

Anupam Poddar, art collector and founder, Devi Art Foundation, picks three Indian artists to watch out for

It really is the best of times. Even as art comes back to collectors (as opposed to being with investors), emerging artists and their works are finding a new footing; a platform from which new ideas are being expressed, and better still, are being received well. As increased facilities in terms of more residencies, both local and international, foster a kind of cross-pollination, works are displaying a more layered and hybrid approach. Says art collector Anupam Poddar, "It is an exciting time for the contemporary visual arts as artists have more freedom to experiment in their practice."

Trust Poddar to know. Best known for the development of Devi Garh, a restored all-suite boutique hotel within an 18th century Fort Palace outside Udaipur, Rajasthan, he is also

an art connoisseur whose latest initiative is the Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon. The non-profit outfit is providing space for emerging artists to display their work, and aims to foster dialogue between them and critics, curators, collectors, and the audience at large. And as Poddar, along with his mother, actively adds to the family's vast art collection (the Lekha and Anupam Poddar art collection is displayed at the Foundation), he has his fingers dipped into the Indian art market.

In this time of exploration, for Poddar, the labours of three artists in particular stand out. "The thing about these three artists is that they have a distinctive take on reality and an almost instinctive understanding of how to translate their vision by means of their chosen medium."

SUSANTA MANDAL



CHOSEN MEDIUM:
Light, shadow and transient materials

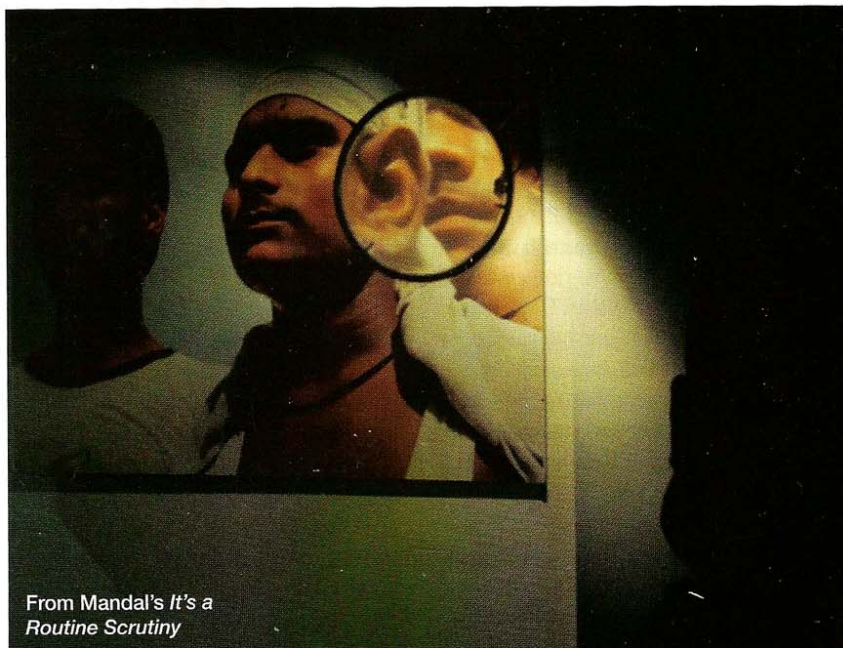
After completing his studies in painting, Mandal, 43, found his interest in canvas waning. Around the same time, the Delhi-based artist started experimenting with the structure of the canvas, using light and shadow as moving elements in his pieces. Thus was born the philosophy of his work and soon, Mandal held his first solo show in Kolkata in 1992.

"The awareness of playfulness that permeates Susanta's work is perhaps the most distinctive aspect of this practice," says Poddar. "Works such as the series *It Doesn't Bite* (2007) and *It's a Routine Scrutiny* (2006), and an untitled wall installation from Devi Art Foundation's current show incorporate elements controlled in a manner that they create sculptures out of variable materials like bubbles, light, and shadow that are constantly evolving."

Ephemeral elements come together in Mandal's work to create sculptures that are in motion. It is these, along with the quietly moving motorised

parts, that give life to Mandal's oeuvre. In one of Mandal's untitled works, a single bubble moves towards a thorn. Interpret it as a murder when it is pricked or natural death as it bursts, the transience of life is highlighted

either way. In *It's a Routine Scrutiny*, a large lens fitted with LEDs moves over rapid shots of people in a darkened room. In doing so, it enlarges the photographs giving different interpretations to the same image.



From Mandal's *It's a Routine Scrutiny*

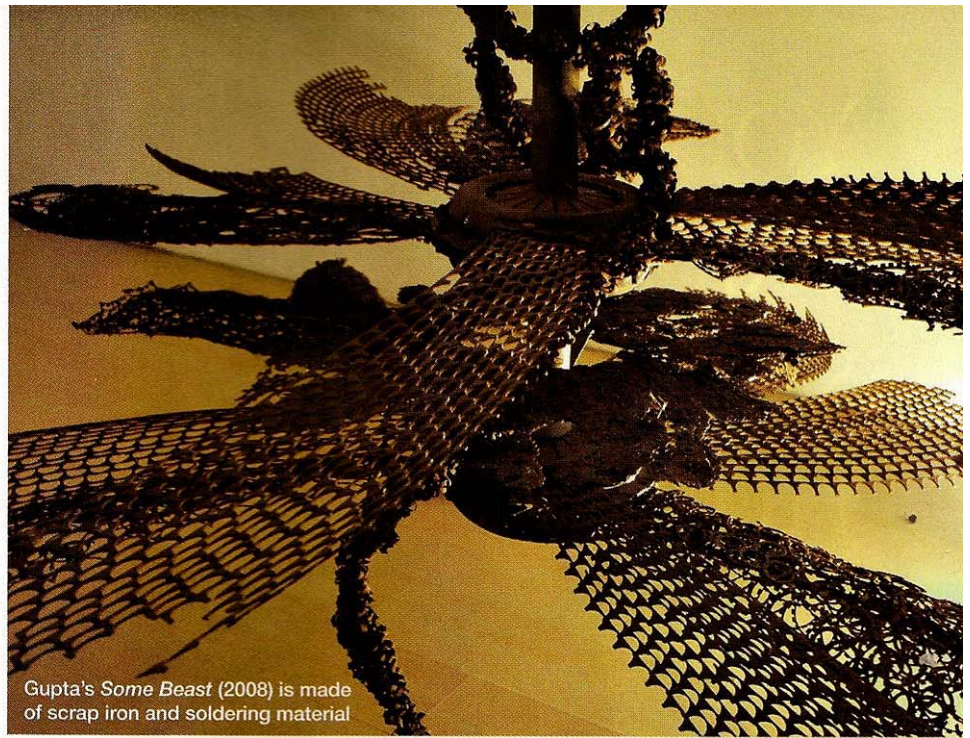
SAKSHI GUPTA



CHOSEN MEDIUM:
Recycled material and scrap metal

Delhi-based Gupta, 29, first displayed her work in 2005. Contradictions are the basis of the works of this trained sculptor. In Gupta's 2006 *Reality Bites*, she created a *mirchi* bed installation that was essentially a mosquito net made of chillies, depicting the idea that something that is supposed to protect, was at the same time, to be handled with care.

This juxtapositioning is further highlighted by her use of recycled materials (she uses chicken feathers in *Landscape of Waking Memories*, 2007) and scrap metal in her work. Says Poddar, "Sakshi has a fantastic ability to impart tactility to her work that belies the materiality of the metal she works with. Her *Landscape of Waking Memories* presents the viewer with a



Gupta's *Some Beast* (2008) is made of scrap iron and soldering material

quilt made up of thousands of eyelashes in metal. One is seemingly confronted by an object naturally associated with comfort and softness that has just been swept aside by someone waking up, yet retains a sense of warmth."

What Poddar particularly enjoys about

Gupta's work is the sense of exploration and alchemical transformation, whereby that metal takes on softness reminiscent of luxurious carpets and thick covers. Poddar particularly enjoyed Gupta's *mirchi* bed installation and a bird constructed of scrap metal that she made during her stint in Vienna.

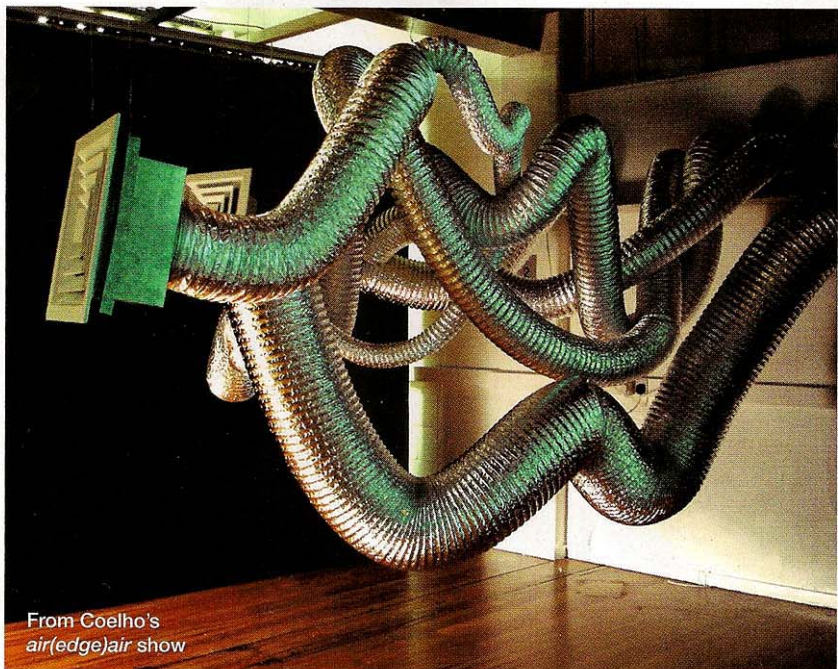


BAPTIST COELHO

CHOSEN MEDIUM:
Mixed mediums

A professional graphic designer, Coelho, 30, first showed his work in 2006 with the exhibition *air(edge)air*. He experiments with many media, his works spanning installations, digital and video works, sound-based objects and architecture-based inspirations. Coelho reveals that his concepts determine the innovative medium through which they are expressed.

His ideas are varied, covering subjects from gender and urbanisation to wars and conflicts. For example, *Clang-Bang Clang-Bang* (on urbanisation) is an installation of earthen pots filled with concrete (its video work is a series of shots moving between these closely placed pots), while *Neighbour # 2 (Mumbai - Malad West)* is his take on space in cities. Says Poddar, "Baptist delves into issues such as a lack of personal privacy/space and the constant spread of buildings that put pressure on the environment. I particularly enjoy the



From Coelho's *air(edge)air* show

straightforward yet layered interpretation of the world by Baptist."

Poddar also reserves special mention for Baptist's *air(edge)air* exhibition that he held at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design Gallery in UK in 2006. Here, Baptist explored the concept of air and sought to give several shapes to its

invisibility. As a result, a work in the series showcased several paper planes entering a room through a window, while in another the artist paid tribute to Gustav Klimt's *Die Jungfrau* through air ducts, diffusers and voice recordings of people's reactions, to the painting, placed inside the ducts.

By Preetika Mathew