




## ART EXHIBITION

BEYOND SIGNS:

# THE POWER OF GESTURES

19-22 SEPTEMBER 2024  
at the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath

Curated By

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BEYOND SIGNS:

# THE POWER OF GESTURES

*Gestures noun /'dʒɛstʃə/ Pronounced [Jes-cher]*

What do gestures evoke? Do bodily movements and postures have the power to replace any of our overused sensory dependence? Can one single gesture hold an entire story in its shape and form?

# Beyond Signs: The Power of Gestures

*Curated by Dr. Alim Chandani*

For centuries, gestures have been a vital form of human expression, transcending spoken language and connecting us profoundly. From ancient times to today, gestures have played a crucial role in communication, yet they have often been overlooked and deserve recognition.

This exhibition celebrates gestures' rich heritage and contemporary impact. Featuring works by talented Deaf artists, "Beyond Signs: The Power of Gestures" highlights the beauty and importance of nonverbal communication. It aims to reframe our understanding of gestures and their influence on Indian Sign Language (ISL), inspiring a shift toward learning ISL and fostering a more inclusive society.

In India, the natural use of body movements, facial expressions, and hand gestures—especially in cinemas—reflects a cultural awakening. This exhibition also underscores how gestures have shaped and enriched ISL, demonstrating their crucial role in developing and expressing the language. Additionally, it sheds light on how the lack of sign language education in schools has deprived millions of Deaf children of their right to effective communication and learning. We hope to succeed in making society more inclusive by emphasising that "Learning Sign Language is BEING Inclusive."

Explore how gestures shape our understanding of culture and identity, and join us in celebrating its powerful contribution to art, communication, and the evolution of ISL.



## **Disclaimer:**

Some artworks displayed in this exhibition are available for purchase. Interested buyers should contact the artist directly for any transactions. Please note that EnAble India and Freedom to Sign are not involved in any financial dealings related to the sale of these artworks.





## **ARCHANA TIMMARAJU**

**Sculptor**

Born in Hyderabad and shifted to Bengaluru, Archana Timmaraju is an Arts teacher by day and a sculptor by night. She teaches at Mallya Aditi International School, Bengaluru. She has many interests, from being a Deaf motorcyclist to creating installations and public sculptures in museums and various places in Bengaluru. Her artwork and installations have been showcased in Chitra Santhe, Bangalore Habba, International Arts Festivals, etc. She holds a Master's degree in Visual Arts. With her enterprising nature, she is the founder of different community-based organisations like Silent Expedition, ArtAble and The Whispers of Silence.

Archana has been a positive influence in many Deaf community events and brings forth her free spirit in her works. Getting away with the rigid rules and nuances of technicalities, she keeps experimenting with her alternate art forms. She has participated in many camps involving interdisciplinary mixed media, pottery, working with copper and mixed metals, and more. Archana wants to convey that through her art and sculptures, which showcase sign language accessibility. All while mixing the themes of inclusivity, communication, and beauty of sign language.



## Empowering Education in Indian Sign Language

“Empowering Education in Indian Sign Language” is depicted through a plaster of Paris sculpture symbolizing communication, inclusion, and knowledge. The flowing hands represent the beauty of ISL, fostering equal learning opportunities for the Deaf community.

Empowering Education in Indian Sign Language  
Plaster of Paris - Sculpture  
4' ft x 3' ft x 4'ft  
Price: ₹ Donation

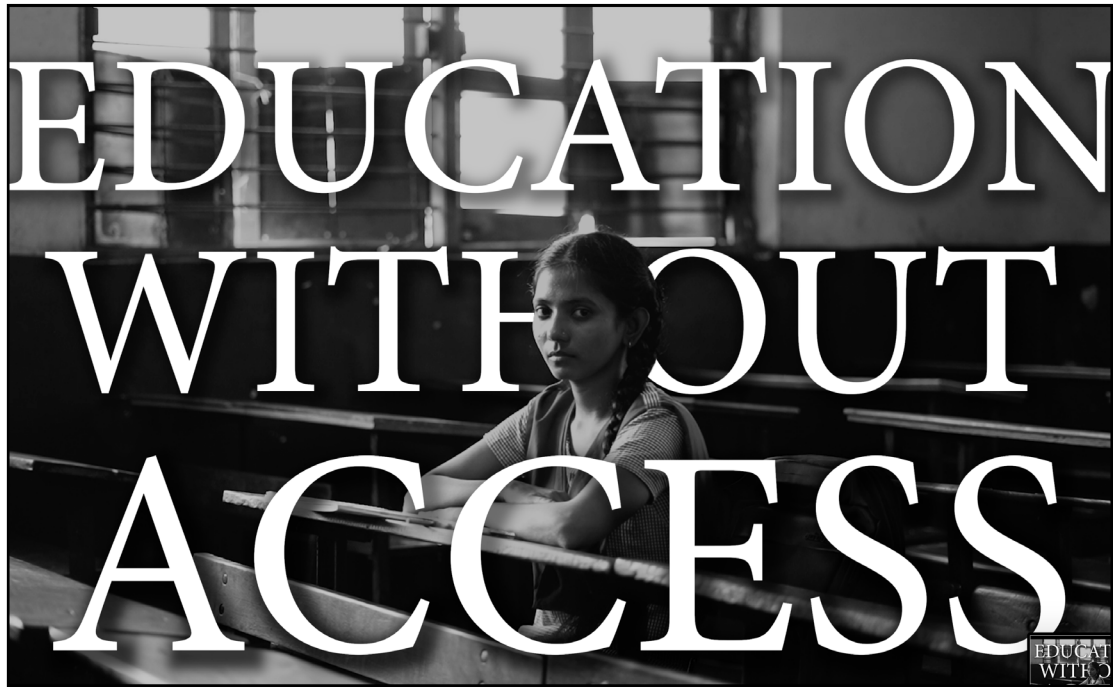


## **ASHWIN BABU**

Multimedia Designer

Born & brought up in Mumbai suburbs and living in Bengaluru now, Ashwin's straightforward approach towards videography comes from retro trends and old black-and-white movies. Ashwin derives his inspiration from films starring Charlie Chaplin, which have a particular influence on his photos and videos. He has a degree in VFX and has taken photography courses, but what drives him are the supportive people around him. As such a stroke of talent, he started by taking portraits of his friends, which transpired to capturing images in other spheres like Landscape, street photography and self-portraits. His extensive visual exposure to videos (Hip-hop & Rappers) & imageries of movies, watching behind-the-scenes of films gives him a distinct edge in his videography. He was awarded the first position in the Global Ability Photography Challenge (2022) initiated by Youth4Jobs.

Having created a buzz in social media trending reels, Ashwin considers Dr Alim Chandani and Bilal Chinoy his inspirations, who push him to keep experimenting with his work. He aspires to become a filmmaker to convey the importance of Sign Language and its impact on the Deaf community. Leaving no stones unturned, Ashwin wishes to advocate for Equal Opportunities in the Artspace through his works.



## Education without Access

*Directed by Ashwin Babu | Cinematography by Akanksha Kamble & Deviprasad Nayak | Actors - Jyoti Saroj, Greycy Thakkar & Gayatri Gulvady*

In India, Deaf students often struggle to access quality education due to a system that inadequately includes them and fails to reflect the importance of sign language in schools. The short film poses the critical question, “When will I be given access to quality education?” It highlights how Deaf children suffer from language deprivation because classrooms are not designed for their needs and there is a shortage of trained sign language teachers. This 5-minute film reflects on the challenges faced by Deaf students and emphasizes the role of Indian Sign Language (ISL) in addressing these issues. By showcasing the need for bilingual education and improved policies, the film aims to shed light on how enhancing access to quality

Education Without Access

Film

5 minutes



## **HARDEEP SINGH**

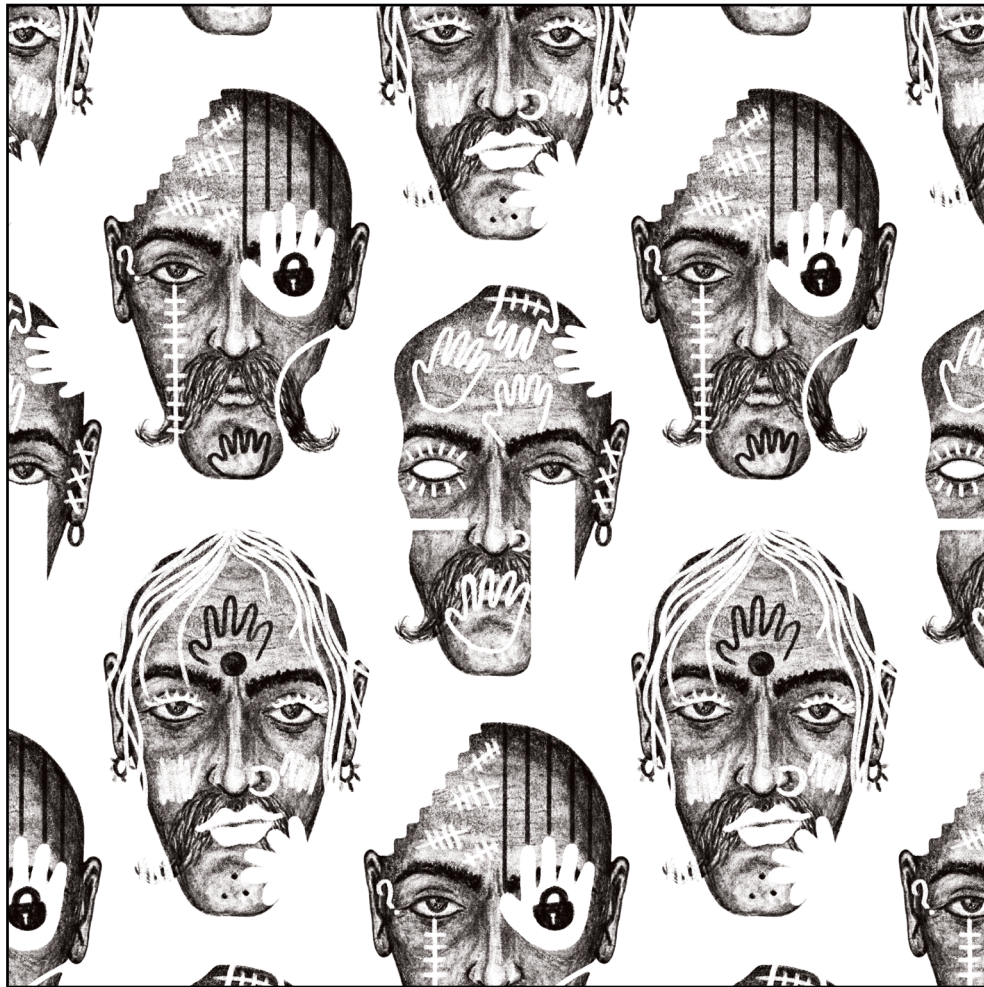
Artist & Multimedia Designer

Hardeep Singh currently works as an Inclusion Coordinator and Designer at the Museum of Art & Photography, perhaps for the first time as a Deaf artist in Museum Spaces. Born in New Delhi, he comes from a family of Deaf artists, particularly influenced by his father and grandmother, who nurtured his love for the arts. One of his original creations was featured in a plate collection by The Plated Project (2021). He also made a special appearance signing an original poem in the Indian film *If I Could Tell You*, directed by Niharika Popli (2024).

For Hardeep, art provides a unique way to express his creativity. He aims for his work to convey the experiences of Deaf people and the challenges they face due to language barriers. Through his art, he hopes to bridge the communication gap between Deaf and non-deaf communities, fostering greater understanding and collaboration. He aspires to inspire positive change and encourage support from people across different walks of life.

In his free time, Hardeep enjoys creating art, listening to music, and reading lyrics.





## Fragmented Faces

“Fragmented Faces” is a poignant exploration of the Deaf experience, capturing the silent struggle for identity. Through intricate details and layered textures, the artwork reveals the hidden barriers of language and the deep quest for self. Each fragment tells a story of resilience and isolation, inviting viewers to reflect on their own connections and separations. Just as each piece is vital to the whole, so too are every lived experience and voice crucial to the Deaf community’s rich tapestry. Dive into this fragmented yet harmonious portrayal to discover the personal narratives woven into every brushstroke.

Fragmented faces

Digital Artwork, Glossy and Matte Laminated Photography Print  
25” H x 25” W; framed dimensions: 32” H x 32” W.

2021

Limited Edition of 5

Price: ₹ 25,000 (includes frame)



## **HIMANSHU KANSAL**

Illustrator

Best known by his artist's name, Luv, Himanshu Kansal is a multimedia designer focusing on illustrations, doodles and cityscapes. Himanshu is a recent awardee for the National Award for Creative Work, awarded by the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu (2023). He is also awarded for excellence in service by the Hon'ble Governor, Haryana (2022), and the Ravi Narang Award for best innovative paper on the Indian Sign Language (ISL) textbook, New Delhi (2023). He is trained in graphics & animations and is certified in Indian Sign Language levels A, B, and C from Ali Yavar Jung National Institute Of Speech And Hearing Disabilities, Mumbai. Himanshu has also designed t-shirts for Freedom to Sign, a deaf-led brand.

Raised in the middle state of India, Madhya Pradesh--from a rich background of historical & cultural heritage encourages his love towards arts. He loves travelling and derives inspiration from everyday life, reflected in his artworks. He draws his extensive experience in the form of comical caricatures and illustrations, developing his characters and individuals, illustrating Indian Sign language textbooks, handbooks and artworks for Deaf events.





## Visual Utopia

Welcome to a world where the first thing you notice about another person isn't their face or facial expressions, but their hands.

Welcome to Visual Utopia!

In this world, our hands—often overlooked in daily communication—take center stage, replacing faces. Each hand in Visual Utopia depicts the English alphabet in Indian Sign Language, accompanied by a word starting with each letter.



<b>A</b> - Accessible	<b>J</b> - Joy	<b>S</b> - Sign
<b>B</b> - Bilingual	<b>K</b> - KODA	<b>T</b> - Time
<b>C</b> - Culture	<b>L</b> - Language	<b>U</b> - Unity
<b>D</b> - Deprivation	<b>M</b> - Music	<b>V</b> - Visual
<b>E</b> - Equality	<b>N</b> - Narrative	<b>W</b> - World
<b>F</b> - Facial Expressions	<b>O</b> - Oath	<b>X</b> - X-Factor
<b>G</b> - Gain	<b>P</b> - Passion	<b>Y</b> - Youth
<b>H</b> - History	<b>Q</b> - Question	<b>Z</b> - Zero Noise
<b>I</b> - Interpretation	<b>R</b> - Rights	

With Augmented Reality, you can immerse yourself in this unique environment and engage in conversations using your hands and imagination!

Utopia Visual

16" x 16"

Sunboard & Augmented

Price: ₹ 10,000 each / 2,00,000 for all



## **JANHAVI KHEMKA**

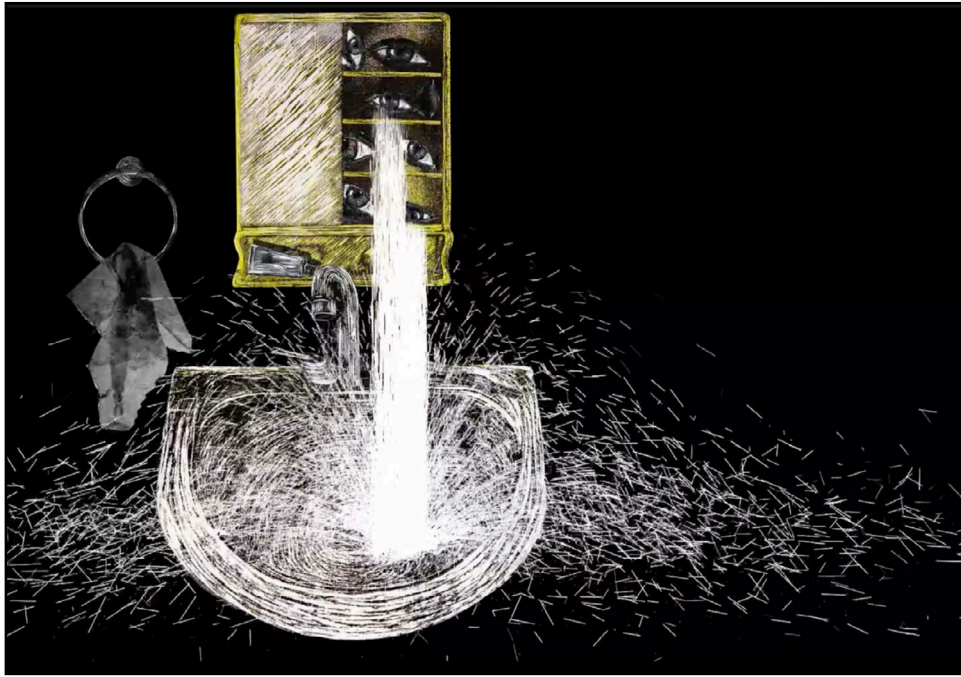
Interdisciplinary Artist

Born in the holy city of Varanasi, India, Janhavi Khemka is an interdisciplinary artist who graduated with a BFA in Painting & Printmaking from the Faculty of Visual Arts, Banaras Hindu University and an MFA in Graphics from Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Shantiniketan. She also studied Studio Arts at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Khemka navigates her art through thoughtful choices in the medium to translate her perceptions. She is transient in her work, shifting from one medium to another, speaking of her personal experiences and spontaneous dialogue between her and the audience.

She has recently been awarded fellowships at KALA Art Institute Residency, Berkeley (CA), and the 3Arts/Body of Work Residency, between UIC and the MCA Chicago. She has worked closely with Japanese printmaker Paul Furneaux in Edinburgh, UK, and has recently earned the UC Berkeley South Asia Artist Prize 2024 and Lalit Kala Akademie Award for her installation 'Sapna,' in 2022.

Her works are in several important collections, including the KNMA, New Delhi, India and the Alkazi Foundation, India. She had her first solo exhibition at the India Art Fair, New Delhi (2024). Presently working from Chicago, USA, Khemka has been creating live performances that question the meaning of language and how we understand it.



## Mera Kamra II

In Mera Kamra II (My Room 2), the cupboard above the sink stands as an unforgettable monument, triggering memories of a poignant past spent caring for my ailing mother. Pouring my grief through the sink became a cathartic ritual, an attempt to cleanse my heart until it found solace.

However, this piece also explores my daily routine and the significance of my eyes as a deaf individual. I use my eyes to read lips, facial expressions, and sign language, which can be exhausting. The animation work allowed me to creatively express the emotional toll of these experiences and imagine the next frame, symbolizing the embodiment of memories within the domestic landscape.

Mera Kamra II

Variable

Woodcut print, Stop-motion animation using woodcut prints, and  
Projection on the wall

Price: ₹ 25,000



## My ear's diagram

I created a woodcut print depicting the anatomy of an ear, unique to my experience as a deaf individual. Unlike diagrams representing the hearing abilities of others, mine tells a personal story. A water wave symbolizes the loss of my voice when exposed to cold water, while a lily flower with five eyes represents my ability to 'hear' through lip reading. A seashell holds significance from my childhood when, at the age of 6, my grandpa played it near my ear, and I could hear its soothing sound. Speakers illustrate my coping mechanism at events or concerts—I always position myself close to the speakers, relying on vibrations to comprehend the loud sounds.

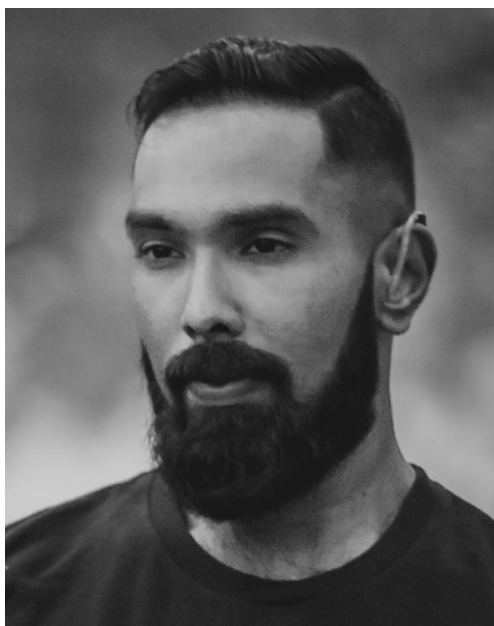
A symbolic element is the fire on my ear, representing a period 9 months ago when I battled a high fever, akin to the intensity of typhoid. Each element in my artwork encapsulates a part of my journey as a deaf individual, reflecting both challenges and unique ways of perceiving the world.

My ear's diagram

35 color Woodcut print on Rives BFK paper

40" H x 30" W Inches

Price: ₹ 1,30,000



## **SRIVATSAN SANKARAN**

Travel Photographer

A familiar figure walking in the lanes of Chennai with a crowd of young photographers with cameras and smartphones, Srivatsan's career in photography started with a calling to do more than a traditional career path. An avid traveller, his documented body of work in photography consists mainly of travelogues. Awarded as Travel Photographer of the Year (2017) by Indian Photography Association, Srivatsan has many more accolades to his name. He was named a Changemaker at the South India Youth speak conclave by the US Consulate & Nalandaway Foundation (2018), Outstanding Contribution to Tourism Promotion awarded by Tamil Nadu Tourism (2022), Certificate of Appreciation for Inclusive Contribution award by Sony Alpha Cameras (2022), Winner of Global Ability Photography Challenge (2022). His most recent achievements include Changemaker at WHO, Geneva (2023), and the National Award in Photography by the Ministry of Culture, India (2024). Srivatsan received a grant from the US Consulate Chennai (2024) for his work.

He is the founder of the Madras Photo Bloggers, which takes people interested in photography techniques and skills and helps them either establish a photography career or pursue photography as a passion.

# The Power of Hands: Expressing Connection Through Gestures and Indian Sign Language



## **Inclusivity:**

A sign that symbolizes unity and acceptance of all.



## **Passion:**

A gesture representing interest and determination.



## **Happiness:**

A joyful sign that expresses joy and positivity.



**Accessibility:**

A gesture indicating openness and availability for all.



**Advocacy:**

A sign that represents support and championing causes.



**Equity:**

A gesture illustrating fairness and equal opportunities.



**Challenges:**

A sign demonstrating obstacles and struggles faced.

**Support:**

A gesture that conveys assistance and solidarity.



**Empathetic:**

A sign expressing understanding and compassion towards others.

**Empower:**

A gesture that conveys strength and confidence.



The Power of Hands

12x18 with Black Border (no frame)

Canvas

Price: ₹ 10,000 (each)





## **VARSHA BADAL**

Contemporary Artist

Varsha Badal's journey in printmaking started when she chose an art form to express her feelings through art, not words. Born in the Muktsar, Varsha has been a prominent figure in the art space in Punjab. In 2013, she graduated with a BFA and an MFA in printmaking from the Government College of Art, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

Varsha's artwork has been displayed in many exhibitions in North India, notably the 7th All India Women Artist Contemporary, Chandigarh (2018), 79th All India Exhibition of Art, Indian Academy of Fine Arts, Amritsar (2013). She also held a prestigious scholarship from Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi in 2017-18. Currently residing in Panipat, Varsha is a guest faculty member in Arts at the Government College of Art in Chandigarh; she believes in the profundity of expressing artists' language through art creation. Using colors as tools to express her vision en masse, Varsha's work has been creating a radiant imagination and possibilities just like her name: rain from clouds creating a rainbow.



## Jealousy

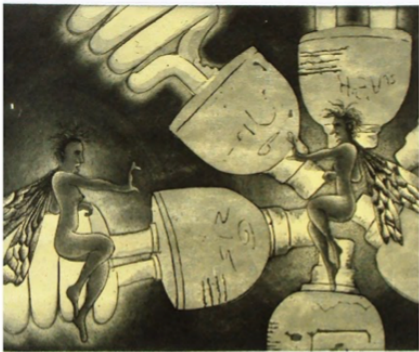
Jealousy is the jaundice of the soul. It is a tribute that mediocrity pays to the genius. The jealousy is troublesome to others but a torment to themselves.

Jealousy

17 x 47 inch (with frame)

Etching

Price: ₹ 16,500



## Action Gestures

Actions speak louder than words. That's why gestures are powerful tools for conveying information and understanding the people around us.

Action Gestures  
18 x 41 inch (with frame)  
Etching & Aquatint  
Price: ₹ 17,500



## **VIVEK KUMAR**

Sculptor

Born in Gaya, considered the birthplace of Buddhism, Vivek Kumar embodies the peaceful sculptor himself. He has a BFA and MFA from the Faculty of Visual Art, Banaras Hindu University, India. He resides in New Delhi as a freelancer artist and has received many awards remarkably, exhibiting his work in many art exhibitions hosted by Banaras Hindu University (2011) and Jehangir Art Gallery (2012, 2019). His notable achievement is the National Academy Award by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi (2018). He is the recipient of various scholarships from both Lalit Kala Akademi and the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

A firm believer in arts as a medium of expressing emotions of love, grief, rage, and loneliness, Vivek also aims to express distinct language through visual elements, such as touching on hearing, silence, and the need for communication. He draws inspiration from his personal experiences and works by Vincent Van Gogh in his sculpting. Individual challenges and a passion for transformative beauty propel me to create art that gives a voice to those who might not otherwise be heard. The legacy of artists who triumphed over adversity deeply motivates him to produce impactful and meaningful work.





## If Freedom could Speak

The human mind is marked by the Ashoka Chakra, which denotes a purposeful, full, and continuous movement. Mankind in the present period is rooted in his culture, much like a root system. Which motivates you to carry on forward. We have our own cultural traits, but we are free and progressive. It is worthwhile that we are free. Even though I'm deaf, I can still hear the buzzing laughter and these hues of freedom. Through my art, I translate that felt form into language that is still relevant in today's world.

If Freedom could Speak

23x10x21 inches

Fiberglass Painted

Price: ₹ 1,50,000



## **Essence of my Life**

Every feeling I have is derived from what I observe. Being able to hear is not a part of my existence, but it does not stop me from doing things. The essence of my life is not around hearing or speaking, but rather communicating what I see and feel through sculptures like these.

Essence of my Life  
38x12x23 inches  
Fiberglass Painted  
Price: ₹ 1,20,000



## **Dr. ALIM CHANDANI**

Curator

Born in Mumbai, Dr. Alim Chandani relocated to the US in 1986. This will be his first time moonlighting as a curator and showcasing the first-ever work of deaf artists in India. He holds degrees in New Media/Interactive design and counselling. He earned his doctorate in Administration and Supervision in Special Education from Gallaudet University, where his research focused on leadership styles in Deaf Education in India.

He is consulting for Hear A Million, an initiative of EnAble India, along with his passion for arts and promoting interdisciplinary forms of arts, as will be showcased in his first exhibition. He has his social enterprise Freedom to Sign™, a brand promoting Indian Sign Language and Deaf Artists. Dr. Alim has been vocal about Deaf individual rights at the National and International Levels. After extensive international experience and spearheading many Deaf empowerment training and advocacy campaigns, he has returned to India. He currently resides in Bengaluru and enjoys exploring new cafes, gourmet restaurants, and leisurely slow travel in the Himalayas.

# **Beyond Signs: The Power of Gestures**

*SHORT FILM*

A captivating three-minute short film that highlights the expressive power of gestures in Indian cinema. Featuring carefully selected clips of actors from popular movies, this film explores how gestures communicate emotions—from love and sorrow to excitement and storytelling.

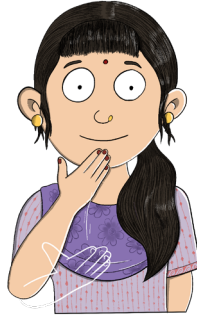
This short film is a celebration of the silent language of gestures, a language that transcends words. It invites viewers to appreciate how these movements shape our understanding of emotion and communication, inspiring a new perspective on the power of nonverbal communication.

# **Gestures in Sync: The ISL Connection**

*SHORT FILM*

The second part of “Beyond Signs: The Power of Gestures” delves deeper into the visual harmony between everyday gestures and Indian Sign Language (ISL). Through a dynamic split-screen, viewers will witness how commonly used gestures in daily life align with ISL signs, illustrating their striking similarities. This visual comparison highlights how gestures influence and shape sign language, underscoring the natural overlap between non-verbal communication and ISL. The film brings to light how gestures form an essential part of human expression, bridging gaps in understanding and creating a powerful connection through movement.





# THANK YOU!

## A Special Note of Thanks from Dr. Alim Chandani

This exhibition would not have been possible without the incredible support and dedication of so many people. To the talented Deaf artists who have contributed their talents to the vision I curated, and to the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP) for their invaluable guidance on curation—thank you.

A special thank you from the bottom of my heart to EnAble India for believing in and supporting this initiative. I am also deeply grateful to my incredible team at Hear A Million, especially Himanshu and Ashwin, who have worked tirelessly behind-the-scenes to bring this exhibition to life and the Soapstone Fellows. Additional thanks to Brandaïd and DeepVision for making this exhibition accessible, as well as to the funders, volunteers, and the incredible interpreters who played a crucial role in making this event inclusive.

Your hard work, passion, and commitment to making art accessible and inclusive are deeply appreciated. Together, we are creating a lasting impact and paving the way for a more inclusive future.

Thank you all for being a part of this journey!

## Additional Thanks to:



GULLY.TOURS



Karnataka  
Chitrakala  
Parishath

A Soumya Rao, Dr. Madan Vasishta, Interpreters, M J Vignesh Muthiah and Volunteers



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