



ARTS ILLUSTRATED



Editor's note

The theme for this issue arrived with Norwegian-British documentary film-maker Deeyah Khan's 'White Right: Meeting the Enemy'. The film, which traces the rise of white fundamentalism, has some disturbing interviews with neo-Nazis as Khan asks quite simply 'I am a woman of colour, I am the daughter of immigrants, I am a Muslim, I am a feminist, I am a lefty liberal, and what I want to ask you is, am I your enemy?' By the end of the film, you are surprised and overwhelmed with how a simple act of crossing the divide with no judgement, no prejudice or bias or expectation, and by purely listening with the need to understand, change begins.

We knew instantly this was what our theme should be this issue: Of humanising divisions that by virtue of their separateness allow us to build bridges. It was a hard issue to work on because it meant meeting head-on the divisions in our minds, in our cultural contexts, our social-political realities and questioning the parts that make us individuals without leeching the individuality of the other. We had a heightened sense of awareness and consciousness while putting this issue together, but, as always, the magazine took a life of its own, choosing the stories it wanted to tell. (For instance, despite several e-mails to Deeyah Khan, the interview we wanted never happened. But the magazine, smug in its all-knowing avatar, continued nonetheless. Sore point, obviously, for me.)

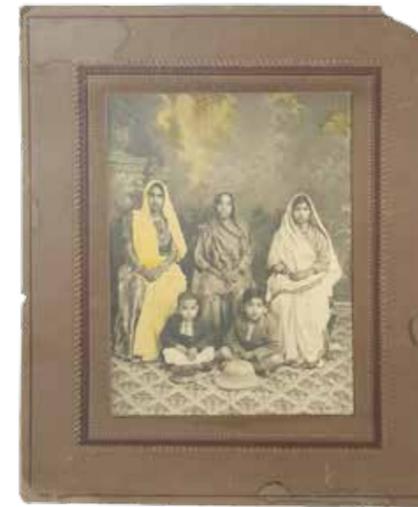
But the stories that did make this issue are each mini revelations of what deep convictions can do and undo, of what art can create and destroy, and how ideas, simple in texture, can have profound implications. And, how, everything begins with a question.

How will we cross the ocean? We will build a bridge of stones...oops, sorry, wrong example, clearly, for the statuesque times we live in.



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Cover Artist



The original photograph used for the cover



Whenever my father travelled on work, *Amma ji*, our old landlady, would taunt my mother, '*Ghiya ji ki bahu, mero miyo ghar nahi, mujhe kisi ko dar nahi*'. It literally translates to – 'I fear nothing, because my man is not home'. When the men were at work, the women were free to do as they pleased. They could step out, meet up with friends, hang out. Much like in the photograph that I chose to create the cover image for this issue of Arts Illustrated. Three women posing with two children...I could not help but imagine them to be my mother, my *mausi* (my mother's sister) and my *maami ji* (my mother's sister in-law), and the children as though they were my brother and I. I recall going to places with them as a child, to the beauty parlour, the blouse tailor, the temple, walking narrow lanes, eating *paani poori*, and orange candies. And *Amma ji*'s prying eyes at the end of the day.

I grew up believing that women must remain scared of their husbands. That is why they step out only when the men-folk were not around. For most of my life I have witnessed issues about liberty for women around me. I have questioned their relationship with men – with their

fathers, husbands, co-workers, or mere co-passengers in public transport. I assumed that I would grow up to be more empathetic.

The cover of this issue is about this strange dichotomy that a woman's life is. Between time and space where she can be as she pleases to be, and where she must conform to forced rules. Between a virtual world and the real one. Between tradition and modernity. Between what is intimate and what is public. And often this divide does not exist in the physical space. It is intangible, one that is born in the mind, constantly fed to the heart through centuries of cultural conditioning.

And now, in my work, she ushers in a new era through some kind of a Blue Screen – embracing and rejecting, adapting and shifting through a multitude of dimensions. In a state of transit. Painting a reality that she likes, finding a safe space, escaping into nothingness. Celebrating the divide that has been a foundation of sorts. Resetting. Refreshing. Rebooting.



Nandan Ghiya

Studio assistants: Mukesh Vijay and Sitaram Jangid
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Cover page curated by Rahul Kumar



Nike ad featuring Colin Kaepernick. (Image: Nike).



Design Feature

A New Hope

Traditionally, drilling notions of division in the mind space of consumers, the language of design in advertising is going through a change, with tiny steps that carry big statements of inclusion.

SUPRIYA SEHGAL

Sentiments have flared and subsided ever since the Colin Kaepernick controversy hit the world on September 1, 2018. The quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers football team chose to kneel instead of standing for the American national anthem before a game against the San Diego Chargers. Kaepernick was protesting the country's treatment of racial minorities. In a flurry of reactions, TV talk shows and social media channels were rife with heated opinions, with people choosing sides about the seemingly disrespectful, yet constitutionally free act by the athlete. Less than a week later, cashing in on the worldwide topical squabble was sports brand, Nike, featuring Kaepernick in a global advertisement for its 30th anniversary. The ad features other sporting legends like LeBron James and Serena Williams, ending it with a tight frame of Kaepernick's face, eyes searing through the screen and the words, 'Believe in something even if it means sacrificing everything', appearing as a defining statement.

As inspiring as the ad may be, one wonders whether to applaud Nike for standing up to its athletes at the cost of driving the brand smack bang in the middle of a controversy, or feel uncomfortable about it raking in the moolah thanks to the PR noise around



Vicks ad featuring Gauri Sawant. (Image: NPR/Vicks India).

occasions like these. In this case, it's true that Nike lost 4% in stock value (about \$5 billion) a day after the release of the ad, but experts shrug this away as only a notional loss. The brand's growth story continues to bolster from around the world.

Whatever the financial truth might be, the ad rekindled a parallel conversion in advertisement agencies and brand boardrooms. 'This is a special ad. It's both divisive and inclusive at the same time. Even though it puts people on polar opposite sides, at least, it has made an attempt to change the narrative of sporting abilities. It has tried to bridge the gap, made the lesser-privileged feel relevant and the brand has taken a strong stance,' reflects Namita Koshy, Associate Vice President and Head of Social, Ogilvy, Delhi-NCR. 'Sometimes, that's enough. The heartening thing is that many brands are now

using a more inclusive tone across the world, including India.'

Traditionally, advertisements have been drilling notions of division in the mind space of consumers. Constrained by the clutches of skin colour and gender roles, Indian advertising has especially toed the patronizing line with devotion. The woman subjected to magically making clothes white, caring for the family by buying the best multi-grain flour, the 'testosterone-y' Thumbs Up adventures that only men can embark on, and the abysmal *shaadi* aspirations fulfilled by a skin whitening creams – the examples are countless. But there are many that are going against the grain, tweaking norms and creating new ones.

A bold step in this direction by Proctor & Gamble's *Vicks* ad won it the favour of millions when the story of Gauri Sawant, a transgender woman

and activist, adopts Gayatri, a young girl whose birth mother had died of AIDS.

Conceptualised by Publicis Singapore, the ad was an impactful step in showing a mother's love with more ubiquity. India's showcase of transgenders in movies had been suspended in poorly conceived humour and jibes. The ad took the humour-only narrative and toppled it on its head, giving the audience an emotional connection instead.

Weighing on the inclusion conversation, Susan Mathen, former Regional Strategy Lead for Pantene/P&G for ASEAN thinks, 'Emotional narratives advising a certain kind of behaviour and pointing fingers at those who discriminate is what we have been seeing a lot in today's ads. But, fortunately, that has evolved into focusing on positives, on real incidents, real protests, real cases of inclusion. Like the Nike Kaepernick ad. Like the JSW

If your husband ever finds out
you're not "store-testing" for fresher coffee...

...if he discovers you're still taking chances on getting flat, stale coffee... wee be unto you!

For today there's a sure and certain way to test for freshness before you buy

Here's how easy it is to be sure of fresher coffee

Look for the "Orange Egg" on all Chase & Sanborn. Especially, packaged coffees of the "Pressure Packed" brand. Taste the most.

Just do this: From your favorite coffee, get the orange egg before you buy. If it's there, it's fresh. If it's not, it's stale. It's the one way to get the freshest coffee ever packed.

No other can lets you test! You can't see an ordinary flat top can. Never see "Orange" that says let us see it is fresh. But all flat tops are not alike. You can't tell which one is good and which one is stale.

Here's the payoff! Here on your good cup, they'll send money! 8 or 10 more Chase & Sanborn in a 48 month period of more pressure coffees... thought to you please. No wonder Chase & Sanborn gets a favor. Because you want's kind on any other coffee!

Chase & Sanborn
"PRESSURE PACKED"
COFFEE

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Eli Rezkallah, from the series *In a Parallel Universe*, Original ad: Chase and Sanborn, Magazine Advert, USA, 1950s. Image Courtesy of the artist.

Will of Steel ad with Geeta Phogat. Like the recent documentary-style ad for Kochi Metro Rail Limited – celebrating their very iconic decision to employ members of the LGBTQ community and using that as one of the launch ads for the brand. Communication today seems to be celebrating and facilitating social change.'

Brands and advertising agencies pushing the envelope to make impactful and inclusive statements are not scarce anymore. There are over 197 million households in the country that are a TV audience; the proliferation of positive messages is sure to make a difference in the thinking on a large scale. The

Internet is available to almost 481 million palms of the country, making it an even better mode of sharing messages of inclusivity with not just ads but also other film-based features.

To many of the Netflix generation, the advertising industry-themed American drama *Mad Men* might have been about the dapper antihero Don Draper, but the show also ignited conversations about the deep-rooted sexism that existed in the 1960s. Putting the spotlight on the same sexism, fine-art photographer, Eli Rezkallah conceived a project called *In a Parallel Universe*, a series of fictional images, recreated from real ads in the *Mad Men* era, that

question modern day sexism: showing it through a humorous light to spark a conversation through role play – says Rezkallah's website. In the series, Rezkallah juxtaposes regressive ads from the 1960s, all with a similar theme of domesticated women in subjugating or patronizing positions by men – with role reversals, using creative tools. It is men who are shown tethered to the kitchen, in tight leotards and being spanked for doing something wrong. The visuals are a grim reminder of how the world operated only decades ago, but the starkness of the imagery is a breath of fresh air, since the viewer can see the absurdity so vividly.



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