

CRAFTING **NARRATIVE EXPERIENCES** THROUGH COMMUNICATIONS: **KAHANI DESIGNWORKS**



Ruchita Madhok & Aditya Palsule

Crafting a narrative experience, the design practice of Kahani Designworks is all about story-narration to portray the culture in which we live today. Exclusively based on the art of story-telling for starting conversations, sharing ideas and building meaningful values, Ruchita Madhok and Aditya Palsule, the co-founders of Kahani Designworks, have created their own niche in contributing to the creative landscape in the city of Mumbai.

TEXT: Namrata Toraskar

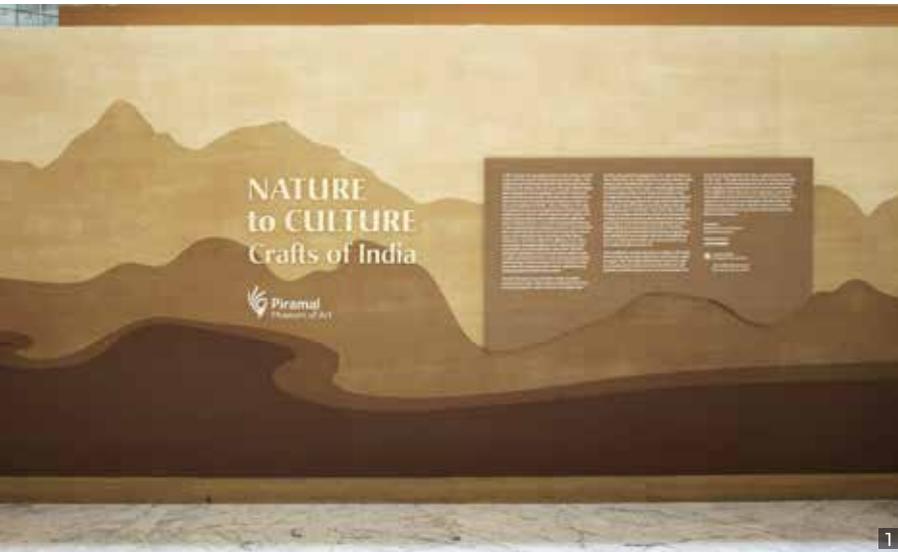
PHOTOS COURTESY: Joy Manavath, Aditya Palsule, Arjun Dogra

In Hindustani ‘*kahani*’ means a ‘story’. Being true to its name, the design practice of Kahani Designworks endeavours to bring the stories of businesses and arts organisations to life in multifaceted forms like visual identity, publications and brand experiences. In the course of developing these communications, exhibition design has become a natural extension of the audience-facing work that they create.

With her training in exhibition design and scenography and wide-ranging work with corporate organisations, arts institutions in India, the UK and UAE,

Madhok reminisces the progress of Kahani Designworks, “While Kahani’s initial projects were primarily in the graphic design space, exhibitions were never too far from our wish-list.” The extensive experience of Palsule in graphics for spatial application synchronises with Madhok’s passion about the power of design to influence the creative landscape of emerging India; and together, they bring an international perspective to their practice.

Primarily drawing their design inspirations from the subject, its history,



material and narrative typology, Palsule says, "Exhibition design is a collaborative and a demanding process. The curators and researchers that we work with usually share a curatorial note that forms the basis for all display within a show." Citing the examples of the exhibitions *Nature to Culture: Crafts of India* and *Likeness without Reference: Cultures of Forgery*, Palsule says that the idea of the exhibition's story is often fueled by many conversations as well as an exchange of research materials.

According to Madhok, the development of their ambitious project



1. Exhibition title and introduction. Nature to Culture, Crafts of India at Piramal Museum of Art, Mumbai. 2017

2. Entry to the exhibition.

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The State of Architecture: Practices and Process in India since 1947 involved a two and half year intense design process. Describing it, Madhok says, "The exhibition-making process was an iterative journey. The ideas around representation and display began as quite complex systems until they were refined and honed over a period of time." The resulting design of the exhibition was thus, minimal and precise, with every floor of NGMA, Mumbai having a distinct story to tell



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3. Main entry to the exhibition space. Likeness Without Reference, Cultures of Forgery at Piramal Museum of Art, Mumbai. 2017.

4. Entry to the display of artwork.



5. The ground floor level of the exhibition, The State of Architecture, Practices and Processes in India at NGMA, Mumbai. 2015.



6. Introduction to Section 2 of the exhibition

and the entire gallery space being held together by a strong visual identity.

While designing an exhibition, Madhok and Palsule believe not just in showcasing the cultural artefacts and concepts, but also in communicating the stories of those artefacts to a diverse audience. Talking about this design ideology, Palsule adds, “The exhibition thus functions as a medium of exchange between an institution and an audience. In this way it becomes valuable to consider the exhibition as a space of discovery and dialogue.”

What sets apart the works of Kahani Designworks is their keen interest to use colour and type to set the tone for this dialogue. According to Madhok, colour creates strong emotional responses but it also carries cultural meaning, which may challenge or provoke



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stereotypes. “For the recent exhibition Mutable: Ceramics and Clay Art in India since 1947 we used a combination of stone blue and celadon green wall colours to contrast with the warm tones of ceramic artworks on display. It proved to be a fortuitous experiment with many visitors commenting on the calm, soothing harmony of tones,” says Madhok. Talking about the importance of typography and the typographic identity that they develop for an exhibition, Palsule adds, “The appearance of type on all promotional material of the exhibition creates an expectation for a potential visitor. Within the exhibition space, language comes alive with the judicious use of type.”

With such unique aspects of creating exhibitions for museums and institutions, Kahani Designworks harmoniously develops the graphic and spatial design strategies which help create an engaging and inspiring experience for all visitors. ■

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Kahani Designworks is an award-winning design studio from Mumbai



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that works with businesses and arts organisations in the areas of Exhibition Design, Visual Identity, Brand Expression, Communication Strategy, Environmental Graphics and Packaging & Publication Design. Their endeavour is to develop context-driven design solutions to engage the audiences with thoughtfully crafted communication.

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7. A panoramic view of the exhibition. Mutable: Ceramic and Clay Art in India since 1947 at Piramal Museum of Art, Mumbai. 2017-2018.

8. A view of the section titled “utility”.