

WEARING ART ON THE SLEEVE

A MUMBAI-BASED PROJECT IS MARRYING FASHION WITH ART IN THE MOST CREATIVE WAY POSSIBLE

BY RASHMI GOPAL RAO

A symbol of prestige and exclusivity, luxury is all about superlative value and desirability. Further, customising a luxury product using the medium of art only enhances its appeal and aspirational value. Curating such pieces of nuanced luxury is Mumbai-based The Studio Project, a bespoke design firm specialising in wearable art. Founded by artist Kanika Ranka Adani, who passionately works on customising luxury products for her clients, Studio Project is all about integrating a touch of the client's unique personality and personal style into the product. Think hand-painted Louis Vuitton suitcases, Fendi shoes, Dior handbags and much more.

Blending fashion with fine arts

With a passion for design, Kanika was always interested in creative arts, especially painting. She is an alumnus of the prestigious School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she pursued a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts. "Though I was born and brought up in Bombay, I have had the good fortune to travel around the globe at a young age, which significantly influenced my artistic style and sense of aesthetics. All through my years in Chicago, I was deeply interested in the confluence of fashion with fine arts. I always wondered at ways one could bring art outside of a studio space or a gallery wall," says Kanika. After completing her graduation, Kanika explored career options in graphic design as well as textiles but they failed to satiate her creative bent of mind.

Her foray into painting on products happened rather serendipitously. "I painted a pair of shoes as a gift

for my friend's birthday which I posted instinctively on Instagram. Unexpectedly, the post received a lot of attention and reached thousands of people. I started receiving multiple painting requests. Initially, I did a lot of projects pro bono but it was my way of learning on the job. There was no ready-made course or a 'Google search', which would give me a step-by-step cheat sheet to the kind of painting and personalisation I was doing. Hence, I did a lot of low-budget projects initially, which I gifted to friends. This helped build my confidence and I slowly moved towards painting on higher value products," says the 29-year-old. Thus was born The Studio Project in 2016.

Enticing variety and personal touch

The Studio Project is a high-end, exclusive hand-painting venture that works on a number of luxurious products like bags, wallets, cardholders, passport cases, luggage, shoes, jackets, accessories, musical instruments and even skateboards. Kanika's meticulous artwork can be seen on coveted brands like Hermes, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Fendi and Gucci amongst others, and are a perfect fit for individuals with a refined taste and discerning mind. Her renowned clientele includes international fashion houses like Dior, Ferragamo and Versace and celebrities like Sonam Kapoor, Nita and Isha Ambani, Virat Kohli, Anushka Sharma, Ayushmann Khurrana, Ibrahim Ali Khan and Samantha Ruth Prabhu.

Before starting the design and painting process, Kanika feels that it is imperative to get familiar with some key aspects of the clients' personality. "I work to turn their ideas and aspirations into a distinctively personalised painted reality through group brainstorming and ideation. When clients share reference photographs with me during this phase, I am able to learn more about their personality and better understand how to meet



A handpainted skateboard



Kanika Ranka Adani



Quirky designs are Kanika's forte



A handpainted Louis Vuitton bag

their needs. Many clients opt to get portraits of their dogs, as they hold a unique place in their hearts and these make for the cutest artworks. Travel stickers telling stories of their personal experiences is also the way many clients choose to add their personal touch to their products," adds Kanika, who is currently working on painting a denim jacket for a client with 30 assorted stickers, including her favourite books, travel destinations, important birthdays and dates, college crests, favourite foods, etc.

Meticulous and elaborate process

The lifecycle of a customisation project starts with the customer sharing an image of the product. The product is normally bought by the client and shipped to the studio. Kanika then comes up with themes, concepts, and colour schemes after discussions with the client. The technique and painting style is largely determined by the distinctive properties of the surface of the base product. Digital graphic layouts that visually illustrate the concept is prepared and once this is approved, the actual paint-

ing commences. "I use imported paints and supplies from reputed US suppliers that are made especially for use on leather and treated canvas products to ensure the best quality. The foundation surface of the product is diligently cleaned and prepared before several coats of base paint are applied. To increase the lustre and sheen of the artwork, each colour is painted in numerous coats," explains Kanika. Further, several coats of sealer are used to make the artwork waterproof and crack-proof. Along with the precautions taken by Kanika, a sheet of guidelines and care tips are also sent to clients to ensure that the quality of the artwork is preserved.

Exclusive creations

It is interesting to note that Kanika finds inspiration for her artwork from a plethora of places – whether it is art exhibitions, travelling, surfing the Internet, watching fashion runways, looking at design icons and having stimulating talks with creative people from various fields. She always ensures that no two creations are the same and offers variations in terms of composition, colours and size. So, which is her favourite project? "Customising my first Hermes Kelly bag was one of my most treasured and challenging projects. Working on such an iconic bag for the first time was thrilling and nerve-wracking at the same time. Given that they are one of my favourite accessories, bags have a special place in my heart. They contribute significantly to personal style and make a bold fashion statement. Customising bags allows me to enhance the customer's sense of style, which is truly satisfying," says Kanika who also has a fetish for personalised passport cases. According to her, there is something exciting and exhilarating about travel and discovery and making that experience a little more personal and special for a client through their passport cover is something she thoroughly enjoys.

Apart from exploring new materials and mediums, Kanika plans to collaborate with new brands in the future for their onsite events for painting live is something she finds exciting. Customising hand fans for a renowned skincare brand and creating some quirky walls for homes have been some of her recent ventures. **W**

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