

design by design



For those who had begun to dismiss the once vibrantly arty Kolkata as the design dustbin of India, there is news. It is a label that holds true no more. Today, design is rearing its head again in the city, steered by a clutch of extremely creative and highly talented individuals. Bold and intrepid, driven and dogged, talented and successful, and all curiously women, these are the divas of design. Whether it is glass or ceramics, grass or bamboo, textiles or print-work, jewellery or home accessories, their medium and scope are varied and vast. In a city where taste has sometimes been sacrificed at the altar of kitsch—all in the name of avant garde design—the works of these designers have given Kolkata's chatterati something new to brag about. Here we take a look at who is doing what right now and how.

Less is more
Jalan's work is not big on patterns. For her it is the shape that counts. Minimalism rules in her creations.





Photographs by BANDEEP SINGH

ANUPAMA JALAN **Ceramics**

"Shapes fascinate me more than patterns. I play with clean forms."

Her plates and platters grace the tables of most of the rich and famous. Her crockery has been used at the Taj Bengal and Oberoi Grand and her candles light up special events at ITC Sonar Bangla.

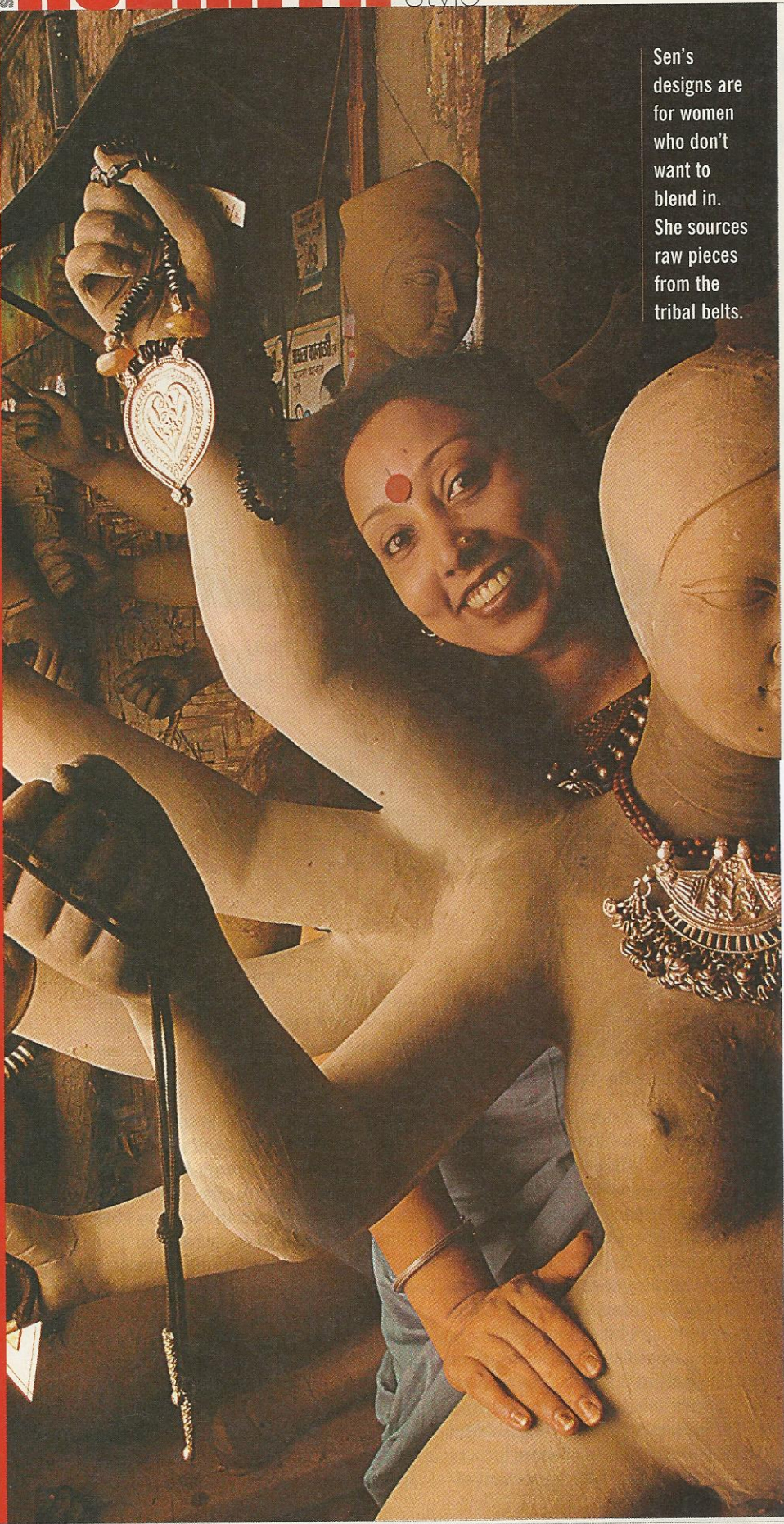
The artist: Meet Anupama Jalan. "My focus is on style combined with utility—ceramics which you can actually use as opposed to plain décor items," she says, pointing to the tastefully displayed ware at her studio-cum-retail outlet in Alipore. (a small section of the family home). Marrying traditional glazed pottery techniques with contemporary de-

signs and styles, she has fashioned a unique range of dinnerware, cups and saucers, dishes and jars and even washbasins and bonsai pots.

Her art: If one were to sum up her design philosophy in one word—minimalism would be it. While there is great attention to detail, patterns and embellishments are as good as non-existent. A bit of leaf etching, a little floral motif around the edges or just the hint of a swirl, that's about it. "Shapes fascinate me more than patterns and I like playing around with clean, linear forms," says Jalan. Colour too is an important el-

ement in her work. And subtlety, again, is the key. Ranging from stark blacks and vibrant oranges, muddy browns and earthy ochres to mint-fresh pistachio greens and smoky blues—each hue is used to judicious effect, letting each piece speak for itself. While her works sell as sets and random pieces through her home-studio, she also retails at The Address and Intrigue in Kolkata and Elahe and Also in Hyderabad.

Jalan works with both terracotta and white clay. While terracotta lends itself to blacks and earth tones, white clay takes on every imaginable tint from vvidids to pastels with equal ease. The secret of her unusual colour palette though lies in "secret" in-house ingredients added to the raw earth procured from the banks of the Ganga.



Sen's designs are for women who don't want to blend in. She sources raw pieces from the tribal belts.

While Jalan often draws out the design of the piece she wants to create, a lot of freehand work is done at the kiln itself. Located within the house, her workshop houses an electric wheel and three furnaces, manned by four potters. Between the five of them, they churn out a dozen pieces a day. Six years into the business, she says her heart still misses a beat when the shape emerges out of the wheel.

Jalan wandered into the world of pottery purely by chance. Even though she dabbled in ceramics in school, she trained in landscaping at the Inchbald School of Design, London. When she moved to Kolkata after marriage, she began to assist her sister-in-law, Shalini, who had set up the studio. By the time Shalini shifted to Bangalore four years ago, Jalan had more than learnt the ropes and was ready to be on her own. Indeed, landscaping and pottery may be as different from each other as chalk and cheese, but if you come to think of it, both have one thing in common—Mother Earth.