

NAVAGRAHA SERIES, PORCELAIN & STONEWARE, 4" HT.



ADIL WRITER

"THE ROAD LESS TAKEN",  
500 ceramic boxes at the Hyatt in Chennai.



## WORKING HIS CHARM

“OK then. Make 500!”

Rajeev Sethi to Adil Writer when Adil said, “No! I cannot make a three-meter-cube Treasure Box!”

“But 500 Treasure Boxes, no problem”—for Adil this is just another escapade for his fertile imagination. The 500-piece Treasure Box installation will be mounted permanently in the garden of ceramic sculpture at the Grand Hyatt, Chennai, scheduled to open at the end of the year. Half-way through the making process, Adil confesses, “This is the first time I have made enough of anything to really develop the idea.” The richness of this series is in no small part the result of this unusual discipline.

“The gift of a decorative box implies permission to conceal one’s secrets.”

“...the dialectics of inside and outside multiply with countless diversified nuances.”

Gaston Bachelard. *The Poetics of Space*

These boxes are small. Many fit in the palm of the hand. Intentionally. They are made to be held—close to the heart—to be looked at closely and opened. Inside? There is virtually no inside. This is not a box to be filled with pins, buttons and paperclips. A treasured ring? Perhaps. But what does an Adil Writer Treasure Box really hold? Unquestionably, your imagination. And a kind of rite of passage, if you wish to make the trip—from outside to inside—to Bachelard’s realm of “intimate immensity.”

Here is the three-meter cube in the palm of your hand.

I have two Treasure Boxes on my desk as I write.

Box One is a fireclay and porcelain mix. Understated by normal Writer standards, the dominant porcelain, a clean, soft matte white, is embedded on one side with a slab of beige fireclay, flashed to a rusty orange by the flame of a wood-fired kiln. Here Adil’s verve is in his clay work rather than extravagant glaze treatment. An undulating wire-cut “equator” swings across the box, bisecting the spare form with a line as supple and varied as an oriental brush stroke. The pale orange of the fireclay appears again in an ascending tracery of abstract silhouettes, an earthy accent that casually adorns this elegant simplicity. Opened, this is a Treasure Box of breathtaking clarity. The inner chamber is ovoid, almost spherical. The twisted wire used for the cut has left a furrowed sheer-wall icescape surrounding two frozen bowls. Here the fireclay slab that narrowly borders two edges is a breath of warmth in the eerie silence of this immense interior space. The ice-bound hemispheres on the inside are shadowed by circular

"ICE" - TREASURE BOX, PORCELAIN & STONEWARE, 4" HT.





"ICE" - TREASURE BOX, DETAIL.

"MOUNTAIN" - TREASURE BOX, STONEWARE, 5" HT.



orange patches of flame-flashed pattern outside. I do not think this juxtaposition of heat and cold was just the luck of the fire. Or is my imagination getting away from me? Adil says this was not intentional. Either way, the subtlety and restraint exhibited in this piece adds welcome range to the work of this rapidly maturing artist.

Box Two is more robust. Though larger, it does still fit the hand and though still a box, this is a mountain-scape, fissured, furrowed and stamped. The huge fish-fossil escarpments that ascend opposite sides of this mini-mountain geode invoke geologic time and prehistoric life forms. The pattern of a regular grid suggests steeply terraced slopes—agriculture clinging to rock tenuously—a precarious human presence.



FOUR-POSTER SERIES, STONEWARE, 8" HT.

Adil Writer, the former and still sometimes architect, often invokes the dictum, “form follows function.” And dare I add material? Yes. Clay—a chameleon that can mimic just about anything and hide in the guise of almost any other medium. Today many contemporary artists push clay towards the ephemeral, ignoring or rejecting its engaging physicality. “Less is more”? Not for this artist. Born and raised in the Mumbai cacophony—teeming life set against the swelter of several thousand years of history—there is more than a hint of Bollywood exuberance in Writer’s multi-layered treatment of material. In his *Treasure Boxes*, Writer welcomes clay’s unique plasticity—its receptivity and immediate response to his spontaneous handling, recording instantly and faithfully the synergy between material, thought and the artist.

Now living and working in semi-rural South India, Adil Writer is anything but isolated. He is well-traveled, interested in everything and an internet savage. While he will gleefully adopt anything from anywhere and anyone, he is not a slave to the trendy. His work is contemporary without being effete and embraces content without being conceptual. Indian ceramic art, still largely under the radar, is beginning to surface. New paths may emerge that recognize the Western critical model but are not fettered by it.

The *Treasure Box* series is a repository of memory and imagination in a revel of fired clay—a material that Adil Writer unequivocally loves.

Adil Writer—the imaginal man—working his charm. Poet of serendipity. Improviser. Indian. Open, absorbing and giving back, sharing the treasure trove of his imagination.

**Ray Meeker,**  
Pondichery, India

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<sup>1</sup> Bachelard, Gaston. 1884-1962. French philosopher known for his work on poetics and the philosophy of science.

Ray Meeker studied architecture and ceramics at the University of Southern California. With his wife Deborah Smith he founded the Golden Bridge Pottery in the South Indian town of Pondichery in 1971. While Deborah now runs the Golden Bridge Pottery production, Ray is best known as a teacher and as the “architect/potter” who pioneered “fired building” technology. More recently he has gained attention for his independent studio work, ranging widely from functional stoneware to monumental ceramic sculpture.



BUCKETS, STONEWARE AND COPPER, 10" HT. MAX.

CRUSADE SERIES, STONEWARE & ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, EACH 10" WIDTH



## ADIL WRITER

Bachelor of Architecture, Sir J.J. College of Architecture, Bombay.  
Master of Architecture, University of Houston, Texas, USA.  
Architect at Gensler & Associates, San Francisco, California, USA.  
Associate Architect at Talati & Panthaky Pvt. Ltd., Bombay.  
Golden Bridge Pottery, Pondicherry, India, with Ray Meeker and Deborah Smith.  
Since 2001, partner at Mandala Pottery, Auroville, India. (Production and studio pottery)

### Selected Exhibitions

- 2013 "Traditions Evolving", NCECA conference, Houston, USA. (group show)
- 2013 "The Bucket Show", Forum Gallery, Chennai. (International group show)
- 2012 "4 Continents Ceramic Exhibition", The Studio Gallery, Yallingup, W Australia.
- 2012 "Collection from Sasama", Museum of Modern Ceramic Art, Mino, Gifu, Japan (group show)
- 2012 "Qalam-Atma International Calligraphy Exhibition, Jaipur. (ceramic participation)
- 2012 "Art On Sunday", Petite Ferme, Auroville (solo show, paintings & ceramics)
- 2012 "International Group Show", Gallery Hu, Nagoya, Japan.
- 2012 "Jeff Shapiro & Friends", Kala Kendra, Auroville, India. (ceramic group show)
- 2012 "Akshara", an all-India group show of Calligraphy curated by Jaya Jaitley. VAG, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. (ceramic participation)
- 2012 "Transformation", Auroville group show at ICCI, New Delhi. (ceramic & painting participation)
- 2011 "Delegate's Master Show", Verkehr Shimizu Museum, Shizoka, Japan.
- 2011 "Promises & Lies", SCCP, Shigaraki, Japan. (solo ceramic show)
- 2011 "Continental Drift", Deloraine Gallery, Tasmania, Australia. (anagama/ woodfired ceramic group show)
- 2011 "Atmos-fire", Artifakt Gallery, Australia. (international invitational group show)
- 2011 "International Tea Pot Show", Shanghai, China. (also in 2010, 2009 & 2008)
- 2011 "Firebox", anagama ceramics, group show, #1 Shanthiroad Gallery, Bangalore.
- 2010 "Treasures", Gallery Time & Space, Bangalore. (Solo show, ceramics & painted media)
- 2010 "ICMEA Emerging Ceramic Artist Competition", Fuping, Shaanxi, China. (selected entry)
- 2010 "10 Years of Wood-fire", Knighthood's Assembly, Tallinn, Estonia.
- 2009 "The White Rabbit", Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. (Solo show, sponsored by Delhi Blue Pottery Trust, ceramics & painted media)
- 2009 "2nd Shanghai-Shenyao International Wood-Kiln Exhibition", Gallery Shenyao, Shanghai, China. (invitational show)
- 2009 "5th World Ceramic Biennale 2009", CEBIKO, Korea. (Selected entry)
- 2009 "Small Objects-Fete Picasso Auction", Vallauris, France.
- 2009 "Maati - Explorations in Terracotta", India Habitat Centre, New Delhi (Delhi Blue Pottery Trust's international show)

- 2008 "Mad Hatters Tea Party", ICIA Gallery, Bombay. (All India teapot show)
- 2008 "Sanbao Ceramics", Jingdezhen Sanbao Ceramic Studio, China.
- 2008 "Resonances", Provence, France. (Auroville artists' mixed media by Marie Claire Barsotti)
- 2008 "Threshold", Gallery Art & Soul, Bombay. (Solo, ceramics & painted media)
- 2008 "Miniatures", Artist Centre, Bombay. (Solo, ceramics & paintings)
- 2008 "Harmony 2008", Nehru Centre, Bombay. (Mixed media, All India Art shows hosted by Reliance Industries in 2005, 2006, 2007 & 2008)
- 2007 "Contemporary Ceramics", Lemongrasshopper Gallery, Ahmedabad.
- 2007 "Masters Show, Clay Edge 2007", Cudgong Gallery, Australia. (Invitational ceramic show)
- 2005 "Stoneware", Hatworks Boulevard, Bangalore. (Solo show, ceramics)
- 2004 "Peace and Harmony", Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. (Delhi Blue Pottery Trust's international biennale)
- 2003 "Potters in Peril", National Gallery of Modern Art, Bombay. (Indo-US show)



### Selected Workshops Attended / Conducted

- Anagama / Chinnagama workshops at Golden Bridge Pottery, Pondicherry, with Jack Troy, Jeff Shapiro & Peter Thompson. Workshops at Golden Bridge Pottery, Pondicherry with Betty Woodman, Sandy Brown, Mike Dodd, Jane Perryman & Jim Danisch.
- 2013 Residency at the Fule International Ceramic Art Museum, Fuping, China
- 2012 "Not Only Elephants & Horses!!!", a presentation of contemporary Indian ceramics at "Subversive Clay", Australian Ceramics Triennale, Adelaide, Australia.
- 2012 "Fired Stacks", demonstrated the building & firing the fired - house technique, Perth, Australia.
- 2012 "The Road Less Taken", an installation of 500 treasure boxes at the Hyatt Regency, Chennai. A part of the ceramic sculpture garden envisioned and curated by Rajeev Sethi and Ray Meeker.
- 2011 Invited artist to International Ceramic Festival in Sasama, Japan.
- 2011 Selected Artist-in-residence at Shigaraki Cultural Park, Japan.
- 2010 International Wood-firing Ceramics Symposium, Kohila, Estonia.
- 2007 Clay – Edge 2007, invitational ceramic event. Demonstrated the building and firing of a fire-stabilised mud-brick dome at Janet Mansfield's residence in Gulgong, Australia.
- 2001 "Woodstoke 2001", Paul Soldner, Rudy Autio, Tom Collins, Rodney Mott at Penryn, CA, USA.



SOUTHWEST SERIES, ANAGAMA STONEWARE, 9" HT. MAX.

Photo Credits:

covers: JOGINDER SINGH, jogisingh@gmail.com  
pg.2: JOHN MANDEEN, john@mandeen.com  
pg.4,5,6,7,9: IRENO GUERCI, ireno@auroville.org.in  
pg.11: BERNADETTE BAUMGARTNER, artha@bluewin.ch  
graphic design: PRISMA, prisma@auroville.org.in

ADIL WRITER



Mandala Pottery,  
Dana, Auroville - 605101, Tamil Nadu, India  
Tel: +91 413 2622685 pottery, 2622724 residence  
www.adilwriter.com, www.mandalapottery.com  
adil@auroville.org.in