to ask for help and to figure things out ourselves. It’s really hard to unlearn that. But I’ve realised that asking for support is important. I’d also say that if there’s someone you admire, reach out. Send the message. If they’re busy, they may not reply, but at least you tried. And if they do reply, imagine what could come from that.

Outside the box

When women give, society grabs. So the women in Asako Yuzuki's novels give no more. KANIKA SHARMA speaks to the Japanese author and discovers that her characters don't fall out of line because they want to, but because they must.

Girlboss. Domestic goddess. Alpha female. Asako Yuzuki has little patience for shorthand labels that box women in. Nor is she herself easily defined. When the bestselling Japanese author appears on my screen, she wears a placid expression, reminding me of Shōko, the blogger and one of two protagonists in her latest novel, *Hooked*, who writes about her slapdash and often messy life in her blog, 'Diary of Hallie B, The World's Worst Wife'. It is this slack attitude that pulls Eriko, a saleswoman at a major Japanese trading company and the novel's other axis, into an unexpected spiral of obsession. What emerges is a tale of female friendships, an unlikely feminist manifesto miles removed from *Anne of Green Gables*, a novel Yuzuki grew up admiring.

Yuzuki writes with an intimate understanding of women in all their shifting shades. She studied at an all-girls school where friendships flourished, before moving to a co-ed college where misogyny felt insidious. "It was the early 2000s and gender bias in Japan was even stronger than it is today," the author recalls. "Women were routinely expected to behave in 'feminine' ways. I began to feel that pressure very clearly myself."

It follows that Yuzuki is deeply unsettled by the return of the tradwife, a stereotypical ideal she fought so hard not to fall into. She considers women who conjure immaculate meals on a whim, maintain households and tend to their husbands like they're bonsai trees as martyrs to a vanishing cause. And it was at home that she first saw signs of this struggle. "My mother was a homemaker but she actually wanted to continue working. She only quit because my father strongly urged her to," Yuzuki says. Her mother did end up working again, in small intervals, with former colleagues and after the divorce, which "was quite progressive for a woman of her generation". Even as a child, Yuzuki

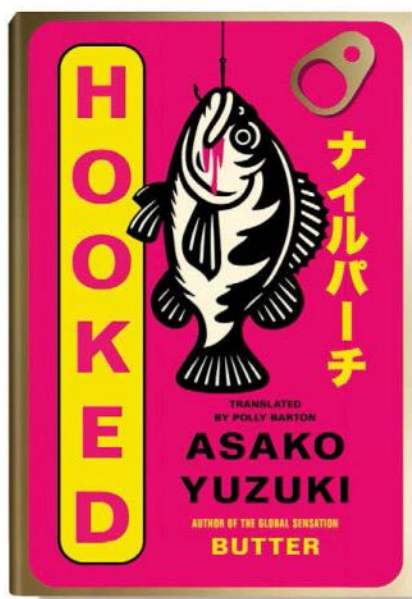
could see her mother's frustration. "Her abilities had so few places to go."

From her early work, 'Forget Me, Not Blue', to the award-winning *Butter* and now *Hooked*, Yuzuki has constructed a world where female friendships begin to unfurl. Exchanges between women are taut as they size each other up based on ideas borrowed from men, and compare their bodies and successes in the workplace and at home. In her novels, as it is

On the flip side, her own life's joyful counterpoint is indulgence and, often, idleness. In her downtime, Yuzuki tinkers around with a digital synthesiser, playing electronic music purely for fun. She loves sushi but prefers to make chirashi, an easier, more forgiving version that doesn't need a professional hand to roll it into shape. Although since her trip to India last year, it is the taste of butter chicken that lingers on her tongue. "An Indian interpreter gave me a recipe for butter chicken curry when I was there and I learned to make it perfectly," Yuzuki smiles. "To me, a recipe is like an instruction manual for understanding the person who created it."

In Yuzuki's imagination, women, food and friendship are inextricably intertwined. Her current research into feminist histories has only deepened that understanding. Across decades, she has found, it was often over something as simple as tea and snacks that ordinary women—factory workers, homemakers, mothers—built networks, exchanged information and sustained movements. And yet, in Japan, *Butter* and *Hooked* have drawn criticism for how they portray the female experience. "I've always wanted to write stories like these," the author says, "but in Japan, where women's social status remains low and misogynistic discourse is pervasive, the kind of stories I want to tell risk being turned into negative campaigns against women."

To her utter surprise and joy, Yuzuki has found love and acceptance in the wider English-speaking world. Women on trains, on buses and in kitchens have felt seen in her sumptuous writing, sharing images of butter dropping on a bowl of hot rice seasoned with soy sauce—small rebellions of pleasure inspired by the novel. And in the end, it is these readers and the cult status they have bestowed upon her books that have given Yuzuki what she has always been writing towards: the freedom to tell women's stories without censure.



REELED IN

Published by HarperCollins, *Hooked* examines obsessive female friendships.

in the real world, women's bodies are no longer theirs for pleasure and joy. They become flawed, insatiable and in need of constant correction through diet and discipline. "In our generation, cosmetic surgery and medical services have become more accessible. We work constantly, spend on beauty and fuel the very system that exhausts us," the writer observes. This realisation now feels sharper as she stands at midlife, watching a society inching towards a more conservative future.

Clocked in

ANKITA SHAH explores the growing appeal of cycle syncing and what it offers women in their work and personal lives.

In *Kiki's Delivery Service*, my favourite Studio Ghibli film, Kiki leaves home for a year of witch training. Flying on her broom, she finds her footing as a delivery girl in a new town. Except, one day, she is just not able to fly. Convinced she has lost her magic, she turns to her friend Ursula for advice. Ursula tells Kiki what she does when she cannot paint. "Take long walks, look at the view, doze off at noon. And suddenly," she says, "I can paint again." I've always loved this scene because it captures the ebb and flow of a creative life.

Only now, I suspect Kiki, our 13-year-old protagonist, could have been in her late luteal phase, brain-fogged and fatigued, experiencing the ebb and flow of the female body. The sense of loss and finality she feels is starkly similar to the days before a period when one is robbed of vigour.

Alongside the circadian rhythm, the female body experiences a monthly cycle—mapped in medicine a century ago in a 1928 paper by George W Corner and Willard M Allen in the *American Journal of Physiology*, but only recently entering everyday language through wellness content and period-tracking apps. Across roughly 28 days, estrogen and progesterone rise and fall through four phases—follicular, ovulatory, luteal and menstrual—before resetting with menstruation. The fluctuations can feel subtle for some, pronounced for others. Besides preparing the body for reproduction, these hormones also influence metabolism and act on receptors in the brain, shaping mood and cognition, resulting in these four phases carrying different colours.

When a cyclical body is expected to live by linear time, the ebb can feel like a setback; the peak in comparison, a fluke; the self, unpredictable. But some women are now tuning the dials to follow the signals of their monthly rhythms, changing the relationship with their body.

Writer and editor, Anushree Nande has worked on restructuring her strength training workouts according to her cycle for three years. It began when her sister suffered two ACL injuries, both a few days before her period. They looked into studies and found a possible correlation: "Ligaments are more lax during the luteal phase as the body prepares for potential pregnancy," Nande explains. Around that time, footballer Vivianne Miedema was advocating for cycle-based training (following her own ACL injury in 2022), while manager Emma Hayes had already introduced it at Chelsea FC Women in 2020.

Nande feels a surge of energy in her follicular and ovulatory phases. She can push harder and recover faster. "I add HIITs, kickboxing, speed-work drills, even new movements I haven't tried before," she says. In luteal, she switches to stability work. "More isometric holds and slower mobility movements like animal flow." Syncing to how her body feels in each phase, she is able to show up regularly.

The famously troublesome luteal turns into something meaningful for illustrator and entrepreneur Pranita Kocharekar. She channels the heightened emotions of this phase into her art. "That's when I pick up my creative work." In the follicular phase, Kocharekar will upskill or pitch a new client because mistakes feel bearable and failure less nerve-racking. Ovulation is for visibility. "I schedule video meetings or shoot content then, because I usually feel the most confident." On menstrual days, she and her all-woman team take their two-day period leave, no matter the deadlines. Nande's and Kocharekar's cyclical living affirms that consistency requires an inclusion of the reality of inconsistency.

For some women, cyclical living is also about managing pain. To prevent blackouts and stabbing abdominal pain that endometriosis can cause in her late luteal, biologist Prashasti Sharma tries to finish rigorous lab work and demanding experiments earlier in her cycle. With her PhD guide's support, she uses luteal for reading and analysis.

Menstrual health researcher and educator Dr Taqdir Kaur Bhandal compares the four cycles to the seasons. "PMS, the menstrual autumn, is a really good cleanup time." Besides literal tidying up, Bhandal suggests taking up administrative tasks that make daily life easier, addressing recurring feelings, practising somatic movement for release—activities that tap into the body's natural decluttering energy.

When social worker and dance-movement practitioner Gargi Shah moved to Australia for work, navigating intimacy in a new space made her attentive to her cycle. Her curiosity and openness to meeting strangers was magnified during follicular and ovulatory phases. She started to reserve the luteal for her female friends. "Intimate encounters with men in that phase often led to people-pleasing behaviours, leaving me with a sense of self-betrayal later," Shah adds. With her female friends, she could be vulnerable in every sense. "It was eventually about my body feeling safe."

Despite tailoring different aspects of their lives, these women echo the same feeling of greater control. "I don't feel I've regressed when I can't work out intensely," Nande shares. There's a relief that comes from knowing the patterns and knowing that one isn't 'falling behind'. With syncing, Bhandal says, a shift from self-hatred to self-love becomes possible. "Rather than feeling like your body is constantly working against you, you finally see it on your side."

The metaphor of seasons is growing on me. Each phase is the heightening of different capacities and the ebb and flow of the cycle is necessary to sustain them. You take long walks, look at the view, doze off at noon and do what the body desires. Aligning with these seasons then is preserving the self and rebuilding a relationship with the body, without the friction it has long carried.

Each phase is the heightening of different capacities and the ebb and flow of the cycle is necessary to sustain them





Matters of the art

Inspired by her mother's personal style and an enduring love for India, Bvlgari's jewellery creative director Lucia Silvestri imbues the brand's new collection, Eclettica, with transformative powers. By LAMIYA CHITALWALLA.

Wednesday Addams may be a role model today, but in the early 2000s, she was the kind of child your mom asked you to stay away from. A rule breaker. An outlier who didn't care if she was shunned. I, on the other hand, participated enthusiastically in everything, from ballet and gymnastics to basketball and even calligraphy.

But when it came to fashion, I struggled. It felt like swimming against the tide—if something fit, I hated how it looked on me and if I loved something, it rarely fit. Picking up a medium while the saleswoman gave me the side eye and handed me a large or holding my breath while trying to squeeze into a dress like an overstuffed suitcase you have to sit on to shut. One wrong move and the zip is broken, along with your confidence.

Instead, I found solace in jewellery, inspired by my mom. She would boldly pair her chunky silver earrings with a big bindi and kohl-rimmed eyes, standing out in rooms filled with women in their dainty diamonds. It was a smart technique, divert attention to something you want people to notice.

Taking notes from her, I started wearing linen pants and a cotton shirt with a wrist full of silver kadas to college when everyone else was in skinny jeggings and skintight T-shirts. I also experimented with the occasional nose ring—in this case, a silver bindi strategically stuck onto the right side of my nose.

After the first week, I had classmates message me on Facebook asking where I shopped and if they could borrow my jewellery. It was a boost of confidence. The



HIDDEN GEMS
The Seres Scarf necklace and Serpenti Spira cuff (opposite page) from the high jewellery collection.

girl that rarely flipped through fashion magazines was dishing out style advice.

Over the years, my oeuvre has evolved. What was initially a reflection of my mother's style became a jumping-off point and source of inspiration. The black bindis transitioned into a jet-black winged liner and the silver jhumkas and gold Kolhapuris taught me how to style mixed metals.

Like me, Lucia Silvestri's first muse was also her mother, whose personal style influenced her daughter's highly sought-after works. When I met the Bvlgari jewellery creative director in Milan, she was introducing the world to the brand's new high jewellery collection, Eclettica, joined by Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Dua

Lipa, Anne Hathaway and loyalists from all over the world.

Silvestri always crafts pieces to be versatile, playful, comfortable and feminine. Eclettica features 15 transformable creations and nine masterpieces that were "guided by mesmerising paintings and by architecture, from which I drew the grace of geometry. Each piece embodies the harmony of contrast, born of multiplicity and transformed into wearable art." The Seres Scarf necklace that can be worn in nine different ways and the Serpenti Imperial Heart necklace were at the top of my favourites list. At a whopping 30.75 carats, the latter's Golconda-type diamond is said to have come from one of India's royal families. "There is always something from India in our collections, starting from the gems, because 70 to 80 per cent of gems we buy in Jaipur," says Silvestri, who is already dreaming about the next collection, which has two magnificent gems from the subcontinent.

Seeing Bvlgari's diverse clientele, bedecked in the brand's signature bold designs, all gathered under one roof, reminded me that when it comes to jewellery, one size really does fit all. Still, the pieces give you the opportunity to make them your own, stacking mixed metals or opting for one pièce de résistance like the Secret Garden necklace with a 26.65-carat pink-orange padparadscha sapphire from Sri Lanka. It all boils down to how it makes you feel, or in Silvestri's words, how your face changes when you put on the jewellery. She looks for happiness. The kind I feel now when my mother goes through my jewellery drawer to pick something to wear. I used to borrow from her collection in search of a version of myself I felt good in. Now she reaches for mine, and that small reversal brings its own unique joy.

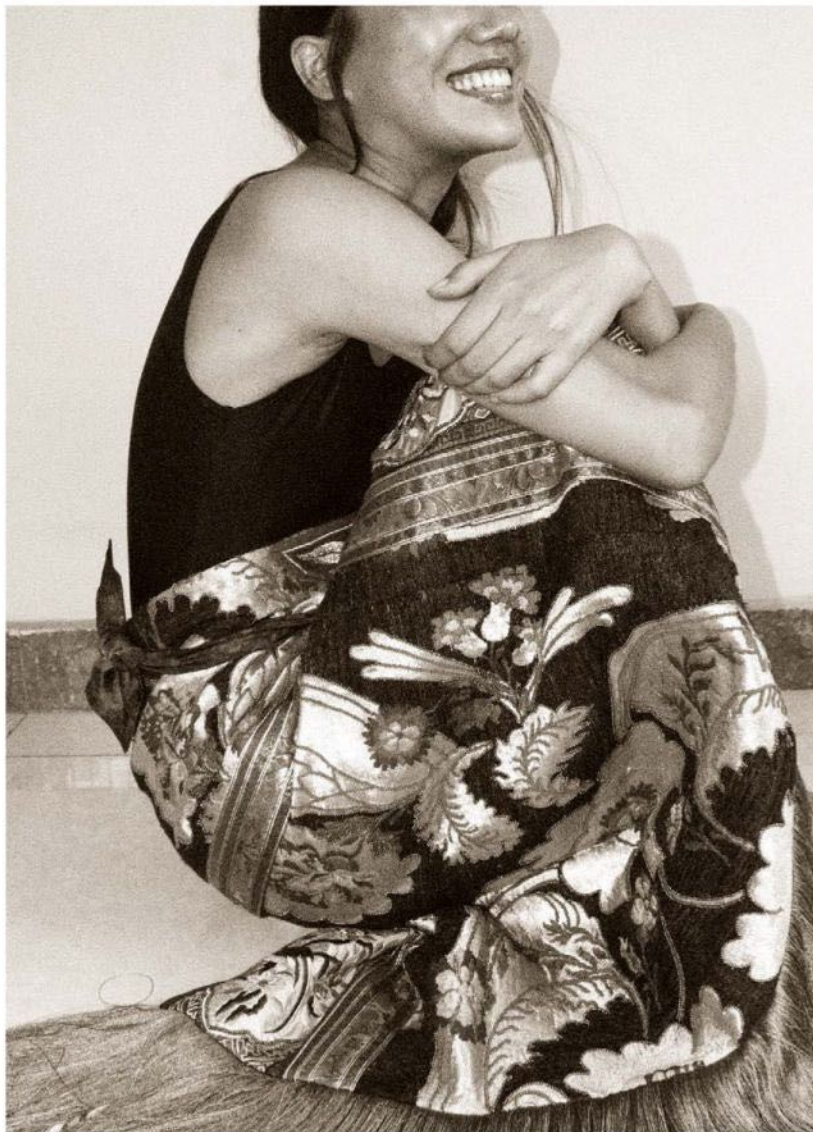
SAY CHEESE

In an age of converging faces, is leaving your enamel alone the most radical thing you can do?
By SARA HUSSAIN.

A SLIGHTLY CROOKED canine can live on a face for years without much drama. Mine leaned forward, hovering a fraction ahead of the others like an eager intern. I called it my vampire tooth—generous branding for something that slightly puzzled dentists and only popped up in photographs at angles I didn't enjoy.

For years, I treated it the way one treats a relative who interrupts at dinner: faintly exasperating but fundamentally beloved. The tooth was simply part of the arrangement; this changed during an appointment for a dental cap on an adjacent tooth. Between drill burs and rubber gloves, the dentist mentioned she might shave the canine so the cap could sit comfortably. I grunted in agreement. It's difficult to articulate consent when your mouth is overwhelmed by suction tubes. Later that day, I ran my tongue along the ridge and realised the familiar snag was mostly gone. The vampire had been domesticated. It wasn't a veneer, just a small adjustment, but it was permanent, and I hadn't fully reckoned with the change until it was already done.

Though part of the same lineage as dental caps or crowns—which repair and protect damaged teeth—veneers sit in a slightly different territory: thin porcelain shells bonded to the front of the tooth to alter colour, shape or alignment. Most dentists will tell you the process is minimal, preserving the majority of the natural tooth. What circulates online is more dramatic: rows of healthy teeth filed to thin pegs before the veneers go on. The images are alarming enough that dentists have spent considerable effort debunking them. The procedure is irreversible either way;



the enamel does not grow back. The tooth becomes dependent on the veneer to function. Poorly done, they can leave people with jaw pain, tooth sensitivity and the inability to fully close their mouth.

What fascinates me is not the procedure itself but the atmosphere around it. They dot social media feeds, transformation videos rack up millions of views and dental clinics present smile upgrades with the pacing of beauty tutorials.

To understand where the impulse to perfect, upgrade and refine can end up, consider one extreme. In looksmaxxing communities online, young men share techniques for reshaping the face itself—chewing routines meant to square the jaw, or the notorious practice of tapping cheekbones with small hammers to encourage micro-fractures. In that world, veneers are not an extreme measure but the entry point.

We are living through an era of unprecedented aesthetic pressure. Heroin chic is back, a facelift in your 30s is no longer a conversation anyone lowers their voice for, the exact profile of someone's breast augmentation is 'tea' and HD cameras have made every crease and pore a problem to be solved. In that context, veneers fly under the radar. A small cosmetic cog in a very large wheel. But that is precisely what makes them worth paying attention to. When a permanent procedure starts feeling like basic upkeep, the question of whether you actually wanted it becomes genuinely hard to answer.

Nobody decides overnight that something about them needs fixing. The idea settles in gradually, through enough images of a certain kind of face, body and smile. By the time you're in the chair, the desire feels like your own. It probably is, by then. But it didn't start that way.



Vanity confidential

Through the lenses of four top shelves, SIYA BHAMBWANI investigates the private rituals and disciplined habits that hold ambitious women together.

THE BEST VANITY cabinets and cases do much more than organise. They can be systems of sustenance, points of respite, vessels of completeness. We peeked inside the vanities belonging to women whose careers move at a breakneck pace—on

runways, in Olympic pools, in high-altitude hospitality and under red-carpet lights. A good vanity case, we learnt, keeps high-functioning lives intact, far removed from any reductive notions of feminine (read frivolous) fascination.



KIRANDEEP CHAHAL
Model

What she packs without fail: Modelling means long hours of makeup and constant travel and that shows up first on our lips. Chahal keeps her Vaseline Lip Therapy Rosy Lips and Dior Lip Glow oil within reach at all times.

“I can do anything as long as I have a lip balm on me,” she laughs.

Her comfort products: In a life built around airports and unfamiliar hotel rooms, fragrance is her anchor. Her signature scents are Prada’s Paradoxe and Dior’s La Colle Noire.

The routine that refreshes her between sets: The Paula’s Choice Pro-Collagen Peptide plumping moisturiser keeps her skin supple, as does Eucerin’s Hyaluron mist spray. Her vanity is built for motion with small resets that prevent fatigue from showing up on camera.

MAANA PATEL
Olympic swimmer

The first thing she puts on: “I’m in the water for four hours every day,” she says. “No amount of skincare helps after that.” For years, she didn’t think much beyond her performance in the pool—until a friend nudged her towards sunscreen. Now, she applies Isdin’s Fotoprotector Fusion Water Magic before every session.

What she uses to undo the day: The Ordinary’s Glycolic Acid 7 percent exfoliating toner helps clear residue without overwhelming an already stressed scalp, while an overnight mask comes out when her face feels tight after long weeks of training.

Something that never leaves her bag: A lip balm (her current fixation is Laneige’s Lip Glowly balm in the gummy-bear flavour). And tucked into her small jewellery box is either her ring or necklace. “I’m excited to put it back on once I’m done training,” she says. It’s her way of stepping out of athlete mode and remembering that she’s more than her lap timings.

RIGZIN LACHIC
Founder, Dolkhar, Leh

Her non-negotiable: At high altitudes, the air is dry and the sun harsher than it feels. Barrier repair comes first for Lachic with La Roche-Posay’s Cicaplast Baume B5+ moisturiser.

What’s on her nightstand: Medicube’s Age-R Mini Booster Pro facial device and Sulwhasoo’s Overnight Vitalizing Mask have become a nightly ritual for her. “My vanity has matured from product-led to practice-led,” she says, “in an attempt to truly understand my skin.”

The local gems she treasures: Traditional multipurpose balms and oils from the Ladakh Men-Tsee-Khang institution fit naturally beside global skincare. When she travels, she carries cold-pressed apricot and sea buckthorn oils—soothing and familiar.



SANDHYA SHEKAR

Celebrity makeup artist; founder, Mokae Beauty

What she trusts blindly: Weleda's Skin Food moisturiser is her holy grail. As someone who spends her days under studio lights and amidst backstage chaos, her skin is constantly exposed to the elements. The Augustinus Bader Rich Eye Cream sits nearby for similar reasons—fatigue shows first under the eyes when you work on other people's faces all day.

The ritual she returns to: Her kansa wand and gua sha tools have been with her for over a decade. "Massages keep my face mine, no matter how chaotic life has been," she says.

One thing she won't experiment with: Exfoliation is controlled territory. She uses Gunam Beauty's Daily Liquid Exfoliant sparingly, aware that overdoing it can destabilise skin faster than neglect. "You can't punish your skin and expect it to cooperate," she says, with the certainty of someone who works on famous faces for a living.

Monstrously feminine

For centuries, men have pigeonholed women into the perky-breasted, narrow-waisted, long-legged manifestations of their daydreams. Now, grotesque women are becoming their nightmares. By SAACHI GUPTA.



To this day, I burst into tears when someone plays ‘Ami Je Tomar’ from the first *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* film. I squeeze my eyes shut if I see Vidya Balan—hair dishevelled, sindoor smeared, gaze wild—dancing on screen. I shudder at the sound of ghungroos. My friends and family poke fun at this irrational childhood fear I’ve carried with me to 25. “It’s something about the untethered, ungovernable look in her eyes, how animalistic her voice becomes,” I always explain. “I’m terrified of that loss of control.”

Manjulika may be my personal sleep paralysis demon but the last few years have seen many such female characters burst into mainstream popularity. In both literature and film, there are more and more women who bubble over with rage, lose control and morph into monstrous creatures with freakish bodies. Take Rachel Yoder’s 2021 book *Nightbitch*, recently adapted into a film starring Amy Adams: exhausted and enraged by the physical and mental toll of motherhood, the protagonist finds herself changing into a dog, “two black hairs curling from her chin”, growing extra nipples, craving raw, bloody meat. Physical abuse turns Triptii Dimri into a supernatural figure in Anvita Dutt’s *Bulbbul*, empowering her to avenge abused, murdered and raped women, including herself. In Nobel Prize winner Han Kang’s 2007 novel, *The Vegetarian*, protagonist Yeong-hye’s small act of rebellion—of claiming agency over her own body by refusing to eat meat—is met with anger, violence and a total lack of understanding from her closest kin. Her husband calls it “sheer obstinacy for a wife to go against her husband’s wishes as mine had done”. Descriptions of Yeong-hye’s changing body are vivid: eyes hollow, collarbones protruding, skin pale as she refuses to apply makeup. Ultimately, she ends up barely conscious, tubed up in a hospital. But even this, to her, seems a better ending than existing in a world where she is constantly at the behest of a patriarchal society.

It’s not hard to see why these characters have become such icons, why their beastliness is comforting to so many

women. Through centuries, men have remained almost comically bad at writing female characters. On the subreddit *r/menwritingwomen*, there are weekly contributions where users document all the cringeworthy, lustful, biologically inaccurate ways in which male authors depict women. Most famous are Haruki Murakami’s depictions of women who exist only for men’s sexual and spiritual fulfilment. There are other offenders too, their literary crimes so egregious that they must be recounted again and again. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), Philip K Dick wrote about “breasts that smile”, while in Jeffrey Eugenides’s *The Marriage Plot* (2011), Madeleine’s breasts withdraw inwards when she is depressed. There is even someone, in Stuart Woods’s *Desperate Measures* (2018), who stores a tiny purse in her vagina.

In retaliation, women are writing themselves into different, more gro-

Between skincare lines for children and teens going to Sephora instead of bookstores, everyone wants to be at their most conventionally attractive—no matter the cost

tesque fantasies. Author Caitlin Breeze notes for *Electric Literature* that these are “stories where metamorphosis isn’t a curse but a way out... A reclamation of the things women are told to suppress: anger, appetite, selfish desires”. These fierce, monstrous figures have been part of South Asian folklore for centuries before Manjulika. Who hasn’t heard of the ‘chudail’, a malevolent female ghost with backwards feet and long hair representing the spirit of women who died during childbirth or had unfulfilled desires, luring men to their deaths? Or stars like Reena Roy and Sridevi immortalising the ‘naagin’ as vengeful women, both villains and victims, who shapeshift into snakes to avenge the deaths of their lovers, much like Manjulika. Interestingly, these women are depicted as conventionally attractive when they seduce men, but are only able to access their true powers once they revert to their original form

of ugliness and shed what society perceives as beauty.

These tropes of transformation don’t seem so fantastical when we realise that women’s daily lives include constant shapeshifting. Sometimes, I like to imagine how twisted our most mundane rituals—plucking eyebrow hair, waxing our underarms, dieting, painting our lips red, injecting botox—might seem to an alien race. How bizarre it is that we are all trying to look like copies of one another, eliminating any so-called ‘ugliness’ with procedures and 10-step rituals. Between skincare lines for children and teens going to Sephora instead of bookstores, everyone wants to be at their most conventionally attractive—no matter the cost. And any subversion of this is radical.

Feminist body horror refuses to normalise the empty pursuit of female perfection. In Mona Awad’s *Rouge* (2023), a young woman obsessed with skincare videos is lured into a lavish, cultish spa. Here, glassy skin and agelessness become unsettling and creepy instead of beautiful. In Carmen Maria Machado’s short story ‘Eight Bites’, a woman undergoes surgery so she can eat no more than eight bites at a time. Films like *The Substance* (2024) and *The Ugly Stepsister* (2025) highlight the ugliness of beauty, the drastic measures women take just to look conventionally attractive, often to their own detriment.

If there is any action that makes room to understand and justify female rage, it is this: transforming the female body from passive and idealised to powerful and unruly, especially now, when bodily autonomy and reproductive rights are being snatched away across the world. The rise of cultural phenomena like the ‘tradwife’ and ‘high value woman’—prim, proper and subdued ladies who exist to serve their male partners—only reinforces regressive social norms repackaged as choice feminism. In this time, we need more literature and cinema that make us comfortable with our unshaven legs and dishevelled eyebrows, with our volatility, fury and sadness. It is the wild women of horror who allow us, me, to give less of a damn, to lose a little control sometimes. And for that—despite my fear—I owe one to Manjulika.



High hopes

The mountains call, but not everyone has the privilege, access or tools to listen. **THEA MULCHANDANI** talks to women who have successfully challenged the prototype of the ruggedly masculine mountaineer.

As a child, I once heard someone on the radio talking about how, when they died, they wanted their ashes scattered over the Himalayas. I remember thinking, What must it be like up there, that a person wants to go even in death? I wanted to see it while I was still alive,” shares Jyoti Ratre, who was 55 when she broke the record of being the oldest Indian woman to summit Mount Everest in 2024.

Born in Bhopal, Ratre first saw the snow-capped peaks of Himachal Pradesh’s Dhauladhar range in 2017—an encounter she describes as “love at first sight”. Soon after, with minimal training, she completed the Pin Parvati Pass trek, also in Himachal Pradesh. “It was 5,300 metres. I thought if I worked on my fitness, then I could do Everest.”

Ratre’s first attempt was in 2023. A week before she set out, a stomach ache took her to the doctor, where she discovered a severe urinary tract condition that required immediate surgery. “You usually need full anaesthesia for it, but I opted for a localised shot so I could make a quick recovery,” she says. “In my heart, the desire for Everest was so strong that everything else felt small. In India, women think life ends at 50. I wanted to prove to them that that’s when it starts.” The next morning, she was in Kathmandu. Three days later, the climb began.

During the summit push, Ratre’s team was hit by an unexpected storm and forced to turn back to Camp 4, the final base where climbers rest before attempting to reach the summit. When they arrived, one of her companions was missing—he’d lost his way in the storm. “He was unconscious when the Sherpa found him late at night,” she recalls. “I had a choice then. I could either wait and attempt the summit the next day or save my companion’s life. I thought, if I raise the flag tomorrow and he dies, I won’t be able to forgive myself.” Ratre had been just 600 metres from the goal she had spent six years chasing but she knew no peak was worth a human life. She made the call to let her guide descend with her companion, staying back at Camp 4 for two days until he returned for her. “My dream did not come true, but I was happy with my decision,” she says. In May 2024, she finally stood atop the tallest mountain in the world. “I used to cry when I reached a summit. But with Everest, I think I blacked out. I didn’t feel anything. I didn’t feel happy or sad. I just can’t express it in words.”

ALL THE WAY UP

Tashi and Nungshi Malik were 21 when they became the first female twins to summit Everest. Two years later, in December 2015, they went on to scale Aoraki (Mount Cook), New Zealand’s highest peak, becoming the first female twins to achieve that feat as well.

The same year, then 17-year-old Kaamyaa Karthikeyan became the youngest woman in the world to complete the seven-summit challenge—to reach the highest peak on each continent. “The mountains don’t discriminate,” says the Mumbai-based mountaineer. “They’re going to treat a 17-year-old the same as they’re going to treat an 80-year-old.”

The mountains may not discriminate, but sometimes, the people who climb them do. Karthikeyan recalls a two-week legal battle in Argentina to be permitted to climb Mount Aconcagua as a 12-year-old. On Mount Denali in Alaska, expedition companies refused to take her on as a 14-year-old, despite having guided younger American climbers. So, she decided to go without one. “Going unguided on Denali is something that only people who are excellent climbers do,” she says. The mountain lacks logistical support, has the highest vertical rise from base to summit in the world and numbing Arctic weather. “It was just me, my dad and two other climbers we knew from back home. It’s important to do things that might seem a little crazy to break stereotypes for the people who come after.”

Karthikeyan prepares for her expeditions meticulously, poring over memoirs and personal accounts, and mapping the mountain in her mind until she can recognise every landmark she climbs. It’s why, at 18, she also became the youngest Indian woman to ski to the South Pole, putting her on track to becoming the youngest person in the world to complete the Explorer’s Grand Slam—the seven summits and skiing to both poles—a title once held by Tashi and Nungshi Malik, who completed this adventure in 2014 at the age of 23.

The twins’ first climb on Mount Rudugaira in Uttarakhand in 2010 “made the noise in our heads fall away”, Tashi recalls. “There was a deep stillness, around us and within us, unlike anything we had experienced before.” Then came a simple question: if it felt so powerful at 5,000 metres, what would it feel like at 8,000 metres?

Since then, the twins have become strong advocates for women in mountaineering, pushing for equal support, funding and sponsorship. All this, despite safety remaining a persistent concern—weeks spent in remote terrain, often in close quarters with men, sharing limited space. “Thankfully, I always had my sister with me,” Nungshi says. “But not every woman is as fortunate.” In addition to solitude, women also have to deal with erratic menstrual cycles. The extreme climatic conditions of the mountains delay periods, often throwing them out of kilter for months. For women who do bleed, there isn’t running water, the comfort of a shower or even a means to dispose of waste. Many climbers track their cycles, taking pills to delay

“When I was young, I was fast. Now I’m older, and want to show that women my age can still do it. My daughter asks when I will stop, but I won’t. I’ll still climb Everest when I’m 82” —LHAKPA SHERPA

them. “On Everest, I got my period right before the summit push,” Tashi says. “I couldn’t open my layers in that cold, let alone access a toilet. I just let it overflow.”

It would explain why women make up only around 20 per cent of mountaineers climbing in the Himalayas, according to a study published by The Himalayan Database in 2025. It’s like a self-consuming ouroboros, where women are rarely represented on the mountains, so sponsors lack faith and hesitate to fund them. And with fewer opportunities to climb, women are rarely represented on the mountains.

And then there’s the somatic presumption. If you picture someone going up a hill, it’s usually Jack, not Jill. Jack is also over six feet and his back resembles the grooves you’d see on a mountainside. It’s definitely not someone like Sultana Nasab, who was five months pregnant when she summited K2 in 2024. Nasab is from Shimshal in Gilgit-Baltistan, a village located on the Karakoram range where “practically everyone is a mountaineer”. Apart from her husband, she told no one about her pregnancy before leaving for the expedition. “I didn’t want people to find out and force me to turn back.”

Up there in the cold, you’re at the mercy of a ruthless force. Most people don’t want their loved ones to willingly walk into something so treacherous, but they do it anyway, even when it demands everything of them.

Karthekeyan chalks this up to what she calls the mountaineer’s cycle: you go out on an expedition and wonder why you’re putting yourself through it. You promise never to climb again. And then you reach the peak. On your way back, you’re already thinking about the next one. “It’s an addiction of sorts,” she says. If that’s the case, Lhakpa Sherpa is most certainly an addict.

The first Nepali woman to summit and descend Everest in 2000, she has since climbed it nine more times—the most by any woman in the world. “When I was young, I was fast. Now I’m older, and want to show that women my age can still do it,” she declares. “My daughter asks when I will stop, but I won’t. I’ll still climb Everest when I’m 82.”

Sherpa summited Everest eight months after giving birth, and again, while two months pregnant. “It’s normal for Sherpas,” she shrugs. “Any woman my age knows how to work or do physical labour while pregnant.” And yet, sponsorship has remained elusive. “Every man has a sponsor. For women, it’s very difficult. Especially for women like me. They look at me like I’m a kitchen boy,” she says, referring to the years that she worked minimum-wage jobs in Connecticut even as she continued to climb.

These stories stitch together a patchwork of women’s persistence, belief and strength. Colorado-based Mandy Horvath, the first female bilateral amputee to summit Mount Kilimanjaro

in 2021, adds an additional swathe of fortitude. The 32-year-old climbed without prosthetics, using only her arms and hands, going through over 50 pairs of gloves. “Around 70 per cent of amputees don’t wear prosthetics because of accessibility issues. It’s important to show what the human body can do on its own.” And the human body can do incredible things. Arunima Sinha from Uttar Pradesh, the world’s first female amputee to summit Everest, climbed the seven peaks in early 2019. Her final summit of the lot, like many mountaineers, was Mount Vinson, the highest peak in Antarctica. Last year, Himachal Pradesh’s Chhonzin Angmo made history as the first visually impaired woman in the world to summit Everest. With



BABY STEPS

Kaamya Karthekeyan was just 12 when she climbed Mount Aconcagua—the highest peak in South America—in 2020. On December 24, 2024, at the age of 17, she completed the seven summits, having ascended the highest peak on each continent.

Mount Elbrus, the highest peak in Europe, under her belt already, Angmo is aiming to complete all seven summits as well.

In the feature documentary *Mountain* (2017), Robert Macfarlane writes of the inexplicable, awe-filled emotion the mountains evoke: “Anyone who has been among mountains knows their indifference, has felt a brief, blazing sense of the world’s disinterest in us. In small measures, this feeling exhilarates. In full form, it annihilates.” Maybe that exhilaration is what Ratre yearned for all those years ago, when she first set her sights on the mountains, listening to a stranger speak of the Himalayas as a final resting place. And maybe it was the simultaneous feeling of being annihilated as everything below her appeared very, very small.



Condé Nast Traveller

THE LAST WORD IN TRAVEL

In absentia

As the visual landscape becomes overrun by generative AI, six contemporary artists demonstrate, through the absence of life forms in their works, how inefficient, imperfect and unpredictable humans will always remain a vital part of the creative process. By AVANTIKA SHANKAR.

TWO LINES FROM Julia Cameron's book, *The Artist's Way*, succinctly capture the inexorable human impulse to create art: "Art is not about thinking something up. It is about the opposite—getting something down." A few years ago, not knowing how to start a story and uninspired by my exchanges with ChatGPT, I put pencil to paper but wrote with my left hand. It's my non-dominant appendage and I figured it would force me to write more simply. It did. Multimedia artist Saju Kunhan also shifts to his left hand when he's trying to find new perspectives in his work. The Kerala-born, Mumbai-based artist is best known for *Home Ground*, his 2022 showcase at Tarq, in which he emblazoned teak panels, broken floor tiles and mud blocks he'd salvaged from his ancestral home in Palakkad with archival photographs of the surrounding landscape. "My work deals with the idea of migration and displacement, and my process of transferring those photos, of displacing them from one surface to another, reflects that," he shares. Before he makes the transfer, Kunhan paints his own scenes over the archival prints. He uses his left hand to do this because he believes it brings out new textures in his brushstrokes. "Although the technique is a part of the work, it's actually more important for me than the final product. The artwork is just a residue of the process."

I like the idea of art being a by-product of process—an imprint of something more significant than the sum of its parts. Machine intelligence has allowed us to generate millions of images, videos, pieces of text and even entire songs through prompts that require about as much human input as the average WhatsApp message. Already, online spaces are being

Machine intelligence allows us to generate images, videos, text and even entire songs through prompts that require about as much human input as a WhatsApp message

cannibalised by AI-produced content and it's slowly becoming indiscernible from the real thing. In every corner of the internet, battles about the provenance of visuals rage on. Some artists are exposed for passing off AI-generated art as their own. Others have quit social media after being falsely accused of using AI. For Sudarshan Shetty, the question of human versus machine is an old one. Since the early 2000s, his work has been grappling with the 'absent human'. Last year, he took an exhibition titled *Future Remains* to Galerie Krinzinger in Vienna, inviting audiences to piece together the life of "an imaginary human condemned to be elsewhere" by offering up a museum of personal objects made from wood, resin and marble sand that looked

like someone had just walked out of the room after using them. He tells me the woodcarving artisans he works with are so good, they were once able to create an entire car that everybody assumed was made using a CNC (computer numerical control) machine.

"The idea of making art and its dissemination will itself be challenged in the future," muses Shetty, though he is quick to remind me that AI can only ever be a tool in an artist's belt, not the whole belt.

Some objects are conspicuous remnants of human presence. A cigarette butt flattened on the road could come from someone lamenting the end of a friendship, someone wondering why they didn't get that promotion at work, someone processing their heartbreak through puffs of smoke. Jaipur-based sculptor Prashant Pandey tells me he started collecting cigarette butts because he saw them as time capsules that documented these brief moments in the life of a smoker. He would imagine their breaths, their pauses, the imprint of the stressors they must have been trying to grant themselves relief from. Growing up in a home above his family's idol sculpture workshop in Jaipur, Pandey saw one part of a stone carved into a deity and worshipped, while the other was discarded as junk. It taught him to never conflate 'waste' with 'worthlessness'. "If you choose

LOOK UP

In *Vortex Oblivion* (2023), Pratap Morey maps the city's restless cycle of construction and growth through large photographic collages.





EAGLE EYE

In *Banglavukunnu-Thoockuparamb Road #2* (2023), Saju Kunhan delves into ancestral histories through the use of materials salvaged from his hometown. *Opposite page:* Rajyashri Goody's *Losing All Taste* reinterprets the generational pain and resilience of Dalit communities through ceramic objects resembling local food items like bhakris, meat, flowers and leaves.

to question your notion of waste, you will find that the world is full of material imbued with the added value of human experience," he says. With so much of our lives now automated, it was perhaps this elusive human experience that the artist was chasing, which led him to collect close to 350,000 cigarette butts over the course of five years. These were used to create 72 sculptures of tobacco leaves that were suspended together in an expansive installation titled *Biography* for Gallery Maskara earlier this year. The cigarette butts would have eventually disintegrated into toxic refuse and harmed any wildlife that ate them, so Pandey's use of them as an artistic material does the public service of keeping them out of the waste ecosystem.

Like Pandey's gallery-appropriate sculptures mask a gritty origin, Rajyashri Goody's ceramic installation, *Losing All Taste*, appears, at first sight, to be a colourful, whimsical view of local Maharashtrian food: bhakris, various types of meats, fruits and flowers. But when you read the 'recipe booklets' that accompany them, inspired by literature from Dalit writers like Laxman Mane, Eknath Awad and Urmila Pawar, you find yourself staring at emotions that Savarna kitchens rarely hold: shame, fear, desperation. How does one authentically and respectfully document a food culture that includes so many experiences of hunger? In 'Cactus Pods',

It's not hard to imagine a world where
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pomp and pride of the pharaohs

inspired by Babytai Kamble's 'The Prisons We Broke', Goody offers a heart-wrenching prescription: "If your children haven't eaten for three days and look like corpses, go to the stream," she writes. "Pull cactus pods down with a stick." The viewer is then told that the cactus seeds will turn into "slabs of concrete" in the intestines. "But for that one night," Goody continues, "sleep peacefully." Goody tells me that she could very easily use AI to create these poetry recipes; all it would take is a simple search through the original text for instances involving food and a

prompt to rephrase them as English-language poems. "But for me, there's value in going through the books myself. It is work that has to be done," she says. "You're learning and unlearning about yourself through these books."

I wonder if future generations will turn to such poetry for solace as they suffer through the worst of the climate crisis. Already, essentials like breathable air, potable water and open public spaces are becoming luxuries that few can afford. Echoes of this dystopia appear in *Untold*, Shreya Pate's 2021 sculpture series for Galerie Mirchandani + Steinruecke, in which she pares architectural motifs like staircases, archways, bathtubs and other household apparatus down to their most fundamental forms. A kitchen counter looks like someone has just made rotis and wiped down the stove.



“One day, you see a 3-storey building being taken down and shortly after, that same plot has been developed into a 30-storey skyscraper. You wonder, Was there really this much space on that small patch of land?”
 —PRATAP MOREY

A clothesline resembles a bridge between two pyramids. Today, the sight of clothes hanging off a balcony might seem ‘typically Indian’ but it’s not hard to imagine a world where skyscrapers will have enshrouded the sun completely and those who still have the privilege of hanging their clothes out to dry will do so with all the pomp and pride of the pharaohs. All of this gloominess, of course, is my own imagination—in reality, Pate’s spatial playground invites viewers to explore the impact that architectural forms have on their bodies and psyche. “Civilisations come and go,” she says, “but architecture is something we have always lived with and will continue to live with until extinction.” Still, her work is a bleak reminder that we may soon be packed into sun-obscuring high rises that make the simple architecture we take for granted today feel like a rare luxury.

In *ED (Erective Disproportion)*, a 10-part floor-to-ceiling installation at Tarq, those very skyscrapers appear in miniature form, photographed by Pratap Morey on his walks around Mumbai. “One day, you see a 3-storey building being taken down and shortly after, that same plot has been developed into a 30-storey skyscraper. You wonder, Was there really this much space on that small patch of land?” The studio is where he ‘retaliates’, shrinking the buildings down and using forceps to place them around his own phantom metropolis.

Morey’s painstaking process is an act of spiritual defiance meant to “put the city in its place”, in the same way that Goody’s ceramics are created through repetitive physical movements that help her process the pain of her ancestors. Pandey’s sculptures made out of cigarette butts left behind by strangers embody the entire life cycle of an industrial ecosystem, just like Kunhan’s wooden panels are physical records of past lives. We worry that humans are getting lazier, that they’re always looking for the easiest ways to do the hardest things. But art like this shows us that even though most people are hurtling towards their goals without regard for the journey it took to get there, there will always be those who yearn for the scenic route.



MIND OVER MATTER
 Above: Shreya Pate’s *Untold* highlights the ever-present architectural elements around us. Below: Sudarshan Shetty’s *Future Remains* inspects the meaning poured into the everyday possessions we surround ourselves with.





SMOKE AND MIRRORS

Prashant Pandey's *Biography* is a cultural examination of smoking and what can come out of an action that is so detrimental to humans and the environment.



Skin craft

Across India, tattoo traditions and craft share a visual language.
By DIVYA BALAKRISHNAN.

ARTIST: VENKAT RAMAN SINGH SIVAM. COURTESY OF BARO ART. COURTESY OF BORDER-LINE TATTOOS (OPPOSITE PAGE).

What marks a milestone? A glass of champagne, perhaps, or a celebratory dinner, something shiny bought to remember the moment. Ankita Kayal chose something more permanent. Inked on the forearm of the founder of Paher, a handloom-focused label, sit three dotted floral forms arranged like a vase, rendered in a cross-stitch grid. The motif comes from the same vocabulary Kayal works with daily—single-weft jamdani weaves on Bengal mul, Braille-like tangaliya knots on kala cotton, bandhani polka dots. She got the tattoo in 2023, the year she left her full-time job to run Paher independently. She later added a thin bracelet circling her wrist, referencing tattoo traditions from Kutch. For Kayal, the motifs that structure her textiles now dot her body—bridging the distance between craft as practice and craft as identity.

These designs were inked by Utsavi Jhaveri of Border-Line Tattoos. While working in advertising in LA, Jhaveri was drawn to the then-emerging trend of ‘ignorant’ tattoos—silly doodles and simple line work that required neither heavy equipment nor years of apprenticeship. After her return to India in 2018, she began to self-train in the art of the hand poke. When her grandmother passed away, everything shifted.

“The women in my family would embroider, crochet and knit together,” Jhaveri says. She discovered a treasure trove of saris that had been drawn on by her grandfather and embroidered by her grandmother.

Jhaveri photographed the embroidered motifs, recreating them digitally into a collection of tattoo designs called Dori, because it felt like a thread connecting generations of women in her family. She has since explored techniques like kasuti from Karnataka, kantha from West Bengal, tangaliya from Gujarat and phulkari from Punjab.

Centuries before tattoo studios, guns and sterile needles entered the fray, communities like the Toda of the Nilgiris, the Gond of Central India and the Rabari of Kutch (to name a few) practised godna (‘hand poke’). Godna might have come to be associated with criminal activity during the British Raj, but it has always been a carrier of histories that move seamlessly between body and object. The same diamond that sits in a Rabari embroidery can be etched on skin; the grid-like pattern of a handloom sari may appear along an arm.

Take Baiga godna, traditionally practiced on women in Madhya Pradesh using geometric patterns inspired by everyday life—grains, honeycombs, fishnets, iron chains, mountains. Amit Arjel-Sharma, of Delhi-based Blue Blood Tree Tattoo studio, trained under Shanti Bai Maravi, a sixth-generation Baiga godna artist in Lalpur, Madhya Pradesh. Immersing himself in Baiga culture, he documented not just motifs but also how specific designs are placed on the forehead, arms, chest, back or legs according to age, gender and identity.

He has worked with the Garo community in Meghalaya where, under the guidance of master weaver Daisy Momin, he adapted Garo textile motifs, such as the ‘eye of the goddess’ and ‘warrior shield’ patterns, into tattoos. Momin herself received the first tattoo of this kind in the community. In Gujarat, he studied trajva, practiced by the Rabari and Mir, where motifs such as the amba mor appear in both tattoos and weaves.

The Badnin’s (Baiga tattoo artist’s) vocabulary now extends beyond skin. In regions like Surguja in Chhattisgarh, traditional godna motifs are translated onto kosa silk saris and textiles.

The women of the Dusadh Dalit community in Central India have transcribed their tattoo practice into an art form called

godna painting—a subset of Mithila painting that emerged in the 1970s. The dense fields of dots and lines seen in contemporary works on paper—made with cow dung, bamboo and kajal—echo markings once inscribed on the body to denote resilience.

Arjel-Sharma also operates as assistant to Mangala Bai, Shanti Bai’s daughter, who began learning Baiga godna at the age of seven while accompanying her mother to villages. “Godna is our purakho ki pehchan (identity of our ancestors) and it makes me proud that even when I am not here, the work will remain,” Mangala Bai says. Though the practice has faded in her village, people who left for the cities want to preserve their traditions through skin craft. She now travels to art platforms and conventions, visiting Delhi, Mumbai and Goa. Last year, the pair travelled to the Sydney Biennale to showcase a floor-to-ceiling canvas called *Ten Thousand Suns*.

Around 2020, Jhaveri visited the Baiga community near Kanha National Park, where she was tattooed by Mangala Bai using sewing needles. “Her sister asked me to tattoo her with a design from my Dori collection. They were extremely particular about placement and balance, which reflects how deeply symbolic tattooing is within their culture,” says Jhaveri. “Tattooing, like embroidery, is about continuity—techniques and stories carried forward through hands and generations.”



MATERIAL MEMORY
From fabric to paper to skin, the motif travels—traced and transformed—carrying craft lineage into permanence.

Handle with care

The fashion industry's most chaotic courier service is run by its stylists—on their Instagram stories. By SURBHI SHUKLA.

IT'S 8PM ON a Wednesday. My forehead throbs as if every neuron in my body is unionising against me, because I've just learned that an outfit made by a Parisian atelier won't reach Mumbai in time for my celebrity client's fitting on Friday. DHL? Three days. Me? 24 hours. Solution? "Internet, do your thing: Anyone travelling from Paris to Mumbai tomorrow? DM! Tiny parcel. Eternal IOU."

Welcome to Indian fashion's underground courier empire—byzantine but brilliant, built on "Can you carry this?" DMs and drama too juicy for our main feeds. Watch any creative's Instagram stories, and you'll see the breadcrumbs: "This is insane but does anyone know anyone heading to Jaipur?" Smartmouths chime in with "Courier services exist, you know?" Little do they know of the miracles this system has made possible. Like the time the Misho team scrambled to get a couture piece ready in Mumbai and hand-delivered to LA within a week—that is, less than half the time it would usually take—so it could be worn by Beyoncé. That's not assistance. That's national service.

The beauty of Indian fashion's hand-carry culture is invisible to outsiders, essential to insiders. Stylist Meagan Concessio has built a solid network that comes through in the scariest of times. She recalls a particularly stressful incident when an outfit ordered in London got suitcase-stuffed with a person carrying it for her shoot to Mumbai—until his day-long Dubai layover derailed plans, sparking a frantic relay hand-off to someone else travelling from Dubai to Mumbai. It landed just in time for it to be shot on a celebrity and end up on a movie poster.

When stylist Nikita Jaisinghani was working with an artist for a Lake Como wedding, all outfits were finalised during fittings in Mumbai, but a key look got lost in alteration mix-up hell with the wrong piece getting shipped. Panicking mid-transit from London to Italy, Jaisinghani clocked

that an iconic Indian musician, responsible for innumerable generational hits, was heading to the same wedding from Hyderabad. Plot twist: she dispatched her assistant on the earliest Mumbai-Hyderabad flight—this time with the correct outfit. The musician's team even had him wait at the airport for the hand-off. The reward? A crisis averted, and recognition from a living legend on Jaisinghani's dedication.

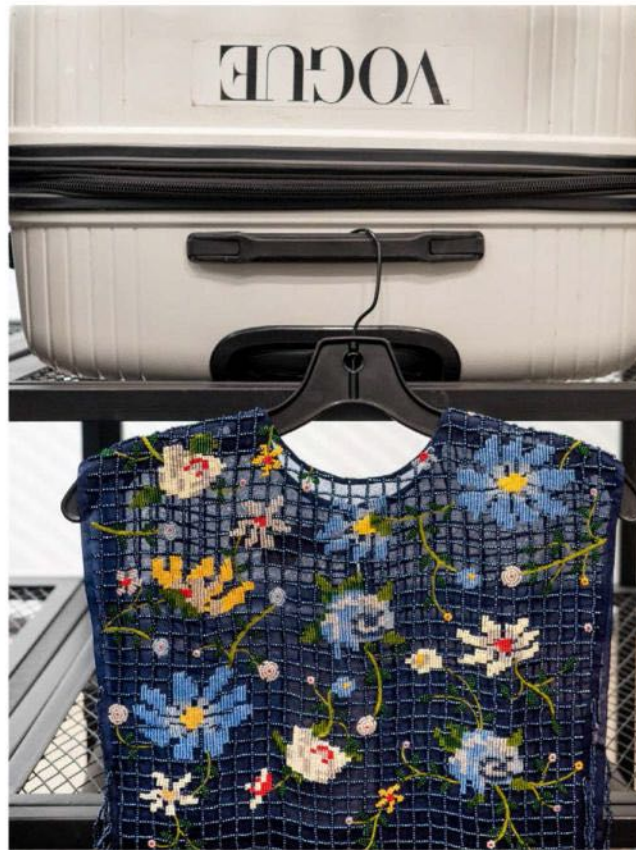
But, of course, the social dynamics are layered and there's a hierarchy—what you'd ask of a close friend versus a colleague.

The delicate negotiation of "how much am I willing to inconvenience myself?" versus "how much does my contact actually owe me?"

What makes it work is that everyone's been on both sides of the request. There's an intimacy to trusting someone with your most urgent professional need and an awkward comedy to the follow-up text: "Did it make it? How was customs? Can I buy you dinner?" All because the client likely had a change of heart, and so there was a change of brief.

These shenanigans reveal a country still developing reliable infrastructure, but nurturing global ambition with pure jugaad—the resourcefulness of people who've learned to build systems where none officially exist. When a bride I styled was getting married in Zurich, and needed her blouse majorly altered on the day of her departure, getting it done and having my family friend deliver it to her wasn't a backup plan—it was *the* plan.

And honestly? It works better than any existing official system does. But not because it's efficient or smarter—in all honesty, it's wildly expensive, held together by goodwill and WhatsApp reminders. So, the next time you see an "Anyone heading from Paris to Delhi?" on your Instagram feed, take a moment before you scroll. You're witnessing scrappiness at its most glamorous—a small peek into the vast system that keeps you voting on whether your favourite celebrities ate or chopped a look.



PRECIOUS CARGO

Indian fashion's 'underground' courier service is fuelled by Instagram DMs and personal relationships.

AD

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL HOMES IN THE WORLD



Critical thinking

In a world that treats humans as something to optimise, six authors pen micro-fiction stories anchored to different anatomical parts to illuminate the body's most vital function: feeling.



COMING ACROSS *WILD Geese* by Mary Oliver as a young reader was a transformative moment in my life. In the poem, Oliver writes, “You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.” To me, this line speaks to the simple urgency of being alive, that our time here is meant to be spent doing as we please. She closes the poem with:

*“Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.”*

Hers was a generous imagination of the world, her promise comforting: we all belong here and the world will receive us as we are. But that vision feels increasingly distant now. To inhabit a body today is a strangely complicated thing. There is constant discourse around what it should look like, whom it should desire, which bathroom it can enter and which table it is allowed to sit at. Drugs promise to sculpt us into smaller versions of ourselves and celebrities willingly shrink before our eyes while scores of people go hungry in other parts of the world.

Artificial intelligence has only exacerbated this threat to the body. When even a moving video of a person—once the ultimate proof of authenticity—can make you wonder how much of it is actually real, it makes you question where the human ends and the machine begins.

In the face of all of this, perhaps to be human is to experience the ordinary, inconvenient reality of having a body. Hair remembers the hands that brushed it, mostly gentle, sometimes hard. Hands are tactile things, reaching out for comfort despite the fear of rejection. A scent picked up by the nose can return us to the soil we grew up playing in. Mouths speak love and cruelty in the same breath. Shoulders store grief long after the moment that caused it has passed. Every part of us carries a story.

But these stories struggle to survive in the world we inhabit right now. The days blur together, and each morning is waking up to a tired mind and an aching heart in a reality where nothing makes sense, only to have to do it all over again. Using our body to make art then becomes a form of resistance. After all, it is our hands that write, our eyes that see and our backs that bend over desks. We play and dance with the same appendages that we work and maim with. Through the body, something new enters the world; something special is born that becomes language, music and art.

To map these universal experiences, we invited six authors to write works of micro-fiction that isolate fragments of the human anatomy, with every story anchored to a different body part. These tales dare to dream of our organs as living, loving and grieving parts, a radical exercise in a culture that pushes us to feel less every day.

—Asma Siddiqui



My Nose Made Me Forgive My Father

by Sandhya Mary

My nose is my bridge to my past. It's my most nostalgic organ. I always forget that my nose's first job is to 'breathe', to keep me alive. I remember once frantically searching for my father in a crowded mall. My father, who was long dead. My nose sniffed out that salty smell of his, something that I hated when he was alive. We almost hated each other. After a distraught search, for what I didn't know exactly, I sat down on an iron bench with tears rolling down my face. I terribly missed my dead father, whom I had never missed while he was alive. Maybe I missed the relationship we could have had. I forgave my father. My nose made me forgive my father. Perhaps he needed that forgiveness to enter heaven. I walked out, feeling a profound sense of peacefulness.

Job Interview

by Megha Majumdar

Minutes before the interview, as the young candidate buttoned her blazer outside the office building, a crow's dropping landed upon her combed hair. She froze. Then, ashamed, as if the crow had marked her—underqualified, this one—she pleaded with the darwanji to let her use a staff-only bathroom. He took pity and pointed with his chin. In the bathroom, a trickle of water. Not a tissue in sight. The white and grey splatter dried like paint upon her hair. There was nothing to do but message HR. She was deathly ill in bed, she'd write, fever of a hundred and two. Could they reschedule? With a noisy creak, a stall door opened and an aunty emerged. Assessing the situation, she took an embroidered handkerchief from her purse, wet it and wiped the candidate's hair. Another woman who arrived, watched for a moment, then cupped both her hands under the trickle from the tap and rinsed, rinsed. Swiftly, one wove the candidate a plait which hid the dampness and the other undid the rubber band from her own ponytail to secure it. The candidate looked at herself in the mirror. She began to thank them, but they had already vanished, once more, complete strangers.



Handwriting

by Mahesh Rao

I have never had a violent impulse. I am an exemplary eldest daughter: dutiful, efficient, composed. But this morning, when the endocrinologist patronised me in his usual brusque manner, I began to feel my palms itch in an excruciating way. I wondered what the impact of a fierce slap against his cheek would feel like. There would perhaps be an initial painful shock against my skin. If my hand lingered, I would feel the rasp of his stubble. There might be a hot prickle that would take a minute to fade. All day, the itch continued. When the man cut in line at the bank, when the client kept interrupting me, when my neighbour complained about the two leaves that had dropped from my plants, I could feel my knuckles tighten and my hand tremble with its urge. This evening on the train was a blur. But when I looked up, the woman opposite me rubbed her cheek, for some reason staring at me in horror and fury.



Rain Fills My Eyes

by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Because you are coming to India after ten years, I set out a gardenia in a red clay bowl on the sill. On the radio, Vilayat Khan plays the sitar: *Megh Malhar* for rain. I push through wet curtains to the balcony. In the sky, the dark drops mingle with the wing lights of an airplane. I imagine it to be yours.

Are you awake? Are you watching, from your window's oval, the streetlamps coming on, one by one, in the city of your birth? The wind shakes pungence from the hard green of the mango buds. Rain fills my eyes. Are you thinking of me?

Inheritance

by Avni Doshi

My kneecaps are flat, dark landscapes. They are a record of every fall. Not beautiful, misshapen. I have kept them covered for most of my life. When I squeeze them, my hands fill with flesh, fat, instead of bone.

I wanted bony knees. My father had knobby ones. My mother was known for her delicate patellae. My grandmother had knees like conch shells, crackling, so refined they required replacements.

My sister inherited the knees I wanted, the knees of our forebears. She needed to have them surgically strengthened three times before the age of twenty. She tells me she can feel the metal inside her body on cold days.



The Curve

by Janice Pariat

My mother's back curved like a question she'd long stopped asking.

I would press my palm between her shoulder blades as a child, to feel her breath and bones, the soft flutter-flutter of her heart. I know it still so well—the space where all of her is held. Where sometimes, there is a hollow.

I have inherited the curve.

The doctor said *postural*. He drew a diagram. I threw it. I didn't tell him about my mother, or her mother before that—women who bent towards the earth with the names of all who came before. Something in the bones knows how to hold without being asked.

I stand straighter now. From choice, and something more: refusal, perhaps. Or love.

My spine is a sentence I'm still learning to finish.



IN SICKNESS AND HEALTH

After exchanging vows during cancer treatment in Chicago, Apurva Agarwal and Anirudh Sriprakash finally celebrated their long-delayed wedding with family in Mysuru. By BAISHALI CHATTERJEE.

One month before Apurva Agarwal and Anirudh Sriprakash could make it to the aisle, their vows faced the ultimate test. Agarwal, a finance professional, was diagnosed with T-cell acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (T-ALL).

Instead of planning menus and honeymoon itineraries, the couple was now planning chemotherapy routines and navigating survival. As Agarwal's parents recall, the moment reshaped everything. "We were sitting in Delhi when we heard the news. We froze. You worry when your child has a simple fever, this was beyond that," her father says. "We flew to be with her the very next day."

Though the focus was now on her treatment, the couple did not want to wait any longer to solidify their commitment to one another. They exchanged vows in an intimate ceremony in March 2023 at her uncle's home in Chicago, officiated by her brother-in-law.

"It's tough to be a caregiver and learn the language of being a part-time nurse, but Anirudh did it gracefully. While most people in this situation would have left, he made it clear that his commitment wasn't conditional," says Agarwal. "Isn't that what 'in sickness and in health' means? The true anatomy of a vow, if sickness came before? Most couples never get to see this side of the story and if they do, it is not before they begin the most beautiful chapter together."

The civil wedding was shaped by their circumstances. Agarwal was accompanied by her father and tau ji (uncle) in a floor-length red dress, her choice to go bald in the face of chemotherapy-induced hair loss underlining their new reality. She adds, "My cousin sang 'Perfect' by Ed Sheeran, a song that encapsulated our bond, fighting against all odds."

With both sides of the family standing steadfastly by the couple, Agarwal's brother, Arpit, doffs his hat at his brother-in-law's strength of character. "Cooking, cleaning, working,

staying at the hospital, being a part-time nurse, learning medical jargon, all for my sister. That's pure love."

After more than two years of intense treatment, Agarwal was finally cancer-free. The first thing the couple focused on post-treatment was celebrating their union the way they had originally planned to. Though other locations were considered, they ultimately returned to Club Mahindra, Mysuru, where the wedding was scheduled to take place in 2022, completing what had been left unfinished 1,123 days earlier.

"It became an emotional necessity to honour our original dream," says Agarwal. For her parents, the wedding became a way to restore something that had been taken from her. "When everything stopped the first time, it left a space in her life that needed healing," they say. "This wedding was about closing that painful pause and replacing it with a memory of strength and celebration."

The three-day affair began with the bridal mehendi followed by a cocktail evening. While the mehendi featured minimal wooden and floral decor, the theme for the cocktail party was 'Golden Glow Soiree'. "The event was designed to replicate our second date under a canopy of shimmering lights. In true celebratory fashion, our event boards reminded guests of the gravity of the occasion: 'We have waited 1,123 days for this day, party accordingly'," reminisces the bride.

For the evening, Agarwal wore an electric-blue ruffled sari by Arpita Mehta paired with an heirloom diamond tennis necklace. Sriprakash wore a classic bandhgala elevated with handmade elephant-motif buttons.

The varapooje held the next afternoon, a ritual where the groom's family is officially welcomed by the bride's, felt deeply personal. "Our parents and some family members had already met, not at a celebration, but in hospital corridors, standing beside each other through uncertainty," says Agarwal. "In many ways, the varapooje felt like a tribute to parents who carried hope when we couldn't, and who now stood witnessing a moment they had once prayed for."

For this ceremony, Agarwal wore a frosted mint Kanchipuram silk sari with intricate silver weaving from Angadi, paired with natural, dewy makeup; a rose-gold diamond set from Khanna Jewellers; and an heirloom nose ring.

WHERE THE PROMISE BEGAN

At their civil wedding in Chicago in March 2023, Apurva Agarwal wore a floor-length red dress as she and Anirudh Sriprakash exchanged vows in the middle of her treatment.



A CEREMONY AT HOME
Held at her uncle's home in Chicago, the civil ceremony carried the truth of the moment, with Agarwal's shaved head marking the reality of treatment.



The sangeet later that evening became a tribute to Agarwal's North Indian roots, allowing her to live out her "lehenga dream". She chose a rust-orange lehenga with a raw silk base and pearl embroidery from Kalighata with jewellery by Preeti Mohan, while Sriprakash chose a brown silk jacket-and-pant ensemble with subtle embroidery. The couple danced with family and friends against a backdrop of fresh roses.

For the couple, the evening felt like a release after years of waiting. "When our families took over the dance floor, it wasn't choreographed or curated," says Agarwal. "After the last three years, watching them beam the way they did... you could see it in their eyes."

For the decor of the wedding ceremony the next morning, the couple chose a canopy of greens and fresh blooms, an ode to the natural spaces in which they found healing. Marigolds and roses reflected devotion and endurance, while brass elements grounded the design in heritage, "a reminder of where we come from".

Agarwal reminisces, "When we look at the wedding photographs now, the passage of time feels profound. Comparing our civil wedding to the Indian ceremony nearly three years later, walking down the aisle with my dad, seeing our nieces and nephews grown, the images hold everything we've lived in between."

The bride stepped into the nuptial ceremony in a mustard-gold Kanchipuram silk sari from Angadi with a wide maroon-and-gold zari border, her bun adorned with gajra. Her temple jewellery set and bangles were from Khanna Jewellers, while the maang tikka and nose ring were family heirlooms. The groom wore a traditional South Indian dhoti and kurta, with bold maroon-and-gold borders that complemented the bride's sari.

The reception ceremony, which took place later that evening, celebrated the couple's journey and the promise of their life ahead. "The grand arches in a subdued palette reflected the triumphs of the past few years, while the vibrant fresh flowers signalled a blooming, a new season unfolding," says Agarwal.

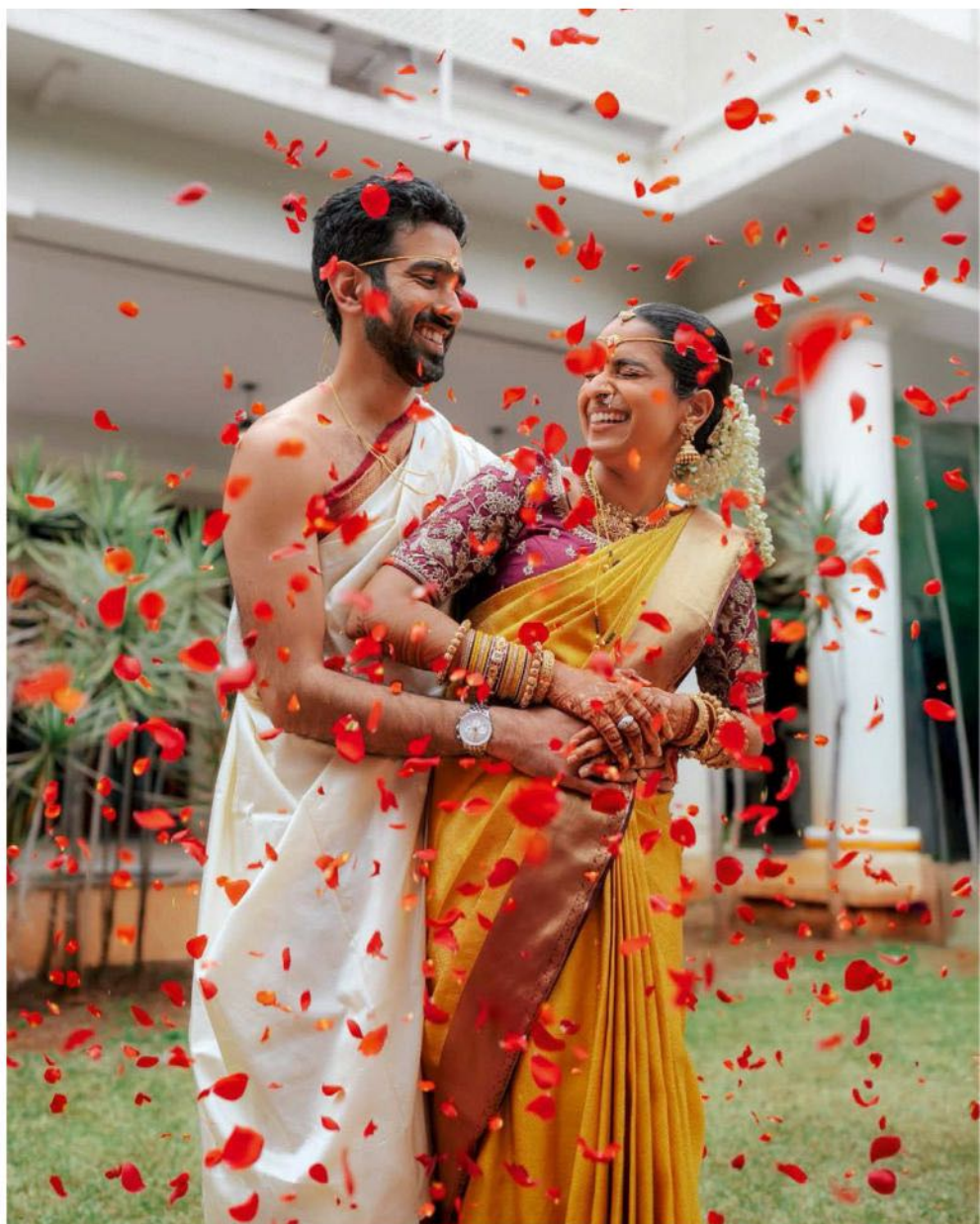
"There's a different kind of emotional weight in clothes that have been waiting to be worn," she adds, talking about her trousseau. "All my outfits have been hanging

"When we look at the wedding photographs now, the passage of time feels profound"

—APURVA AGARWAL

in the closet since 2022 and I chose to wear them for the actual wedding."

The civil ceremony in Chicago and the wedding in Mysuru were separated by nearly three years, yet bound by the same promise. What changed in between was everything they had to endure to reach this moment.



AFTER 1,123 DAYS

In Mysuru, family and friends brought a hard-won joy to the celebrations, shaped by everything the couple had endured to get there.

Keeping it reel

A new player has joined the wedding party. They blend in, film everything and upload to the 'gram before the night ends. By SARA HUSSAIN.



FEVER PITCH

Devanshi Tuli and Pranoy Sarkar's wedding became widely visible online, prompting messages about how it had 'gone viral'. But for the couple, that visibility came later. What they planned was a wedding in Mandawa, Rajasthan, shaped by intimacy and shared creative instinct, with ceremonies and details built around what mattered to them the most, not what would look the best on the grid.

ESHANT RAJU.



t a friend's wedding last winter, somewhere between the mehendi drying and the fourth attempt at getting the bride's dupatta to sit correctly, a lady crouched beside her and asked, very seriously, "Do you want to do the mirror transition shot before your entry? We can post it right after the pheras."

The bride, who had two aunts and a hairdresser orbiting her head, said yes without looking up.

The lady with the phone was not a friend or relative. She was a content creator hired to help the wedding go viral. Moving through the day with a smartphone, portable light and mic, she captured the jokes and arguments, last-minute rehearsals, moments that fell slightly outside the formality of traditions.

Of course, weddings have always travelled beyond the people in them. Images from stylist Devanshi Tuli's wedding to art director and photographer Pranoy Sarkar spread widely online, prompting messages to the couple and to photographer Eshant Raju asking how they had managed to 'go viral'. Tuli, however, says none of that was by design. 'Content' and virality never crossed their minds. They wanted to live the day as it happened, with one photographer and one videographer documenting it. What is newer is the effort to structure that kind of circulation in real time, rather than leaving it to chance.

Bengaluru-based Souvik Sarkar, who started *The Wedding Scroll* with Suraj Mandal in 2024, traces it back to his sister's wedding. Throughout the day, she kept asking relatives to film moments on their phones while the official photography team worked beside them. "They did their job beautifully, but we knew the final photographs and films would only come months later," he says. What Sarkar noticed was that weddings already produced an unofficial archive through blurry phone clips, shaky dance-floor footage and relatives filming rituals from odd angles.

"When you're in the middle of your own wedding, you miss so much of it," says Natasha Gandhi and Anam Batliwala Poddar, founders of Mumbai-based *Wedding Social*. "You're present, but you're also not fully seeing it."

Vasundhara Daga, who founded *Viral Ever After* in Mumbai after years in influencer marketing, describes the job succinctly: "We're not there to get the perfect shot. We're there like a best friend with an iPhone." A best friend who happens to be very good at editing and understands that this is someone's milestone moment—everything happens once, in real time; there are no retakes. Photographers and content creators, at least for now, seem to have arrived at an unspoken understanding—the two lanes coexist and sometimes can overlap.

Daga adds that the process of filming reels can become its own event: someone messes up a take, doubles over laughing or unexpectedly nails it. She is frank about the range of expectations couples bring to the service. "Some come to us for memories," she says. "Some come for virality. We deliver both."

For Aditi and Rohan Mannsukhlal, whose four-day wedding was held in Spain, the appeal was sharing real-time moments with loved ones who couldn't make it. Their content creator followed the celebrations from the haldi ceremony through to the reception. Every morning, they would wake up to a folder of reels waiting for approval. "What's so wrong with wanting content

from your wedding? We share and overshare everything on social media; a wedding is celebratory and a major milestone I want to share with everyone," says Aditi. Two months before the wedding, the couple sat with their assigned social media manager from the agency and mapped out what they wanted. "You can do a package with a certain number of posts, and it turned out to be cheaper than a lot of wedding photographers we spoke to."

'Viral weddings' were once the domain of celebrities and public personalities, but in our digital world, we're the main characters of our own show. The growing niche of wedding content creators hints that while weddings still belong to the people in the room, they no longer belong *only* to them. There is now an audience outside it, sometimes imagined, sometimes real, shaping aesthetic choices, pacing and what gets prioritised. Some couples think about what will be seen, be shared and travel beyond the events themselves, even when they insist they are doing it for themselves. Not everyone is chasing virality, but it lingers as a possibility, influencing decisions in ways that are not always obvious.

Content strategies can begin long before the first event. Gandhi and Poddar describe working with couples to build a dedicated page or pre-wedding content that starts telling their story weeks in advance, creating anticipation before celebrations have even begun, rather than just documenting after the fact.

The assumption, when people first hear about wedding content creators, is that the clients must be influencers. Brides with large followings who have spent years turning their lives into content and want their wedding to match.

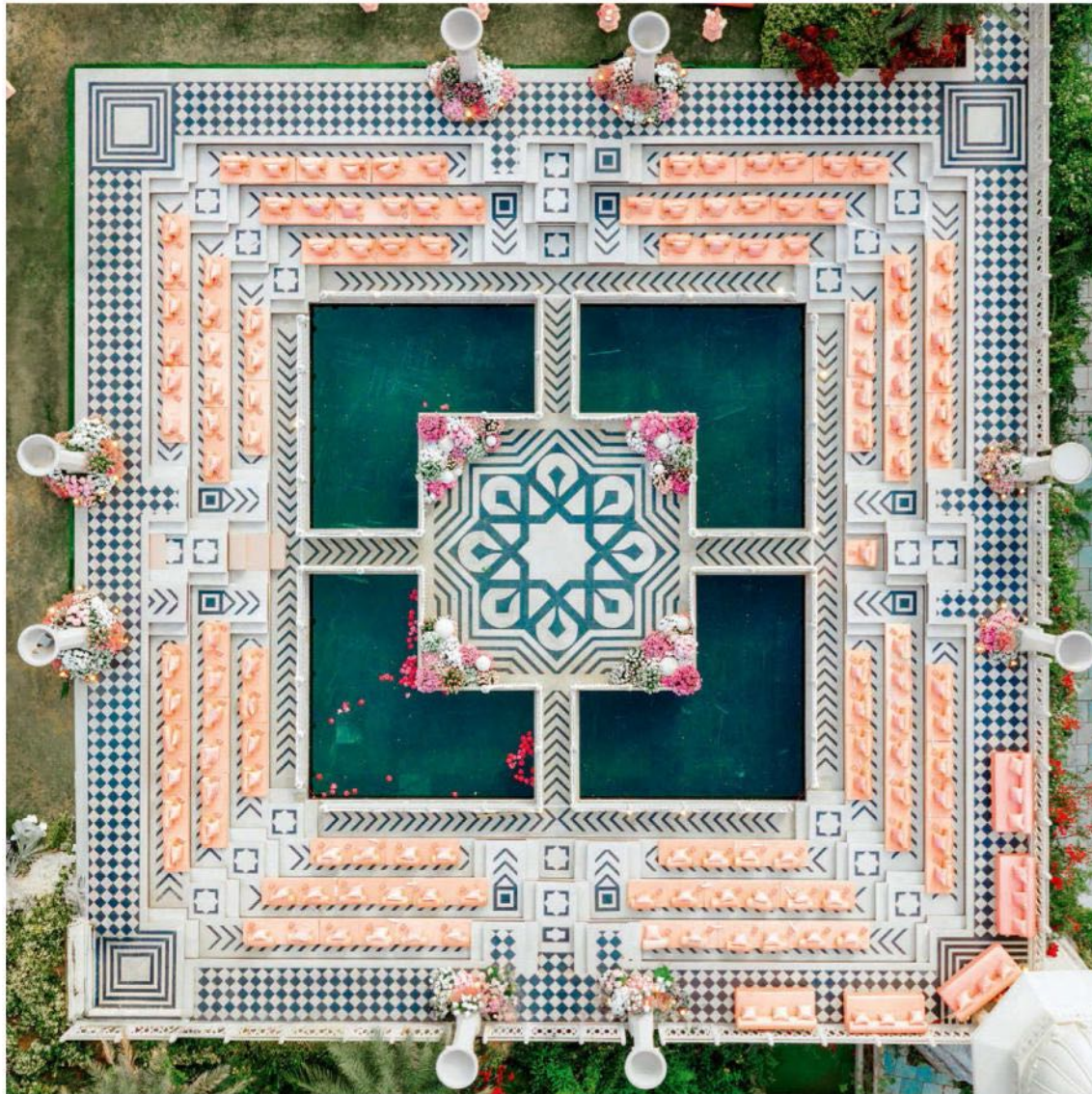
But Gandhi and Poddar say most of their clients are people like you and me. "A large number of couples hire us purely for personal memories," they say. "Many of them do not even want public pages." Daga says the same: "No one goes back to physical albums anymore. But I have seen families binge-watch their wedding content for hours."

For Meera Khan, a Mumbai-based marketing professional planning a 2027 wedding, the moment of conversion happened one night, when she fell into a rabbit hole of bridal content and kept landing on the same kind of video. Not the cinematic wedding films with the sweeping drone shots. Something closer, handheld, a bride laughing at something off camera, a bridesmaid fixing an earring, the seconds before the entry when everyone is holding their breath. "It felt like videos your friends would take," she says. "It looked more authentic and captured the spectrum of emotions in real time." She is hiring a wedding content creator alongside her photographer and videographer. "You wait months for the final photographs. This way, you get to wake up the next morning and see the day again from another perspective."

For people who have grown up documenting their lives on their phones, wanting that instant archive feels increasingly natural. In part, the rise of wedding content creators reflects how deeply platform logic has seeped into everyday decisions. One of the oldest principles of entrepreneurship is this: successful businesses turn everyday behaviour into a paid service. Every new wedding vendor tends to emerge from something guests were already doing for free. Wedding planners replaced the organised aunts and art directors stepped in for that one cousin with great taste. Wedding content creators follow the same pattern.

Weddings have always been many things at once: ritual, reunion and a performance for the people in the room. It is now also, occasionally, a performance for people who were never invited.

“...A wedding is celebratory
and a major milestone I want
to share with everyone”
—ADITI MANNSUKHLAL



Main character energy

Gone are the days when choosing a wedding venue hinged on how many guests it could accommodate. Today, the space itself becomes the anchor for every dreamy decision. By BAISHALI CHATTERJEE.

Hairstyle like Alia Bhatt's. Lehenga from the Priyanka Chopra Jonas moodboard. Bridal entry to mimic Kiara Advani's. In an era when Bollywood weddings have become the blueprint, how does a couple personalise their big day? Increasingly, the answer lies in the venue. After decades of focusing on capacities and per-plate costs, couples are now choosing locations that carry personal meaning or a distinctive atmosphere: the family home; a temple they visited in their youth; the ballroom where their parents got married decades earlier.

For couples hosting guests who have travelled long distances, the destination has become part of the celebration

itself—something friends and family experience together between rituals and receptions.

Neither Sweta nor Sundar Solai grew up in India, but when they got engaged at the Royal Botanic Gardens in London, they knew they wanted a traditional Chettinad wedding in Tamil Nadu, where each had spent summer vacations in their ancestral villages. The celebrations were split between the bride's village of Mithilaipatti and the groom's in Devakottai.

"We were keen to share our culture with our friends from the US, UK, Malaysia and Singapore," says Sweta, who created an itinerary for guests that included tours of historic Chettinad houses and temples and a visit to her favourite bakery in Karaikudi.

While Sweta and Sundar chose a large celebration, Devanshi Majmudar and Rutvij HR Naik opted for an intimate ceremony at a temple in Kolkata—the same temple where Majmudar took her first Gita lesson and with which Naik’s mother had long been closely associated. Fifty guests, no DJ or baraat—only the ambient sounds of temple bells and the rhythmic chants of priests.

For Stuti Vora and Dhrumil Nishar, the setting felt almost preordained. “It’s funny how spaces actually choose you,” says Vora. “We stumbled upon Amitarasa in the Nandi foothills outside Bengaluru a while ago. The connection was instant. Dhrumil took a video of me walking around the temple that day, pointing to the spot where I pictured us exchanging malas.”

Similarly, when Shikha Dholakia and Nitesh Shivashankar attended an evening puja at the Ayyappa mandir in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, while scouting locations, the moment left a deep impression. Hundreds of diyas were lit as dusk settled. “The music started and I found myself in tears,” says Dholakia. Three weeks later, the couple married at the same temple.

Not every meaningful venue lies in pilgrimage or heritage. For many couples, the most powerful setting is home. Pastry chef Preetanjali Pasari married Aditya Bhartia in her childhood Kolkata home. “It was my dream to have Bobo Calcutta design my wedding in my own garden,” she says. The decor drew on the story of the descent of the Ganga, a tribute to her faith in Shiva and Shakti.

Filmmaker and screenwriter Jehan Handa also chose familiarity for his wedding to entertainment lawyer Maana Sheth, hosting the celebrations at his ancestral home in Delhi. “My house, nestled in Safdarjung in South Delhi, is a quaint oasis,” he says. “I always imagined it lit up like Humayun’s Tomb, with Indian instruments welcoming guests and laughter filling the room.”

HOME TURF

Kritika Kamra and Gaurav Kapur skipped the destination wedding script in favour of an intimate civil ceremony and vow exchange at their Mumbai residence, surrounded by friends and family in the city they chose as home.



JOSEPH RADHIK (TOP); FOLIO HAUS; RAABTA BY SHREY BHAGAT (OPPOSITE PAGE).



A SENSE OF PLACE

As venues take on greater meaning in the wedding story, decor is increasingly shaped by the setting around it, not imposed on top of it.

For many members of the diaspora, ‘home’ may be the country their families once left. Toronto-based first-generation immigrants Simran Mand and Karam Lehal chose Lehal’s hometown of Orchha in Madhya Pradesh. Founded in the 16th century by the Bundela Rajputs, the historic town is known for its palace architecture, temple complexes and the Betwa river flowing past centuries-old chattris.

One detail from Mand’s childhood became part of the wedding design: the manji, the woven charpai found in many Punjabi homes. “For me, it represents home—my grandparents resting under a tree, long summer afternoons, family conversations,” she says. The charpai appeared in her editorial portraits, where she sat surrounded by friends laughing and singing.

Couples also choose locations where the surrounding landscape becomes inseparable from the wedding theme. Akanksha Bakshi and Krunal Pardiwala hosted their destination wedding at the St Regis in Cairo, where their sangeet took place with the Pyramids of Giza as a dramatic backdrop. For Alisha and Sujay Tyle, the palatial architecture of Fairmont Udaipur—its domes and sweeping courtyards set against the Aravalli hills—shaped their maharaja-and-maharani-themed celebration.

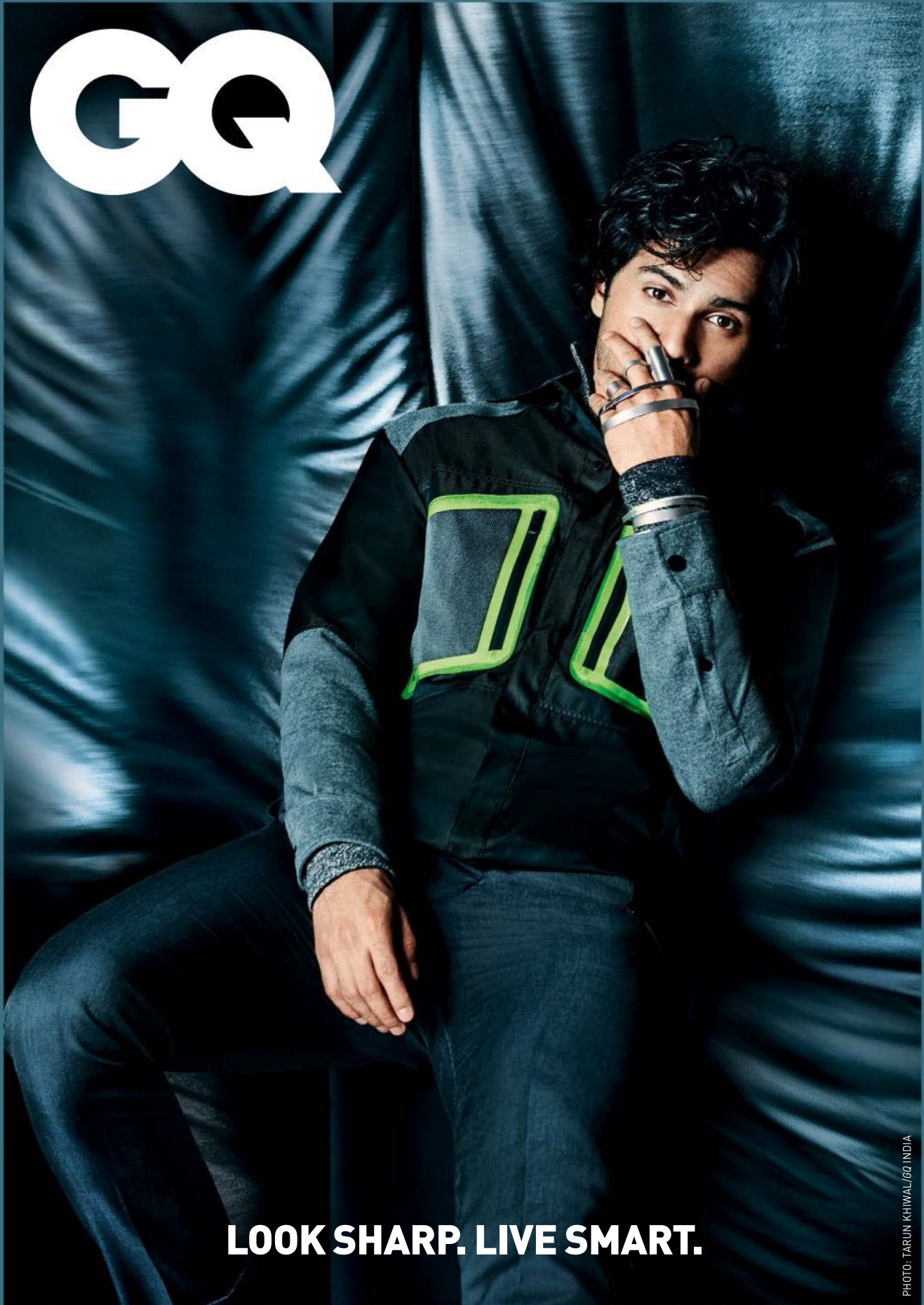
Megha Manglani and Rahul Ohri wanted their ceremony to reflect the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether.

They chose the Mahi lawn and saltwater pool at JW Marriott Mumbai Juhu. During the ceremony, the changing sky and the sound of waves became part of the atmosphere, allowing the decor to remain intentionally minimal.

Across India, certain venues have become sought after because the setting already carries such visual and cultural resonance. Couples are gravitating towards the Oberoi Rajgarh Palace in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, for its sweeping views of Panna National Park. The restored 14th-century Six Senses Fort Barwara in Rajasthan draws those looking for historic architecture paired with contemporary hospitality. Taj Lake Palace in Udaipur offers an island setting in the middle of Lake Pichola. Elsewhere, properties like Ananda in the Himalayas provide an entirely different atmosphere, with ceremonies set against mountain ridges and forested valleys rather than palace courtyards or city ballrooms.

When it’s time to start your happily ever after, what ultimately matters is your partner. But a sense of familiarity, an ancestor’s blessing during the pheras, a fairytale setting like the one you imagined as a little girl are the elements that make those moments truly special. So the location itself—be it your childhood home, the country to which you belong or a hotel by the ocean at sunset—often shapes how the union is experienced and reminisced about across decades of anniversaries.

GQ



LOOK SHARP. LIVE SMART.

PHOTO: TARUN KHIWAL/GQ INDIA



Like father, like daughter

Picking the perfect wedding lehenga is an arduous process for any bride. But it helps if your father is the couturier.

By THEA MULCHANDANI. Photographed by SHIVAMM PAATHAK.

Putting together a bridal outfit with the help of a parent can be a trying experience. Opinions differ, patience runs thin and you might even catch wind of an ‘Ugh, you just don’t get it.’ For this parent-child duo, however, things fell into place rather naturally. “In terms of decor and outfits, I’ve totally left it to him,” says stylist Hoorvi Valaya. “Because I know there’s nobody better.” She’s referring to her father JJ Valaya, who has spent over three decades dressing brides at the House of Valaya. The designer would have nothing but the best for his own daughter. Luckily, the best was already in his archives.

Hoorvi’s wedding lehenga was inspired by a piece from JJ Valaya Muse, a bespoke line where each design is made only once and never repeated. She had her eye on a particular lehenga, which was reworked in burnt orange and fuchsia, with antique-gold and jewel-toned resham embroidery. “When we did our trials, I saw multiple pieces, but I was very clear that this was the one that I wanted,” says Hoorvi. Embellished with crystals and gemstones and featuring art deco-inspired paisley motifs, the piece took nearly 2,000 hours to create.

The two understand each other’s instincts and have fostered a sense of trust, which makes working together easy—as long as you leave the designing to JJ and the styling to Hoorvi. This translated into complete control over the lehenga for JJ, while Hoorvi took over jewellery, hair and makeup. “I communicated my vision to her and then I stepped back,” says JJ. “She understands the ethos of the brand; I trust her,” he adds. “Although we do have our battles, she’s her own person now—and I respect that. Of course, as her father, I still see her as my little girl.” When it came to the lehenga, there was just a singular point of contention, a war that many a daughter has waged in households across the country, nay, the world: “The depth of the neckline,” says Hoorvi, only half-joking. “And the length of the blouse. That’s really the only struggle we’ve had.”

So no, perhaps JJ is not the quintessential ‘chill dad who works in fashion’ that Hoorvi’s friends imagined. “I have a lot of respect for him, so I always listen to what he says. A single statement from him can make me rethink everything,” she says. But that authority was never at the cost of reassurance. JJ recalls her school years: “Right before her class 12 boards, she told me she just couldn’t handle sociology. We sat down with her teachers and she started sobbing. I just told her to give it her best and that it would all be okay.” He smiles. “A few months later, she scored full marks.” It’s these seemingly small moments, he believes, that reveal who a person becomes.

Hoorvi grew up around moodboards and fittings, often assisting on shoots. “I’d help match jewellery to garments when I was really young,” she says. “Nothing major, but I’d get very excited about it.” Like most fathers, JJ claims he saw Hoorvi’s calling long before she did. “When she was 5, she made these three paintings—just crayon scribbles, really. I’ve had them framed at home,” he says. “That’s when I knew her sense of aesthetic was in place.” His own

design sensibility has always leant layered, detailed, a little indulgent. And try as she might, Hoorvi hasn’t strayed too far. “Even when I attempt something minimal, it somehow turns into this royal, opulent look,” she laughs. “It’s in my DNA.”

He speaks of her achievements with undeniable pride—joining Pearl Academy, earning a scholarship to the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles and making the dean’s list. “There was a point when her teachers would carry her portfolio to show prospective students,” he beams, “to convince them to join the institution.”

“He’s my best friend,” she says simply. “He’s the first person I talk to when I feel overwhelmed, which happens quite often. He tells me what I need to hear.” She’s watched him navigate the same industry she’s now a part of, the pressures and the pace of it. “When I’m lost, I just think, What would he have done? And that helps me find my way.”

It’s safe to call JJ a girl dad; he plays the part of both mentor and cheerleader. “I wanted my daughters to grow into capable individuals who believe in themselves,” he shares. There’s satisfaction in that statement, but also an acceptance of the inevitable—that his little girl is all grown up now. He can’t help it when the doting dad inside of him appears, “Nobody can love a daughter more than a father,” he says, “So I’m very happy she’s found a man who will love her just as much as I do.”



DESIGNER DAD

When it comes to wedding prep, many fathers are happy to take a backseat, but not JJ Valaya. He was at the steering wheel the whole way.

ALL ABOUT THAT BASE

As relentless as she is at the crease, Smriti Mandhana is perfectly laid-back at home in Sangli. Walking through sugar cane fields, playing cricket with children and eating her favourite snacks, the vice-captain of the Indian women's cricket team shows us what her time in between tours looks like. By SUPRITA DAS. Photographed by BHUMIKA SHARMA. Styled by JAHNVI BANSAL.

Cupid top, ILK. Pleated laser denims, KANIKA GOYAL LABEL. Wave earrings in gold, ANATINA. Rani-pink Ganga Jamuna festive sari, ANAVILA.





*Slashed long coat, panelled
and tiered underlay,
double-panelled hakama pants,
KALEEKAL. Camisole,
DIVYAM MEHTA. Firefly
earrings, MEROH.*



*Short check coated
raffia-effect summerside
trench, BURBERRY.*





T

The late afternoon sun over a sugar cane field in Sangli, Maharashtra, is unforgiving as our cover shoot begins to wind down. The crew, sapped dry after a long day of holding poses, chasing light and adjusting fabric, is more than ready to make their way home. Akshara, one among a group of students from the very school Smriti Mandhana once attended, had briefly been a part of the shoot, running through the field holding one end of a linen sari while the cricketer held the other. As people around her pack up, the 13-year-old makes her way towards Mandhana. She has been waiting for this moment, a question ready in her head since morning. But when she finally stands in front of the vice-captain of the Indian women's cricket team, the class VII student forgets what she had to ask. Instead, she bends down and touches Mandhana's feet.

Mandhana pauses, places a gentle hand on her head, thanks her for being there and wishes her well. For Akshara, the distance between where she stands and everything she aspires for suddenly feels smaller.

It's the kind of reaction Mandhana has come to evoke with ease. For years, she has been among the most consistent run-scorers in women's cricket. The last couple of seasons have only deepened that stature: India's first-ever World Cup win, leading Royal Challengers Bengaluru to their second Women's Premier League title, and a steady accumulation of records and accolades like reclaiming the number one spot in the ICC women's ODI batting rankings and clinching the BCCI's best international cricketer (women) award for the second year in a row and the fifth time in her career.

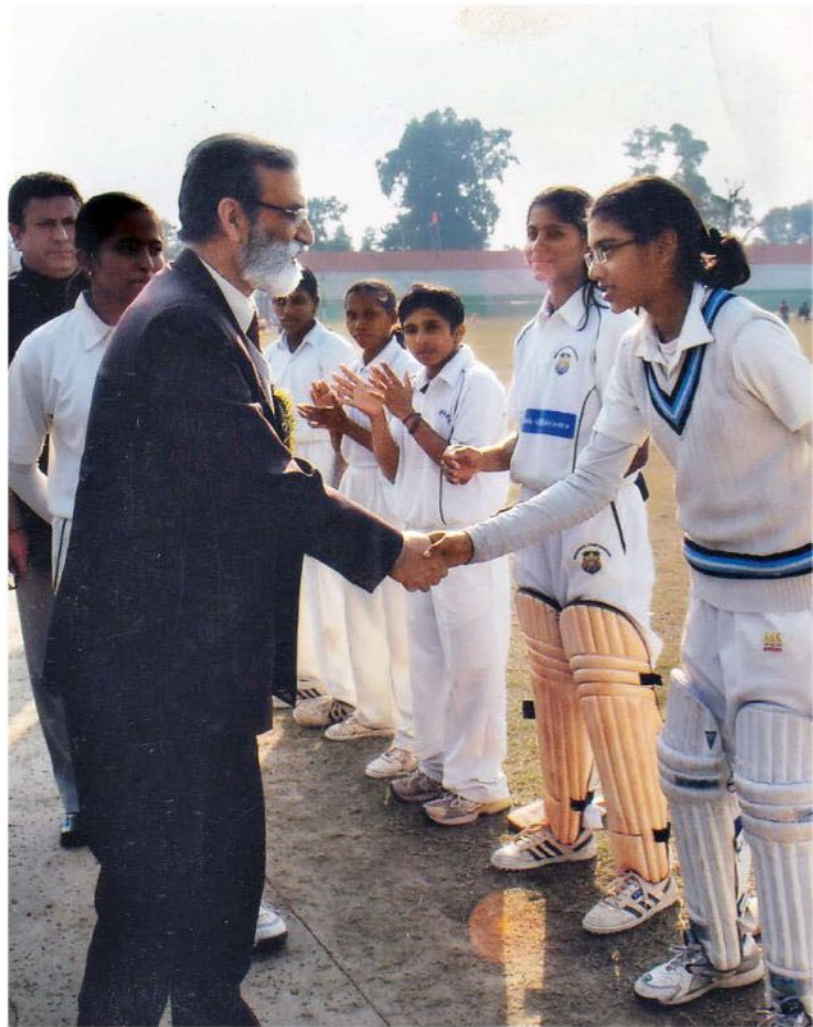
MADE OF METTLE

For all that Mandhana has become, it is Sangli and its people that she returns to, each time, to feel like herself.



METEORIC RISE

Mandhana through the years: from her childhood and teen years in Sangli to the semi-finals of the 2025 ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, with captain Harmanpreet Kaur.



Alongside it has come a certain kind of visibility that places her among India's most marketable athletes and on magazine covers such as this one—her first since the 2025 World Cup triumph and the WPL title earlier this year. There is also a Barbie in Mandhana's likeness now, a cultural marker that situates her alongside global icons like Serena Williams, whom she grew up watching from afar.

And yet, step into Sangli, and the scale shifts. Weekdays here move in a slow stir. Chai stall shutters lift, unhurried, as the first light comes in. Half-awake children gather at bus stops to get to school. A light morning breeze sets kilometres of unharvested fields into a gentle sway. Ask anyone what the city is most famous for and the answers come easily: sugar cane, grapes, turmeric.

And, over the last decade, Smriti Mandhana. "I am exactly like Sangli," says the cricketer. "Laid-back."

Mumbai-born Mandhana and her family moved to Sangli when she was very young. The city's tempo and vibe—short distances, non-negotiable two-hour

afternoon naps, no overt materialistic avarice—have stayed with her, even as everything else around her has expanded.

For all that expansion, something in her settles only once she is back in Sangli. Mandhana is very specific about when that shift happens. There is a bridge over the Krishna River nearby, she tells me. The moment she crosses it, something switches almost instinctively. "I'm not cricketer Smriti Mandhana anymore," she says. "I'm just Smriti." She is Smriti, whose closest friends from school don't follow her cricket career at all. "Lagta hai aaj tune kuch kiya hai?" they tease when a reel of her latest milestone shows up on their Instagram feed. She is Smriti, still reminded by her mother to switch off the lights and fans before leaving a room. She is Smriti, who never misses a visit to her favourite Sambha Bhel where autograph- and selfie-seekers wait respectfully till she finishes her snack.

Mandhana spent many of her early years moving between one- and two-BHKs, adjusting as circumstances demanded. But inside those rental



COURTESY OF SMRITI MANDHANA, GETTY IMAGES (RIGHT).

homes, her obsession with batting was already taking shape. Hours of hanging-ball practice indoors left marks on the walls of the living room that became a recurring source of exasperation for her mother. “Arre, don’t cry, Mummy. I’ll buy us a house soon,” she remembers assuring her mother with the misplaced overconfidence only a teenager can carry.

But Mandhana kept her word. A few years into her career, she bought her family their first home in Sangli.

It helped that her parents had pulled out all the stops to make her the sportswoman she is today. Nav Krishna Valley School in Sangli was picked over others as it prioritised sports and adjusted attendance and exam dates for its athletes. In fact, the trophies Mandhana won for shot put and 200m races during her school years still find a place in her home today, on the same wall as her World Cup gold medal.

She may have had the will, but Mandhana’s way wasn’t always bump-free. Being the only girl

training among a hundred boys meant she often had to fight for her chance to get into the nets. But her coaches stood faithfully by her side like stumps that would not budge. Rathe Master brought out a new ball for her every day—rare at her level—preparing her to play pace, seam movement and bounce. Anant Tambvekar, who has had the longest coaching stint with the southpaw, did everything from pitching wickets, preparing nets and tossing her ball after ball for practice.

Mandhana was, as her brother, Shravan, insists, always the more driven between the two of them: “Everyone says she started playing because of me. I don’t think that’s true. She may have first seen me bat in the early years, but she always had more hunger.” That hunger would see her choose cricket over everything in life, no matter the cost. “I’m a very easy-going and chill person, but I’m also a little bit mad,” she admits. “Mad only about my batting,” she clarifies, grinning. “You will always see me calm on the outside

*Eden 2.0 embellished vest,
Twinline denim pants,
KANJIKA GOYAL LABEL.
Camisole, DIVYAM MEHTA.
Samira ring (worn as earring),
E3K JEWELLERY.*

but I'm very aggressive in my head. I have a lot of ego as a batter. If I get beaten even at the nets, I don't like it at all."

Mandhana breaks into a laugh each time she uses the word "obsession" during our chat. It has come up a few times, but I'm not keeping count. For her, it really is the pursuit of a feeling over an outcome that shapes everything.

There are days when she has returned to that feeling, long after practice has ended. Nights when she has shadow-practised in her room, chasing a correction only she could see. Screenshots on her phone capture fragments most would miss: the angle of a stance, the position of her head, the smallest shift in grip. "It's weird, but I don't have photos of myself otherwise on my phone," she says. "It's just batting photos."

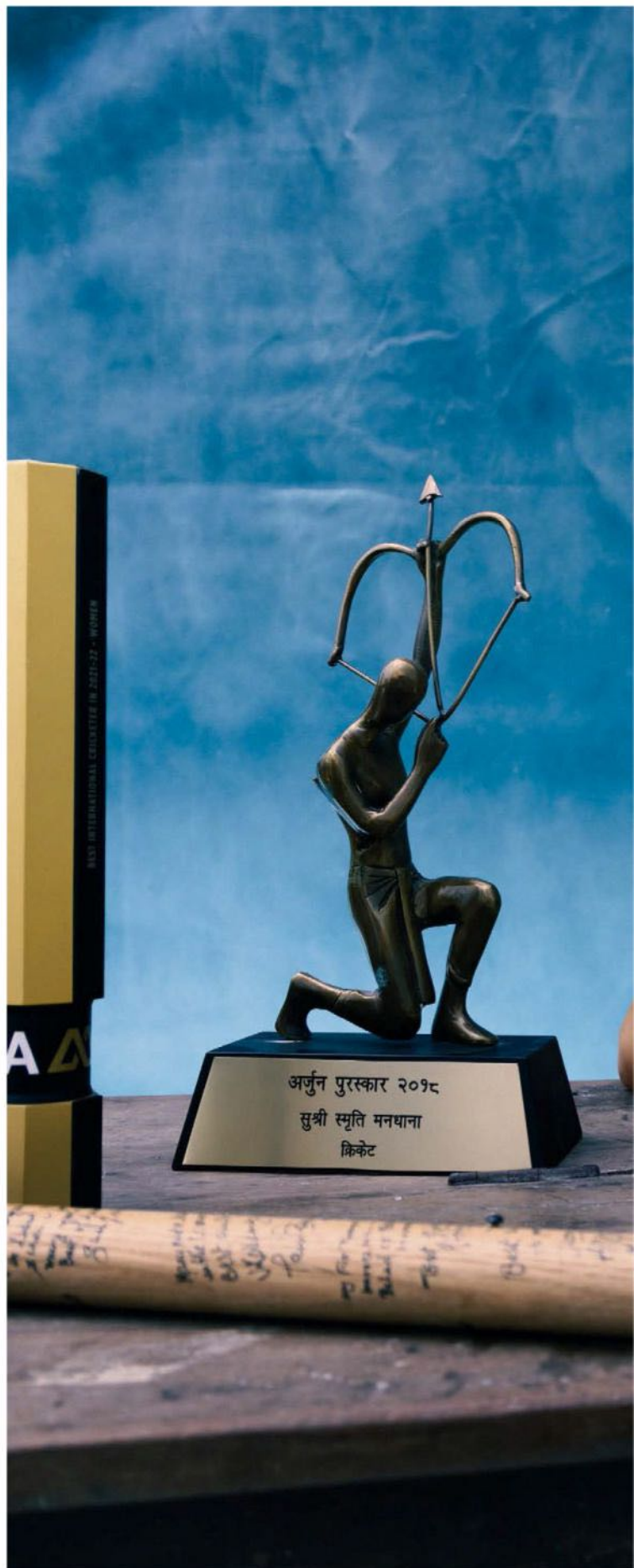
"So, what *is* cricket really then to you, Smriti?" I ask. "It's not cricket," she corrects me. "It's batting. And batting is my solution to everything. It's like medicine."

And when it comes to batting, there is nothing she is willing to leave to chance. "Cricket is a team sport made up of individuals; you play for the team," she explains. "But when I go out there to bat, it's just me. Nobody can do that for me. Some battles I must fight on my own."

Over the years, those battles have taken different shapes. At one point, it was about expanding her range, improving her strike rate to keep the scoreboard moving and adding power to her game by hitting more aerial shots versus on-ground ones. In recent times, the shift has been subtler, but no less significant. After the 2024 T20 World Cup, she found herself re-evaluating her preparation process. The hours with the bat had never been in question, but other aspects—fitness, diet, recovery—began to take on a sharper focus.

The build-up to the home World Cup that followed was among the best phases of her career. The runs had come, the rhythm felt right. And yet, once the tournament began, something didn't quite click.

The inability to close out the game against England stayed with her. It kept her awake all night. Suddenly, India was in a precarious situation in a home World Cup. An elimination would mean taking the game many years back. "This can't be happening. Where am I going wrong?" Mandhana asked the cricket god she often has conversations with, sometimes in faith, sometimes in fear.





*White drift dress, BLONI.
Kaza patchwork pants,
KARTIK RESEARCH.
Scarlett 50 chocolate suede
pumps, JIMMY CHOO.*





“You will always see me calm on the outside but I’m very aggressive in my head. I have a lot of ego as a batter. If I get beaten even at the nets, I don’t like it at all”

The internet, meanwhile, had a field day. “Go back to your kitchens,” wrote some to the Indian women’s cricket team. “Chokers,” said others.

Never one to let praise or criticism get to her too much, what Mandhana does thrive on is pressure. “When we started playing, wasn’t this what we all wanted? We wanted people to fill the stadiums for us; we wanted fans to scream and support us. Then we must accept the downside as well. None of it lasts very long anyway.” And sure enough, when Mandhana smashed a hundred in India’s do-or-die clash against New Zealand, the online chorus changed almost immediately. She was back to being India’s darling.

At the level she now plays, even the smallest details can make all the difference. Older and wiser, she doesn’t rely on 3am shadow practice only to fix things. The 29-year-old has two go-tos to make herself battle-ready: a couple of episodes from the Mahabharata she listens to and a pocket Bhagavad Gita that accompanies her everywhere. “I find all my answers there,” she says. “For me, that’s therapy.”

Mandhana is a World Cup winner now. But if anything, her pursuit of perfection has only grown sharper. Which is why her life in Sangli today looks very different.

What began as a search for an exclusive place to train has, over time, taken the shape of something far more considered. Today, the movie set–like façade of the Mandhana residence is what grabs your attention first, though the jury is still out on whether the design leans closer to *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*’s Raichand mansion or Rocky’s imposing residence from the *KGF* franchise. Either way, Mandhana’s love for the movies, Bollywood especially, had to be taken into consideration.

Funnily enough, the house was built in reverse. A few years ago, a video of Norwegian footballer Erling Haaland’s high-performance home in Cheshire, England, caught Mandhana’s attention. It made its way to her brother’s inbox almost

instantly. Everything in it seemed designed around the athlete’s performance and ease: meals, training, recovery—each element within reach, each transition seamless.

The idea turned into an actionable blueprint for Mandhana. The plot of land in Sangli first gave way to practice wickets at the far end. Then came a gym. Then, a pool; a sandpit too. The house came later, almost as an extension of what had already been built.

Mandhana herself feels like a structure under perpetual construction. She has gone from a bespectacled teenager, whose cover drives were set to slow-motion edits, to one of the most recognisable faces in cricket today. Along the way, she has stepped into spaces rarely occupied by women athletes, fronting campaigns across banking, insurance, even engine oil.

With that visibility has come a scrutiny that extends beyond the game. Her muscular upper body, the result of intense gym work and nutrition supervised by a personal chef who now tours with her, has been reduced to meme material: commented on, edited, circulated online.

Mandhana, as ever, takes it in her stride.

“These biceps win matches for India,” she says. “I think they look pretty good on me, actually.”

There are many matches and many World Cups left to win for India. But for now, Mandhana dreams of a future where references from men’s cricket are done away with while teaching, talking and playing the women’s game. “We didn’t have references from our own game growing up,” she says. “I want us to become so good, so consistent that the next generation doesn’t have to go anywhere else for comparisons. We become the reference that we never had. This is in our hands and I know it’s definitely possible.”

Standing under the hot March sun that afternoon, 13-year-old Akshara may have forgotten what she wanted to ask Mandhana. Possibly because the person she saw standing in front of her was the answer itself.

*Shirt, embroidered vest,
pants, DIOR.*







GODDESS DRESSING
From left: Models Ashley Graham, Bhavitha Mandava and Devyn Garcia play three graces in The Met's new Condé M Nast Galleries. Graham's Di Pensa gown evokes the Hellenistic period, while Mandava and Garcia channel ancient charioteers in chiton-esque Tory Burch and Michael Kors Collection dresses.
Fashion Editor: Amanda Harlech.

Making Space

As The Metropolitan Museum of Art gives the Costume Institute pride of place with new galleries, DODIE KAZANJIAN considers *Costume Art*, an exhibition that sets art and fashion side by side—and erases any distinctions between the two. Photographed by ETHAN JAMES GREEN.

Fashion is more art than art is”, according to Andy Warhol, who, 39 years after his death, may have the last word. Is fashion art? Is art fashion? The answer to those perennial, pesky questions should be resolved this May when The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Costume Institute, after years in the basement, expands upstairs into prime real estate, just adjacent to The Met’s Great Hall. “In a way fashion is beyond art,” says the Costume Institute’s curator in charge, Andrew Bolton. “It embodies our lived experience. It’s the only art form that does that.”

Fashion will now be at the centre of the museum in what has been The Met’s sprawling gift store, between the Egyptian galleries to the north and the Greek and Roman galleries to the south. There, in a home of their own, the Costume Institute’s Condé M Nast Galleries—named for the publisher and bon vivant who made *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair* and other magazines into cultural touchstones—will present *Costume Art*, an exhibition that examines and celebrates the dressed body, featuring clothing and artworks from a majority of the museum’s 19 collecting areas.

Max Hollein, the CEO and director of The Metropolitan Museum, calls the new galleries “a powerful continuation” of what the institution has long done. “The Costume Institute is part of our identity. The new galleries don’t represent revolution.”

But they were a long time coming, and all the while the audience for fashion has grown dramatically. “The relationship between fashion and art has become less defensive,” says the artist Maurizio Cattelan, one of several artists and curators I spoke to about The Met’s new galleries in the course of writing this story. “Fashion no longer asks for permission from art, and art no longer pretends to ignore fashion. They’ve understood they share the same obsession: the body, power, desire, status.”

“The impact of the Costume Institute and its exhibitions has grown enormously over the last 30 years,” says the designer Michael Kors, who reels off name after name (from Mark Rothko to John Singer Sargent to Georgia O’Keeffe) when I ask him how art and artists have influenced his work. “It’s opened people’s eyes to the interconnection between fashion and everything—from pop culture to politics to art. It has shown the public that fashion is about more than just the clothes you put on every day.”

And these new galleries, says the designer Tory Burch, “will recognise fashion as an essential part of our shared history. The Met has always understood that fashion is a vital form of creative expression, one that shapes and reflects our culture.”

Even so, the Costume Institute’s spring show remained stateless for years. The new home came about after a long campaign (much of it led by the global editorial director at this magazine) and resulted in a daunting assignment for an architecture firm. The commission went to the Brooklyn-based firm Peterson Rich Office, whose principals,



AHEAD OF THE CURVE
Above: *Nana and Serpent* (1992) by Niki de Saint-Phalle. Opposite page: *Configuration in Serpentine Movements I* (1950) by Jean Arp.

Nathan Rich and Miriam Peterson—a husband-and-wife team who had their first date at The Met—immersed themselves in the history of the museum and its 21 separate buildings. “It’s more of a city than a building,” says Peterson. The two studied the Great Hall and thought about how it might lead to the galleries and considered the way light filters in. They knew their job would be to create a new urban pathway and they worked closely with Bolton. “It was wonderful having conversations with him,” says Peterson. “We felt a deep resonance between architecture as a field and costume as an art form.” Bolton needed a flexible space, where lighting could be adjusted and power provided, but he wanted it to reflect something of the stature of the Greek and Roman galleries. “It had to be a rotating exhibition space,” says Rich. “It needed to constantly change. At the same time, it had to feel as if it had always been there.” The new almost-12,000-square-foot galleries are divided into five interconnected spaces, and they incorporate

limestone thresholds, echoing the limestone arches in the Great Hall. The luminescent grey-and-white stone floors, beamed ceilings and Venetian plaster walls flood the new space with an aura of permanence.

“Fashion at The Met has grown from celebrating beauty and craftsmanship to exploring culture, politics and history,” says Dasha Zhukova, an art collector, businesswoman and trustee at the museum. “It’s not just about what we wear, but what clothing tells us about who we are. So I wouldn’t call it controversial that the Costume Institute has taken centre stage at The Met. The new galleries are about perspective, not hierarchy.”

Zhukova also points out that the Costume Institute has been responsible for engaging a younger and more diverse audience. This audience is especially uninterested in drawing boundaries. The painter Anna Weyant, herself just 31, tells me firmly that costume should be regarded as art and indeed as one of art’s most “political forms”.

Tschabalala Self says, “To me, the separation between fashion and art is a false dichotomy. They’re both means of expression, and they’re both vehicles—modalities, really—that allow artists to express the concerns and desires of our time... I’m really excited to see the new exhibition... I’m a figurative painter, so the body is central in my practice. It’s something we all share, and when we dress we all make a statement.”

“The term *art* is a legacy of a much older term from the ancient Greeks: *arete*, which translates as ‘excellence’,” says the artist Paul Chan. “So it seems to me that there can be excellence in costumes as much as in any painting or sculpture.”

Any dissent to The Met’s grand move? “I regard fashion as an art but not as Art,” comments Massimiliano Gioni, the artistic director of the New Museum in Lower Manhattan. And yet Gioni is quick to point out that museums and curators (“myself included”, he says) have expanded their field of vision. “It doesn’t even matter whether fashion is art or not: certainly it is a discipline, a practice that can tell us a lot about what we desire and value—as such, it is a language worth listening to and engaging with if we want to learn more about ourselves.”



NESTING STAGE

A gourd-shaped artefact—part of The Met's collection of Japanese 19th-century Meiji period art—evokes fertility. *Opposite page:* Model Adut Akech Bior, pregnant with her second child, in Loewe.



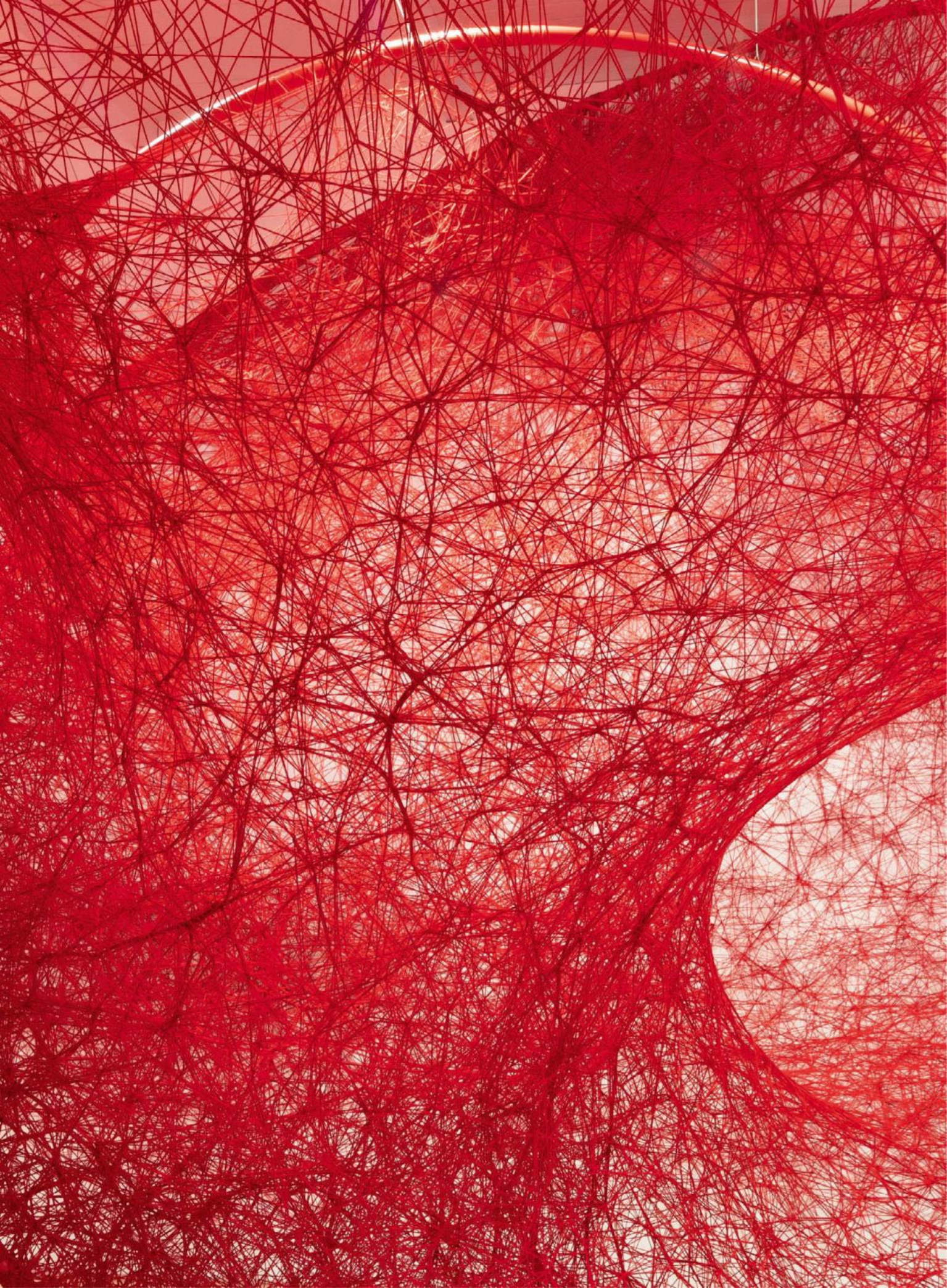




WRAP PARTY
Model Elisabetta Dessy wears
a quilted Erdem x Barbour
coat—inspired by Deborah
Cavendish, the late Duchess of
Devonshire—and Erdem shoes.

SHAKE THE FOUNDATION
A Charles James muslin dress from 1947 (*left*) employs a bustle as a kind of scaffolding, while Nicolas Ghesquière's 2006 work for Balenciaga creates the illusion of a pannier atop a buoyant skirt.





*EVERYTHING'S
CONNECTED*

A rendering of red veins
bleeds into model
Libby Taverner's black
wool-mohair Olivier
Theyskens gown. *Opposite
page:* A close-up of
Chiharu Shiota's 2024
work *In Circles* resembles
an arterial network.





PAST LIVES

Model Abény Nhial turns back time in a warrior-esque Givenchy minidress by Alexander McQueen, its leather trompe l'oeil breastplate standing in for a suit of armour.

Opposite page: Models Chen Yang and Yura Romaniuk go skin-deep in Tamae Hirokawa for Somarta bodysuits, their intricate beadwork mimicking patterns seen in Japanese dogū figurines from the final Jōmon period (circa 1000–300 BC).



BEAUTY NOTE
Gleam from head to toe.
Fragrance-free and safe
for sensitive skin,
Clinique Moisture Surge
Body Hydrator instantly
enhances radiance.

“The difference between art and fashion is time,” says the artist Rachel Feinstein. “Fashion is about the present, about now. Next year, what you’re presently seeing on the runway is going to look dated, where a painting or sculpture made today will not. Art has a longevity aspect—it’s meant to last.”

Boundaries vanish in the new exhibition Bolton has mounted. In conception, *Costume Art* is inclusive and collaborative, and the unifying theme is the human body and how it has been depicted—dressed, undressed, decorated, honored, injured and mourned. In a series of revelatory, often surprising, sometimes purposefully jarring, juxtapositions, the exhibition pairs objects and images with clothing: a 460 BC Greek vessel with a 1920s gown by Fortuny; Albrecht Dürer’s *Man of Sorrows with Arms Outstretched* with Vivienne Westwood’s Martyr to Love jacket; an 1883 walking dress that appears to have strolled out of Seurat’s study for *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*; Jean Arp’s and Henry Moore’s curvilinear sculptures with ensembles by Rei Kawakubo for Comme des Garçons. The exhibition reveals the long and symbiotic relationship between art and fashion—making the case that they are separate but equal art forms.

“I wanted to present fashion as a lens with which to look at art,” Bolton explains. “I wanted the pairings to be sometimes formal, sometimes conceptual, sometimes political, sometimes humorous, sometimes deeply profound and sometimes lighthearted. When you juxtapose a garment with an artwork, another meaning comes about. Something else happens. I want to focus on that. It’s as if one plus one equals three... Hopefully, the show will empower people to make those connections beyond the four walls of the museum.”

“I’ve been struck by how The Met’s presentation of fashion has shifted from something archival to something more immersive, almost cinematic,” says the artist Laurie Simmons. “The exhibitions have taken on narrative, mood, psychology—more of a sense of performance... The museum is acknowledging that the body—dressed, styled, staged—is as rich and loaded as any ancient relic. It’s also an ongoing story that’s constantly being rewritten in real time. Its placement near the Egyptians and across from the Greeks and Romans feels less like a disruption and more like a correction. It acknowledges that what we wear is also civilisation’s artefact.”

“I like the idea that some of the glamour of fashion is rubbing off on painting and artists,” the artist John Currin tells me. “I care about painting even more than sculpture or architecture or photography; still, I think these things coexist wonderfully, especially fashion, because it’s been so beneficial for the museum.” Institutions like The Met need change, he argues; nothing should be regarded as sacred. “They should have a celebrity zoo at The Met,” he says. “People naked in cages. They can work out in front of everybody... I’ll give up the bookstore if that’s what it takes. (The Met has not given up its store—only relocated it.)

Finally, I asked my husband, Calvin Tomkins, who wrote the history of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (*Merchants and Masterpieces*) the question I’d been asking everyone. “Can costume be art and art be fashion?” He answered with a resounding “Yes!” and added, “In fact, the two are so close that they can’t help being each other.”

“It had to be a rotating exhibition space,” says architect Nathan Rich. “It needed to constantly change. At the same time, it had to feel as if it had always been there”

UNDER YOUR SKIN

What lies beneath the flesh is a centuries-old fascination. Robert Wun Couture and Thom Browne Couture offer their own interpretations—as seen on models Yasmin Warsame and Betsy Gaghan (*opposite*). Gaghan wears Thom Browne Couture boots.



PURPOSE BUILT

After losing mobility in her legs, designer Louise Linderth devoted herself to thinking about dressing wheelchair users in everything from jeans to high fashion. Here, model and musician Aariana Rose Philip, who has quadriplegic cerebral palsy, wears Linderth's Lou Dehrot strapless jumpsuit. "It was so fabulous and magical—I felt like a piece of high art," Philip says of the shoot. *Opposite page:* Model Emeline Hoareau wears an Undercover jacket—which incorporates a memento mori—and a Gabriela Hearst dress.



HAIR: JIMMY PAUL, MAKEUP: KARUKI, PRODUCED BY SPECIAL, PRODUCTION AGENCY.
SET DESIGN: STUDIO WAGNER, MANICURIST: JIN SOON CHOI, TAILOR: CAROL AL



DREAM TEAM

On Bhavitha Mandava: Dress, TORY BURCH. *On Amelia Gray:* Dress, VICTORIA BECKHAM. Coat, STELLA McCARTNEY. Stuffed animal (*throughout*), JELLYCAT. Socks, ALO. Eye mask (*throughout*), CLEMENTINE SLEEPWEAR.

Fashion Editor: Tabitha Simmons.



SLEEP OVER IT

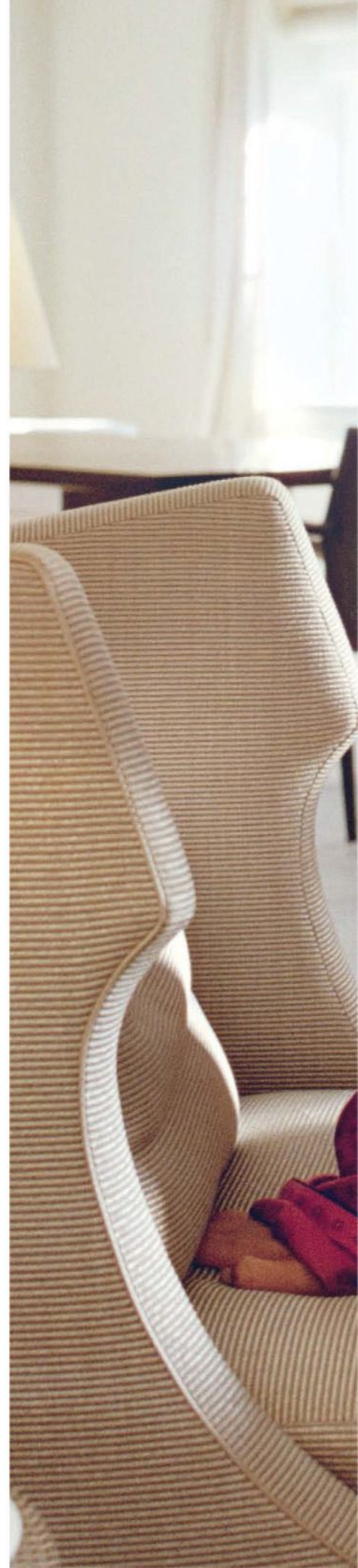


The nightcap, the debrief, the carb-loading: the real hang is always at the afterparty. This summer, make it easier in light, lazy slumbercore. Photographed by SEBASTIÁN FAENA.



BELLHOP BOP

*On Mandava: Dress, scarf, TOM FORD. Shoes, REPETTO.
Opposite page, on Paloma Elsesser: Robe, GUCCI. Necklace, CHOPARD.*





A woman with dark hair is sitting on a windowsill, leaning back against a large, ruffled white pillow. She is wearing a two-piece floral dress with a white base and red and orange floral patterns. The dress has a fitted bodice with a small bow at the waist and a full, tiered skirt. She is also wearing a light pink visor, a necklace, a bracelet, and a ring. Her shoes are white, lace-up shoes with a bunny face design. To her right, on the windowsill, is a red coffee cup. The window behind her shows a cityscape with tall buildings under a clear blue sky. The room has light-colored curtains on either side of the window.

*TURN OFF
THE WORLD*
On Sora Choi: Dress,
clutch (as pillow),
SIMONE ROCHA. Bra,
FLEUR DU MAL.
Necklace, bracelet, ring,
TIFFANY & CO.
Shoes, BODE.



UP ALL NIGHT
On Bibi Breslin: Dress, LOUIS VUITTON.





READY PLAYER ONE
On Breslin and Abby Champion:
Pyjamas, PRADA.



SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO
On Mandava: Pyjamas, CHANEL HAUTE COUTURE. *On Gray:* Dress, jacket, tights,
 MAISON MARGIELA. Shoes, CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN. Bag, JIMMY CHOO.

HAIR: RODDI WALTERS. MAKEUP: LISA HOUGHTON. PRODUCED BY PETTY CASH PRODUCTIONS. PROP. STYLIST: ROBERT SUMRELL. MANICURIST: MAMIE ONISHI. TAILOR: MATTHEW NEFF FOR CAROL AI STUDIO TAILORS. LOCATION: THE MARK HOTEL.

DO IT ALL
OVER AGAIN
On Devyn Garcia: Slip
dress, shoes, DIOR.





THE MOST BEAUTIFUL HOMES IN THE WORLD



VOGUE
INDIA
Values
presented by **tira**

WOMEN OF EXCELLENCE

Vogue Values: Women of Excellence,
presented by Tira, brought together women
shaping conversations across industries,
from sport and cinema to entrepreneurship,
design and social impact.







Mira Kapoor



Rahul Khanna



Gauri Khan

The honourees represented influence as much as achievement. Each has redefined leadership in her field, creating new paths and inspiring others to follow. Together, they reflected the many ways women across India are shaping the present and the future. The afternoon featured conversations across sport, leadership and the arts.

Women in Sports brought together Jinisha Sharma, Jyothi Yarraji and Sheetal Devi in conversation with *Vogue* India's features editor Sadaf Shaikh, exploring the discipline and resilience behind sporting success.

This was followed by Women in Leadership and Entrepreneurship, where Chetna Gala Sinha, Mira Kapoor and Samantha Ruth Prabhu joined *Vogue* India's digital editor Sara Hussain to talk about ambition, influence and leadership today.

The final conversation, Women in Art and Craft, saw Banu Mushtaq, Kalyani Priyadarshan, Monica Shah and Radhikaraje Gaekwad in a discussion with *Vogue* India's executive editor Lamiya Chitalwalla on the role of women in shaping and preserving creative traditions.



Jacqueline Fernandez



Jinisha Sharma, Jyothi Yarraji and Sheetal Devi



Masaba Gupta



Jaya Raheja



Sudha Reddy



Imran Khan

Tira joined Vogue Values: Women of Excellence as the presenting partner, bringing its For Every You philosophy to the evening. Rooted in individuality and self-expression, the platform celebrates beauty in all its forms, a vision closely aligned with Vogue Values.

Mercedes-Benz joined as an associate partner, presenting an installation inspired by the Benz Patent-Motorwagen, widely regarded as the world's first practical automobile. The installation referenced Bertha Benz's historic journey in 1888, a moment that proved the invention's potential and marked a turning point in automotive history.



Jyothi Yarraji



Sheetal Devi



Samantha Ruth Prabhu



Kalyani Priyadarshan



Dr Purnima Devi Barman



Banu Mushtaq, Kalyani Priyadarshan, Monica Shah and Radhikaraje Gaekwad



Aneef Padda

The afternoon also featured a conversation between Rochelle Pinto, head of editorial content at *Vogue* India, and Bhakti Modi, CEO of Tira, discussing the vision behind building a modern beauty platform and the evolving ambitions of women today.

Sunira created a special keepsake for the honourees. Handcrafted in velvet by women artisans, the bag featured an eagle motif made from upcycled ajrakh and Bagru remnants, a symbol of strength and resilience. Each piece also supports artisan livelihoods and indigenous craft traditions.



Faye D'Souza



Gabriella D'Cruz



Anaita Shroff Adajania

VOGUE INDIA *Values*

presented by **tira**

WOMEN OF EXCELLENCE

PARTNERS



fnpLUXE





Chetna Gala Sinha, Mira Kapoor and Samantha Ruth Prabhu



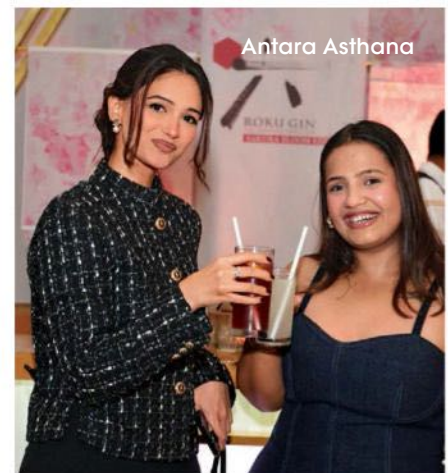
Anita Dongre

The evening ceremony honoured the Women of Excellence across categories and opened with the live debut performance of 'Rooh' by Kamakshi Khanna and The Dirty Jays.

Across the room, women from sport, cinema, design, finance and literature came together in conversation, sharing stories and celebrating each other's work.



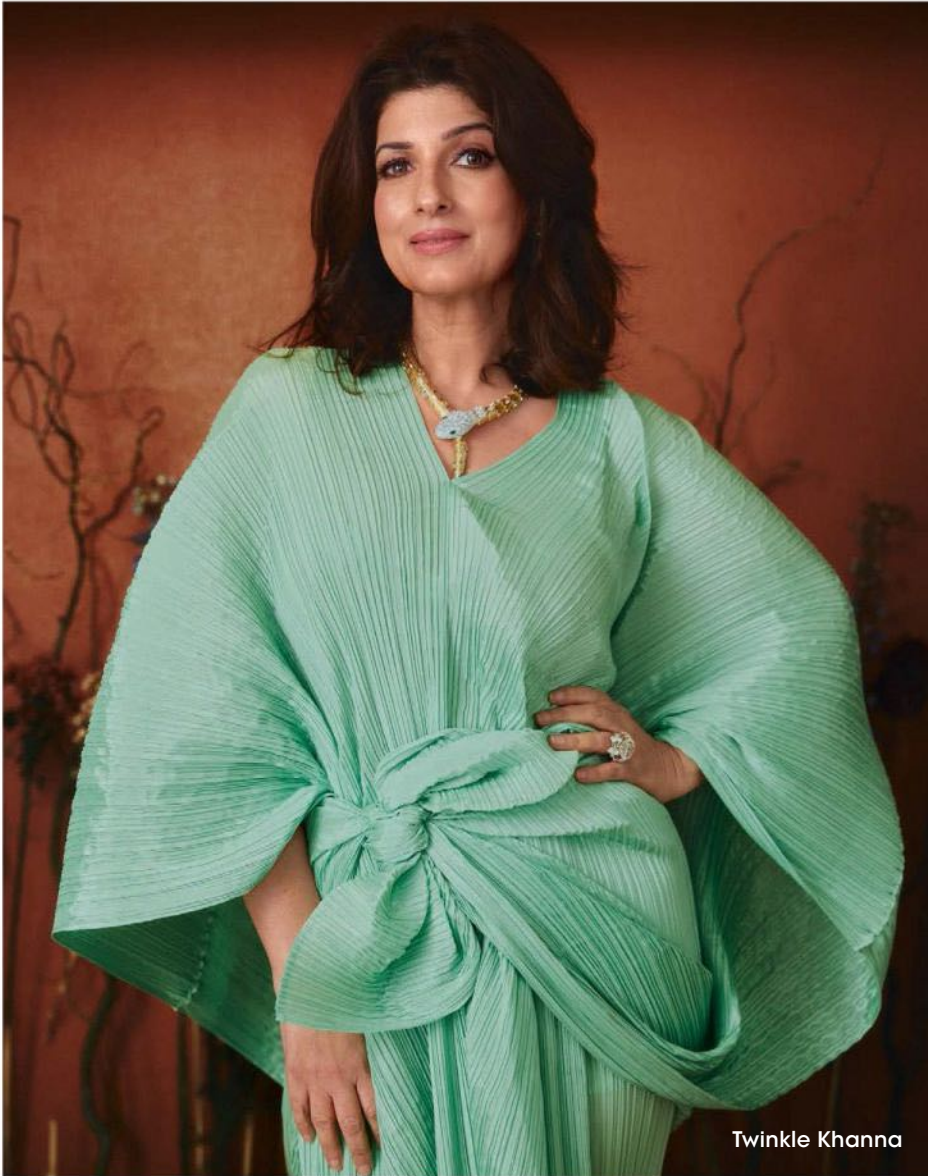
Shilpa Rao



Antara Asthana



Madhu Neotia and Shalini Bhupal



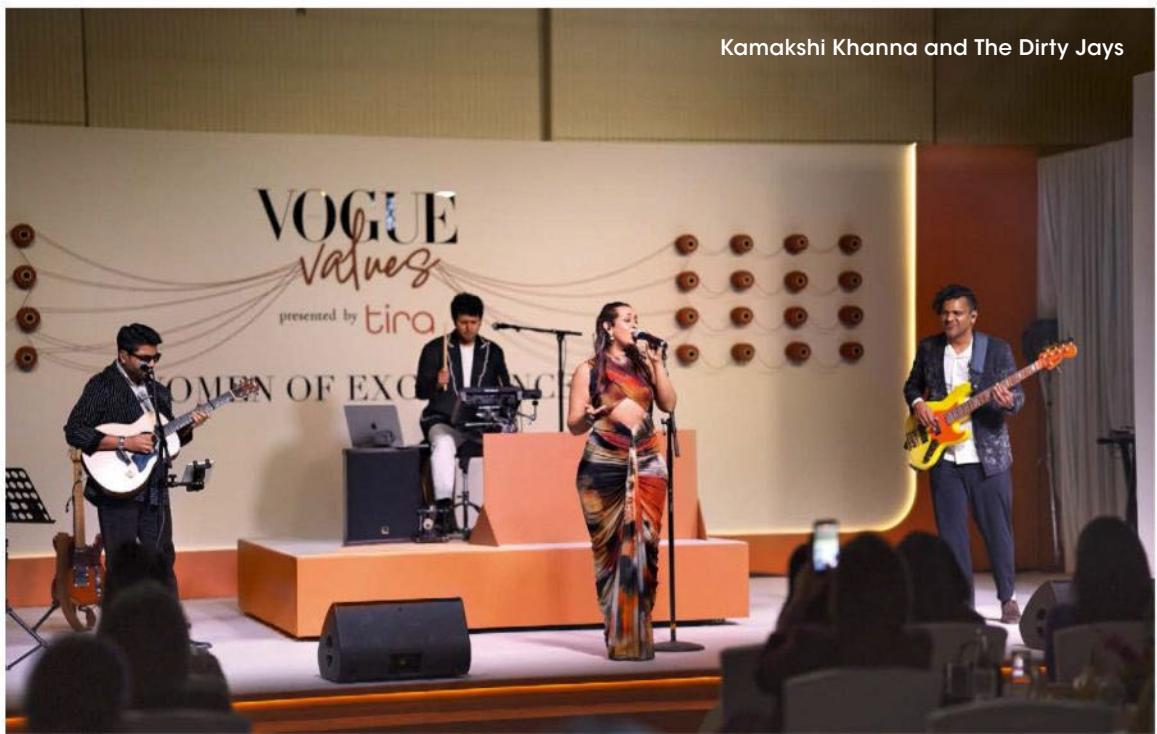
Twinkle Khanna



Banu Mushtaq



Radhikaraje Gaekwad



Kamakshi Khanna and The Dirty Jays

Jury duty

The annual Vogue Beauty & Wellness Honours returns to spotlight the products, experts and innovations defining beauty and wellness in India today.



MEET THE EXPERTS

The 2026 Vogue Beauty & Wellness Honours jury: Dr Batul Patel, Rochelle Pinto, Jacqueline Fernandez, Sara Tendulkar, Hiral Bhatia, Radhika Karle and Puneet B Saini.

Set against the glow of a beautiful March sunset, an accomplished panel of voices from across beauty, wellness and culture came together to evaluate more than 80 products spanning makeup, skincare, haircare, wellness supplements and fragrances. This year's jury included *Vogue* India's head of editorial content Rochelle Pinto; entrepreneur and philanthropist Sara Tendulkar; actor Jacqueline Fernandez; makeup artist and educator Puneet

B Saini; hair expert Hiral Bhatia; Pilates educator and founder of Radhika's Balanced Body, Radhika Karle; and dermatologist and medical director of The Bombay Skin Clinic, Dr Batul Patel. Their combined expertise ensured that each product was considered through a nuanced lens of efficacy, innovation, sensorial appeal and relevance, bringing both rigour and real-world perspective to the process, with Readers' Choice votes offering an additional measure of audience insight to the winning line-up.



Dr Batul Patel



An artfully composed grazing table



Radhika Karle



Jacqueline Fernandez



Puneet B Saini testing a concealer



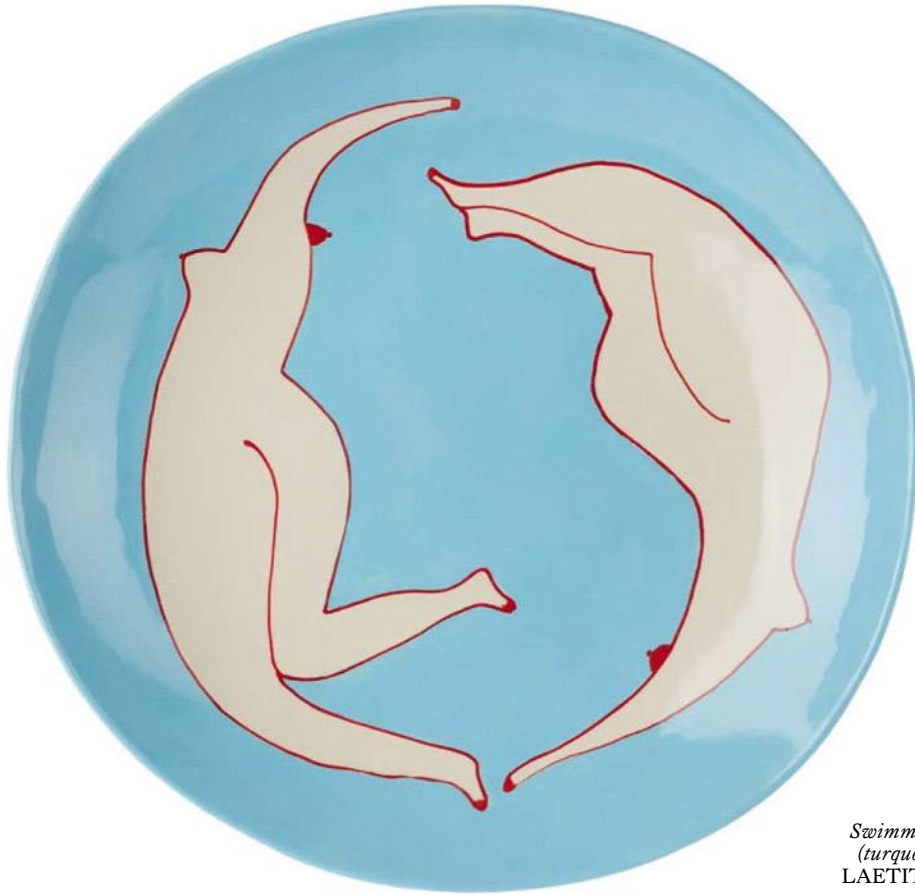
Sara Tendulkar analysing fragrance notes



Hiral Bhatia



Statement florals for the evening



*Swimmers fruit platter
(turquoise), ₹17,163,
LAETITIA ROUGET.*

HORO SCOPE WATER

SCORPIO

What you have been working on at a surface level is also germinating underground. Scorpio, this may not be the time to give up. Rest for a while if you must, but don't close the book just yet. You will find, among the grey clouds, many silver linings—and also a gap that allows the sun to shine through. Get grounded, make plans and think about which direction life would be taking you in right now, if everything were going as desired. Turn over a new leaf and seek new adventures.

PISCES

A change has been beckoning you, and since Neptune moved out of your sign earlier this year, you have felt a deep shift in your inner world. You are working on your foundational script—the ideologies and chatter that run your life in the background. You are now bringing your focus onto what you feel you can, and want to, have instead of what you thought was possible based on your limitations. This is a time when your wisdom will guide your actions and your logic will help you chart your plan out on a beautiful roadmap. Trust the niggles that won't leave you. It has something important to share with you just as you have something important to share with the world.

CANCER

You have stepped into a version of yourself that can see through things with closed eyes. As you learn to trust your inner voice more than what you sense externally, you will also realise that it leads you to path-breaking moments in easier ways than you are used to. Sure, it's important to maintain boundaries and lay a solid foundation before moving across worlds on an apparent 'whim'. However, Cancer, you're ready for this. Pick what you want wisely and remember: if it is love you want, it is a community you must build.

Text by SNEHAA KHANNA SAHGAL.

HORO SCOPE FIRE

ARIES

What once felt like a missed opportunity is now turning the wheel of fortune in your favour, Aries. No more shrinking or stepping aside to let someone else take the lead and definitely no more hiding away. This new chapter in your life isn't a phase, it's a karmic reset point. And you have journeyed through it exceptionally well. Embrace whatever comes your way and look at it with a two-year-long lens. If it fits and can be built upon for a long time, then give it your best shot. If it doesn't, and you still want to dabble in it, do so with that awareness.

LEO

You've had your eyes set on something long-term and visionary. You've been working at it and have also been feeling like nothing is moving—all at the same time. Breathe. You are suspended midair, so use this to your advantage to scout the road ahead, make tweaks and adjustments and also reflect on what route works best for you. Life may have been a bit of a struggle lately, but it need not be so anymore. Pay attention to your 'random ideas'. They are coded messages that make your life easier.

SAGITTARIUS

It might be a good idea to remain a closed book, Sagittarius—until you've zeroed in on your inner voice and decided your course of action. There is nothing that conspires randomly in the cosmos and the most arbitrary thoughts and memories may carry messages for you. Listen intently. The messages could be simple, like someone is thinking of you, or more complex, like an epiphany that strikes you out of the blue. This may not be the time for a definitive decision. It may just be a time for you to remember, recoup and choose long-term happiness. Every. Single. Time.



*Handsome Devil carafe (Inferno),
₹65,140, HEVEN.*



*Gold-tone flask collectable,
₹25,836, KEEPSAKE.*

HORO SCOPE EARTH

TAURUS

Things moved fast and now you may feel like there is so much for you to handle and work through. Taurus, your ideas may be booming, your options expanding. And while it may all appear to be a bit too much, you are being reminded that no matter what you think or feel you are supported in numerous ways. There is one cup that seems to stand out from the rest and this is the one the cosmos is encouraging you to select. Every time you're tempted to go back to your old ways, remember the choices you are making now and take assertive steps in alignment with your new goals.

VIRGO

You work well in a team. Your task may not be about doing things yourself; you may be better at managing time and skills. The time to bring in this shift—in what you feel you are capable of—is now, and you must prepare to step into those shoes. A window closes, but a huge door opens. Harmony, peace and contentment are yours for the taking. You are no longer about big glittering dreams; you're about tiny moments that warm your heart. You're about moments that break your walls down but let beams of light in. You're more about your feelings now than you ever were before. Congratulations.

CAPRICORN

You may have been functioning on autopilot—which seems to be a default setting for you, Capricorn. You're great at establishing systems, but hey, there's more to life than regimented structure. When was the last time you said yes to having fun and doing something without an agenda—something curated by you. This is a breakthrough moment, as you realise how trapped you may have felt in your own life and mind, how you are now ready to emerge from the metaphorical abyss with new ideas, inspirations and vitality. Just say yes to that inner call.

HORO SCOPE AIR

GEMINI

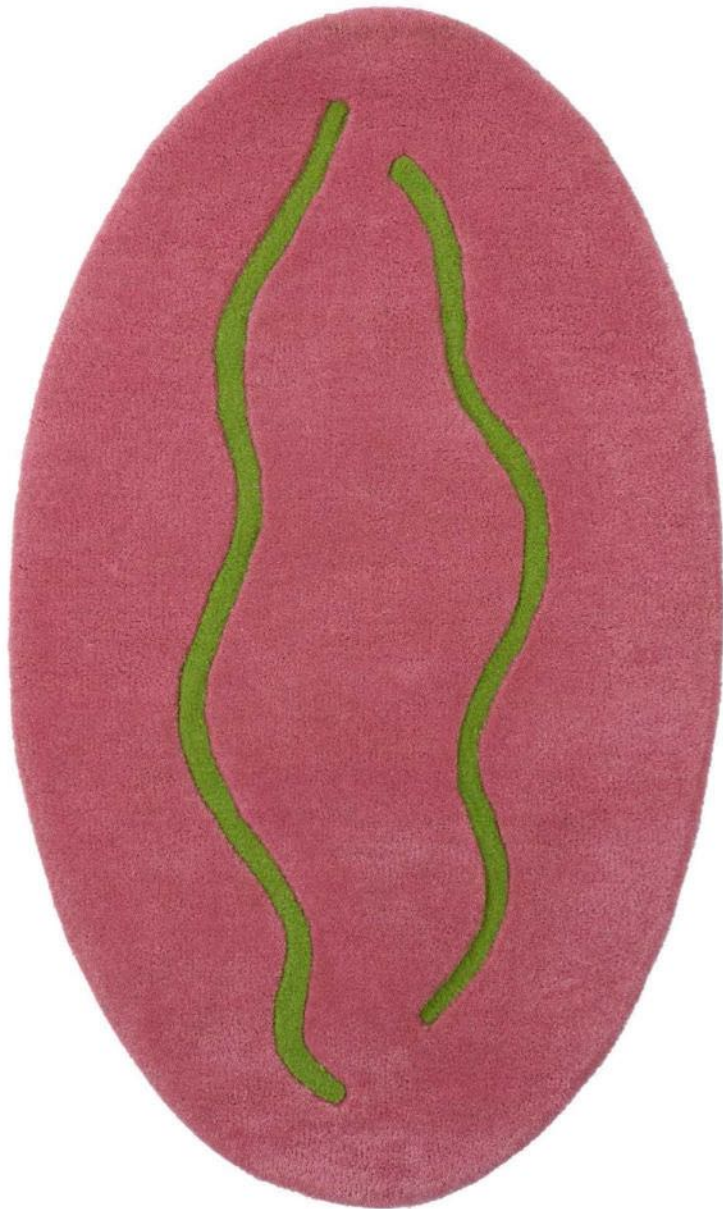
Something sneaky may have been going on in your life lately and you may have felt like something is amiss. You may have been drowning in your fears and may have also sensed anxiety about your future. However, Gemini, things will begin to shift soon enough for you. As you decide to take one day at a time, you are no longer focused on the fears that haunt you, instead you are focused on the everyday shifts you can bring about in the tiniest ways, like waking up slower than usual or immediately checking off things that take less than five seconds. You are cashing in on compounding—the way in which the tiniest ripples gradually coalesce into one big wave of change over time.

LIBRA

You love going by the rules, following the guidebook to a T—and in many ways, it saves you tons of energy and effort. Libra, it may be your time to wish upon a star and look forward to brand new starts, or at least new ways of reaching for the sky. The waters may feel rough for a short while, but that may only be because you've been berating yourself about what you cannot do or achieve. This is the time to break the chain. The cosmos will ask if you're ready for a fit check and to discard what you don't need—only so that you have more room for all that you love.

AQUARIUS

You've been paying attention to the signs, closing your eyes and going inward; and Aquarius, for a moment you may have felt like you were sure about what you were doing. But the cosmos had other plans. Perhaps what you began did not work out—but not all is lost. You have a cathartic moment approaching. You have a new opportunity rising. And this will require more than just passion. It will need you to merge every ounce of your vision with strategy and authority, even planning. You may feel like you are receding into the background for just a bit, but what's really happening is that you're gearing up for the high jump you've been practicing for all this while.



*Floor Is Vulva rug (pink),
₹19,412, CARNE BOLLENTE.*



AROUND THE CLOCK

The Swiss maison, Frederique Constant, unveils two new interpretations of the Classics Manchette watch collection. Dressed in gold and contrasted against a turquoise mineral dial, the first Manchette holds two understated, minimalist hands—signature to the Classics Manchette collection. The second version presents a steel bracelet with a mint-green dial, revealing softer, cooler hues. The two versatile models are adorned with the iconic Clou de Paris motif and offer options for all occasions, whether it's a glamorous night out or a casual off-duty day.

For more information, visit www.frederiqueconstant.com



LAND OF STORIES

From the harbour views of Sydney Opera House to the coral stretches of the Great Barrier Reef, Australia moves between city and landscape with ease. Travel extends inland to Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, where Indigenous stories shape the experience. Routes open up beyond major cities, linking coastal, cultural, and remote regions in one journey. With connected travel across multiple destinations, the country offers a way to see more in a single trip, balancing nature, history, and everyday moments along the way.

For more information, visit www.qantas.com/in/en/book-a-trip/flights/qantas-explorer.html



VIRTUAL TRY ON

Aza Fashions has launched its Virtual Try-On feature, offering a more immersive way to experience Indian luxury fashion online. It goes beyond the traditional in-store experience, providing interactive personalisation no matter where you are. Customers can explore and curate looks for real occasions and observe how it fits them, thus allowing for a more assured online shopping experience.

For more information, visit www.azafashions.com

A MOLECULAR RECOVERY

Designed to work at a molecular level, Pantene's New Bond Repair Conditioner is a targeted treatment developed to repair up to three years of hair damage. From heat styling, colouring to humidity and sun exposure your hair requires a comprehensive solution to maintain its structural integrity. The conditioner replenishes lost lipids in the hair cell membrane complex, and rebuilds broken bonds. Powered by Pantene's proprietary Melting Pro-V Formula, the conditioner contains 5,000 Pro-Vitamin B5 pearls which melt instantly upon application, and result in smoother and nourished hair.

For more information, follow [@pantene_india](https://www.instagram.com/pantene_india) on Instagram



Vogue DIARY

We bring you the best in luxury and fashion

TRUE EXPRESSION

Jewellery can tell a story about who you are, if made thoughtfully. ANEKA draws inspiration from cultural symbols across the world to create pieces that feel personal and current. The Plume collection takes cues from the eye of a single peacock feather, charting a journey of self-expression through colour, form, and light. Emeralds, dark pink spinel, and rare padparadscha sapphires sit alongside round white diamonds in 18K recycled white gold, letting the stones take centre stage. The signature Peacock-cut diamond, with 57 facets across its crown and pavilion, reflects light through vertical lines that echo the fine strands of the plume. From rings to necklaces, ANEKA designs are made to be worn across moments, feeling expressive without being difficult to style. The collection can be experienced at the ANEKA flagship store in Kala Ghoda, Mumbai.

For more information, visit www.maisonaneka.com or visit the ANEKA flagship store in Kala Ghoda, Mumbai.





A NEVER-ENDING SYMPHONY

The Forevermark Avaanti Collection echoes the rhythm of a life in constant evolution, with jewellery pieces that celebrate every choice, milestone and change. Each piece in the collection is crafted around a natural diamond silhouette. Its conical end mirrors the culet and symbolises clarity as well as direction. Distinctive yet effortless, the Avaanti Collection is designed to accompany the wearer through every stage of life. For more information, visit in.forevermark.com

NEW FACE FORWARD

CaratLane names Yami Gautam Dhar as its first brand ambassador, marking a new chapter for the brand. Her style and presence fit the brand's approach, where jewellery can be worn for moments big and small. The collaboration highlights fine jewellery that feels approachable and personal. As part of the Tata Group, CaratLane continues to grow its reach, offering designs that integrate seamlessly into daily life while staying stylish, versatile, and in step with contemporary tastes.

For more information, visit www.caratlane.com



CHRONICLING HERITAGE

Rooted in India's rich textile legacy, SUNIRA works closely with artisans and in-house karigars to translate handloom traditions into contemporary expressions.

Handwoven and handspun cotton, Banarasi brocade, Jamdani, muslin and ikat are complemented by hand-block printing from Bagru and Ajrakh, along with tie-dye processes such as Bandhej and Leheriya. The brand's zero-waste philosophy ensures that leftover fabric is not discarded. This approach not only sustains the craft but builds meaningful livelihoods and preserves knowledge systems within communities.

For more information, visit www.suniradesigns.com or follow @suniradesigns on Instagram

WEDDING EASE

Your wedding outfit should feel personal, not just ceremonial. Sartorial Weddings by Sarah & Sandeep blends traditional ceremonial elements with silhouettes and colours that feel contemporary. Each garment is finished with detailed handwork, ensuring the structure, fit, and detail are precise. The collection balances occasion wear with personal style, so that pieces feel easier to wear without losing grandeur. Every design reflects a modern approach to wedding dressing, keeping each outfit stylish, wearable, and effortless for celebrations.

For more information, visit www.sarahsandeep.com or call +91 8080614777



EFFORTLESS ELEGANCE, EVERY DAY

A watch should work with what you're wearing—and sometimes, it's the one detail that brings everything together. Calvin Klein keeps it clean with a mini square case that feels sharp but not too formal. The dial features a horizontally patterned design. A jewellery-inspired mesh bracelet wraps comfortably around the wrist and feels light enough to keep on all day. Available in multiple colourways, it's simple, easy to style, and fits into your routine without much thought. You can wear it to work, out for nights around town, or through the day without needing to switch. It slips easily into different looks, feeling almost like a piece of jewellery you keep reaching for over time, across different settings and occasions.

Now available at all Calvin Klein stores

COAST CALLING

If your idea of a good trip includes sun, sea, and not checking your phone every five minutes, Sri Lanka is where you should be. Specifically at the Anantara Peace Haven Tangalle Resort—sitting along the island's southern coast. Set on a rocky stretch edged by coconut palms and a quiet beach, the property houses 152 rooms and private pool villas, designed for slow stays and longer breaks. Mornings start with beach yoga or Ayurvedic therapies, followed by meals across restaurants serving Asian, Italian, and international cuisine. There's also easy access to nearby national parks and heritage sites, so you can explore beyond the resort without going too far.

For more information, visit www.anantarahotels.com or follow @anantaratangalle on Instagram



Shoplist

FASHION

Alo (www.aloyoga.com)
Anatina (www.shopanatina.com)
Anavila (www.anavila.com)
Balenciaga (www.balenciaga.com)
Barbour (www.barbour.com)
Bloni (www.bloni.in)
Bode (www.bode.com)
Burberry (www.burberry.com)
Chanel (www.chanel.com)
Christian Louboutin
(www.christianlouboutin.com)
Clementine Sleepwear
(www.sleepwithclementine.com)
Di Petsa (www.dipetsa.com)
Dior (www.dior.com)
Divyam Mehta
(www.divyammehta.com)
Erdem (www.erdem.com)
Fleur du Mal (www.fleurdumal.com)
Gabriela Hearst
(www.gabrielahearst.com)
Givenchy (www.givenchy.com)
Gucci (www.gucci.com)
Ilk (www.ilk.co.in)
Jimmy Choo
(www.jimmychoo.com)
Kaleekal (www.instagram.com/kaleekal)
Kanika Goyal Label (www.kglabel.com)
Kartik Research
(www.kartikresearch.com)
Loewe (www.loewe.com)
Lou Dehrot (www.loudehrot.com)
Louis Vuitton (www.louisvuitton.com)
Maison Margiela
(www.maisonmargiela.com)
Michael Kors Collection
(www.michaelkors.com)
Olivier Theyskens
(www.oliviertheyskens.com)
Prada (www.prada.com)
Repetto (www.repetto.com)
Robert Wun (www.robertwun.com)
Simone Rocha (www.simonerocha.com)
Somarta (www.somarta.jp)
Thom Browne (www.thombrowne.com)
Tom Ford (www.tomfordfashion.com)
Tory Burch (www.toryburch.com)
Undercover (www.undercoverism.com)
Victoria Beckham
(www.victoriabeckham.com)

JEWELLERY & WATCHES

Chopard (www.chopard.com)
Hermès (www.hermes.com)
Meroh (www.meroh.in)
Tiffany & Co (www.tiffany.com)

CULTURE & LIVING

Carne Bollente (www.carnebollente.com)
Heven (www.heven.in.net)
Jellycat (www.jellycat.com)
Keepsake (www.instagram.com/keepsakethelabel)
Laetitia Rouget (www.laetitiarouget.com)

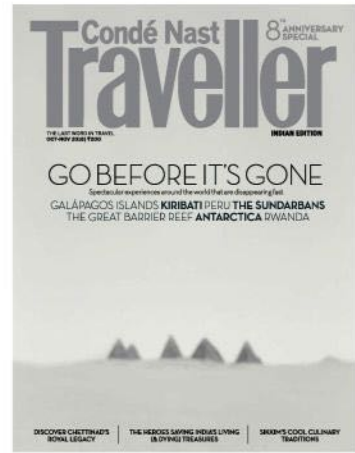
BEAUTY

Clinique (www.clinique.com)



*Dress, pants, shoes,
earrings, bag:*
LOUIS VUITTON.

The merchandise featured editorially has been ordered at the above stores. Some shops may carry a selection only. Prices and availability were checked at the time of going to press. But we cannot guarantee that prices will not change or that specific items will be in stock when the magazine is published. We suggest that before visiting a shop you call to make sure they have your size.



Condé Nast Traveller



THE LAST WORD IN TRAVEL

Chain reaction

Hermès shrinks the Kelly to fit around your neck so you can still wear the house icon hands-free.

*Précieux Kelly
long necklace, price on
request, HERMÈS.*



PHOTO: BIKRAMJIT BOSE / VOGUE INDIA

VOGUE INDIA

BEFORE IT'S IN FASHION, IT'S IN VOGUE!



INDIA VOGUE

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