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# Citizen Z: Of everyday images

## Hyderabad artist Varunika Saraf's 'Citizen Z' showcased at Art Basel, Hong Kong

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SANGEETHA DEVI DUNDOO

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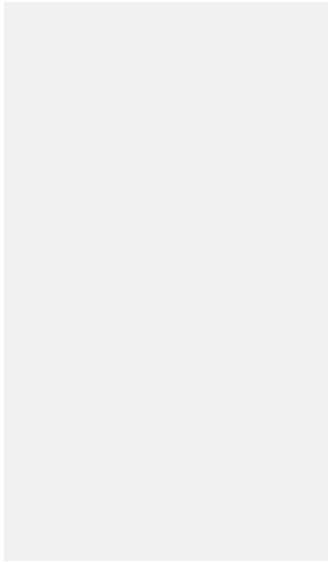
Varunika Saraf, (below) snapshots of Citizen Z and the display at Art Basel Hong Kong

When we interviewed artist Varunika Saraf in March 2017 at her studio, contrasting the larger works, there were a series of small drawings done using silver nib.

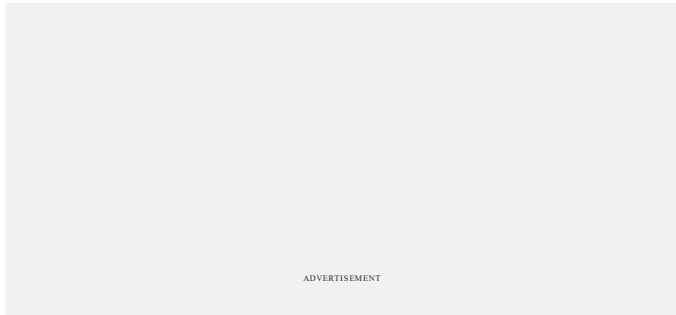
These were a part of an ongoing project titled 'Citizen Z' through which she began re-creating and documenting images from newspapers each day.

A year later, Citizen Z has seen substantial progress. Twenty drawings (24X16cm each; medium: silverpoint) from this series are showcased at the Art Basel, Hong Kong, held from March 29 to 31. "The project will take another year to complete and will then have 300 to 400 works," she informs us. Varunika Saraf is a name to reckon with for her technique of miniatures.

The prestigious showcase at Art Basel Hong Kong happened through the reputed Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai, one of the oldest art galleries in the country that has been at the forefront of contemporary Indian art. Varunika's partnership with Chemould is a recent development and the Art Basel show was her introduction by the gallery at an international forum.



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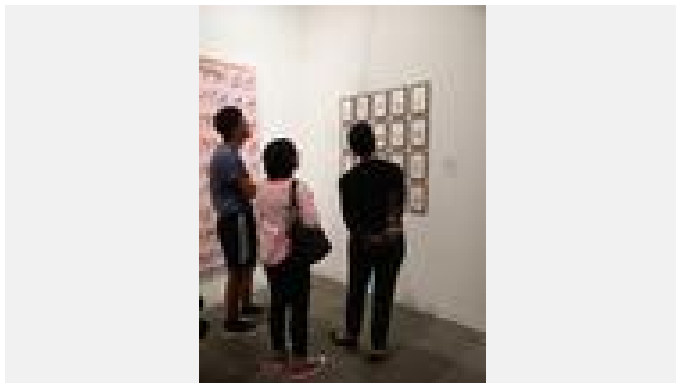


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Artworks displayed as part of Citizen Z have been drawn using silver nib on white, treated paper; it reprises an age-old technique of drawing using silver.

Viewers can observe each of these images and reference the news that accompanied it in the media, as she credits the newspaper, the photographer and the context of the news. Photographs that appear in the media, she observes, are moments frozen in time and encapsulate issues of our contemporary world. "We are saturated with content and may not linger on the emotions that pour out of these images. There are powerful, disturbing images that reflect the suffering people go through. Sometimes, the pictures say it all and you don't even need to read the report accompanying it. The images that came in of ordinary people soon after demonetisation and the student protests in the last two years left me moved," she says.



Recreating these photographs as works of art is her way of focusing and dealing with those emotions. "At the end of the project, I want to have a room full of these images, hopefully as a solo show, and invite people to view them and engage in discussions," she says.

Citizen Z, she feels, will help us pause and ponder over images that are forgotten when a new day ushers in fresh newspaper images.

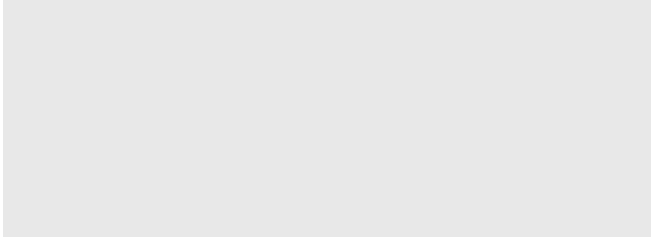
Varunika is also working on larger artworks to be exhibited at Art Basel, Basel (Switzerland), in June 2018.




\* Art Basel conducts three art shows each year — in Hong Kong, Miami and Basel. Art Basel Hong Kong concluded on March 31. The show featured 248 galleries from 32 countries and territories.

\* Mumbai's Chemould Prescott Road gallery was founded by Kekoo and Khorshed Gandhi

and has represented acclaimed artists over the decades. The gallery is now headed by Shireen Gandhi. At Art Basel Hong Kong, Chemould represented artists Atul Dodiya, Aditi Singh, Dhruvi Acharya, Jitish Kallat, Mithu Sen, N S Harsha and Varunika Saraf.



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