

a screenplay about two youngsters trying to make it big in the Hindi film industry. Through their encounters with the stars, Sippy not only reveals more about the actors but also weaves in her own take on Bollywood, which, as Ramesh Sippy's daughter, she's quite familiar with. "I grew up in the film industry, but on the periphery, not on the inside," she says. "The book was my version of it." Her second book, *Bollywood Posters*, sent her scouting through Mumbai's Chor Bazaar, movie studios and production houses in search of old watercolour film art. More recently, she designed two books about the IPL.

The obsession with images and reality hit early. Sippy was only 16 when she started photographing people on the streets of Mumbai. Later, armed with a liberal arts degree from the University of Michigan, she worked as a still photographer on her home production, *Patthar Ke Phool* (1991) and assisted Gautam Rajadhyaksha on shoots with



Madhuri Dixit-Nene and JRD Tata. "His black-and-white portraits stayed with me," Sippy reminisces. "They were very close to their real selves as opposed to their painted selves." Her work treads the same territory.

### Shooting to thrill

Sippy shot her first magazine cover, featuring actor Rhea Pillai, before she even graduated from college. But that's where her film connection has steadfastly remained; Sippy wouldn't act, direct,

write scripts or even try cinematography, and explains that she was more interested in fashion shoots. "The adventure of fashion photography was something nothing else could replace. I climbed Flora Fountain,

and stood on a horse carriage when I was eight months pregnant." But fashion doesn't excite her as much today. "I cannot objectify [people], and I think that came in the way [of my job]."

So for now, photographing children it is. The project isn't new—Sippy is returning to it after seven years. "I didn't want to let it go," she says. "These moments will never come back. If I can capture them for a family, it's very satisfying, personally and professionally." ■

*Sheenasippy.com*



## ART

# shape shifter

In Rana Begum's works, DEEPANJANA PAL finds order can sometimes have the element of play

**R**ana Begum was only eight when she went to England from Bangladesh in the winter of 1985. She'd never seen snow, and just as the thick blanket of white hid a world underneath it, the English language obscured much of everyday life from Begum, who spoke only Bengali at the time. Art proved to be her Babel fish. It allowed her to express herself and understand her world. Today, her childhood love has become her career, and Begum is among the more exciting upcoming contemporary artists of her time.

Begum's sculptural pieces and drawings have a smooth, urbane quality and are a fusion of eclectic ideas, ranging from origami to modernist

architecture. They're stylish but also clever, offering different views when you walk by. Begum talks to *Vogue* about her biggest preoccupations.

### Optical illusions

"It's fascinating to watch how people view my work; to wait for the reaction when someone moves in front of the work and finds that the colours and pattern shift. What I hope to create with my work is movement, an experience of walking through the city, of seeing the random. The experiences we have of walking down a street are not just a visual palette of colour and form; there are other elements at play that complete the experience: material, surface,

and light, for instance. The initial illusion you see in the work then becomes a reality as you move around the space and experience the work as a whole."

### Colour

"I explore how people react to colour and form beyond cultural conditioning, and take strong inspiration from my urban surroundings: walking the street, for example, and watching things that are accidental, like someone putting a purple bin in front of an orange door. Colours used in Islamic geometric patterns are also quite bright. These clashes fascinate me."

*Begum's works are on display at the Amrita Jhaveri gallery in Mumbai; Amritajhaveri.com*

