

ARTS

Gopika Nath – To open the knots in a relationship, both hands are required

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213

At an exhibition of her work, Gopika Nath is displaying her art. Layers of fabrics with patterns stitched on them in concentric circles are neatly hung on the wall. Parts of the fabric on display are singed on the edges and others have needle work, which looks like a mash-up in certain patches and seems smooth on the rest. The framed pieces of her work, hanging against a whitewashed gallery wall, display a range of emotions. One feels anguish, despair, and hope all in a piece of work. Prod her and she replies

Isn't there pain within all of us? While I may be friendly with one person, I may be angry with another and because of my experiences I may have burnt myself with others, but essentially I am still the same person. And that gets reflected in my work.



Gopika Nath

Gopika, a textile designer, fiber artist, writer, healer and a teacher has been working with textiles for over four decades. Her foray into textiles is nothing less than magical. While still at school her teacher asked the class what do they want to be and she surprised herself by saying that she wanted to become a textile designer. The thought has never crossed her before. In reality, she wanted to be a doctor. Once school was over, she kept wondering about the choice of course that she would sign up for her graduation studies. As luck would have it, by the time she went to enrol for a course at the university, the only course that was available was textiles.

She is an alumna of The Central School of Art and Design, London, and recipient of the Fulbright Fellowship and has formed a compelling bond with textiles for life.

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Though fabrics inspire Gopika, she went a step ahead and learnt to weave them, making the bond even stronger. **“It was like giving birth to something with just thread and air and that was fascinating,” she shares.** Having worked with the biggest names in the corporate sector: Fabindia, Shyam Ahuja, L’affaire, Ravissant, she carved a niche for herself by creating her range of hand-printed sarees and scarves but she was thirsty for more. In addition to the private sector, she has also worked extensively with the **crafts people in the rural sector** through the Ministry of Textiles towards reviving the handloom art of regions like Kashmir, Bastar, and Kutch.

My chosen path of work allows me to express what I feel. I am sensitive and go into a cocoon while creating my art. I start going inwards with the repetitive movement of needle and thread. Going on and on, round and round, I find myself in deep meditative state. My focus shifts from the noise outside my studio to the noise within. Then it is just me and the needle and thread.

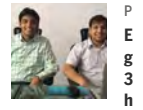
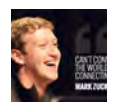
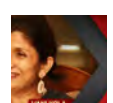
Sometimes Gopika doesn’t like what she has created. “In which case she either reworks on it after a while or burns it and reworks on it again, till she is satisfied.” This burning of work, though seen as violence, is deeply healing. It allows her to burn the negativity within, which otherwise gets reflected in her work. Sometimes the thread gets all jumbled up, much like a relationship and all her energy goes into resolving the knot. Like in certain real life situations, if the knot cannot be unwound then that thought/relationship gets pushed at the back of the mind and she continues with the rest of the work.

Gopika remembers, “There was this one time, when I had sent out invites on emails to the entire neighbourhood for a get together at home. And few days later, I bumped into one of the ladies who hadn’t come. I casually asked her about her absence and the neighbour said, I did not get any invite and the first thought which came to me was, ‘Liar.’ The word kept playing on my mind on loop and I reproduced that thought with the help of a needle and thread on fabric.” She is also quick to add that “by calling someone a liar, one is also judging oneself and I do not feel good about judging someone.”



Gopika is an intimate storyteller and engages her audience with human emotions and relationships. She remembers a line *rishto ki ganth kholne mein, aaj mehsoos hua ki dono hatho ki zarurat padti thi* (To open the knots in a relationship, I realised today that both the hands are required), which is also symbolic of her work.

For aspiring artists she says “I am doing **art because I want to** do it and whatever little name comes along with it, I am ok. But if you are doing it for money, then one should not be here. There is very little money for artists,” she continues, “Whatever be the medium, the most important part is to have a voice and a **passion to make it possible**. Because of the internet, things are out there in the open for public scrutiny and a lot of people cannot live up to it. So choose wisely and focus on creating your art.”

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