

(Left) An installation from Anant Joshi's *Navel: One and the Many* (2007). (Far left) Baaraan Ijlal

FIVE TO WATCH

From dark installations to canvases exploring sexuality, Bazaar picks the artists of 2013. By Georgina Maddox

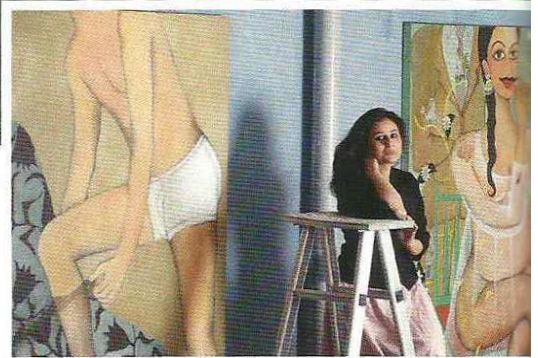
ANANT JOSHI, 43

Curtains made from razor blades and headless toys that morph into mega monsters with multiple limbs—the Nagpur-born Anant Joshi's obsession with toys is not just a boyhood fascination for GI Joe that has proliferated into adulthood. His dark sense of humour has a very serious take on violence. He first came to attention with his solo show *Navel: One and the Many* with Chemould Prescott in 2007, which turned heads because of its sheer scale and how it merged the sinister quality of brutality with comic humour. "I have always felt that violence is so futile and yet everything we do somehow gets connected to it. I want to explore the comical side of it and explode its harmful potential," says Joshi an alumnus of the JJ School of Art in Mumbai with a residency at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam.

For his large solo show coming up at Chemould Prescott, Joshi is creating an army of toy-sized bronze figures. Here the toad and prince merge into one body, Barbie gets the head of shark and the last supper becomes a macabre collection of fish-headed, gorgon-faced, multi-limbed creatures.

His market mantra: Joshi's paper-works sell between ₹30 to ₹50 lakh according to saffronart.

Pratap Morey works with the exacto-knife as much as with printing techniques and photography



BAARAAN IJLAL, 35

She's an artist who is at home on ladders, given that all her current canvases are twice her size. As a bonus to their larger-than-life presence the canvases are also bolder than one would expect of a soft-spoken girl from Bhopal. Ijlal is currently creating waves with brave and beautiful works at two of Delhi's cutting-edge galleries. The Engendered Space in Shahpur Jat, is hosting the exhibition *Queering Making Part I* while Aabadi Art in Lado Sarai showcases *Queering Making Part II*. This comes close on the heels of her debut solo *Bagdad Café* which laced Sufi mysticism with *Arabian Nights*.

The canvases at Engendered Space consist of a family portrait of a beautiful pregnant man-woman, who is flanked by a partner who reassuringly places a hand on his/her shoulder. The other canvas captures an intimate undressing of the headless torso of a man in sheer black stockings. At Abadi Art soldiers wear lacy lingerie under their fatigues. "Doing works based on alternative sexuality and variant desire is always hard, because you are worried about people's reactions. Usually you can't find a gallery willing to display these works," says Ijlal. For her next project the self-taught artist wants to move out of galleries. "I want to do a public art project, not around desire but the city and memory, about how globalisation leads to an erasure of the individuality of cities."

Her market mantra: Ijlal's gallery prices indicate that her works sell between ₹2 to ₹3 lakhs.

PRATAP MOREY, 31

Morey began his journey as a formal easel painter with a somewhat obsessive interest in self-portraits. An expressionist, he moved on to look at a more abstract version of the self portrait using photo-montage, mirror images, and an abstraction of his own body parts. A labour of love, Pratap's work involves a high level of skill and he works with the exacto-knife as much as with printing techniques and photography. His current work involves structure made out of digital archival prints and archival boards. "My works revolve around urban architecture and self indulged urban life," he says.

He recently had a well-received show in Paris, which won the La Critique award at Vernissage Salon, Realities Nouvelles. He also has a show lined up in New York, was part of a residency programme at Space 118, Mumbai, where he will host the fruits of his labour in a show in February, and is part of *Queering Making* at Engendered. Morey also showed in Kochi during the Biennale.

His market mantra: His current work ranges from ₹80,000 to ₹1.20 lakh.

BALBIR KRISHAN, 39

Living on the outskirts of Delhi in a small village called Bijrol, self-taught artist Balbir Krishan had an arduous journey before he could taste the success of a sold-out show at Triveni Art Gallery in 2010 hosted by Abraham Alkazi. "In 1996, I had a train accident and my life was turned upside down. I had to face not just financial problems but also hide my true identity as a gay person," says Balbir who is radiant after walking his first Pride March in the Capital, with the help of prosthetics and many friends by his side. From a time when he could not buy colours or brushes and had to work with a ball pen and paper to a schedule packed with over five exhibitions in 2013, Balbir has come a long way.

For the New Year he has a solo in February at Muse Art Gallery, in Hyderabad, and several group exhibitions, including one at the Lalit Kala Akademi, at Delhi's Habitat Open Palm Court in August, and at Mumbai's Jehangir Art Gallery in October. "There was a time when I couldn't face my neighbours or extended family because I was ashamed of my male nudes. Then I read an article about Bhupen Khakhar in *Art and Deal* (2005), and I realised I was cheating myself," says Balbir.

His market mantra: Balbir's work sells between ₹1.5 to ₹5 lakhs as indicated by United Art Fair and his gallery.



(From above)
This Order by
Pratap Morey.
Balbir Krishan's
male nudes.
Singing Cloud by
Shilpa Gupta



SHILPA GUPTA, 36

Most artists would be over the moon given that they have bagged a top spot on the currently coveted Skoda Art Prize of ₹10 lakhs. However multi-media artist Shilpa Gupta has a way of being both excited and deadpan together. Being selected in the top four of Skoda, means that even if she does not bag the first prize—it will be announced in February alongside the India Art Fair—a residency is usually on the cards for the top three. In the meantime, the 36-year-old, Mumbai-based Gupta unwinds after a hectic two months of touring in Japan and Switzerland where she showed *Untitled*, a work whose "underlying narrative is of greed of the body and mind." Her next pit stop is the Sharjah Biennale in the UAE where she will be displaying *Bell-jar*, a library of stainless-steel bookcases by authors writing under pseudonyms to either hide their gender as women, like George Elliot and JK Rowling or their religious identity, like Ali and Mino who were Muslims.

Her market mantra: Gupta's work sells between ₹50 to ₹80 lakhs as indicated by saffronart, the online art portal, and her gallery. ■

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