

# HORMAZD NARIELWALLA

Hormazd Narielwalla works across a number of artistic disciplines including printmaking, sculpture and artist's books but he is best known for his intricate paper collages and assemblages, which are originated on the surfaces of antique, vintage and bespoke tailoring patterns.

Viewing the utilitarian, graphic templates as 'beautiful abstractions of the human body, that carry with them not only an outline of a garment but also a representation of the individual that wore it', he re-interprets the long-discarded patterns, overlaying their delicate geometries with forms of his own, to express ideas about identity, memory, migration and diaspora.

Born in India and moving to the UK in 2003 originally to study as a fashion designer, Narielwalla's practice is influenced by cross-cultural perceptions he explores in a number of ways. Fascinated by the transformative power of clothes as a means by which to project notions of character and identity, the idea of bodily adornment and costuming is a recurrent motif. Who are we? Where do we come from? Who might we become?, are themes that reverberate throughout his work.

*'Outwardly abstract ... nevertheless suffused with something innately human and personal.'*

(Claire Wrathall, Christies Magazine Sept/Oct 2018)

Working intuitively and often in extended series, his abstract compositions recall Cubist traditions, with condensed, accumulated fragments of visual information laid out over the two-dimensional surfaces of the paper supports. The poised arrangements of line and plane can suggest fluid arrangements for the human form, exploring the dynamics of a body's movement in conjectured three-dimensional space; or play with suggestions of the body as sculpture or icon. Freed from function the patterns provide a network of abstract marks that are the architecture upon which he constructs images that are often a subversive play with notions of gender, whether re-imagining himself as a Geisha; or celebrating the vagina, in 3D collages that recall the flower images of Georgia O'Keefe.

*'Just like the humble yet beautiful stamp, which travels the world on a paper envelope, Narielwalla's work bears a global imprint. His fascination with human adornment also encompasses the traditions of West Africa and India, pairing European dress patterns with Indian printmaking techniques and architectural conceits to suggest new multicultural identities.'*

(Nancy Campbell, 2015).

With their locus in the human figure, Narielwalla's images incorporate references to aesthetics and cultures from through-out the world. Following the instructive points and lines of the original pattern the blocked planes of cut papers are selected for their associative and decorative qualities. From modest material starting points the work articulates an eloquent range of subject matter. *Dead Man's Patterns* (2008) – an artist's book inspired by the bespoke suit patterns of a deceased client of a Saville Row tailor – offers an elegiac reflection on mortality; while a commission for the Crafts Council (2013) used military uniform

patterns from 1850 – 1947, in a sculptural installation that examined colonial narratives of the British Raj. *Lost Gardens* – an on-going series of collages that resemble delicate cartographic remnants embellished by passages of vivid colour – is inspired by the memory of a vanished rose garden of the artist's childhood. *Rock, Paper, Scissors* (2020) – a sequence of 100 small-scale works made on the pages of a 1906 sewing manual – responds to the sculpture of Barbara Hepworth, referencing her signature pierced forms with apertures cut into the layers of applied paper.

In a number of works that reference iconic figures Narielwalla fuses ideas of form and decoration, transforming the human figure itself into a kind of abstract sculpture. A print commission published by the Victoria and Albert Museum for the exhibition 'Frida Kahlo: Making Herself Up' (2018), was based on a sequence of collages that celebrates the Mexican artist's use of traditional costume in forging her distinctive and lasting visual identity. Coco Chanel (whose radical designs did so much to liberate the female body) is the focus of images that layer together intricate arrangements of pattern papers in an allusion to the skills involved in couture. *Diamond Dolls* (2020), a recent series of collages and limited edition artist's book, depict a repeated motif of David Bowie's 'Ziggy Stardust' persona that celebrate the singer's shape-shifting ability to project different identities through dress, make-up and performance. Each figure is defined by highly individual, sculptural costuming that allude to the gender-fluid traditions of kabuki and onnagata, which influenced Bowie in his approach to challenging conventions about sexuality and gender.

*'As a young gay man growing up in India, Western culture hardly permeated. It seeped in very gently, drop by drop. Then in the 1990s MTV started broadcasting music videos from the West and my first glimpse of David Bowie was from the 1970s, with his bright red hair and green, glass-like eyes. His beauty captured my imagination immediately. He showed me a different kind of masculinity in the character of Ziggy Stardust – the hair, the make-up, the costumes, in addition to his music and stagecraft.'*

*'Bowie's shape-shifting ability to create different personas was the starting point for images that at their basis explore ideas of transformation into another self. My dancing dolls are a form of celebration. Highly decorative and drawing on an extensive collection of papers I have sourced from all over the world, ranging from Japanese Chiyogami, Nepalese Lokta, Dutch gold and hand-blocked papers. Beauty as a form of seduction.'*

(Hormazd Narielwalla, June 2021)

## **CV**

2009 – 2014 University of the Arts, London. PhD in Fine Art  
2006 – 2007 University of Westminster, London. MA Fashion Design & Communication  
2003 – 2006 University of Wales, Newport. BA Fashion Design

## **Selected Solo Exhibitions**

2021 *Diamond Dolls*, Eagle Gallery/EMH Arts, London  
2020 *Rock, Paper, Scissors*, Eagle Gallery/EMH Arts, London  
2016 *Lost Gardens*, Southbank Centre, London  
2015 *Solo Showcase*, Fashion Museum, Bath  
2014 India Art Fair 2014, Birla Academy of Art and Culture  
2009 *A Study On Anansi*, Paul Smith, London

### **Selected Group Exhibitions**

- 2021 195th Annual Exhibition of the Royal Scottish Academy, digital exhibition
- 2020 Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize, Drawing Projects UK, Trowbridge (& tour)  
Midnight's Family, 70 Years of Indian Artists in Britain Ben Uri Museum, London
- 2017 Migrations, Eagle Gallery/EMH Arts, London  
No Turning Back, Migrations Museum, London
- 2013 Crafts Council Project Space at COLLECT, Saatchi Gallery, London
- 2011 Block Party, Crafts Council national touring exhibition

### **Selected Awards / Commissions**

- 2020 Shortlisted for the Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize (*Rock, Paper, Scissors*)
- 2019 Best Limited Edition Book at the British Book Design Awards (*Paper Dolls*)
- 2019 Permanent Collection, J P Hackett, Savile Row
- 2016 Winner of the Paupers Press Prize at the International Print Biennale, Newcastle
- 2013 Print commission for the Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- 2009 Awarded the first International Rectors Scholarship to read a PhD at University of Arts, London

### **Publications**

- 2021 *Diamond Dolls*, co-published by Concentric Editions and EMH Arts, London
- 2020 *Without the Spirit, There is only Material*, artist's book
- 2020 *Rock, Paper, Scissors*, published by EMH Arts, London
- 2019 *Sky in a Box*, artist's book
- 2018 *Paper Dolls*, co-published by Concentric Editions and Sylph Editions
- 2016 *Lost Gardens*, artist's book
- 2014 *Anansi Tales*, artist's book
- 2014 *Hungarian Peacocks*, artist's book
- 2011 *Savile Row Cutter*, published by Benefactum Publishers, London
- 2009 *Dead Man's Patterns*, artist's book

### **Selected Collections**

- Albers Foundation Library, CT, USA
- Ben Uri Museum & Gallery, London
- Bower Ashton Library Special Collection, UWE, Bristol
- Contemporary British Collections, British Library, London
- FIT, New York, USA
- Stuart Hall Library, INIVA, London
- TATE (acquired through the Eagle Gallery/EMH Arts Archive)
- National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- Prints and Works on Paper Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
- Rare Books and Manuscripts, Yale Centre for British Art, CT, USA