

Imperfect, impermanent and incomplete; the three words that describe all things—living and non-living—and the ability that they have to hold beauty in them. It is up to us to discover that beauty in these things that surround us in the everyday.

The Japanese concept of beauty is incompleteness and the beauty of omission is valued, empty space allows the imagination to fill in what is not depicted. And this is the 'Unassertive Simplicity', the Wabi-Sabi of life that I explore through my images for the exhibition '*imperfect, impermanent, incomplete...*'.

payal sehgal mahajan	2000	<i>Starting Again</i> tuggeranong arts centre, act
1972	born mumbai, india	
1994	bachelor of fine arts (graphics), punjab university, india	1998
1997	a founding member of MultiFocus, an exhibiting group	<i>Launched</i> <i>photoaccess members' exhibition</i> act legislative assembly
solo exhibitions		
2003	<i>imperfect, impermanent, incomplete...</i> huw davies gallery, act	1998
		<i>Visions &amp; Reflections - Women in Multiculturalism</i> anca gallery, dickson, act
1997	<i>as it is...</i> photoaccess, act	1997
		<i>Summer Salon 97</i> centre for contemporary photography, melbourne
selected group exhibitions		collaborations & publications
2003	<i>Refuge?</i> anca gallery, dickson, act	2001
		photoaccess calendar 2001
2003	<i>PhotoAccess Members' Exhibition 2003</i> huw davies gallery, act	2000
		Picturing Canberra (2000) a photoaccess publication - photographs only
2002	<i>Continuance</i> tuggeranong arts centre, act	1999
		contribution to Canberra Arts Anthology 1999
2001	<i>Madonna, an exhibition exploring motherhood</i> canberra school of art foyer gallery & spiral arm gallery, act	1999
		photoaccess calendar 1999
2001	<i>Ephemeral Phantasies</i> anca gallery, dickson, act	1999
		contribution to Against the Grain
2001	<i>Echoes from the Past</i> tuggeranong arts centre & belconnen gallery, act	1997
		contribution to Against the Grain
2001	<i>Panoramas of Uriarra</i> tuggeranong arts centre & belconnen gallery, act	various photoaccess course brochures
2000	<i>Queridos</i> academy library, adfa, act	grants
		1998 – 2003 joint recipient of a number of grants from artsACT and act office of multicultural and community affairs as member of MultiFocus
2000	<i>DADA Members' Exhibition 2000</i> strathnairn gallery, act	2001
		artsACT grant for <i>imperfect, impermanent, incomplete...</i>
2000	<i>PhotoAccess Members' Exhibition 2000</i> anca gallery, dickson, act	2001
		act heritage grant for group exhibition
		2000
		nava (pat corrigan) grant for group exhibition
		i would like to thank the following organisations and individuals who have made this project possible: photaccess megalooaccess suzie edwards berenice hetherington ed whalan mummy papa rajat guchi meenakshi and the four musketeers and of course my loved ones in bhaarat my special thanks to tina anderson, brian miller & rodney trezise of world wide printing



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*imperfect, impermanent, incomplete...*

payal sehgal mahajan

*imperfect, impermanent, incomplete...*

I will remember the first time I saw Payal's work. It was part of what was known as the Multicultural Photographers Group Exhibition, *Starting Again*, held at the Tuggeranong Arts Centre in 2000. For that exhibition Payal had chosen the simplest of flowers, the daisy and placed images onto clay tablets. Sitting on a plinth in the same exhibition was the plainest of white vases, hand built and part filled with water. Looking into the vase, you suddenly

realized there were words floating in the water. The words were part of the poem *Begin Again* by Colin McCarty, which formed the theme of the exhibition. Payal had chosen the following words to place into the vase and into the water: begin again, sometimes, new, wise, heart and another unremembered word.

It is interesting that three years later, her philosophy and practice is now reflected in those words. It is as if she planted them in the water and three years on the fruition is now in this exhibition, *imperfect, impermanent, incomplete...*

This is Payal's first solo exhibition since 1997 and her development as an artist has undergone subtle shifts since then. Now, Payal is the mother of three, and no doubt the way of the world, its troubles and joys are impacting on her work.

For this exhibition Payal has chosen to explore the philosophy of Zen and in particular the concept of *Wabi Sabi* and how it applies to the everydayness of not only her life, but all our lives. The central image for this exhibition is the cup, an image that has long been associated with sharing, sustenance and ritual. Payal has photographed the humble cup and explored the image through various mediums. By taking what is traditionally a 2D medium, and transferring images onto fabric and clay, the artist alters and extends our perception of an ordinary, everyday object.

*curl I - III*, 2003. In this work Payal has transferred through screen printing the photographic image of a simple cup onto dyed linen. The beautiful orange and ochre linen panels explore the interior of the cup



then  
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into

which is captured and reflected back to us as a curl of light. There are three panels, each different to its sibling. However each panel relates to the next—one is not possible without the other.

After working and experimenting with the process and the panels, other artists may have chosen to exhibit what they felt was the better panel—but Payal has chosen to exhibit all three, and for me that is the quintessential Payal. No one banner is finer than the other; no part exists without the other. As an artist Payal is saying to us “come on this journey with me—see how each part gives birth to the next and relates to its past”.

In *light*, 2003 we see the cup again but this time it has been screen printed onto silk, a material known for its incredible strength and beauty. Here the cup takes on a quiet beauty with fine lines and detailing from the surface of the silk. It sits against a background of text that relates directly back to the simple pleasures of childhood.

*chance settings I - VI*, 2003. The smaller silver gelatin works on linen relate to the imperfection and incompleteness of their production. In these works it is enough that the image asserts itself before anything else. They have been left as they are, a reminder that beauty does not always lie in the perfected. Here imperfection and incompleteness give rise to individuality and uniqueness. These are one off pieces that evolved through exploration of the medium and are meant to be never repeated.

Payal's work has always been about being open to your medium, exploring and extending it without restricting or subduing either party in the process. Images take her to places that perhaps she had not planned to go but always Payal has been open to that journey. There is a power in her work that has as its essence gentleness; it comes with a persistence and acceptance of being in a world that is indeed not perfect. Always there is a tactile and organic quality to the work, be it in the lightness of the fabric she uses or the robust honesty of materials such as clay and canvas. There exists an alliance between the artist and her medium the outcome of which is a body of work that reconnects us to the beauty in the everyday.

Suzie Edwards

Suzie Edwards is the gallery and visual arts coordinator at the Tuggeranong Arts Centre