



Kanika Ranka at her Worli home. PIC/SURESH KARKERA

The parakeet on your LV

Would you let an artist paint on your Neverfull MM tote? Meet the woman convincing the rich to part with their lakhpati bags so she can turn them into wearable art

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LET'S say, you are at a party and notice another guest carrying the same luxury handbag as yours. It's an accessory that you have spent a whack of money on. "It is an awkward moment," chimes designer Kanika Ranka, 25. "Especially, when you are hoping to stand out." And, that's where her services come in. Founder of The Studio Project, Ranka dabbles in wearable art. Her job is to make

bespoke fashion fun and personal.

Over the last three years, the Worli-based entrepreneur has customised bags for the fashion forward, including actor Sonam Kapoor, philanthropist Nita Ambani and YES bank founder Rana Kapoor's daughters Radha and Raakhee. The designs range from floral patterns, logos and comic characters to straight up monograms.

It all started when she was pursuing a degree in fine arts from the


Art Institute of Chicago. "Abroad, wearable art is a thing. Here, not so much." By the time she returned home, the sight of women carrying Dior, Hermes and Chanel was fairly common. "With everyone travelling extensively, it is no big deal to be seen with luxury bags. That alone can't lend you street cred." What was needed was personalisation; it could be a symbol, a dash or a slash, anything that would make you look like "you own it". "There was certainly hesitation initially because there is the risk of ruining a very precious bag in the name of customisation. So, customers started out by first giving me their old bags," she laughs.

Ranka knew there was no room for error. She conducted thorough research on the best way to paint on a variety of surfaces, the tech-

niques of preserving colours, and even conducted patch tests on her own bags.

The time taken to customise a bag can range from two weeks to two months. Ranka admits she has a waiting list, and getting here has taken time. The first bag she customised was for a friend's birthday. She earned high-profile clients through word of mouth and with some push from social media. "The best traction occurs when a high-profile client carries my bags to a high-profile event. It's rewarding to see orders come to you organically."

As a rule, Ranka has a detailed, one-on-one discussion with the client on expectations. It usually starts with locking a theme. Unicorns, Wonder Woman and flowers are popular. "I then create around

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six digital visuals on Photoshop to give the users a sense of what the bag will look like. Options on design placement, colour and size are available. Clients need a lot of reassurance before they say, yes." This means a fair bit of back and forth until they arrive at a consensus. "I have to deliver what I have promised. The bag needs to look exactly like

what they've seen waterproof paint from America a leather and ca hars is a process between 10 to 1 paint on each p the required lev colours. This is f ers of varnish to doesn't peel off.

Her services from ₹4,500 to ₹

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