

A Times of India publication

Europe's No. 1 Style Magazine

GRAZIA

Easy Chic

Volume 13 Issue 6
September 2020

Power Pairings

13 designers + artists
bring fresh energy
to September

**BEYOND
THE
BINARY**

*Drag
Queens
on the
Power of
Make-up*

#GoodVibesOnly
Jacqueline Fernandez





From the EDITOR'S DESK

What's the best thing that's come about while we've been in #WFH mode and limited in terms of how we create? The power of collaborating by virtually joining hands, heads, and hearts to create stories and images that are telling of our times and that help build a new, relevant narrative. This month, we've ideated with artists, designers, and photographers and invited them to collaborate with each other and us, and the results are here for you to see in our September issue.

To begin with, we asked ten emerging talents in fashion and design to co-create artworks that focus on 'nostalgia, longing and unexplored possibilities for our future' – encompassing everything from scrapbook-style collages featuring Indian objects, family photographs and doodles to mixed media artwork dominated with the colour pink and featuring a

mythical creature; and an illustration that juxtaposes a subconscious, dream-like snapshot with eccentric visual representation with birds and animal faces against the backdrop of NYC. It's also September and the start of a new fashion season, which is why for our next big collaboration, we focused on showcasing new A/W 2020 collections, enlisting eight artists to create stunning imagery while in confinement.

On our cover, this month, is the lovely Jacqueline Fernandez, who's spreading her brand of infectious energy not only on her social media profiles, but also in the pages of our digital magazine via her tenets to positivity.

Stay safe,

Mehernaaz
Mehernaaz



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@mehernaazdhondy

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our website
grazia.co.in



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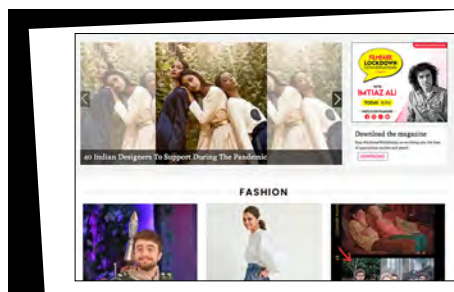
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Our website is our complementary arm, combining the best of what the magazine offers with its own flavour and take on current events around the world. Fashion news haute off the press, beauty product reviews, DIY hacks, and previews and reviews of the biggest dos around the country – we've got it all covered in easy reads.



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SOLO

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This month, it's all about unexpected pairings, jewellery that's a bit more artistic, and an important WFH conundrum: Is it ok to wear pyjamas all day?

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QUEEN
CULTURE

Europe's No 1 Style Magazine

GRAZIA SEPTEMBER 2020 VOLUME 13 ISSUE 6

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Emerging talents co-create artworks that focus on nostalgia, longing and unexplored possibilities.

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In light of the new normal, we unveil the beauty and complexities of getting hitched in present times.



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IT TAKES
TWO

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ON THE GRAZIA COVER

JACQUELINE FERNANDEZ is wearing a camo print jumpsuit, Dior; gold plated chain necklaces, Misho

Photograph SAHIL DAS
Fashion Director PASHAM ALWANI
Hair and make-up SHAAN MUTTATHIL

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Eight artists in lockdown interpret and showcase the best of A/W 2020.

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DINNER AT
EIGHT

FASHION CHARTS

Your best buys in stores right now

1



'MEDUSA BIGGIE' SUNGLASSES, VERSACE, ₹ 19,965

Channel your inner hip-hop queen with this 90s-style, acid green acetate pair. Work them with a slick-back do that'd make Rihanna proud.

2

SILVER NECKLACE, TRIBE AMRAPALI, PRICE ON REQUEST

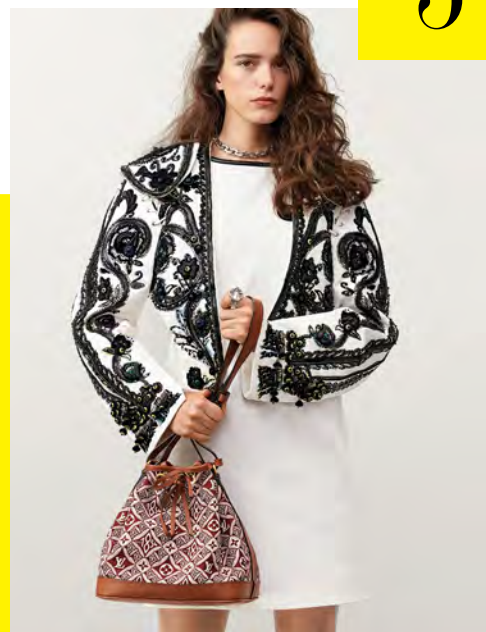
For days when you want to dress up but don't *really* want to, we've got just the solution. Wear this statement-making necklace with everything from an LBD to a plain white Tee.



3

DRESS, JACKET AND BAG, ALL LOUIS VUITTON, PRICE ON REQUEST

There's nothing quite like a beautifully embroidered bolero-style jacket to make you forget you're under house arrest. Brb, we're daydreaming about all the possible outfit options, with this jacket as the star of the show.



5

WINDCHEATER, TOMMY HILFIGER, ₹ 3,450

A light-weight waterproof jacket is just the thing for the sunny-one-minute-rainy-the-next weather we've been having of late. Plus point for all the extra pockets that will enable you to step out of the house hands-free.



TIE-UP SANDALS, CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN, PRICE ON REQUEST

These scarf tie-up sandals are crying out for a relaxing seaside holiday (or staycation). Wear them with a white lace maxi dress for that ideal vacay #OOTD.



4



6

BOOTCUT JEANS,
UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON,
₹ 4,670

Universally flattering, a pair of bootcut jeans is the ideal style to swap your worn-out PJs for. Pair with a basic tank and XL gold hoops for a laid-back yet comfy look.

7



'SADDLE' BAG,
DIOR, PRICE
ON REQUEST

Maria Grazia Chiuri gives the iconic 'Saddle' bag a 2020 update with an OTM tie-dye print. It's perfect for all your essentials when you re-enter the normal world, or could serve as an extra to your at-home, mise-en-scène flatlays.



**POLKA DOT
BANDANA,**
I WAS A SARI, ₹ 440

We've hit peak 90s and 00s fashion nostalgia obsession with the resurgence of the humble headscarf. For good hair days and bad, it's the perfect accompaniment to a floral peasant-style frock.

8

10

**PRINTED
TURTLENECK, H&M
STUDIO, ₹ 6,020**

After months of oversized vintage Tees and sweatshirts, it's finally time to get out of that slump to try on something a little *extra*. Throw on a tailored blazer over it for your weekly meetings or wear it with a pop of your fave red lipstick for a gossip sesh with your girlfriends.



9

RUCHED DRESS, ZARA
₹ 3,590

If you're looking for a dress that offers pure, unadulterated joy, look no further than this tangerine ruched shirt-dress. It's great for bright, sunny and gloomy rainy days alike. Add a chunky necklace for max impact.



For more beauty tips and trends, head to our website

[grazia.co.in](https://www.grazia.co.in)

BEAUTY CHARTS

Skincare and make-up on our radar right now

1

ETUDE COLORFUL VIVID TINT, ₹680 EACH

These bright, colourful tints have a super pigmented formula, packed with lip-plumping menthol. Great to keep your pout painted without any transferring, even under your face mask.



5

ESTÉE LAUDER ADVANCED NIGHT REPAIR SYNCHRONIZED MULTI-RECOVERY COMPLEX, ₹4,500

This cult favourite has been reformulated to be more powerful and effective. It offers 72-hour hydration, antioxidant protection, and anti-ageing benefits that are visible in less as three weeks.



FOREST ESSENTIALS NATURAL DEODORANT, ₹1,250

These aluminium-free antiperspirants are made with natural plant extracts to scent your skin without clogging pores or causing hormonal imbalances.

2

3

DERMALOGICA ACTIVE CLEARING RANGE, ₹3,200 ONWARDS

This one-of-a-kind range targets zits and ageing at the same time. The salicylic acid in it fights acne-causing bacteria, while the Age Bright Complex reduces blemishes and fine lines. If you're someone who's battling adult acne, stock up on this, stat.



4

KAY BEAUTY ILLUMINATING HIGHLIGHTERS, ₹799

Pop this on to get glowing in no time. Apart from super shimmery, iridescent pigments, we love that it also has skin-loving avocado and mango butter.



A GREEN SLATE

This sustainable fashion brand is here to make a difference

Unearthing ancient crafts that have long been a part of our traditions seems to have lost its ethos due to the concept of fast fashion in the industry. A homegrown brand is seeking to revive these crafts keeping the true essence of the country's traditions intact.

A brand truly born out of the joy of dressing up, the genesis of SajKe was a passion for making a change and empowering women. It personifies the mother-daughter relationship; the intimate bond the women feel when they make each other feel beautiful. SajKe's collection is an amalgamation of Indian crafts and modern styles. The brand embodies the power of confidence in a woman. It weaves the story of strength while representing beauty and grace.

Jumping on the bandwagon of sustainable products is easy, but creating 100% environment-friendly products is a task, something that SajKe does effortlessly. An ode to hand-embroidered and handcrafted culture, it wants to be a pioneer in the gradual shift to slow fashion, which is beneficial to local artisans and consumers alike. By reintroducing treasured crafts like Ajrakh and Kalamkari in the 21st century, the brand wishes to greet the world of fashion with the best of Indian culture and modern aesthetics.

The force behind the brand, Founder Mrs. Divya Advani Bharwani, has been working relentlessly since the age of 18. Being a single child, she confidently took up her family business, equipped to amplify it, with a genuine passion for the industry. Her research and



Mrs. Divya Advani Bharwani



acumen generated a proclivity towards sustainable fashion, and the mission of promoting and advocating for eco-friendly fashion was born. Together with her sister Bhavna Panjabi, she began this long and fruitful journey to fulfil

her dream. Her women-driven brand encapsulates beauty with a purpose. Divya's vision is for SajKe to be counted among the top sustainable, viable brands on global platforms.

SajKe's signature textile

jewellery is intricately handcrafted to perfection. The blend of natural dyes and organic fabrics exude the grace of authentic India. The clothes created using layers of block printed fabrics emanate simplicity, comfort and elegance. Other than textile jewellery and handcrafted apparel, the brand also offers a range of décor and gift items with unique designs.

An upcoming brand in sustainable fashion, the brand's approach is not only to deliver products, but also emotions. Thriving to make a global impact, SajKe is here to stay.

sajke

 @Sajke.in |  sajke.in

10 HOT STORIES

EVERYONE'S BEEN TALKING ABOUT

1 THE NEW NEXT

How will we dress once this all ends? After months of self-soothing and finding comfort in the relaxed cocoon of loungewear at home, could we pivot solely towards relaxed fits for the long term future? Or, will we go to the other extreme and dress up more than we ever have before? In the absence of A/W 2020 runway presentations in the country, what trends can we expect? As the way we live our lives adjusts to a new normal, how will our wardrobes fare? Five designers weigh in...



INGY STOCKHOLM



DIOR



SIMONE ROCHA

RETURN TO INNOCENCE

As a refreshing antidote to the current digital overload, there is a parallel fashion space ensconced in softness and whimsy – a humane factor – that could perhaps be alluded to as an homage to simpler times. Eka's Rina Singh explains, "The generous explorations of pleated Madras checks at Burberry, big plaid iterations at Rossie Assoulin, Monse and Thom Browne all bring forth ideas of empathy and compassion seen via generous volumes, refined layers, and perfect imperfections. There is a vulnerability and softness expressed through romantic, humanly themes in the use of sheer and lace – delicate materials where softness is not being regarded as a lack of strength. At Simone Rocha, the old world, feminine and fairytale styling drives this point home, along with Cecilie Bahnsen, Molly Goddard, Erdem, and Ulla Johnson – all making a case for fictitious characterisation in styling for the ramp." Singh also highlights a 'tactile therapy' approach with lightweight quilting, plush jacquards and Inge Stockholm's gilded wood jewels that are treated to be as light as a feather.



BURBERRY

SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

MISSONI

DRIES VAN NOTEN

MONSE

FUNCTIONAL FOCUS

Along with a predicted post-pandemic paradigm shift in buying patterns, changing fashion trends, and the need to re-evaluate how the industry functions, the birth of new inventions leaning towards utility also seems imminent. "We are experiencing an alternate reality with digital fashion shows to avoid the spread of the virus, and designer masks being crafted for weddings. As many festivals and occasions are now close-knit, the way we dress for these events has changed. There will be a gradual shift from heavily layered wedding looks towards functional fashion, like pocket lehengas, pre-stitched saris and even twin sets where the focus is comfort and functionality," says Monisha Jaising.



THE BEYONDS

MONISHA JAISING

GABRIELLA HEARST



GUCCI



BOTTEGA VENETA

URVASHI KAUR



JIL SANDER

REVIVAL OF CLASSICS

Over the last few months, we have seen a shift towards more classic and effortless styles with a focus on essentials and harked on the importance of “forever pieces”.

While these investments are a way to possibly feel more hopeful amidst our current dystopian reality, they’re still wardrobe essentials that can be used during lockdown and far beyond. “There is now a focus on purist products – think oversized sweaters, plush shawls and floor-length dresses in luxe materials. Investment pieces like the Balenciaga ‘Priestess’ dress and an Hermès blanket poncho make it to the top of the list,” says Bhaane’s Nimish Shah. He also predicts (perhaps, thanks to the rise of a conscious consumer) thrifted and hand-me-down dramatic pieces for private gatherings as well as dressing for oneself rather than for show, bringing forth an asexual yet sensuous sensibility.



FENDI



ROKSANDA



HERMÈS



BALENCIAGA

CLEAN LINES

As we have been forced to slow down in lockdown, we’ve also had more time to reflect, make changes to old patterns and set intentions for the future. “We now have the chance to break out of the old frenetic cycle of living that we were stuck in, like an endless, meaningless loop. It’s great to see how people are returning to minimalism and transitioning towards comfort and simplicity. This pandemic has altered what we expect from clothing. More than a trend, it’s a shift in mindset that will continue to develop, where we are less reliant on trends, and minimalism complements sustainability by investing in timeless pieces. As a brand, we encourage customers to buy pieces that are versatile and can last over several years – like well-cut blazers, cosy overlays and easy dresses that move seamlessly between home to work to lounging. Even classics are going to explore new meanings as we transition towards simple living as seen at Jil Sander and Bottega Veneta’s collections with long-line simple dresses and super pared-down blazers and lots of black and ecru monochrome,” shares Urvashi Kaur.

SEASONS OF CHANGE

With many labels poised to embrace seasonless collections, the modern fashion calendar has been skewed and what was once old is new again. “This is truly the time to embrace timeless and seasonless dressing. As the idea of seasons becomes redundant, the focus shifts to separates and statement pieces that lend themselves to individual expression. While we all crave a simpler and nostalgic time; the 70s are a great way to throw back with fringes, wide leg trousers, and long slip dresses – all of which will never go out of style. Also, after being cooped indoors for months, the joy of busy botanicals as seen at Richard Quinn and Anna Sui via prints and embroideries feel liberating and uplifting,” says Nachiket Barve. **11**



ANNA SUI



CHLOÉ



ETRO



MARINE SERRE



RICHARD QUINN

Embroidered
hoodie, Ashish,
₹ 37,945

Mesh midi skirt,
Self Portrait,
₹ 22,325 approx

Lace detailed satin
dress, Attico
at Le Mill, ₹ 62,145

Tailored trousers,
Studio Rigü,
₹ 10,300



2

THE MASHUP

It's all about unexpected pairings this month

While the idea of putting together WFH outfits at the start of lockdown made our days exciting, it wasn't long before the novelty wore off and we entered a lazy, hopeless slump, wearing anything we saw the moment we opened our closets, often ending up in mismatched pairings (that went perfectly well with our confused moods, if nothing else), because we had nowhere to go. But, from the many surprises 2020 has given us, this A/W 2020 trend of pairing clashing separates (irrespective of silhouette, style, occasion or even time of day) is by far the most relieving one. Advocated by the likes of Louis Vuitton, Coach and MSGM, wearing mismatched clothing is now considered 'cool'. So slip on a pair of tailored trousers to make your lacy night dress appropriate for a day of catching up with friends or layer a cute blazer over your comfy tank and wrap skirt combo for an impromptu Zoom call.

Ruffled shirt,
United Colors of Benetton,
₹ 3,490

Checked blazer,
Vero Moda,
₹ 2,000

Sequined skirt,
ONLY,
₹ 1,799

Cotton silk skirt,
Alanui,
₹ 51,130 approx

'Ena' quilted blazer,
Untitled Co.,
₹ 26,000

Panelled leather trench,
Michael Kors,
price on request

Handwoven silk
dress, Ekaya,
₹ 39,975

STRAIGHT-TALKING 3

10 HOT
STORIES



FASHION FORWARD

Clothes-maker Kallol Datta on redefining fashion visuals in a post-Covid world

One of the ways in which humans express their personal identity is through clothes, and traditionally brand visuals were created to influence purchasing decisions by depicting apparel as fitting with a desired lifestyle. That has now further branched out into two trains of thought, courtesy social media. One, through the educational – the ‘raising awareness through clothing’ school of thought; with the other being visuals created based on how viral they might go. The manner in which the latter thought is increasingly adapted by fashion brands is worrisome. Eliciting a response by any means possible has led to brands momentarily jumping onto long-existing grassroots-led movements and piggybacking on the clout the short-lived association provides to positively further the way the label is perceived. Remember when 90 per cent of our designers jumped on the sustainability bandwagon in the early 2010s without understanding what the term meant, and not having sustainable practices in place? Yes, fun times.

Fashion print magazines have been around for a while. The designer look-book, or catalogue, is a recent phenomenon. In the 1980s, Yohji Yamamoto presented his first seasonal look-book, which prompted fashion designers across the globe to marry visual imagery, graphics, and clothing to create manifestos

and narratives for their brands.

Right now, more than ever, fashion manifestos and everything they encapsulate needs to be anthropological. They need to reflect the signs of our

times. And just a handful of clothes-makers and industry professionals doing it is not enough. Conceptualising, casting, modeling, photographing and writing about a garment in a manner to ensure it grabs eyeballs is a disservice to consumers and observers. If an item of clothing looks dramatically different hanging in your wardrobe when compared to the clothing brand’s Instagram feed, then there is a glaring problem – a disconnect. Fashion does not need escapism and fantasy right now; it does not need vapid visuals, where the product does not even register.

Currently, the magazine and newsprint industry is going through a season of change, with fashion and lifestyle publications dropping out of circulation every week. And while this has a lot to do with Covid-19 and the already-in-motion economic downturn, it does not seem temporary, wherein most of these publications will probably not come back to printing editions again. It’s really unfortunate because the May and June 2020 issues have had better content than ever before. Some casualties are reworking their online presence. For those publications that will only have an online edition, this is an opportune moment to focus more on the content inside as opposed to who is placed on the cover. Designers and the fashion media’s dependence on selling fantasy shouldn’t be the priority. Will content produced by the industry get more meaningful and thoughtful? Social media posts don’t seem to suggest so. People of colour are still being used as props in campaigns. Marginalised communities are being screamed at for not being sustainable enough when buying sustainably produced and organic apparel is a privilege. Brands posting a rainbow grid to celebrate pride month while stifling queer staff of payment? Check.

It will be interesting to see what business

and creative models magazines adopt once their websites become more prominent than their print editions. People who get their fashion information primarily online are already subscribing to Patreon and other subscription services of independent fashion entities. Fashion magazines are now coming into an already saturated online marketplace. The noise and hype is infinitely louder. How do you create engaging visual and editorial content to draw in and retain consumers? By playing fair. Hierarchies and aspirational value hold little meaning in the online e-zine world. Personally, I would rather post a strong, evocative image of a garment of mine on my social media feed, styled and photographed by an independent creative rather than a ‘meh’ one produced by an e-zine with an erstwhile masthead. It is a seemingly more democratic space that thrives on collaborative exercises. And therein lies your answer. We should be collaborating with people and communities from whom we’ve borrowed and stolen ideas with absolute impunity. Collaborate with professionals from the queer community; from regions other than Delhi-NCR and Mumbai, and pay them what you would pay the other creatives that swarm our industry.

On building narratives online, magazines need to address the politics of identities in fashion. Our version of what it means to be ‘Indian’ seems distorted. Making your product in India does not excuse you from sewing a mediocre garment, which will end up in a landfill after being minimally used. Sharing a #NationalHandloomDay post while the Handloom Board was just dismantled was oxymoronic at worst. No more fantasy in clothing for now, not when the world is literally burning around us. ■

Strong and evocative visuals on social media is the need of the hour



Fashion does not need escapism and fantasy right now

Photographs: PARAK SARUNGBAM, SIDDHARTHA HAJRA

4



Jenn Nkiru

“We were beauty before they knew what beauty was,” eulogises Beyoncé in the opening montage for her *Brown Skin Girl* video, which finds pride of place in *Black Is King*, a visual album based on the 2019 soundtrack she executive produced, *The Lion King: The Gift*. With one sweeping statement, Queen Bey manages to wax eloquent about the complexities associated with our perception of beauty. The song, which features her daughter, Blue Ivy, is a love letter to women of colour everywhere. With African influences, intricate, opulent styling, and pure Black-girl joy, the video for the song is a revolution in six minutes.

LARGER THAN LIFE

Celebrating diversity and womanhood with the director of Beyoncé's Brown Skin Girl video



A still from the music video

The scenes with Naomi Campbell, Lupita Nyong'o, Adut Akech, and Kelly Rowland could inspire an entire Met Gala theme.

Directed by artist and filmmaker Jenn Nkiru, the music video is among the most visually stunning in *Black is King*. Born and raised in Peckham, a district in south London, Nkiru had previously worked as a second unit director on Beyoncé and Jay-Z's epic music video for *Apes**t* (you know, the one that was shot in the Louvre?) The British-Nigerian artist has now worked on three projects with Bey – including an Ivy Park campaign for Adidas. With its focus on the Black diaspora and the African motherland, the project was a natural fit for Nkiru. In times of social revolution, protesting on the front lines might feel like the only way to bring about change, but it isn't the only path to freedom – there's a role

for everyone in this fight. In an exclusive chat with *Grazia*, Nkiru answers many of our burning questions, covering topics such as art activism, the ground reality of being a person of colour, and representation.

GRAZIA: The question on everyone's mind: What was it like working with Beyoncé? How did you approach *Brown Skin Girl*?

JENN NKIRU: The entire project was a massive undertaking – an entire football team was involved in the making of the visual album. Beyoncé is a beautiful soul and a generous collaborator. She knows what she wants but is also receptive of ideas. Even beyond the personal comfort though, the entire team wanted to have a diasporic conversation with this piece, and so it was really thinking about [and] understanding



Africa as the motherland of humanity – but also how do we look at the diaspora? Yes, we did come together with ideas and a vision, but our souls were in sync, too. I was intent on bringing feminine energy to the project because

we were indulging in aspects of beauty that are not often indulged. It was clear from the get-go that I wanted to celebrate different women of colour. In fact, I have a friend that's British-Indian. So, I wanted the video to have a sense of intimacy, sisterhood, [and] celebrations.

G: How did you go about creating imagery that's not only aesthetically appealing, but progressive?

JN: For me, personally, ideas that are deemed progressive now have always been my reality, growing up. While the conversation around featuring only women of colour in a video is seeping into mainstream culture, I don't find it particularly path breaking because I've been pushing the dialogue forward for the longest time now. I've always been surrounded by strong, independent women of colour, and their stories have resonated deeply over the years.

G: The Black Lives Matter movement reignited much after work on shooting the visual album ended? How did you go about creating something that focused on representation without it coming across as contrived?

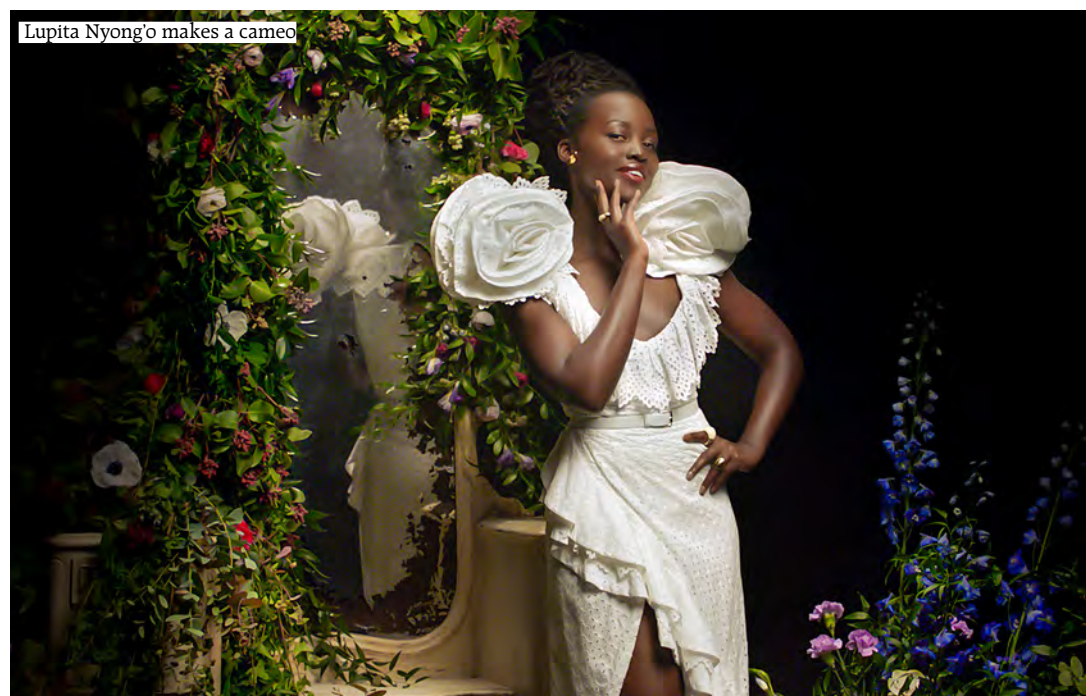
JN: It boils down to intentionality. Consciousness and intentionality can seem to pervade much or all of our lives – perhaps, they somehow account for what it is to have a mind. For everyone involved on this project, it was about achieving a general understanding of both. It wasn't only about putting together a beautiful product, but about vocalising art as activism. We are currently dealing with topics that aren't only a part of our artistic lives, but our lives in a holistic way. Just last night, a young, black boy of around 12 was pinned to the ground by policemen outside my front door. I was privy to that, and I tackled the problem in the best way I knew how. So, when we as black artists go about doing the work we do, situations like these propel us to focus on the urgency of these issues. The hope with *Black is King* is that it will ignite conversations globally. My work has always complemented that journey by helping me become more vocal and less shy about presenting my beliefs to people.

G: Fashion and style is an important part of the album. How did you highlight the clothes without diluting the impact of the overarching message?

JN: I believe that clothing is armour. And yes, while we did ensure that all the looks fit in with the overall palette, we wanted the women in the video to feel empowered. We wanted the clothes to be representative of them. In practice, we went about creating a debutante ball – a rite of passage in African-American culture that's rarely depicted – and embracing the beauty of natural forms. So, the clothes in the video are lush and decadent. There's also a huge presence of life in the video, specifically a lot of flowers, a lot of plants. Our ideas were centred around growth and nurturing. **II**



Naomi Campbell and Adut Akech



Lupita Nyong'o makes a cameo



@endlesslyloveclub



@jennymwalton



@lucywilliams02

5

THE BIG BAG THEORY

Once an extension of your arm, where does the handbag stand in the chaos of a pandemic?

Off late, a pre-pandemic time seems to be a distant memory. I sometimes reflect on all the daily rituals I auto-piloted through, such as chomping down breakfast like a kid about to miss the school bus and then darting out of the house with my trusty bucket bag on my shoulder. It was an endless abyss encasing one too many things that I didn't need on the regular, but the grainy leather stayed sturdy through rain, shine and the impatient jostling of a daily commute. Now, retired to the indoors and living the #sweatpantslife, I catch fleeting glimpses of my handbag – empty and resting.

A woman and her handbag share a special relationship. While utility is a pivotal factor, the association is mental and, often, emotional. For most, it signifies a sense of independence, security, and can be equalled to a form of armour, psychologically – like how some women say they feel 'naked' without their handbag. But there's another more common reason a girl and her handbag are inseparable – vanity. The advent of luxury handbags, with their exorbitant price tags, represented a moniker of stature and affluence – the headlining accessory of the times. Just before the pandemic crippled the fashion industry, we had arrived at a period of peak 'handbag ridiculousness'. A movement made popular by Jacquemus's 'Mini Le Chiquito'

bag – too tiny to even fit in a credit card but big on hype, the fashion folk were all vying for one.

In the current situation though, my beloved handbag is catching dust. For the rare occasion that I step out to run an errand, I sling on a cloth tote. I'd mentally declared a handbag hiatus. But, unlike me, many others were practicing quite the opposite. My Instagram feed is peppered with posts of women holding mini bags, whether they are lounging on their beds or crouching fantastically next to their Monstera plants. From Prada's reissued nylon bag to Bottega Veneta's 'The Pouch' clutch and Dior's 'Bobby' – everyone is diving in for some arm candy.

Which makes me question: What is the status of the handbag in the time of a pandemic? Cecilia Morelli, founder of luxury store, Le Mill weighs in: "For us, handbags have been strong sellers even during lockdown. What we see here is that the customer wants to treat themselves but will still not 'squander' money. And a handbag feels like the answer to this. Our in-store clients are more willing to experiment and buy unique pieces, while our online clients are on the lookout for classic styles from more well-known brands such as a black sling from Saint Laurent."

Hanna Strömberg Khan, co-founder of VRTT vintage that deals with pre-loved luxury goods, mirrors these thoughts, "We

have noticed an increase in sales after a couple of months in lockdown. I personally think it's because the handbag has become the one accessory we mix and match to feel slightly more dressed up than we do in our at-home outfits. It is a timeless and safe item that will always come to good use – if not today, then when the world is back on its feet, again."

At a time when we have traded in glamour for comfort, shelving our party dresses and even jeans to invest in shorts, roomy T-shirts and anything that feels like a hug, the financial scope for investing in a handbag seems bleak. But it's probably one of the few pieces that lend us a semblance of normalcy. Many folks have begun to indulge in 'fashion therapy' – dressing up in their most extravagant buys to pose in their doorways and living rooms. Much of this could be solely for the purpose of social media but there is repeated discourse about how putting on your finest every now and then can make you feel better. This is also pre-emptive of our post-lockdown wardrobes, where we will shrug off the leggings fatigue to step out in our fun prints, some shimmer – anything that breaks the quarantine-induced monotony. The same rings true for the handbag in lockdown, the occasions to parade it in are slim but it is silently masquerading as a pick-me-up, a gentle reminder that better days are around the corner. **ff**



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COMING INTO HER OWN

*Sharp as a blade and
laced with complexity,
this novel is on the Booker
Prize longlist*



Avni Doshi



Dubai-based Indian-origin author Avni Doshi's debut novel, *Burnt Sugar* (which was released in India by HarperCollins as *Girl in White Cotton*) took her almost seven years to write, and is as polarising as they come. The book, which is set in Pune and explores the fraught relationship between mother Tara and her daughter, Antara, revolves around the former's decline of cognitive abilities – a woman who was once quick to list the different variations of teas made in different homes now forgets the name of her own son-in-law. Tara's journey also takes readers on a rollercoaster ride of emotions – from living a rebellious life, rejecting her upper-middle class upbringing to finding sanctuary in an ashram where she lives freely, without materialistic values. However, it is Tara's ambivalence towards her daughter, Antara, that propels the latter to despise the woman who she believes never cared for her. Described as unusual, complex, and mysterious, the novel has earned Doshi a Booker Prize nomination. We caught up with the author days after the longlist was announced to talk about motherhood and the impact recognition can have on a writer.

GRAZIA: Given that your book centres on a dysfunctional relationship between

a mother and child, what prompted you to explore this dynamic?

AVNI DOSHI: I was interested in the profound intimacy and the possibility of trauma inherent in parent-child relationships. When we are children, our parents are larger than life – almost god-like – and we are at their mercy. This dynamic begins to shift as we grow – and as parents age and children become adults, there is a reversal in the roles. Children often become caregivers as parents decline. I was interested in how this dynamic shifts and what this does to the psyche of an individual. How do we move around this change psychologically and emotionally?

G: What went through your mind when you heard you'd been nominated for the Booker Prize? How does this sort of recognition impact a writer?

AD: I was very surprised and emotional when I heard the news. I never believed it was possible. I think there are so many wonderful books coming out everyday and readers have endless choices, so it's very easy for a new release, particularly a debut, to go completely unnoticed. To have recognition from an organisation like the Booker Prize can introduce a book to readers who would never have come across it otherwise.

G: While reading your novel, I was prompted to analyse my own relationship with my mother. I asked myself a pertinent question: Would I have been at odds with my mother if we were part of the same generation, detached from the bond we share? Do you think that because we don't get to choose our family, any kind of conflict or difficulty with our mothers could lead to a fragmentation of one's own self?

AD: I don't think it makes sense to ask that question because we can never objectively understand our mothers as people unrelated to us. We are mirrors of our mothers. We are foils of our mothers. We replicate and invert each other – we build and destroy each other. The relationship exists at a personal, biological, and archetypal level.

G: What part of being a mother do you enjoy the most?

AD: I'm not sure if motherhood is really enjoyable. That makes it sound like going to the movie theatre or on a trip. It's more complex and extreme than that. Being a mother is an intense experience because I feel it's constantly remoulding or remaking me in subtle ways. I thought it was my duty to be a teacher to my children, but I see that was so naive – they are actually my teachers. **U**

SURREAL DEAL

Ditch your everyday staples for jewellery that's a bit more artistic and downright fantastical

10 HOT
STORIES

7



'Marigold' necklace,
Eurumme,
₹ 6,900



BALMAIN



SCHIAPARELLI



ROMA NARSINGHANI

Distorted figurines, animal motifs and 3D gem-set baubles, A/W 2020

spotlights jewellery that is practically wearable art. Not only are these provocative pieces reflective of the current upside-down state of the world, but also symbolic of the 1930s art movement: Think celebrated artists such as Frida Kahlo and Salvador Dalí. And it's needless to say, they serve some creative inspiration we're all in dire need of, right now. Take a step away from minimalism with accessorising cues from the catwalks – from Schiaparelli's whimsical adornments to Balmain's bedazzling life-sized animalia. Let these off-kilter extras be the focal point of your look while you pair them with your wardrobe basics, like a crisp white shirt by day or an all-black outfit at night.



Sculptured shell clip earrings,
Swarovski,
₹ 17,280



'Serpenti' diamond ring, Bulgari,
price on request



Face drop earrings,
Accessorize,
₹ 567



'Crab Opium' earrings,
Begum Khan
at www.matchesfashion.com,
₹ 73,105 approx



LANVIN



'Panthère De Cartier' earrings, Cartier,
price on request

Photographs IMAXTREE, Fashion Stylist OJAS KOLVANKAR

L-R: Looks from Dandelion's
'Paradise Garden' collection

COSY UP

My Instagram feed has an uncanny knack for offering (mostly unsolicited) reality checks, especially in the morning when I wake up from my REM sleep, later than I should as a non-negotiable kindness to myself (a form of self-care, as the buzzword goes). On a rather muggy Tuesday morning in August, I was alerted (via an Insta post): *Every few days, try your jeans on just to make sure they still fit; pyjamas will have you believe all is well in the kingdom.* As reality set in, I felt like I was being thrown to the wolves. But to be fair, at approximately this time in a pre-Covid world, I would be making my way through Mumbai's rush hour (in jeans) trying to punch in on time at work. But five months into the now normal work from home situation, here I am on my bed, still in my shorts, unshowered, tapping away at my laptop, asking myself an important question: Replying to emails and getting on work calls in home attire may sound like the dream, but is it really the best approach when it comes to my productivity and mental health?

Sure, staying loyal to your PJs for one or two days while working from home

To get dressed up or to stay in pyjamas? The WFH dilemma we're all facing

is probably fine – but when we face the prospect of logging in remotely for an indefinite period of time, shirking the responsibility of getting dressed could possibly make us less productive and may even make us want to catch a few naps during the course of the day. I'll be honest: Staying rooted in homewear makes me feel sluggish and unresponsive to the creative challenges that crop up on the daily.

FINE BALANCE

Not everyone agrees though. "While sleepwear has become a popular purchase, it's interesting to note there is a wider understanding that we need clothes specifically to sleep and lounge in that's fuelling this demand. Personally, I find my pyjamas to be incredibly comfortable to get me through the day (or days). I wear a range of different styles that don't necessarily

Staying in doesn't necessarily
have to mean forgoing style

make me feel like I'm in sleepwear at all times. I also find myself steering towards athleisure when I want to change things up. And between the two, I don't necessarily feel like my productivity is hampered in any way, given that I focus on putting comfort first," says Samyukta Nair, the creator of chic sleepwear label, Dandelion.

Sandeep Gonsalves, director and co-founder at Sarah & Sandeep, echoes Nair's sentiments: "I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing to work in your pyjamas once in a while as it can be good for one's mental

health, especially during these stressful times. I am fine with adopting a more comfortable dress code and letting my employees wear clothes that don't take much thought or fuss, which will then probably help them function better. Though, on days when my staff must interface with clients for Zoom/Skype consultations, they are required to wear suits as it is important for them to look presentable and uphold the brand's values." The WFH situation even prompted Gonsalves and his wife, Sarah, to tap into the loungewear space by launching 'SOPOR' – a multi-utility collection consisting of pieces that are well-suited for Zoom meetings, a quick trip to the supermarket, a stroll up the street, and, of course, for reading a book in bed before shut-eye.

There's no denying that we're all navigating a particularly challenging time – so it's important to take care of yourself. And if you need a few days in your PJs to recuperate and come to terms with everything that's going on in the world, that's completely OK – but Noopur Sharma, partner and lifestyle head at communications consultancy agency PR Pundit, believes that while it can be tempting to fall into a uniform of athleisure and pyjamas when working from home for an extended time, she prefers to get dressed to maintain a sense of normalcy. "Clothes influence my mood and so dressing up for work certainly sets the tone for the day. A regular workday now demands even more face-time with teams and clients – virtual meetings, business

itches, and team calls emphasise that we must harness the power of clothes we wear. A business casual look finds the right balance to dressing up for work from home. It's all about rediscovering your wardrobe and embracing new styles, every day."

For those who are not accustomed to working from home, it certainly takes more than the recommended dose of caffeine to remain focussed and productive in a space that's inextricably linked with comfort and relaxation. So, what then is the key to ensuring a level of productivity at home? Will routine and structure force us to stick to a plan? "It is less about the attire and more about the attitude that we take to working from home. Without clear boundaries around time, workload and distractions, the work will spill over and become pervasive enough to quickly turn the



Designer Sandeep Gonsalves opts to dress up when on work calls



@jnaydaily

'dream' into a nightmare. Having laptops at our dinner table doesn't mean we have to eat with them," says Toronto-based counselling therapist and diversity and inclusion expert, Deepak Kashyap.

The power of clothes – choose as you may between dressing up or staying cosy in your PJs – to lift the spirits is greatly underappreciated, and God knows we need a little pick-me-up right now. **||**



@jnaydaily



You could take cues from Bridget Jones and tackle WFH in pyjamas



Samyukta Nair shares a snapshot of her fave PJs

*Is the September
issue still relevant?
We find out*

NEW ORDER

The fashion industry has long been in dire need of an overhaul. In fact, it has been pressured to adapt to the digital age for some time now. But the current Covid-19 pandemic might just have created the ideal circumstances for a long awaited innovation boost, especially when it concerns putting together the all-important September issue – the magazine world's equivalent of a new year that marks the end of summer, bringing a sense of change to the air. Considered the most important issue of the year, editors this year have been scrambling to carry out small-scale, socially-distanced shoots, learning quickly that they need to be equipped with a back-up plan for every situation. And while you can't quarantine the joy of fashion, we asked writer and former editor of two of the country's well-known glossies, Nonita Kalra, to weigh in on the future of the September issue.

GRAZIA: September issues have historically been considered the biggest fashion moment of the year. But people no longer need a magazine to tell them what's about to be 'cool'. What can a publication tell them that they don't already know?



NONITA KALRA: This is an important time for magazines to emphasise hope, optimism, and kindness. Equally, this is the time to acknowledge that the world we were living in was hugely imperfect and that we need to be the change. I think this is the right time for all magazines to address the bigger picture.

G: Do you think, going forward, September issues will focus more on matters of immediate relevance as opposed to fostering escapism through visuals?

NK: More than escapism, we need inspiration. It is important not to think the two are the same. September issues have always been about that. And while I think fashion magazines have done a great job in elevating thought, there needs to be both ideas and inspiration.

G: How will a magazine's current identity crisis play out on its front page?

NK: There is no crisis; I see this as a time to reset. And we are seeing that change play out in every single page, and not just on the cover. The fact that the entire world is facing the same pandemic has led to a shift in priorities. The stories that are being told right now address that. There is always a moment when an event will play the role of a catalyst – we need to accept that this is that moment and work with the change.

G: How can fashion media be thought leaders in times like these?

NK: By staying true to their brand and its beliefs. Fashion is not a limited subject – it reflects political, social and economic realities, and documents them by highlighting the choices that women make at that time. Now, more than ever, this needs to be reflected very clearly. **U**



Selfies & FaceTime portraits have changed fashion photography



Magazines have had to abandon in-person photo shoots in favour of other methods



Label ALERT

10



The new normal has blurred the lines between our work wardrobe and loungewear. Invest in these mood-lifting, eco-friendly jewellery pieces and versatile separates.



IF YOU LOVE: Fuss-free clothing.

THEN YOU WILL LOVE: Akané.



WHO: Sister duo Janhavi and Juhi Vyas co-founded Akané to counter environmental degradation caused by fast fashion brands, with an aim to provide a sustainable alternative to consumers. Propelled by Janhavi's college graduation project, the indigenous label started out as an organic dyeing service in 2017. Coincidentally, Juhi – while working at a fashion magazine and an e-commerce website – learnt about the

impact mass consumerism and unhealthy purchasing patterns have on the environment. This led them to start the conscious clothing label together.

WHY: The duo aims to promote slow fashion and mindful consumption by creating timeless and versatile ensembles. To champion zero-waste practices and support weavers and artisans, the brand sources natural ingredients and fabrics, locally from Mumbai. Think: Waste flowers from temples, flower markets and festivals to leaves foraged from farmers and vegetable vendors. Over the last two years, the label has been able to navigate the challenges of producing in small batches, while also educating their customers about the uniqueness of their pieces, since no two naturally dyed pieces are exactly the same.

PRICE RANGE: ₹ 500 to ₹ 6,000

WHERE: www.thefairnest.com, www.in-d.co, Teatro Dhora, Mumbai; On My Own, Goa.

WEAR: Consider these versatile pieces for your work from home wardrobe. Pair the label's handwoven silk kimono with a camisole and shorts, or layer it over a slip dress.

IF YOU LOVE: Colourful, stacked and beaded jewellery.

THEN YOU WILL LOVE: Love Letter.

WHO: Designer Anmol Vaswani had an illustrious career before she started her jewellery brand, last year. The Parsons School of Design graduate worked as a product designer and wholesaler at Anthropologie, coupled with stints at Stella McCartney, Vera Wang and Bibhu Mohapatra, among other brands. Vaswani, who shuttles between New York, New Delhi and Goa, started Love Letter to pursue her passion for sustainability. The designer takes inspiration from her travels globally to design quirky pieces.

WHY: Love Letter was born out of Vaswani's quest to find sustainable items for her own wardrobe that were not dowdy-looking or were restricted to muted or earthy tones. While designing eco-conscious jewellery for her brand, she uses eclectic and playful styles, such as repetitive beads in bright, tropical colour combinations to appease Gen Z folk and millennials. Working around the limitations of ethical and handcrafted jewellery, the brand uses locally sourced recycled plastic, sterling silver and freshwater pearls without compromising on aesthetic appeal.

PRICE RANGE: ₹ 1,500 to ₹ 6,000

WHERE: DM @studioloveletter on Instagram.

WEAR: These colourful beaded necklaces and bracelets are the perfect accomplice to your daily, easy-chic look. Stack them with a watch, a cuff or other minimalistic jewellery pieces you swear by.





Camo printed jumpsuit, **Dior**;
enamel bangle, **Hermès**; gold
plated chains, **Misho**

THE PURSUIT OF *Happiness*

An eternal optimist, Jacqueline Fernandez's sunny spirit is infectious, even if it is via a phone call. The talented actor talks about how she's navigating this period of uncertainty as she maps out her own silver linings playbook

Photographs **SAHIL DAS**
Fashion Director **PASHAM ALWANI**
Words **TANYA MEHTA**

Never in our wildest imagination did we ever visualise a time as dystopian as the one we're living in. With the constant news fatigue and work from home exhaustion setting in, it's safe to say this hasn't been the most pleasant spell. So, when we got on a call with our September cover star, Jacqueline Fernandez, her effervescent tone pierced through like a breath of fresh air. The Sri Lankan native, who has spent more than a decade in Bollywood, has showcased her acting chops in many commercially-successful films, be it *Housefull 2*, *Judwaa 2*, and *Race 2*. Most recently, she played a helpless wife who takes the suicidal decision of going on a murderous rage and becoming a serial killer when her husband is arrested on the charges of brutally killing six women, in Netflix's *Mrs. Serial Killer*.

Then with the unanticipated onset of Covid-19, Fernandez, like most of us, found herself cooped up at home. Fortunately, she spent the initial days of quarantine at a farmhouse on the outskirts of Mumbai, "It was a little unexpected, I thought I'd only stay for a couple of days but we were stranded there for two months. In hindsight, I can't think of a better way of spending the initial phase of lockdown. I love the outdoors and I spent all my time painting and horse riding – it was a blessing in disguise," she says. Now, back in her apartment, where she lives alone (miles away from her parents who live in Bahrain), the actor isn't one to spend her time moping around. Besides immersing herself in household chores, she has been focusing on her other businesses, which include her activewear label, Just F. She's also created her own short film titled *The Little Things*, "I've been working since I was 14, so I don't really know what a day off is like. Editing and directing this film was a lot of fun. I have my tripod and lighting equipment at home, shooting content by myself and being self-sufficient has been a liberating experience."

So, when we tasked her to shoot our cover within

the confines of her own home, Fernandez gladly rose to the occasion, producing beautiful imagery without an army involved, "As actors, we're extremely spoiled; we're always surrounded by a team of artists who ensure our make-up is done and not a hair is out of place. Having to do it myself was not only an interesting, but it also made me appreciate the smaller things in life that we often take for granted," she says.

Next month, after a lengthy hiatus, the actor is geared up to return to set and begin shooting for her upcoming horror flick alongside Saif Ali Khan, Fatima Sana Shaikh and Ali Fazal, titled *Bhoot Police*. But, until then she's perfecting her headstands and practicing yoga in her living room. She's also excitedly whipping up apple pies; but most importantly she's following gratitude as a religion to swear by. In these testing times, Fernandez is harnessing the power of positivity and is using it as a driving force as she shares her manual to becoming your most authentic self, even during a pandemic.

'BUSY' IS A BAD WORD

"I haven't seen my parents in nine months. This is probably the longest I've gone without seeing them. But, the great part about a time like this is that my family and I have constantly been chatting over Zoom – my brother is in Australia, my sister is in the US, and even though we've had to navigate the different time zones, we make it a point to get on a group call. It's beautiful how this period has brought all of us closer together. It's the same with my friendships, a lot of people who I wasn't that close to have reached out to me and I've rediscovered and rekindled so many relationships. It's important to check in on your friends, especially now, even if it's through a phone call or message. Before the lockdown, I would rarely make the time for anyone – I would always say 'I'm busy' and expect them to understand. These moments of self-reflection have taught me the negative connotation of the word. You can be productive and work-oriented while still valuing other people's time." »



Button down knit, **Hermès**;
embroidered pencil skirt,
Dhruv Kapoor; 'Sun Stud'
necklace, **Misho**

CREATION VERSUS CONSUMPTION

"With additional time on our hands it's only human to engage in some mindless scrolling through social media. But, in light of the current environment, it's become a very toxic and volatile space. I'm a strong believer in freedom of speech but there are several individuals who are misusing these platforms. I use social media to interact and communicate peacefully with my fans, which I continue to do even today. But I've tapered down the time I spend on these sites. Instead, I've shifted my focus towards other applications – I've been revisiting Pinterest, an app I enthusiastically used as a teenager, and which I now use to create mood-boards for my characters and films. I've downloaded meditation apps, I listen to podcasts and I even joined Masterclass – I've tuned in to everything from Natalie Portman's acting workshop to learning about Sara Blakely's journey to launching Spanx. All these stories are incredibly inspiring and, most importantly, positive. Instead of constantly perusing through other people's lives on Instagram and Twitter, I find it more fulfilling to spend my time on applications that provide constructive knowledge"

YOU GO GIRL

"Now, more than ever, it's time to own your body and who you are. Recently, I uploaded a picture on Instagram exposing my freckles, which I've always been asked to conceal and have felt obliged to do in the past. I get them from my mom, it's hereditary. So, I've asked myself: Why have I been hiding them all these years? Why can't I own the way I look? I guess somewhere in the back of my mind, I am reminded of the comments I've been privy to by people who have referred to them as 'black spots' or 'dirt' and so, I've always considered it a flaw. I've learnt to be unfazed by it. As individuals, we need to reassess the concept of perfection and beauty. Today, more and more people are embracing their oddities, it's what makes them more interesting. It's time to be fearless."

NOW WATCHING


"Here's an admission: I think I've finished watching everything there is to watch on Netflix. And like many others, I'm guilty of re-watching *Friends*. The show was

ahead of its time, and is still relevant even today. I've also finally taken the time out to read, I'm currently hooked on to *The Female Brain* by Louann Brizendine, which was recommended by Lisa Haydon when we were shooting for *Housefull* four years ago. I personally believe every girl should read this book because it provides an insight into why we feel the way we do, and why we shouldn't feel guilty about certain emotions, because sometimes, they're purely hormonal. I've also been watching quite a lot of Japanese and Danish films as well as a few Korean shows. The exposure has opened my mind to a plethora of great content that I previously hadn't explored.

DECLUTTER

"I've spent the past two months standing in front of my wardrobe, contemplating on what I should do with everything I own. So, I decided to dedicate two whole days to decluttering my wardrobe. Let's just say that I now have a room full of 'stuff' – I realised that I've been hoarding candles, a number of cushions, and gadgets – they were all catching dust. It made me realise that we consume way more than we need. So, I gave them all away. I segregated the clothes I don't see myself wearing for the next few months into boxes and I curated a capsule wardrobe, of sorts, for myself. What's left on the shelves are six pieces that I wear on rotation – tank tops, sweatpants, workout clothes, and a good skirt for days when I want to dress up. Decluttering my space has given me peace of mind. Now, if I need to purchase something I'll see if I own something similar. I'm recycling within my own closet, it's the best form of minimalism."

THE REWARD SYSTEM

"Considering we aren't frequenting physical workspaces any longer, it becomes difficult to set boundaries with our routines. The professional almost always seeps into our personal lives. But after a productive week, having a day off is imperative. I'm a huge believer in making the best of Sundays – I read, watch stuff, I make sure I don't do anything work related (no accounts or research.) I make sure I unwind, have a drink or catch up with a friend or two on Saturday nights. And I have no qualms about treating myself to an entire pizza." 

"As individuals, we need to reassess the concept of perfection and beauty. Today, more and more people are embracing their oddities, it's what makes them more interesting. It's time to be fearless."



Pinstriped crop top, embroidered jacket, shorts, all **Namrata Joshipura**; gold drop pendant, **Dhora**; suede boots, **Christian Louboutin**

Crop top, **Deme**; striped trousers,
Smokewear x Lovebirds; 'Chunky Chain'
hoop earrings, **Misho**; belt, stylist's own





Midi dress, **Dior**; 'Nazar Battu' locket, link chain, both **Olio**;
'Flow' rings, both **Misho**

Hair and make-up **Shaan Muttathil**

IT TAKES TWO

Ten young creatives join forces to showcase the power of collaboration during these trying times

Words **OJAS KOLVANKAR**

The new fashion season marks a fresh start for design professionals. Filled with hope and opportunity, it opens the flood gates of creativity. Ordinarily, designers would seek inspiration from nature, travel and different cultures or communities. Although this time around, in the new normal, as everyone is confined

to their homes, creative stimulation is hard to come by.

In a unique collaboration orchestrated by *Grazia*, ten emerging talents from diverse backgrounds and aesthetics come together to co-create artworks that spotlight nostalgia, longing and unexplored possibilities for our future.

WEAR YOUR MIND

by Shreya Oza and Namrata Gosavi



Ahmedabad-based textile designer Shreya Oza's label Asa is rooted in indigenous practices. The designer who is known for her minimalistic design sensibilities teamed with visual artist Namrata Gosavi for this collaboration. The duo's shared passion for hand-crafting techniques served as the starting point of their artistic partnership. Further, they merged Asa's handmade prints in Gosavi's sketch to shine the spotlight the individual's mental health during the pandemic – fragile and perceptive.

"We used prints juxtaposed with animal figures to symbolise the mental health of people. We hope one can embrace their true self," adds Gosavi.

PINK IS MY COLOUR

*by Amesh Wijsekera
and Ayesha Kapadia*

Sri Lankan designer, Amesh Wijsekera's eponymous label is known for its eccentric ensembles made from dead-stock fabrics. When Wijsekera partnered with visual director Ayesha Kapadia, the creatives instantly found synergies in their bold and unapologetic design sensibilities. Taking a hands-on approach, the duo's mixed media artwork is dominated with the colour pink and features a mythical creature. While the colour stands for values such as confidence, beauty and peace for both of them, the figurine conveys brave forms of self-expression, identity and unrestricted possibilities.

"The artwork incorporates dark graphics, bold design elements from Ayesha's line art and my eclectic designs combined with the textures and colours of my clothes. The idea was to create a majestic, mythical creature personifying our spirits and expressions of a world without stereotypes and labels and also to showcase endless possibilities and freedom. The delicate wings against the strong tailored silhouette of the body juxtapose ideas of strength and fragility. The rabbit face depicts fantasy against the pink backdrop of stars and the lily pads, significant to our environment and culture," explains Wijsekera.





QUARANTINE DREAM

by Avni Aneja and Namrata Vansadia

Avni Aneja is the co-founder of the athleisure label, Six5Six Street. Catering to Gen Z and millennials, the label makes oversized silhouettes in bright hues with subversive messaging. For this collaboration, Avni joined hands with New York-based visual artist Namrata Vansadia. Reflecting on their current state in these challenging times, the duo decided to use animal figurines as a metaphor to showcase their longing for

human interaction and the loneliness they are experiencing. Further, plants and animals symbolise the newfound companions which have substituted our friends during the pandemic.

"This year, the pandemic altered the quality of our life significantly, we deliberated and decided to address it in our piece. One of the things that came to surface while brainstorming is how challenging and lonely

this time has been for most people across the globe. To portray the same, we illustrated a snapshot of a group of friends but instead of human figures, it's a subconscious dreamlike, feverish and eccentric visual representation with birds and animal faces placed against New York's cityscape. We wanted to display emotions such as longing for a connection and for us return to a place where moments like these can be recreated," elaborates Vansadia.

NOT SO PERFECT

by Ankita Srivastava and Rachna Ravi

Minimalistic, fuss-free and versatile styles define Ankita Srivastava's clothing label, Little Things Studio. Srivastava, who promotes self-love and body-positivity through her brand, decided to follow the same theme for her artistic partnership with illustrator, Rachna Ravi. Their

collaborative artwork born from their shared feminist ideology, features a facial reflection of a young, content woman surrounded by foliage, reassuring her that she is beautiful the way she is.

"We all are struggling during these trying times to make sense of the new

reality. The idea of self-reflection struck me. Being alone in isolation for such a long time has definitely made us reflect on the good and bad sides of our own self. We hope through this artwork, we bring more awareness and practice being kind to our own minds and bodies," says Srivastava.





JIGSAW

by Prakhar Chauhan and Bonseng Sangma

Delhi-based designer Prakhar Chauhan is the creative force behind the streetwear brand prxkhr. Specialising in prints, Chauhan's label is known for its eclectic style. When the designer teamed with collagist Bonseng Sangma, they decided to merge prxkhr's prints and Sangma's abstract artwork

together. The result was a scrapbook style collage featuring iconic Indian objects, Chauhan's family photographs and doodles.

"The artwork captures playful and nostalgic emotions from my childhood. The use of family photos and other iconic Indian objects will make the viewer reflect

on their memories of growing up too. The images seen in the artwork are from my trips to my maternal grandparent's home as a child, which Bonseng used to make a collage, along with some everyday objects and finished it by adding doodles," explains Chauhan. **LO**

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Shivani Gupta wears a *zardozi*, leather and bead-embroidered *lehenga* from Payal Singhal's 'Sanat' collection for her backyard wedding in Santa Monica, California

MADE IN HEAVEN

What happens when the treasured aspiration of a big fat Indian wedding is swapped with an intimate gathering without the pomp and show? While many have postponed their big day in the hopes of a grand celebration, others haven't let a pandemic deter them from tying the knot. In light of the new normal, we unveil the beauty and complexities of getting hitched in present times

Words **TANYA MEHTA**



“**H**ow many weddings do you have to attend this season?” I asked a friend, “Erm, around 22? I really need to plan my outfits,” she said, matter-of-factly. The year was 2019, in a time when most global citizens were blissfully unaware that their lives were about to be dramatically transfigured in the months to come. Personally, I love weddings – the palpable energy, the song and dance, the joy of people-watching as everyone turns up bedecked in their finest, the lavish food spread that beckons you to go in for seconds; and of course, the cherished sight of two people diving into a lifetime of happiness and commitment. But, for those who have an extravagant social calendar like my friend, their plans were about to be thwarted by the ongoing Covid-19 crisis.

True to its reputation of grandiose, an Indian wedding is a high-octane experience alluding to the sheer number of rituals and traditions that prompts week-long celebrations with guest lists spilling into hundreds. But, with a deadly virus propelling severe government restrictions and safety measures on the implementation of ceremonies, embraces have been replaced

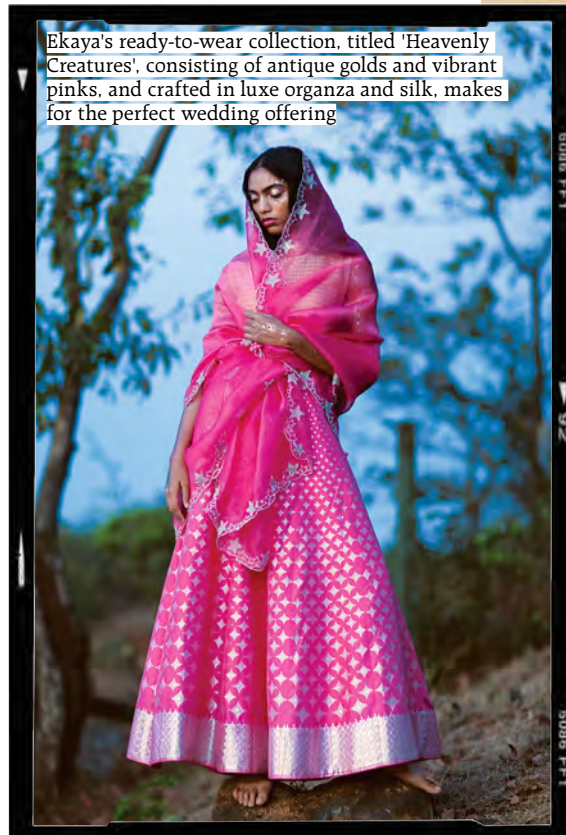
by masks, sanitisers and social distancing. However, even in a sombre period like this several couples have gone ahead and created their day of togetherness. We reached out to them as well as some of the best experts in the industry to truly glean what goes into getting hitched during a pandemic.

STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

Pre pandemic, the highly-anticipated custom of picking your wedding outfit would include standing in the atelier amongst racks of opulently embroidered *lehengas* as you get laced into a blouse that fits like a glove, the glinting shimmer of an *odhani* falling over your shoulder, followed by the dopamine release when you know you've found the perfect match. Shopping for a wedding outfit is a lengthy, tedious and mostly enjoyable task, an awaited occasion where the bride-to-be, flanked by her closest kin, embarks on a mission to seek the outfit of her dreams. Often, a hefty budget is put aside just for this outfit, with a designer in mind. Now, with small scale nuptials, what is the modern bride looking to wear? Apparently, there's little room for compromise. “Brides still want to go ahead and wear what they've always envisioned,” says Palak Shah, founder of Ekaya. “People are looking for more re-usable value with their purchases, something

that can be re-worn or handed down, making it more meaningful. Given the limited guest allowance currently, couples still want their weddings to make an impact. Orders are taken online; fittings can be carried out at their homes and sometimes at our store by appointment. We've expanded our product »

Ekaya's ready-to-wear collection, titled 'Heavenly Creatures', consisting of antique golds and vibrant pinks, and crafted in luxe organza and silk, makes for the perfect wedding offering



range to include more affordable, easy-selling products. Instead of being more experimental we're adhering to safer choices that never go out of style."

While classic, heirloom-worthy pieces seem to be the need of the hour, many designers are conscious of restricted budgets and are adapting accordingly. Payal Singhal, an industry veteran who has been part of many collaborations over the years, talks about keeping up with the times despite having a workforce of only 30 per cent due the

reverse migration of skilled labour, "While the lead time to create a bridal outfit takes up to eight weeks now, I've recently launched a prêt collection to make them budget-friendly keeping the silhouettes, prints and cuts the same as our main line and changing the fabric to ensure a more affordable price point. We have also worked on pieces that can be worn in multiple ways and can go literally from lounging at home to a small wedding function – as I humorously call it, the 'sleep to *sangeet*,'" she says. The designer offers her clientele video consultations, where the process is carried out remotely – from discussions to sharing swatches, sketches and even images of the muslin and final garment before it's shipped out.

Singhal feels that this period will shift our priorities towards more mindful consumption without diluting the end product, "I think bridal-wear will remain exquisite, laborious and intricate as always but, perhaps, friends and family of the bride and groom will invest in fusion-wear and lighter pieces, similar to the trend that's always existed in the West."

THOUGHT OVER DESIGN

The inclination towards mindfulness is not only witnessed in their clothing choices, many young couples are also opting for sustainability when it comes to decor. Devika Narain, a wedding designer who has worked on many upscale weddings – including that of Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli in Tuscany – perceives a pause

on the excess in the current scenario. "The most significant cultural shift that weddings have witnessed in the past few years is that an increasing number of people are becoming more conscious. From what was a day where

used was recycled to create uniforms for the children in the village.

SCREEN SAVIOURS

With limited guests, including not having all your loved ones present on the big day, being one of the many harsh realities of a lockdown wedding, insiders and vendors are creating new mediums to bring family and friends from far ends of the globe closer on the day, albeit virtually. Vikram Mehta, founder of Mpire Events, a company that specialises in large-scale celebrations, believes that technology is imperative to thrive during these testing times, "I think most clients are looking for innovative solutions that are interactive and entertaining. For instance, cool invites, applications to cover the wedding online, and a nice formulated video on YouTube to showcase a *sangeet* carried out indoors for those who are attending the wedding from their home. Some

entertainment options that may work for Zoom attendees for a theme-based event starts with a WhatsApp invite and ends with a backdrop for their laptop view," he shares.

As work from home is now the new normal for most of us, the reliance on applications such as Zoom and FaceTime has further increased in order to stay connected, which has now turned into a pivotal element for weddings as well.

Wedstreamers is a unique initiative that aims to provide a curated experience to guests who

aren't physically

present at the ceremony. "Though streaming didn't really catch on, pre-Covid, we now see an opportunity for people to harness the power of technology and creativity to stream their weddings, in innovative ways. The idea is to create an intimate virtual »



A groom gets drenched by his family members during the *haldi* ceremony. photograph by Joseph Radhik

no expense or thought was spared, brides and grooms are now asking more thoughtful questions and making decisions of quality over quantity and theatrics. In light of the current pandemic, I'm certain that good design will pave the way for beautiful, efficient, sustainable solutions to retain the sanctity of our celebrations," she shares.

Sabah Shaikh, founder of Ātisuto, a bespoke wedding company reflects on the rising demand for personalised experiences, "Consumers are slightly more skeptical with the scale of the event and the amount of people that can be invited over. People are toning down the grandeur and sticking to minimalism. Classic decor, sustainability and creating a setting while implementing safety measures is the requisite right now," she says.

Last year, Narain reassessed her own process and worked with a couple on a unique low-waste wedding in Jaipur with minimal plastic usage, the paper in all forms had seeds that could be planted, while the fabric

A low waste decor and *mandap* created by Devika Narain for a wedding in Jaipur



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experience in real-time. Unlike other social media streams, we ensure this feed is restricted and shown to people who are on the guest list. We can probably run this feed with an emcee hosting the virtual wedding while bringing in multiple friends to raise a virtual toast. The stream could be created as a single-way feed or even a broadcast-level show for a wedding. The possibilities are endless with a promise of reliable and high-quality broadcasting worldwide and can be customised according to the needs of the client," say founders Shivanand Lalwani and Vignesh Rammanoj.

PLAYING SAFE

Even if you've tapered down your wedding list to the size of a small gathering, safety measures are paramount at the moment, and many creatives who are present to ensure your day is memorable are becoming actively cognisant of this. Raonak Hathirami, founder of Recall Pictures, a wedding

lockdown wedding lies in its reliance on old-school intimacy. The bride and groom can feel a sense of ease without having to create a spectacle, and amidst all the chaos, it's a silver lining. "It's like we're travelling back in time – we started off with home weddings that evolved into picking venues that later snowballed into destination weddings; and now, it's come full circle. Today, weddings require extraordinary involvement in the measure of personalisation, intimacy and digital involvement. You can invest more quality time with every guest at all your wedding ceremonies, making the photographs even more memorable," says Monisha Ajgaonkar, founder of The Photo Diary.

Joseph Radhik, a reputed wedding photographer who has captured a host of news-making nuptials in the past, feels optimistic about this change. "The current generation has witnessed and experienced so many weddings, not just those of their friends and family but also what is showcased on television and social media. Strangely enough, these lockdown weddings are close to their idea of an ideal wedding more than ever before," he shares. The ostentation once projected to meet the social obligations of a political or business



Minimal decor created for a home wedding in Mumbai by Atisuto



Prudhvi Ram Kanakamedala and Vaishnavi Narne opted for an intimate wedding held in Hyderabad in August. photograph by Joseph Radhik

photography company that has covered a bunch of lockdown weddings, describes the experience as challenging but essential, "As the world gets accustomed to greeting with nods and toe taps instead of handshakes and hugs, we photographers need to adapt as well. Hand sanitisers and equipment disinfectants have now become must-haves in every photographer's camera bag. Non-contact, verbal-only posing skills will need to be developed to accommodate clients who prefer no physical contact. In general, photographers need to have a heightened awareness of what we are touching on the shoot, taking frequent breaks to wash our hands thoroughly," he shares.

AT SHUTTER SPEED

Despite the roadblocks, formidable timelines and constant adjustments, the beauty of a

alliance has now diminished, providing the to-be-weds a sigh of relief. In the past two months, Radhik and his team have worked on multiple engagement ceremonies and many at-home weddings in the country. For him, this is a historical time in his career, "The risk factor involved in shooting a wedding is high. This also isn't a period for the business to thrive. But as a photographer, this is a time we had only dreamed of as weddings have embraced simplicity. In this new setting, you can capture people being their most uninhibited selves. When you strip away the extravagant decor, the heavy jewellery, the confetti and the fireworks, you can document a wedding for what it truly is – a beautiful union of two people". »

Shreya Shaparia and Dhruvill Shah get married at their holiday home in May. photograph by Monisha Ajgaonkar



IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH

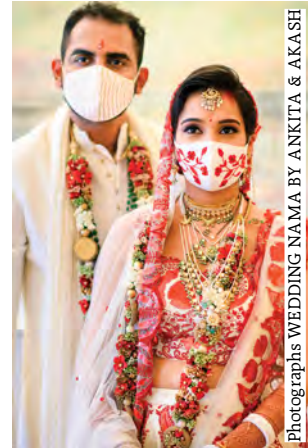
Three couples share bittersweet memories of their lockdown weddings

EKAM AND ADITYA JAIN

"When all you seek is togetherness, even a pandemic can't stop it. We were in a long-distance relationship and didn't want to live with the uncertainty of figuring out when we would see each other next. So, we hit fast-forward and decided to get married. In a span of 15 days we planned clothing, decor and flights, and hosted a wedding ceremony for 40 of our loved ones in our living room. For the ones away, we scheduled a YouTube Live on the day so that they could be part of the celebration. When we look back, we realise that we wouldn't have wanted anything more; it was a truly special day. Yes, a grand celebration is due when the world allows it but for now, we are just soaking in the joy of being with each other."



FEATURE | GRAZIA



Photographs WEDDING NAMA BY ANKITA & AKASH



YUSHIKA JOLLY RAGHUVANSHI AND SIDDHARTH RAGHUVANSHI

"We were all prepped for our big fat Indian wedding, set to take place in July. But once the pandemic ensued, leading to a nationwide lockdown, we were confused about the path ahead. With the date around the corner, we decided to go through with it, and with help from friends and family we put everything together in a week. The wedding festivities were held at Sangpor village in Gujarat, where our farmhouse is located. It was attended by only 25 guests; the decoration was done by a local vendor. We tied the knot at Gurudwara Chadar Sahab in Bharuch. In the end, we felt like it was probably the best way to get married. Not only did we not splurge on materialistic things, we truly enjoyed the wedding amidst family. Hopefully, we can celebrate with our friends soon."

ADITI PATIL DALAL AND RONIL DALAL

"Wedding in eight days? We did it. It all began on Friday, July 24th, 2020 – our families sat together and we decided to go for it. We had originally planned to tie the knot in January 2021, with a guest list of 900 people. We quickly realised that the situation was unlikely to get better anytime soon. We held the *baldi* and *mebendi* ceremony at home with only close family in attendance, where home-cooked food was served. For the wedding, we had already booked the 'Gateway' room at the Taj Mahal Hotel, so we went ahead and held the ceremony there with only nine of us in attendance. From ensuring the bride's *lehenga* turned up on time to dealing with the chaos of the groom forgetting his *sherwani* at home, it was a memorable experience, to say the least. Wedding planning and timelines are always such a hyped-up concept and through our experience we realised that we've created fabulous memories anyway." 📸



Photograph RECALL PICTURES

GOING

SOL

O

As we continue to social distance and isolate from one another, our current reality calls for solidarity, togetherness, communication, and collaboration. We're on the cusp of a societal and cultural reset that harks heavily on the tenets of hope, creativity and pushing our own boundaries, despite limitations. In that spirit, we enlisted – and gave absolute creative freedom to – eight artists in lockdown, across the country, to interpret and showcase the best of AWW 2020 collections

Fashion Director
PASHAM ALWANI

ANCHAL NOTANI x NAMRATA JOSHIPURA

"The attempt was to encapsulate the uncertain times we've been going through. The simplicity and stark nature of the frames is deliberate in order to represent how our lives have come to a standstill, due to the lockdown. The veil is representative of a cocoon-like shelter needed to hide from the outside world."



RHEA GUPTE x 11:11

"The boxy silhouette of the jacket and the patchwork technique reminded me of the 70s. The image, colours and setup are a minimalistic take on the American prom aesthetic, as depicted in films and television series I have watched, which were set in that era. The jacket, as the protagonist, comes out of its comfort zone to ask its crush for a dance."

SHWETA SHARMA x PÉRO

"Péro designs often start with a feeling of joy at first glance. This quilted coat instantly incited a 'Red Riding Hood' feel, to me. I visualised a walk in the park with my camera shooting a free spirit. I feel Covid-19 has inhibited that city-induced free spirit. I chose to shoot Merrylin at her home, against an artwork with city names — as a statement on being ready and having nowhere to go. Also, this was shot only in black and white, with flash, as it induces of the feeling of an urban city, replete with elements like glass and steel."



TUHIN CHANDRA x HUENN

"This Huemn jacket is such a beautiful piece, and has so much character to it. It almost feels like there's someone creeping up on you, but only you can only see their hands and not their face – which is something I've tried to demonstrate. This, for me, is a true representation of distance and the spirit of collaboration. Since I'm back home, I've used some elements from my childhood, like toys and an experimental science skull, and added a few tongue-in-cheek placards and quotes about how I would have wanted this to be a still-life photograph, but I didn't have enough props to stage the image."



SAHIL BEHAL x RAHUL MISHRA

"Death is not the opposite of life, but a part of it."

— Haruki Murakami

"It's never easy to create something, specially at a time like this. So, having to visualise everything beforehand was challenging but extremely liberating at the same time. It's refreshing to be able to work on a project in isolation, without restrictions. I've played with the idea of life and death — the bright flowers on a black canvas represent life itself."





YVONNE MONTEIRO x LOVEBIRDS

"I call this series 'strolling around the city in my white dress on a Sunday evening'. Every once in a while, an outfit has the ability to galvanise one's spirit to perform better. Case in point: This Lovebirds jacket dress. The movement of the pleats and the unpigmented look of the garment made me feel fresh and uplifted on a windy evening."



**DHRUVIN X
ROHIT GANDHI + RAHUL KHANNA**

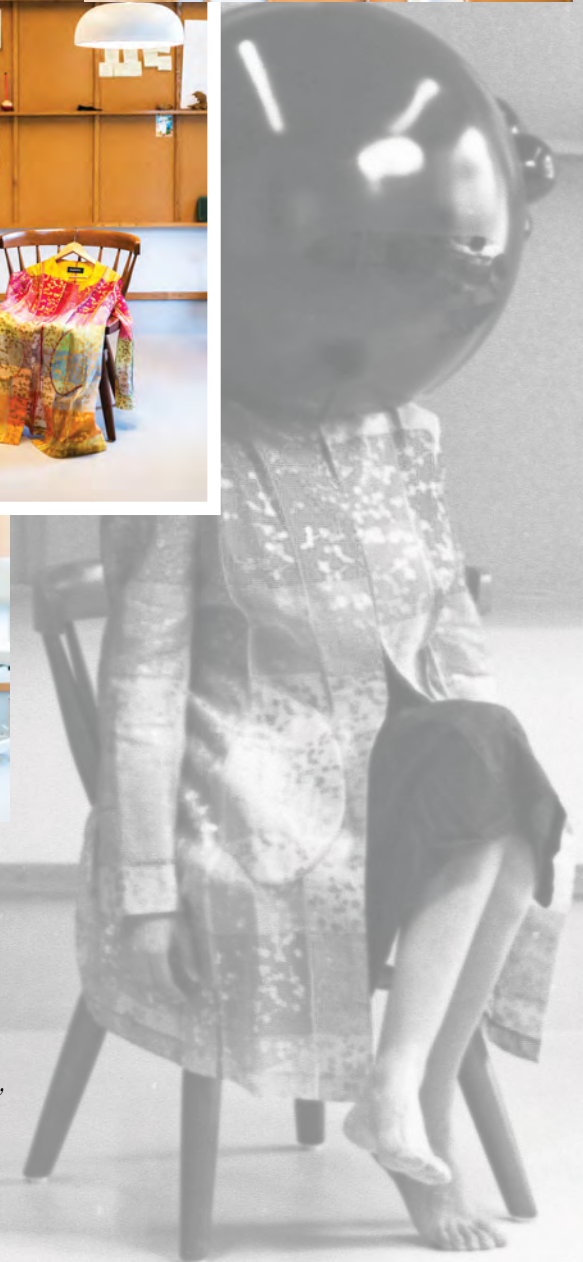
"The current atmosphere is incredibly obscure, so I wanted to create something light and playful, while also allowing me time to experiment with the form and shape of the Rohit Gandhi + Rahul Khanna jacket. Seen here is four-year-old Kai Marwah, Dev Anand's great grandson, nonchalantly working this interesting silhouette."





GORKEY PATWAL X RAJESH PRATAP SINGH

"I love photography because it allows me to meet some really interesting people. I met Princess Pea about three years ago, and since then we've worked on several projects together. She was the first person who came to mind when I started planning this shoot. Meeting after almost eight months, this was shot in her studio in Gurugram. It was fun to see how she juggles work while also taking care of her son. The Rajesh Pratap Singh jacket complements her colourful, kooky world perfectly, and yet it's still grounded in reality." **✎**



THE BARE NECESSITIES

Trends come and go, but we narrowed down the best wardrobe staples to invest in for timeless style

Junior Fashion Editor **SURBHI SHUKLA**

What are wardrobe staples in the this day and age with fashion being so diverse, and with trends heralded seasonally? The idea of a capsule wardrobe can seem daunting, but if the past few months have inspired you to edit your wardrobe, we suggest you hold on to, or invest in styles that have surpassed fashion's fleeting time frame, based on two distinct characteristics: Versatility and functionality.



Drawstring skirt,
Bhaane,
₹ 3,800



Panelled midi skirt,
Self-Portrait at
www.lyst.com,
₹ 32,405 approx



Striped skirt,
Polo Ralph Lauren,
₹ 17,000



Wool-blend midi skirt,
Michael Kors Collection,
₹ 31,000

THE MIDI SKIRT

Trousers may convey control, but skirts can elicit the same energy. Drapes the waist charmingly and flares toward the hem, the midi skirt is incredibly versatile. Depending on your form, long, flowy skirts can appear drab, and short ones, tricky to style. Hard to go wrong with a medium length.



Pleated midi skirt,
Ode to Odd,
₹ 16,500

WEAR IT WITH

Wear it to work with a button-down shirt and blazer or to run errands with a cropped blouse and sneakers. There is nowhere the midi can't go.



Embroidered cropped top,
Rahul Mishra,
price on request



Organic leather saddle bag,
Nappa Dori,
₹ 11,800



'Classic leather legacy'
sneakers, **Reebok**
₹ 7,599





Satin shirt,
L'agence at
www.farfetch.com,
₹ 65,100 approx



Cotton shirt,
Celio,
₹ 2,799



Sleeve detail shirt,
Starch,
₹ 8,900



Cotton shirt,
Promod,
₹ 3,490



MILAN FASHION WEEK

THE DRESS SHIRT

From Carolina Herrera to Rihanna, many doyennes of fashion have rocked the crisp white button-down. No matter how it is styled and accessorised, the shirt always exudes formality. The right way to wear it, is completely up to your discretion.



MILAN FASHION WEEK



Oxford shirt,
Marks & Spencer,
₹ 1,499

WEAR IT WITH

Take the sophisticated route and wear the white shirt on holiday and juj it up with your staple accessories.



'Visionnaire DTZ' watch,
Fabergé,
price on request



Chain link necklaces,
Swarovski,
₹ 10,900



Straw hat,
Myaraa by
Namrata Lodha,
₹ 2,100

High-waist jeans,
Levi's, ₹ 3,499



Skinny jeans,
United Colors of Benetton,
₹ 2,499



Boot-leg jeans,
American Eagle,
₹ 2,699



Slouchy denim trousers,
Mello Drama,
₹ 5,600



THE BLUE JEAN

Jeans have become the most emblematic piece in global fashion. From James Dean to Jane Birkin and Steve Jobs, it crosses economic and style barriers, becoming the quintessential uniform that can be dressed up or down, depending on what the situation demands.

WEAR IT WITH

The hardest part about jeans is to find the right pair for your body, but once you do, hold them dear and wear them with everything. We do recommend a Canadian Tuxedo.



Denim jacket,
ONLY,
₹ 4,499



Cork sandals,
Birkenstock,
₹ 6,990



Leather clutch,
Hermès,
price on request

Denim shorts,
Tommy Hilfiger,
₹ 4,999





Parka jacket,
Ganni, ₹ 49,865 approx

Printed over-coat,
Eka, ₹ 17,800



Trench coat,
Attico at
www.matchesfashion.com,
₹ 2,03,100 approx



WEAR IT WITH

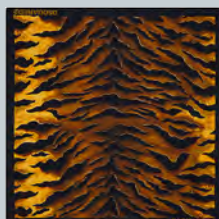
A bag in a timeless silhouette, an edgy boot and printed scarf will take your outfit to new levels. If you were to compare dressing up to a work of art, outerwear is the finishing touch.



'Peekaboo' bag,
Fendi,
price on request



Leather boots,
Alexander McQueen,
₹ 1,08,900



Printed scarf,
Dsquared2 at
www.yoox.com,
₹ 17,300 approx

COPENHAGEN FASHION WEEK

THE NEUTRAL JACKET

Wearability is the backbone of good outerwear and few are as elevated and utilitarian as a jacket in neutral tones of camel. Designers have experimented with colours and patterns over the decades, but we keep coming back to weather our sartorial storms in the classic shade.



Trench coat,
Burberry at
www.darveys.com,
₹ 1,45,950



Hunting jacket,
Uniqlo, ₹ 4,990

COPENHAGEN FASHION WEEK



THE RELAXED SUIT

The phrase borrowed from the boys is so passé, especially since women's suiting has surpassed men's when it comes to tailoring. Its rise up the sartorial ranks is credited to the sense of distinction it brings to the wearer. Bianca Jagger's debonair wedding suit from Yves Saint Laurent debuted tuxedos to womenswear, and now it is the most appropriate attire a formal environment.



Panelled jacket,
Sacai at
www.matchesfashion.com,
₹ 1,77,586 approx



Buttoned blazer,
Mango,
₹ 2,990



High-waist trousers,
Sacai at
www.matchesfashion.com,
₹ 78,332 approx



Drawstring trousers,
Mango,
₹ 3,500



MILAN FASHION WEEK



Linen trousers,
11:11,
₹ 16,450



Linen blazer,
11:11,
₹ 34,150 approx



MILAN FASHION WEEK

WEAR IT WITH

Up the ante by styling your relaxed suit with a fresh pair of sneakers, a cropped top and a pair of timeless sunnies.



'Medusa Biggie' sunglasses,
Versace,
price on request



'Air Vapormax 2020'
trainer, Nike,
₹ 18,695



Cropped top,
FILA,
₹ 1,799

THE BLACK DRESS

The ultime dress for some va-va-voom epitomizes easy dressing. From Audrey Hepburn's elegant Givenchy sheath dress in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* to Gianni Versace's ultra-sexy body-cons and Miuccia Prada's geek-chic pieces, whatever your personality, there's an indelible yet versatile piece for you.



LONDON FASHION WEEK



Knit dress,
Saloni at
www.shopbop.com,
₹ 46,135 approx



Ribbed maxi dress,
H&M, ₹ 3,999

WEAR IT WITH

Go from wearing your black dress with sneakers during the day to a slick pair of heels at night and throw in a shiny trinket for good measure.



Strappy sandals,
Balmain,
price on request



'Celeste noir' studs,
Outhouse,
₹ 5,500



Leather belt,
Mast and Harbour,
₹ 559



Polka-dot dress,
Vero Moda,
₹ 2,599



LONDON FASHION WEEK

Shift dress,
Forever New,
₹ 4,599



ON THE STYLE RADAR

TIME FOR A RESET

As wedding season approaches, comfort and style is taking precedence over custom gowns and haute couture

Textiles and design have, for long, played an important role in defining our culture and national identity. But in a rapidly modernising environment, contemporary Indian designers are pushing the limits by creating a spectrum of fashion – ranging from traditional bridalwear to minimalist daywear. Designers also face the challenge of carving out a space in an already saturated market. But with Covid-19 upending traditional fashion cycles, consumerism, and overall consumption, it's becoming increasingly important to be self-reliant on one's roots, while championing sustainable livelihoods for artisan clusters across the country. As is the case with her peers, designer Sounia Gohil is navigating the tricky waters of fashion retail, which has witnessed a seismic shift over the past few months. Over the years, Gohil's constant innovation, while staying true to her cultural roots, has been evident with her designs, allowing her to create a niche in the contemporary Indian fashion space.

Although loungewear and sleepwear has gained pronounced acceptance in lockdown,



Gohil's new collection is minimal yet dramatic

Gohil has always stayed true to her cultural roots



Gohil stuck to her guns by launching a new collection, replete with minimal yet dramatic looks for an intimate and contemporary wedding. It's a quintessential blend of pastel tones and easy, flowy silhouettes with delicate embellishments, which reflects the designer's signature style, and is perfect for day functions. According to Gohil, the new collection aims to capture the sentiment and warmth of intimate gatherings. We caught up with her, via a call, to discuss her

aesthetic, the future of bridal shopping, and navigating a pandemic.

GRAZIA: Is your design aesthetic a reflection of your personal style?

SOUNIA GOHIL: My clothes come with a modern edge while still reflecting the Indian heritage through embroidery and embellishments, which are staples in most of my collections. When I design, I make sure to keep in mind the modern, confident and feminine Indian woman, who doesn't shy away from wearing dramatic clothes with a hint of comfort. So, it's safe to say that my aesthetic is a true reflection of my personal style.

G: Bridalwear trends through the pandemic show a new affinity for a simpler, traditional look. Your thoughts?

SG: The Covid-19 pandemic seems to have changed the way we approach weddings, and the way we get married. The concept of a big fat Indian wedding could possibly become passé. In fact, most couples are now veering towards intimate ceremonies. It's almost like we're going back in time when weddings were held in our own backyards. The trend of lightweight and simpler wedding *lehengas* will probably become the norm as brides would prefer to be fuss-free and comfortable. Bridalwear has now shifted to retaining a



Bridalwear has now shifted to retaining a piece's value in terms of designs

piece's value in terms of design, and classic styles preserve that quality. And yes, matching face masks will now become part of a wedding trousseau.

G: From altering production schedules to shifting to e-commerce, many fashion

brands are adapting to stay afloat during the pandemic. What's been your experience?

SG: Pandemic times demand pandemic changes. We have also adapted to this new normal. During lockdown, I reconnected with my creative side and used the extra free time to sketch new designs. As a business strategy, we did cut down on our overheads not only for the immediate future, but also keeping in mind the uncertainties that may crop up in the future. I believe little tweaks can bring about a sea change during testing times. We've also had to take a serious re-look at our production schedules – there's been a pullback in material purchases; production is more against orders only and

tackling labour issues has been challenging as most workers have rightfully gone home and may not return anytime soon given the insecurities associated with businesses, in general. But, I am optimistic that with the start of a new season, fashion will find its feet again. I do believe that making online business sustainable for the fashion and lifestyle industry is about accelerating digital for the business as a whole.

G: What's your take on 'dressing up' for a pandemic wedding? Does your brand of bridalwear speak a completely new design language now?

SG: I believe wedding-wear should be subtler and more muted. We should opt for more stylised clothes as opposed to pieces that are heavily embellished.

G: How should fashion labels re-brand themselves going forward?

SG: For me right now, it boils down to listening to my clients about what feels appropriate. My target audience generally wears what makes them feel great and powerful rather than adhering to traditional seasonal trends. It's about how you wear it, not what season it's worn in. Although, I do think there will be a shift towards prêt for some time, with couture taking a back seat. And as for social media, it will become the platform for maximum sales and conversions. ■

The new collection aims to capture the warmth of intimate gatherings





JUST
ONE
THING

WRAP IT UP

From HRH Queen Elizabeth II to Beyonce's Destiny's Child days, the headscarf has come a long way. And the good news is that it's back on the F/W 2020 runways



Printed bandana,
I Was A Sari, ₹ 440



Printed scarf,
Moschino, ₹ 19,950



Satin scarf,
H&M, ₹ 699



Velvet detail scarf,
Ritu Kumar, ₹ 1,050

SIMPLE PLAN

New minimalism is taking the season by storm with a mix of modern monochrome and tailored silhouettes

Modern minimalism is our calling card this season, and this gold-plated necklace will elevate the most normcore outfit, along with the promise to become a personal relic that you will wear forever.

Chain link necklace, Misho, ₹ 23,810



Leather briefcase, Hidesign, ₹ 8,995

Work from home is fine, but when we return to the workplace, it'll be important to get our gear right. What could be more legit than a briefcase?

The world is replete with unsexy sandals, but these aren't one of them. The seductive appeal comes from its sleekness. And, they pair well with tailored trousers or beautiful day dresses. They certainly beat flip-flops.

Thong heels, Zara, ₹ 3,990



We dare you to state an occasion where hoop earrings aren't appropriate. Can't think of one? That's because this versatile piece of jewellery goes with everything.

Hoop earrings, The Line, ₹ 21,000

Graphic print jacket, Polo Ralph Lauren, ₹ 22,300 approx



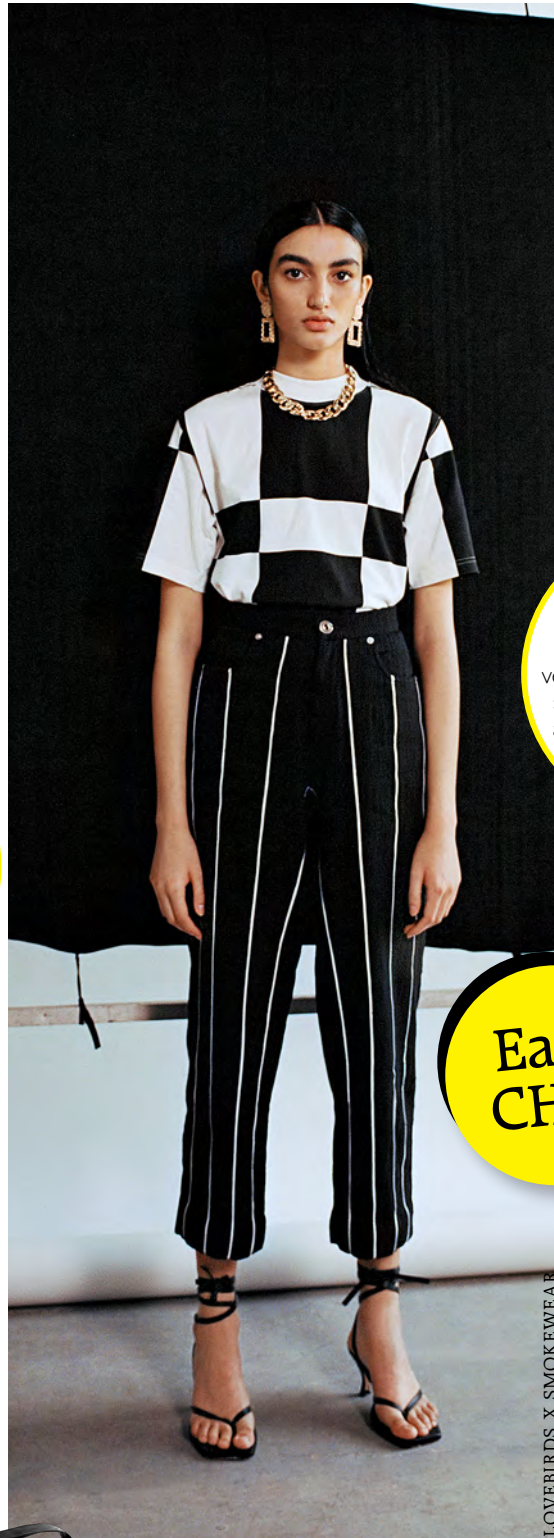
Black and white looks its best on a denim trucker. This slightly shrunken version of the iconic jacket showcases news articles and photographs, in case you missed your newspaper.

Easy CHIC

There isn't a piece of clothing invented that practices more restraint and sophistication than a pair of black trousers. Tailored to perfection, this pair is appropriate for after office hours.



Pleated trousers, Uniqlo, ₹ 2,990



LOVEBIRDS X SMOKEWEAR

Junior Fashion Editor SURBHI SHUKLA

LOVE LOVE LOVE

*The iconic
'Serpenti' gets a
bold new update
with a highlighter
hue and a twist to
the signature snake
head closure. It's
just the pick-me-up
you need right now*



'Bulgari Serpenti' top handle bag,
Ambush x Bvlgari Collection,
price on request

GRAZIA

BEAUTY

HOW
WE
WORK
IT



Photograph KEEGAN CRASTO, Compiled by HENA DESAI

Where we spotted it

Lakmé Fashion Week Summer/Resort 2020 showcase.

Why we loved it

A sleek bun a classic style to master – it's an easy way to elevate your festive look while also being very #WFH –friendly.

Ways to work it

1. Start by washing your hair with a lush, hydrating shampoo and conditioner that will adequately nourish your hair while cleansing it.
2. Create a side parting with a fine-toothed comb. Use a hairspray or strong-hold hair wax to smoothen the front section, especially if you have baby hair. Work a heat protectant or a shine serum thoroughly through the remaining sections, all the way to the ends.
3. Pull your hair back into a low, side ponytail. Tightly coil the hair around the hair tie into a low bun. Secure it in place with bobby pins. You can pull out a few face-framing strands from the front if you like.
4. Blast-dry your hair in place with a hairdryer, while keeping your machine on the medium heat setting.
5. Settle any fly-aways or strays in place with the hair wax or with a gentle spritz of hairspray to finish off.

1 NYX Professional Makeup Born to Glow! Liquid Illuminator, ₹ 850, 2 Benefit Cosmetics 24 Hour Brow Setter Shaping & Setting Gel, ₹ 2,390 3 Enn's Pucker Hydrating Lip Mask, ₹ 900 4 SUGAR Cosmetics Magic Wand Waterproof Concealer, ₹ 799 5 Bollyglow Filmi Foundation, ₹ 1,250, 6 Kay Beauty Volume & Length Mascara, ₹ 799





QUEEN CULTURE

'They' call the shots

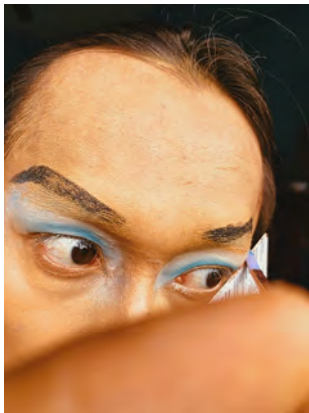
Words **HENA DESAI**

As recently as about five years ago, 'they' was just another plural pronoun in the English dictionary. In 2019, this seemingly nondescript word caused quite the stir as it was crowned the 'Word of The Year' by dictionary publisher Merriam-Webster, as it was embraced by non-binary folk to describe their gender identity. ICYMI, the word 'they' generated 313 per cent more online searches

than ever before, and that says a lot about the kind of curiosity around it.

Talks about breaking away from a binary idea of gender aren't new – and drag artists have played a big part in this. The mainstream media may be shining the spotlight on this vibrant, creative and tenacious community now more than ever (thanks to shows like *RuPaul's Drag Race*), but drag culture has been thriving for over two centuries now – first as

an underground performance act, and later, as a much larger social movement. Traditionally, drag culture was simply defined as cross-dressing. But in reality, it's so much more than that – the finger-snapping, 'yass kween'-ing community has been super instrumental in blurring gender norms and normalising fluidity. Each bold brushstroke and wig flip is a step towards a non-conformist, out-of-the-ordinary means of self-expression that goes far beyond 'he' and 'she'.



Dame Imfala

"Drag makes me feel invincible. It's my expression of gender that is fluid and devoid of labels. I identify as a non-binary homosexual man when I'm out of drag. In drag, you can call me he, she, they, them, anything — it doesn't matter."

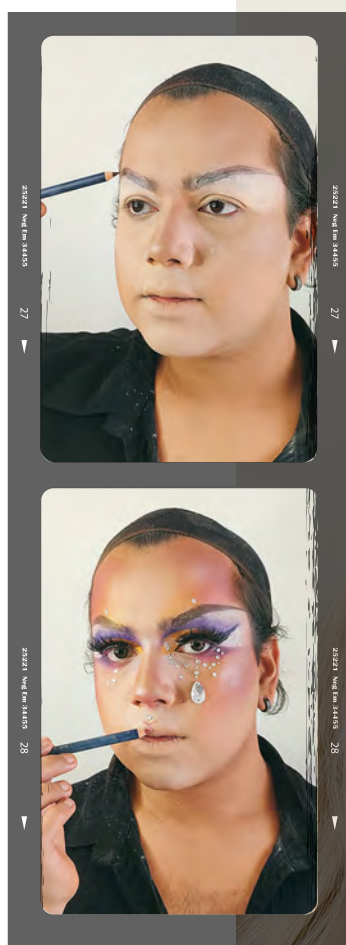
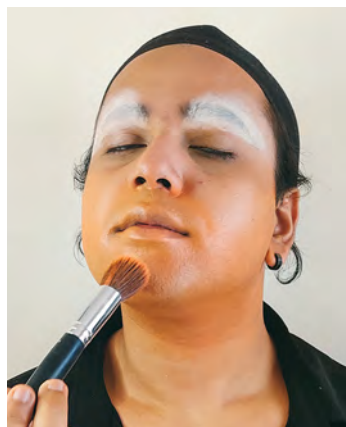
For more, click below

www.youtube.com





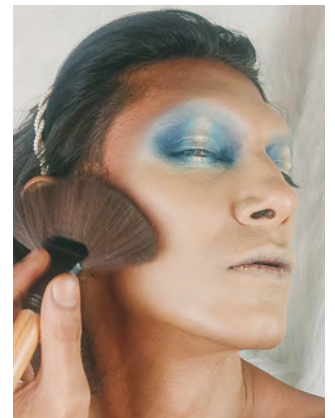
Rimi Heart



“Drag is what you do, and gender is who you are. I grew up as a feminine, gay boy, drawn to bright pink colours in a society where that’s frowned upon. Through drag, I could finally fill that longing and embrace that side of me; and now, I can’t live without it.”

For more, click below

www.youtube.com

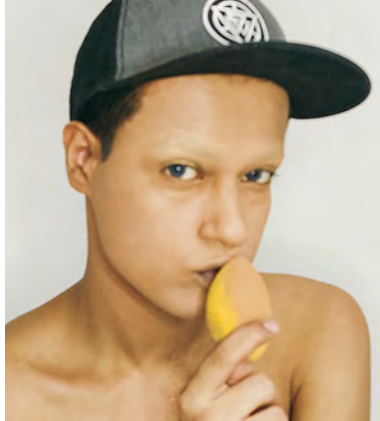


Zeesh

"My characters can be gender fluid or not even related to a gender; that's the beauty of drag — there are no rules. It's a means to move away from heteronormativity and societal rules. The idea of breaking the binary is so empowering."

For more, click below

www.youtube.com



Betta NonStop



"Drag has broadened the concept of gender fluidity for me — through it, I can experience being male, female or none of those at all. I feel that clothes and physical attributes only put up an external front, but gender is something personal. It's what you feel on the inside."

For more, click below
www.youtube.com

LOVE LOVE LOVE



It's so rich with jet-black, inky pigments that you'll never want to coat your lashes and lids with anything else

Givenchy Volume Disturbia Mascara and Liner Disturbia, ₹ 2,425 and ₹ 2,175 respectively

BEAUTY REPORTER

SCENT OF THE SEASON

This new fragrance celebrates the contrast between light and shadow



Hermès L'Ombre des Merveilles,
₹ 11,100 (100 ml)

Image QUENTIN BERTOUX

The Eau Des Merveille fragrance range has been synonymous with the house of Hermès for well over a decade, and now there's a new addition to the family – L'Ombre des Merveilles. Stepping away from its fresh, light predecessor, this new fragrance plays with an interesting medley of light and dark notes: It features a swirl of incense, tonka beans and a hint of deep black tea.

Designed by Hermès' nose and head perfumer Christine Nagel, it bottles emotions of everything – from childhood dreams, femininity to innocence and fantasy. It wouldn't be inaccurate to sum up L'Ombre des Merveilles as mysterious, elegant and captivating, something that you could wear in the day or even at night, without being too overpowering. The airy yet intense perfume is designed to look good on your mantle too – it comes in a star-spangled, pebble-like rocking bottle. Created by Serge Mansau, it mimics a magnifying glass which further plays with the textures of light to reveal a scent's "magical power to see the world from new and marvellous angles."

THIS JUST IN

A new hair remover is on our radar for all the right reasons

We're always on the lookout for convenient, at-home hair removers, and the latest one to catch our attention is the new Gillette Venus Snap. It comes with avocado oil-enriched soap gel bars which ensure that it is super gentle on your skin. It's small enough to fit in your palm and comes housed in a cute case, making it easy and hygienic to carry with you wherever you go. All you have to do is just wet, glide and moisturise – that's it, you're good to go.

Available at www.nykaa.com



Gillette Venus Snap,
₹ 799

TRIED AND TESTED

Team Grazia got their hands on a new product to battle tired eyes, and here's what we think about it



mCaffeine Naked & Raw Coffee Under Eye Cream. ₹ 575

Our search for good under-eye creams is long and never-ending, particularly in this era of Zoom calls and Netflix bingeing. In our quest to find an antidote to tired, puffy and dark under-eyes, one product that has particularly caught our attention is mCaffeine's Naked & Raw Coffee Under Eye Cream. Packed with pure Arabica coffee, this eye cream fights free radical damage, smoothenes fine lines, and gets rid of puffiness in the under eye area. The vitamin E in it also helps in sun damage recovery of the skin, while hyaluronic acid keeps your skin hydrated. The best part? It's lightweight, non-greasy and sealed with a refreshing coffee aroma.



Hena Desai,
Senior Beauty Writer

"I love this cocktail of high-performing ingredients – it has antioxidant-rich caffeine, moisturising vitamin E and hyaluronic acid and soothing sweet almond oil. It checks all the right boxes as it tackles everything from puffiness, untimely fine lines and also fades uneven skin tone."

Garvika Khanna,
Fashion Stylist

"Unlike other heavier creams, my skin absorbs this product in no time. Infused with coffee, it has brought about a noticeable difference to my dark circles, while also de-puffing the area. I'm instantly drawn to skincare products with hyaluronic acid in it, so the fact that this eye cream has it is a big plus."

Meghana Ganeshan,
Digital Writer

"Typically, eye creams cause me to tear up and feel uncomfortable, but not this one. It's free of silicones, mineral oil, artificial fragrance and other irritants, which makes it perfect for my sensitive skin. I like that it's lightweight and potent, while also being super affordable."

NEXT-GEN COLOUR AND CARE



Moroccanoil Color Depositing Mask. ₹ 2,160

You're never going to get enough of this

You probably wouldn't believe us if we told you that a hair mask could leave you with fabulously coloured tresses. But that's until you take a look at Moroccanoil's new Color Depositing Mask Collection. These one-of-a-kind hair products do two things simultaneously – deposit colour pigments while deeply conditioning your hair. Apply this product evenly on clean, towel-dried hair and in just 5-7 minutes, it will nourish your strands with ArganID™ technology, amino acids, apricot kernel oil, and also coat them with a brand new, vibrant temporary colour. You can switch up your look with seven different shades, while never having to worry about hair health. Win-win, we say. **W**



Shivan & Narresh's Praslin dinner table setting

DINNER AT EIGHT

The dinner party is evolving into a millennial-friendly set-up, and we're here for it

Words

RADHIKA AGRAWAL

When I was growing up, my parents dragged me to at least a few dinner parties every month. And for all of those evenings, I would have to put on my best dresses and be on my best behaviour. At 25, the memory of sitting around a giant table with a folded napkin in my lap, delicious food being served on precious china, and staring at what must've been more cutlery on one table than can now be found in my kitchen, is still fresh. Many are of the opinion that the idea of a dinner party is dead – that in a world led by millennials, there's no room for pretence and expensive glassware. It's true that the younger generation doesn't want to be bogged



Maximal details



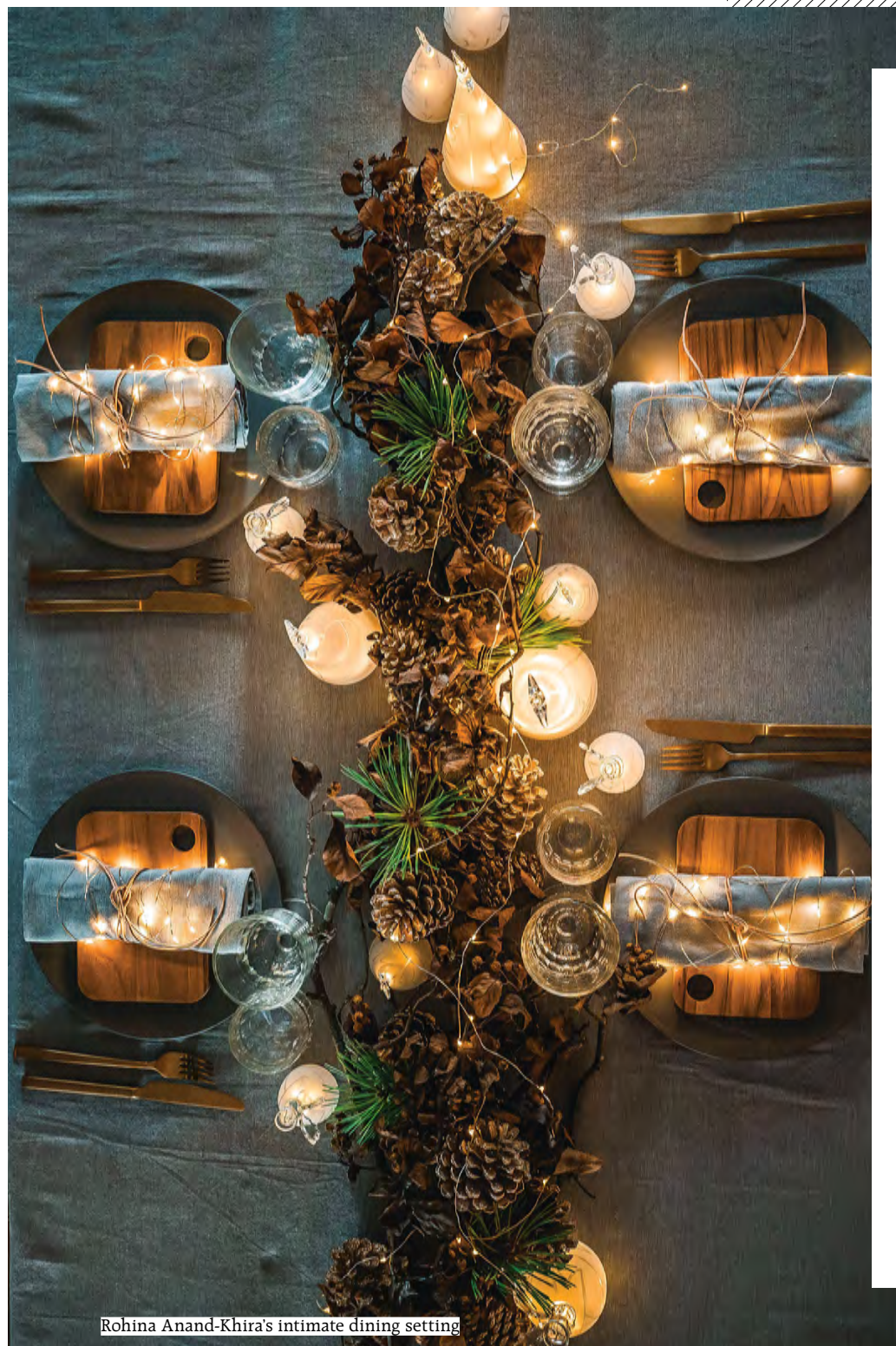
down by the concept of etiquette around friends; but, they value their inner circle more than anything, and enjoy spending their Saturday nights hanging out with them. So, instead of rejecting dinner parties, millennials have simply modified the concept. We asked creatives to photograph a millennial-friendly dinner table to show us what these evening soirées mean to them, especially in a post Covid-19 world.

Designers Shivan Bhatia and Narresh Kukreja are known for throwing handsome dinner parties with the who's who of the town seated around the dinner table. Their table settings have always been maximal, both borrowing from the glory of the past and adding a refined, modern touch. This Shivan & Narresh Praslin dinner table setting is a celebration of friends and family at a time when they have been brought closer together in the face of a global pandemic. "Gatherings have become smaller, yet the reverie and the verve associated with them remain the same. Since revelling in the outdoors is limited, the indoor setting has become more elaborate and refined," says Kukreja. Photographed here are the Praslin table runner, Praslin canvas table mats, noir napkins, elegant bone china crockery, silver cutlery, stemware and complimentary table accents, illustriously designed to sit in harmony with each other, to mark a jubilant time with loved ones.

For 26-year-old Abhilasha Sinha, hosting her own dinner parties is a means to relive the nostalgia associated with her mother's famous spicy chicken curry and pulao. "I've hosted many dinners as an adult now, and while I hold my glass of wine and eat with a fork (things that didn't happen at childhood dinner parties), I still feel like I'm playing grown-up. I miss the chicken curry and rice more and more every day," she reminisces. The sentimentality of seeing their parents meet their friends every week, or month, to celebrate the little things in life has stayed »



Date night and fairy lights



Rohina Anand-Khira's intimate dining setting

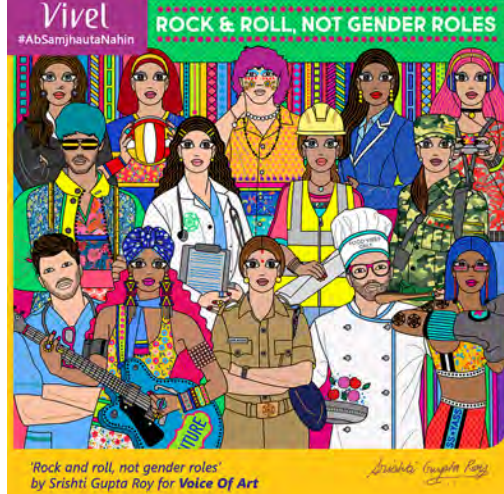
with many millennials, and they often wish to re-enact the scenes, albeit in their own style. Mismatched crockery doesn't obtain awkward glances; sex, politics and religion are encouraged topics of debate; and tank tops and cocktail dresses sit side by side without feeling out of place. For Andrea Pinto, 28, dinner parties marked the transition from her early 20s to her late 20s. "Pre-covid, my flatmates and I were known to ditch social gatherings in favour of staying at home. We would spend hours in the kitchen, inventing recipes, trying to make our moms' classic dishes, failing miserably, but having a blast," she says.

Designer Rohina Anand-Khira of AA Living recognises that most people today in their mid 20s to late 30s don't have the money, time, or apartment space to throw elaborate dinner parties that may have been popular back in the day. Therefore, the focus has shifted to more intimate, laid back meals, where thoughtful details showcase time and effort versus wealth and social standing. "I personally love adding seasonal touches – in the pictured dining setup, we added fairy lights and jute strings around the napkin to keep it minimalistic yet celebratory. The pine cone centrepiece runner along with a cluster of candles immediately gives a touch of Fall," she explains.

The question 'Are dinner parties dead?' extracted a vehement denial from 24-year-old Smriti Agarwal, who has a dedicated Pinterest board for planning for such occasions. "To me, they feel like what graduating from college felt like... when you're done raging in overcrowded nightclubs and puking in public loos, while drinking cheap tequila – come over to the brighter side. We have scented candles, matching napkins, expensive cheese and wine! Who can say no to that?" **W**

GRAZIA GRAB

The latest buzz on your favourite brands



ART MEETS EQUALITY

ITC Vivel's latest campaign, 'Voice of Art', brought together the country's largest collective of young artists to portray a contemporary take on gender equality through art



Art in its purity has been an effective mode of communication since time immemorial – be it to challenge social norms or protest against injustice – and has inspired change. Keeping this powerful tool in mind, ITC Vivel came up with its philosophy of *Ab Samjhauta Nahin* with an aim to eradicate inequality for good. The Vivel 'Voice of Art', initiative brought together the country's largest collective of young artists to express a new-age narrative of equality through vivid illustrations on canvas.

To celebrate Gender Equality Day on August 26th, Vivel's campaign inspired and empowered people to raise their voices against patriarchy. The initiative received over 400 artworks depicting artists' versions of a progressive society without gender bias. The illustrations collectively spotlighted gender stereotypes spanning attire, pay gaps, societal expectations and more. ITC Vivel's brand philosophy, *Ab Samjhauta Nahin*, is a small step in a long journey to empower women to raise their voices and encourage them to stand up against discrimination.



ON THE CARDS

A passionate and successful tarot card reader for almost a decade, Sakshi Kumar believes in helping people. Reading people's future is an art, one which she wanted to share with the world. She kick-started her entrepreneurial journey by

conducting multiple workshops such as art therapy, meditation and more. Her most recent event, Satluj, was held at the Bikaner House. Its focus was on Indian heritage, giving multiple designers a chance to showcase their collections.

SKINCARE SQUAD

Tons of people struggle with skin problems related to age spots, acne scars and more. Skincare brand NohooH was recently launched in India to fight these very problems with ease. It helps in improving the luminosity of the skin, while also offering 72 hours of soothing and moisturizing hydration. The brand's products are crafted with several natural plant-based ingredients to reduce the production of melanin in skin pigmentation, so that your skin can shine as bright as you.



The Covid-19 pandemic has made it increasingly difficult to draw a hard line between work and some semblance of a personal life – especially with emails rolling in, WhatsApp messages constantly popping up, and sitting in on those numerous Zoom calls that are scheduled through the day. No matter what we promise ourselves, many of us are guilty of penciling in at least a little work despite taking a personal vow to set aside ‘me time’ every day. If the work from home life is propelling you to an inevitable burnout, chances are that you might be really (really!) eager for a change of scenery. Enter the workcation: The buzzword that has gained credence in lockdown. It’s where you travel to a new destination and work from there for at least part of your stay. While it can’t be called a vacation, because you will still be working, it does provide the chance to relax away from home outside working hours.

Designer Masaba Gupta, who made her acting debut with the Netflix special, *Masaba Masaba*, just finished working on her upcoming collection from a quaint Airbnb villa in Goa. “Over the last few months, we have all had to adapt to the new normal and a new way of living – both in our personal and professional lives. Personally, one of the most significant changes for me has been

BEYOND THE 9-5

The antidote to separating work and life could be combining them

Words **BARRY RODGERS**



A workcation is a unique opportunity to balance your working hours and time off



Peaceful worktime in the shade of palm trees

the way I work. As a designer, I find inspiration from nature, travel and the world around me. While I was able to work on designs for House of Masaba virtually over the last few months, I was truly craving a change in scene to add a fresh perspective to my overall process. As things began to open up, I was excited to venture beyond the confines of my own home to spend some time in a home in Goa, and it has truly been a refreshing change for my creative spirit,” she says. »

FIND YOUR CORNER

It's important to bear in mind, however, that the task of choosing a workstation spot is a little different than choosing one for a full-blown vacation. Ideally, you would want to choose a destination where you won't be upset that you don't have your days to explore. To summarise: Avoid places where there's a ton you want to do or where the main attractions happen during the day. Instead, choose relaxing destinations with uninterrupted Wi-Fi (think resorts where you could feasibly sit by the pool and work), or destinations where you don't care too much about sightseeing but just want to get a feel for the place. Devendra Parulekar, director at hospitality collective SaffronStays, says, "In an endeavour to suit the way our lives changed during the pandemic, we pivoted our business and

launched workstations much before it was a buzzword. People are done doing their household chores. So, we thought: if one can work from home, they can also work from a vacation home in Khandala, Alibaug, Ooty, Nainital or Goa. That's when we decided on moving workstations to the beaches, hills, and by the pool. Earlier, we would avoid providing Wi-Fi connections at our homes as we wanted people to connect offline. However, in keeping with this trend, we ensured that all homes have strong Wi-Fi for video calls. We




Professionals are now opting for workcation breaks as a chance to swap their WFH desks for a retreat

It's becoming an increasingly popular thing to combine holiday time with remote work



started these bookings for a minimum of one month and saw a phenomenal response, especially in Maharashtra. It became so sought-after that people started extending their stay by 3-5 months."

The few individuals who I know personally believe that workcations create the psychological permission to blend work and holiday because part of the stress of working while you're on holiday is feeling guilty about dipping into work. But a workcation gives you the justification or even creates a compulsion to work while lounging by the pool – which, no matter how you position it, is still work. That we even need workcations reflects how work has become stifling. It's becoming increasingly hard to remain focused or to get creative thinking done, especially when all your time is spent coordinating with teams across the country. But here's the clincher: The success of adopting the workcation life depends on hitting pause on the multitasking and separating yourself from a regimen. Unlike the fast-paced environment of an office, which often programmes hourly activities, the key to unwinding just may be in letting yourself dream, with a cocktail in hand. 

Check out our website for more stories on lifestyle

grazia.co.in

MONTH IN MONTH OUT

MOVIES, ART, BOOKS, AND MORE, HERE ARE OUR TOP PICKS OF THINGS THAT GOT US TALKING THIS MONTH



BEHIND THE SCENES

Sonam Nair

This director is all set to introduce you to a brand-new genre of filmmaking

More often than not, Bollywood is known for its predictable plot lines and rigid genres. And although things are slowly changing, OTT platforms are here to speed up the process with alternative cinema. One such project, *Masaba Masaba*, is a Netflix Original starring the mother-daughter duo Masaba and Neena Gupta. The show attempts to blur the lines between fiction and non-fiction by having the cast play fictional versions of themselves, offering a sneak-peek into the glamorous world of fashion. We sat down with director Sonam Nair to find out what went into creating such a concept and everything we can expect from it.

GRAZIA: What inspired you to make such a unique show?

SONAM NAIR: The show's producer, Ashvini Yardi, came up with the concept. The genre is so fresh that everyone's been curious about it. However, when Ashvini and Masaba contacted me about it, I got very excited by the possibilities of creating the rules for a brand-new genre for India. It was very tough to get the backbone of the series right, as there was hardly any set format or reference for it. I like to tell people it's a scripted series "based on true events".

G: What was it like to work with Masaba and Neena Gupta?

SN: I love both of them. I feel connected to them, as though we are all the same breed of women. They are the reason I wanted to do this series, because I honestly felt like it was a great match. I would be very jealous if I heard someone else was making a series with them. They are gorgeous, intelligent, hardworking women, but what I love about them is how real, funny and genuine they are. Masaba is everything I want in a leading lady. She's stunning, has amazing charisma and screen presence, and I can't wait for the world to witness her acting prowess. And Neenaji is goals! I want to be her.

G: How did Covid-19 impact the making of the show?

SN: We were very lucky to have finished the bulk of our work before the lockdown started. There was some post production left, mainly dubbing with Masaba. But as luck would have it, she was stuck in Goa and as it was a green state, we managed to do her dubbing remotely.

G: From the actors, filmmaker to the rest of the team, *Masaba Masaba* is a power-packed female project. How can mainstream cinema be more inclusive of women in the industry?

SN: This wasn't necessarily a conscious decision, it just happened naturally because women were immediately drawn to the project. I think while mainstream cinema has a long way to go in terms of giving equal opportunities and pay to women, the OTT space is definitely bridging that gap. In an ideal world, we would just look at films and series as good or bad, and not bother about what is female or male-oriented. **LI**



Women at work: Neena Gupta, Masaba Gupta and Sonam Nair

On the Bookshelf

Think Like A Monk
HarperCollins India
Jay Shetty

In this empowering book, Shetty draws on his time as a monk in the Vedic tradition to show us how we can clear the roadblocks to our potential and power.



Such a Fun Age
Bloomsbury
Kiley Reid

A big-hearted debut novel about the awkwardness of transactional relationships, and what it really means to make someone 'family'.

Kintsugi
HarperCollins India
Anukrti Upadhyay

Named after the ancient Japanese art of mending broken objects with gold, Anukrti writes about young women and men puzzling over the lines between love and desire, attachment and freedom.



THE AMERICAN DREAM

This author shares his vision of our time through a collection of 13 interconnected stories



Matthew Baker's latest masterpiece, *Why Visit America*, isn't a travel guide. It's a series of 13 short stories that explore a strange, twisted and almost eerie vision of the future of the United States. Each story follows a different genre, but is interconnected with the other gems that follow. What's fascinating about the collection is that while it is unsettling and deeply telling of the kind of society we live in, it also offers the one thing every reader looks for – hope. We had a chat with Baker to ask him about the inspiration behind the book, and more.

GRAZIA: *Why Visit America* is a truly innovative collection of short stories. What inspired you to write it?

MATTHEW BAKER: There are books and movies that inspired me: Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go*, and Spike Jonze's film, *Her*. But the biggest inspiration for me was my childhood. When I was a child, my parents loved to travel during the summers, packing my sisters and I into a minivan and taking us on week-long road trips to destinations as far-flung as Texas, Florida, California and Maine, making pit-stops along the



Matthew Baker

way. In a certain sense, that was when I began writing the book – those summers exploring the country with my family in a rusted-out minivan.

G: While most writers stick to a genre or two, you have explored many genres of writing, including dystopia, fantasy, science fiction and more in this book. Which one was the most challenging for you to write and why?

MB: There's a story in the book titled *Testimony Of Your Majesty*, which is essentially a *bildungsroman* – a coming-of-age story about a girl living in a parallel-universe United States, where wealth is

considered shameful. I honestly don't know why, but that was the most challenging story for me to write. I struggled with that story for years before the breakthrough moment finally came.

G: Which short story from the collection is closest to your heart and why?

MB: *Why Visit America*, because that's the story that gave me the title and the concept for the book as a whole. And because ultimately, that's the story that was the most fun to write.

G: You have used various metaphors to describe the current political state of the US. Was this in the interest of literature or fragile political sensibilities?

MB: The United States today is a country so radically polarised, that at times it seems to be on the verge of a civil war. It's become impossible to talk about the issues that matter. If you try to have a conversation with somebody about a topic like climate change or gun control, psychological barriers that are as thick as brick instantly shoot up, preventing any genuine exchange of ideas. In an environment like that, the only way to talk about what you want to talk about is to disguise the issue; cloak it in another form. **U**

BIG BYTE

*All the tech we're
crushing on this month*

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The Note line this year combines fashion and style with the power to work and play. As we head into a new normal, this packs in everything one can ask for in 2020, on a phone.



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The OPPO Find X2 Pro has an exclusive design inspired by the Aventador SVJ Roadster, which sports a 120Hz QHD+ ultra-vision screen, an ultra-vision camera system, 65W fast charging, and a limited edition box filled with extra goodies.



APPLE IPAD PRO, ₹ 71,900 ONWARDS

The new Apple iPad Pro is a lot more evolved. It's also a workhorse, a gaming platform, a social distancing gateway, and is a breeze for anyone to use. The iPad OS now fully supports cursor input, and there's a new beautiful new Magic Keyboard with a full trackpad.

MBUX (MERCEDES- BENZ USER EXPERIENCE) INTERIOR ASSIST

MBUX is a suite of cutting-edge technologies that uses artificial intelligence to upgrade every moment you spend on the road in a Mercedes-Benz. MBUX also includes a navigation display with augmented reality technology and intelligent voice control with natural speech recognition. How cool is that? **TM**



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