

## **The fourth episode of A. R. T. 2020 examines the contemporizing of traditional Indian art and craft in 2020 and beyond**

### **For Immediate Release**

As much as categorizations and definitions help us navigate a complex world, especially the one of art and culture- they can also lead to exclusions, boundaries and hierarchies in everyday life, in institutional practice and in the market. Are hierarchies that were in existence like- tradition and modernity, art and craft, free and applied art, "high art" and "low art" - now interchangeable, elided and expanded? Is the term 'artist' itself outmoded? Can all artists, designers, artisans etc. be broadly credited as creators?

**Kalakaari Haath.Inc** and **Avid Learning** present **A. R. T. 2020: Contemporizing Traditional Skills in the New Age** – the fourth episode of **Art Redefined Today (A. R. T.) 2020** as a part of a specially curated virtual week – **A. R. T. 2020: Tradition Meets Arts and Crafts Today**. This thematic week – celebrating India's rich art and craft traditions – will take a closer look at the myriad of artistic styles, aesthetics and artisanal skills that dot the country's diverse cultural landscape and how they are being updated, contextualized and redefined for contemporary times.

This panel discussion on the redefining of the canon and what is included in its purview as skilled creative output worthy of inclusion will feature *Curator and Writer* **Mayank Mansingh Kaul**, *Director*, **Ojas Art Anubhav Nath** and *Chief Mithaiwala, Bombay Sweet Shop* **Girish Nayak** who will be in conversation with *Cultural Entrepreneur* **Sangita Kathiwada**.

*Please read on for more on the discussion:*

In India much of our 'high' art, and artistic tradition as we know it encompasses design, craft, culinary innovation and even perfume making. The question is- it is all art? Do the consummate skills of the artisan, the perfumer, the sculptor, the embroiderer, the *karigar*, the potter, the wood or marble carver arguably even the chef- make them artists or creditable creators? Do they have a place in the canon and how has their inclusion lead to the updation and expansion of the canon of art today and for the future?

In 2020, it is time to re-evaluate what we consider heritage, how we see what tradition and legacy have come to mean and what gets passed on to the next generation being labelled as such. We must assess what a fruitful dialogue between art, craft, design and other creative industries might look like and what that means for our aesthetic and cultural legacy moving forward as well as a larger social context.

Can a new canon of tradition in 2020 mediate between contemporary art, craftsmanship and new technologies, tracing cultural transfers across regions and disciplines, exploring intermediate areas and transition zones?

How are traditional genres and modes of art making being updated in India? How do we negotiate artistic codes in 2020? What are the issues and rewards with adapting folk or tribal art to suit contemporary tastes and commercial markets? Who are the original creators and stakeholders of this kind of art?

*Read more about the Series below:*

This four-part series that seeks to re-energise conversations around Art and the future of Art by engaging with emerging issues and trends and also focusing on taking the conversation beyond – into the stratosphere of

Indian contemporary art of tomorrow. Topics to be touched upon include Meme Art and the Future of Art Engagement, Redefining Traditional Art in today's world, Identity and Body politics in 2020 and Intersections between Science, Technology and Art.

Join us to learn about innovations in tradition and revisit what the vast canon of traditional art will look like in the coming age.

**When:** Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020 | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

**RSVP:** [www.avidlearning.in/](http://www.avidlearning.in/)

**Press Email / Call:** Ayeshah Dadachanji on [ayeshah.avid@gmail.com](mailto:ayeshah.avid@gmail.com) / +91 9820155297

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## About Speakers

**Mayank Mansingh Kaul** is a New Delhi-based curator and writer with an interest in post-independence histories of textiles, design and fashion in India. A graduate in textile design from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, Kaul has been involved in the past in areas of cultural and creative industries' policy. Exhibitions that he has curated include The Idea of Fashion (Khoj International Artists' Residency, New Delhi, 2011), Fracture: Indian Textiles, New Conversations (Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon, 2015), Gold: The Art of Zari (Bikaner House, New Delhi, 2017), 25 Years of Abraham & Thakore (New Delhi, 2017), Crossroads: Textile Journeys with Ritu Kumar (India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, 2018), New Traditions: Influences & Inspirations in Indian Textiles (Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur, 2018) and Meanings, Metaphor - Handspun and Handwoven in the 21st Century (Chirala, Coimbatore, Bangalore, 2018-19). He is the editor of Take on Art Design (2012), Cloth and India: Towards Recent Histories, 1947-2015 (Marg, 2016), Baluchari: Tradition and Beyond (2016) and Take on Art Fashion, which looks at a century of Indian fashion (2019). Kaul has represented the field of Indian design and textiles in prestigious forums in India and internationally.

Chef **Girish Nayak's** interest in cooking began at the age of 17 when he went for an internship at ITC Grand Maratha Sheraton in Mumbai. Even though he started work in the Garde-Manger section, his periodic visits to the bakery section to collect breads piqued his interest. Post the completion of his course at the Welcomgroup Graduate School Of Hotel Administration, he took a keen interest in baking breads. He even worked at local bakeries in his spare time – his first job was at a sweet shop in Udupi, near Mangalore in Karnataka. Girish then enrolled at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), Hyde Park, New York, where he developed a strong basic foundation in the art of Baking and Pastry-making. During his time at the CIA, he worked part time as a Teacher's Assistant as well as a dishwasher. He had the opportunity to work for the famed Chef Johnny Iuzzini, the legendary Pastry Chef at Restaurant Jean George, where he learnt the art of classic French desserts with a playful modern American touch. Keen to enhance his knowledge, Girish was a stagier at some of New York's finest pastry kitchens and bakeries, including Daniel, Bouchon Bakery, Bouley Bakery and Le Bernardin. Girish subsequently became part of the team at Gotham Bar and Grill under Chef Deborah Racicot, where he mastered the running of pastry and bread stations, and went on to work as a bread baker at Amy Bread Bakery in Chelsea Market. Girish returned to India in the latter part of 2010 and joined the Olive Beach, Bengaluru. At Olive Beach, he spent time fine-tuning his pastry skills for the Indian market, under the guidance of Chef Manu Chandra. He moved to Mumbai to help Chef Manu create a new dessert menu at Olive Bar and Kitchen in Bandra and Mahalaxmi. In May 2012, he moved back to Bangalore to help set up the Baking and Pastry unit at Monkey Bar.

Thereafter, he set up the Bakery at Toast & Tonic, while simultaneously providing inputs to other restaurants within the company. With a keen interest in what India has to offer in the confectionary space, Girish decided to take a break and travel within India, to learn more about the techniques and history of sweet making. Post this culinary journey, he joined the Hunger Inc. team to explore working with traditional Indian sweets and mithai in a reimagined, contemporary style with their newest offering, Bombay Sweet Shop. Girish joined the team in 2018, to bring familiar flavours from around the country, using a mix of traditional and modern techniques to create an offering that is fun, seasonal and created to rekindle the love of Indian sweets.

**Anubhav R Nath** director of Ojas Art and co-founder of the Ramchander Nath Foundation; graduated from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, after which he did a course in Marketing of the Visual Arts at the Sotheby's Institute of Art, London. The foundation is dedicated to restoring and promoting the arts and providing unique platforms to artists. An active observer, he covers contemporary Indian art for various Indian and international publications. Currently, he is curating Ojas Art's Expressions of Tihar, a first-of-its-kind show based on experiential curation. Artists visit Tihar Jail, one of the largest prison systems in south Asia and will create artworks based on this unique experience. Previously, he curated Choas in Order a joint show between the Governments of India and Vietnam held in Hanoi (2008) and Maybach: Celebrating a Legend in conjunction with the US and Germany based Maybach Foundation (2006). Besides art, he has a keen interest in vintage automobiles and enjoys researching on their histories. He also volunteers for various non-government organizations and tries to help in the alleviation of disadvantaged children, both in the rural and urban setting.

**Sangita Sinh Kathiwada** has recently been termed as a "serial culture and design entrepreneur" having qualified as a graphic designer and further studied jewellery designing, interior decoration, photography, and silkscreen printing. Mélange opened its door to Mumbai city 27 years ago in a 100-year old wine cellar, enjoying instant success owing to a first of its kind unique approach at a time when sustainability was not a word on anyone's mind. Sangita Kathiwada captured the attention of textile and fashion lovers for having spotted talent making her a mentor to now- famous several designers. Mélange reflects Sangita's impeccable sense of style and aesthetic. With a commitment to supporting the weavers and artisans, incorporating the latest design with ancient Indian handicrafts, she went on to establish The Morarka Cultural Centre at the prestigious National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA). Sangita Sinh Kathiwada drew the attention of the city to its magnificent heritage architecture by painstakingly arranging path breaking Fashion presentations at the Royal Opera House, Faramji Kavasji Hall and the Mumbai University Convocation Hall. Sangita set up "window" a unique non-commercial Gallery along with Neville Tuli. She served on the board of Osians and committed her time for education and awareness for the Contemporary arts and crafts of our country. The force behind Mélange also committed herself to the cause of redefining the role and reach of our national fabric Khadi and other Indian textiles. Sangita served on Lakme Fashion Week board for 11yrs and made a significant contribution by yet again supporting new talent. She also played the role of external faculty for a short duration at NIFT and SNTD design institutions. Sangita has been invited on several national and international platforms as a speaker. Sangita played a key role in designing the film Rang Rasiya. Sangita is credited for renovating, redesigning and repurposing more than a dozen heritage properties giving them a new meaning relevant to contemporary use. She is presently working on launching a wellbeing product in November 2020.

## Partner Information

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## **About Partners**

**Kalakaari Haath.Inc** is a Mumbai based studio formed in 2014 working in diverse design disciplines. They use design as a medium of collaborative storytelling. Their body of work largely entails graphic design, illustration and wall features. They believe that honesty connects with people and lives beyond. Their work makes them who they are — these are values that they are committed to live through their practice.

**Avid Learning**, the cultural philanthropy arm of the Essar Group founded in 2009 has, over the past decade, grown into one of Mumbai's leading public programming platforms and is firmly entrenched in the country's wider cultural ecosystem. Our thoughtfully curated and diverse events embrace the spirit of collaboration to bring together the best of Indian and international writers, artists, intellectuals, cultural experts, policymakers and industry leaders across Visual Art, Literature, Culture and Heritage, Education, Design & Technology and the Performing Arts through engaging and dynamic formats like panel discussions, workshops & master classes, roundtables, lecture demonstrations, festival platforms, symposiums & conferences, multidisciplinary performances and walkthroughs. To date, AVID has conducted over 1250 programs and connected with more than 150,000 individuals, a widely eclectic group of life-long learners including students, patrons, practitioners, influencers, thought leaders and cultural & creative enthusiasts in Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur, Bangalore, Goa and Gujarat. We have also made our mark internationally, with events and collaborations in Dubai and New York. We regularly collaborate and partner with institutions, organisations and initiatives like the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), (CSMVS) Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), one of the apex bodies that impact cultural policy and the creative sector as a whole. We have been at the helm of programming at the Royal Opera House, Mumbai India's only surviving Opera House since its reopening in 2016. We believe in the importance of arts for social change and we regularly offer our support and platforms for Social Advocacy. In April 2020, we launched **AVID Online**, an online further learning campaign on our social media platforms for our followers to engage with a range of varied topics across the breadth of the arts. Our eclectic faculty of experts, thought leaders, practitioners and innovators continue to share their learnings, expertise and knowledge on our social media platforms with tailored content featured weekly for AVID's online community and beyond. In collaboration with long-term and new partners, we have since dimensionalised the campaign by re-introducing our existing offline formats and IPs and enhancing them for digital engagement. We have taken our content live with engaging masterclasses and virtual panel discussions and also built robust

tangential campaigns and series in support of worthy causes and highlighting topical issues. To keep updated on our programmes, like us on <https://www.facebook.com/avidlearning/>, follow us on <https://twitter.com/AvidLearning> and Instagram: @avidlearning or log onto <http://www.avidlearning.in> #LearningNeverStops!

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