

Grantee : Rahul Kumar, Gurgaon, Haryana

Grant amount : Rs 2,83,000

Grant period : One year and six months from December 15, 2013

Précis

This grant supports experimenting with different clay bodies and firing techniques to make a large-scale ceramic installation, consisting of individual units of varying shapes and sizes, to be exhibited during the India Art Fair in 2015. Grant funds will pay for material costs, production costs for a small scale replica as well as the final installation, travel, space rental, labour costs and accountant's fees.

Grant Description

Rahul Kumar is a Delhi-based ceramic artist who has been given a grant to create a large-scale ceramic installation, 14x6 ft, which is to be part of the India Art Fair in 2015. Rahul's interest in large-scale installations stems from his desire to challenge the conventional association of ceramics with function and utility, and create work through this medium that is expressive in an aesthetic sense. He plans on making a number of small and large ceramic objects which work as containers (pots) but also simultaneously tell stories, individually and as an installation.

Most of Rahul's work have engaged the idea of dichotomy and have been relatively small scale. His desire to experiment with scale has several implications on technique: for example, he will be required to create a clay body that is more resilient, has reduced shrinkage as well as higher strength. He will also need to experiment with firing styles, including the challenge of finding or making a kiln large enough to fire the individual pieces he has in mind.

As envisaged in the tentative design sketch Rahul has put together, the proposed installation will have platters of various sizes with textures and motifs on them. Several will have components 'growing out' and entering the space of the viewer. Rahul likes to use the term 'organic geometry' to describe the installation as consisting of round platters with imperfections and growth.

It was after Rahul sent IFA his proposal that the India Art Fair came on board to offer him a space to exhibit his work, and this development is crucial because it is not often in the history of Indian art that one comes across large-scale ceramic installations in a contemporary art fair context. The exhibition space would also allow Rahul to realise his objectives in terms of audience engagement, because he is interested not only in using scale for attention, but also hopes that viewers will explore each individual component for its unique details and imagery.

It is difficult to gauge the risk and experimentation entailed in a work such as this without having an understanding of the processes involved in the making of ceramic art, and because IFA does not often receive proposals in this area. Thus Rahul's proposal was sent to Riyas Komu and Jyotsna Bhatt for external evaluation. It was anticipated that Riyas would bring his valuable experience as curator of the Kochi Muzeris Biennale to weigh upon the implication of a large-scale ceramic installation in an art fair context, and Jyotsna Bhatt would provide expertise as a ceramic artist and teacher. Both the evaluators were measured in their comments on the 'experimentation' entailed in the project, but recommended nonetheless, that it was an important project for IFA to support given that it attempted to challenge popular perceptions about ceramic art. Jyotsna Bhatt suggested that Rahul share his process to the extent possible with other ceramic artists, and Riyas Komu recommended that perhaps an informal 'mentor' who would act as a sounding board would be useful. Both these recommendations have been conveyed to Rahul, and Vineet Kacker, a Delhi-based ceramic artist has been identified as Rahul's informal mentor. At the conclusion of the project, IFA will invite Jyotsna Bhatt to evaluate the project, its challenges, shortcomings and successes.

This is a particularly interesting grant to have been made under EAP since it serves the dual purpose of introducing to IFA the challenges and risks of working with ceramics, and also simultaneously places us in a better position to be able to gauge

ceramic-based proposals in the future, allowing us to acquire an understanding of what the nature of 'critical practice' in relation to ceramic art would be.

Budget

Final installation costs	Rs 1,39,000
Honorarium	1,08,000
Replica making and installation costs	24,000
Testing and experiment costs	9,000
Accountant's fee	<u>3,000</u>
Total	<u>Rs 2,83,000</u>