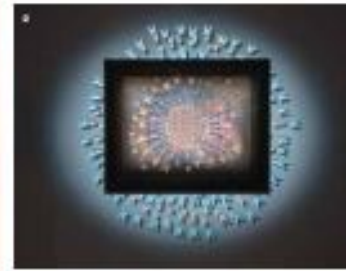


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Femme Elegante

25



1. Project  
2. & 3.  
Installations  
with mapping  
3. & 4. Michelle  
Y Poonawalla

## UNPARALLELED VISION

Artist, businesswoman and philanthropist, Michelle Y Poonawalla ropes in an unconventional approach to marry art with technology to put her passion on the global map.

BY SHIVPRIYA RAJPAI

**A**rt has been an integral part of Michelle Y Poonawalla's life. Her artistic style is varied, experimenting with techniques and technology has remained a constant in her approach. She creates a contemporary sensibility with her art that reflects modern-day concerns. In an exclusive interview, Michelle shares her views on contemporary artists, combining art with technology, and more. Edited excerpts...

**When did you find your calling in art?**

Art has been a part of my upbringing. I have grown up studying art and design, admiring my late grandfather, Jehangir Vastikar who was an illustrious architect and an astonishing artist. He gifted me the technique of oil painting. In his memory, we launched a lovely coffee table book and hosted an art exhibit of his works in December 2015

in Mumbai. This made me stop and think that I must do something to carry on his legacy. In 2016, I made a special butterfly artwork with the children of The Gateway School in Mumbai that garnered immense praise. Doing the illustrations for a book written by my daughter, called, The Adventures of Harvey Moses was yet another stepping stone for me in this field. Some of my exhibitions of note include, Khushi - India On Carmasin conjunction with Sotheby's, Delhi, 2017; India Art Story, Kolkata, 2017; What If You Fly, a solo exhibition at Vis A Vis Gallery, Delhi and Spazio Gallery, Pune, 2018, to name a few.

**Was growing up between the UK and India instrumental in your inclination towards art?**

The city of London is a haven for an art lover and growing up there was instrumental in cementing my passion for the same. I did my graduation from London with a Bachelor in Arts and studied the history of art as well.

**Coming from the affluent and respectable first family of Pune brings you in the forefront of constant scrutiny? How do you handle all the attention and expectations?**

It has been a challenge, but I say that artistic talent is something you are born with and is not bought. I have always wanted to showcase my artwork in a serious way at the right places. It is not a 'social' art show; they have all been serious art shows such as the Kochi Biennale collateral, Introspection which was later exhibited in Dubai at Alserkal Avenue during Dubai Art Week in 2019. Taking part in shows instrumentally have established me as an artist where I am not under any judgement or scrutiny.

**What is your art philosophy?**

I like to focus on relevant issues that touches everyone, any country,



and any race. My art marries a more formal paint on canvas style with experimental digital technology, particularly digital video mapping and motion sensor technology, to create interactive works that push the boundaries of conventional painting.

**You are bending the rules by marrying art with technology. What inspires you as an artist?**

Technology allows art to be magical and limitless, it can bring alive a painting and create an impactful installation. Inspiration comes from everything around me. For example, my immersive digital installation, Introspection showcased at the Kochi Biennale collateral, was born from a sense of discomfort and unease with the way images of violence

**"TECHNOLOGY ALLOWS ART TO BE MAGICAL AND LIMITLESS, IT BRINGS ALIVE A PAINTING AND CREATES AN IMPACTFUL INSTALLATION."**

and displacement are consumed today, usually in endless news cycles. With digital technology, I turned to sound, using a combination of audio clips from newscasts and ambient recordings to uncanny effect. Combining these sounds with motion sensor technology and digitally mapped visuals, the experience created an all-consuming sensorium.

**Innovation has revolutionised the world of art. How do you think it has been possible?**

New artists are now mixing various mediums, using technology such as audio and visual effects and so on. From holograms to projections to 3D installations, there is always more to learn when it comes to technology and the world is just seeing how it can be used in the world of art as well.

**How do you juggle the world of art, business, fashion and society, effortlessly? What do you do to unwind?**

I am very organised and focused. I like to plan my shows months in advance. I keep all social events strictly to the weekends. I unwind by travelling with my family, exploring new places and spending time with my children.

**Tell us about the project you are currently working on?**

I will be a part of the of START Art Fair (2019) at London's Saatchi Gallery. The installation will be accompanied by a parallel exhibition of my recent paintings that encapsulate my varied practice. I am also being launched on 'Sedition', an online platform selling affordable art as digital editions, pre Saatchi.

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