



What is your everyday?

Bombay Duck Designs launches 'Everyday', a series of zines that broadly looks at 'everyday' from different perspectives. PrintWeek speaks to the team behind the project

By Payal Khandelwal

The newest self-initiated creation from the Mumbai-based Bombay Duck Designs, 'Everyday' zine is giving tangible, experimental shapes to the eclectic observations and perspectives about everyday. Having come from a studio that has produced some remarkable zines in the past including *Zeroxwallah Zine*, *The Ghoda Cycle Project*, and *Blued book*, *Everyday*, is especially intriguing as it brings together an artist and a writer for each edition. The project is conceptualised and designed by typographer and designer Zeenat Kulavoor, curated and edited by artist Sameer Kulavoor and writer Phalguni Desai.

The first two issues feature artists Madhav Nair and Anand RK with writers Phalguni Desai and Rachel Lopez respectively. The first issue looks at urban horror, often a result of routine, dullness and trying to make it work as individuals in big, unempathetic cities. The second volume explores how we consume and what we discard as we move onward and upward into our high-rise tower lives.

PrintWeek spoke to Sameer Kulavoor, Zeenat Kulavoor and Phalguni Desai to know more about the zine. Edited excerpts:

What inspired the idea of 'Everyday' in the first place?

Sameer Kulavoor (SK): We already had a decade of experience in self-publishing, having created our own projects like *Zeroxwallah Zine*, *The Ghoda Cycle Project*, *Blued book*, *Flipbooks*, *Kalaghoda Musings* and of course, *100% Zine* with Lokesh Karekar from Locopopo Studio. More than a year ago, when we started Bombay Duck Shop, Zeenat Kulavoor and I were thinking of starting a new publication series that would further experiment with content and the book format, and at the same time blur the boundaries between art, design and illustration, and





Sameer Kulavoor



Zeenat Kulavoor



Phalguni Desai



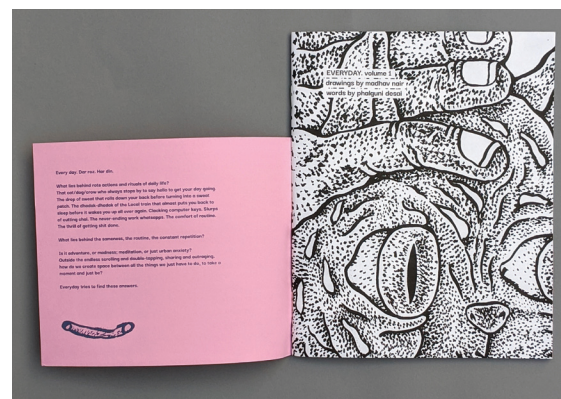
include creative writing. Zeenat came up with the idea of *Everyday* during one of our conversations and it instantly sparked ideas. We discussed the idea with Phalguni (Desai) and even she got the vibe and agreed to join. We all were very excited about the fact that *Everyday* could be so generic and specific at the same time. The scope is endless.

Zeenat Kulavoor (ZK): One of the things that fascinates me is the rigorous documentation of everyday that we artists and writers create in the form of doing sketches, writing notes, taking pictures etc. All of us do this in some form or other. If you see one's everyday documentation, it is quite amusing! You almost get to know a person. Also, every person's everyday is different from the other. These facts gave birth to the idea of *Everyday* zine. I made a note of all these thoughts on my phone and the next day I read them out to Sameer. He loved the idea, and that's where it all began. We've previously worked with other artists but working with writers is a first for us, and that's where Phalguni brought in her expertise.

Tell us a bit about the collaboration process for the three of you – perhaps by taking us through the making of the first issue?

Phalguni Desai (PD): So far, it's been an artist-led collaboration, where the artist is first invited to show us their version of everyday, after which we rope in a writer to respond.

For the first issue, we decided that I would be writing, and Sameer had already picked Madhav Nair as the artist. I wasn't very



familiar with his work but his Instagram (@deadtheduck) made me super curious. What he submitted, however, was far more abstract than I expected. For Madhav, it was about practicing a specific aspect of his drawing (stippling using a specific brush), but for me the repetitive nature of the work started creating an anxiety that I began to identify with the anxiety I feel about navigating Mumbai and the complexities it brings to our relationships with everyday and the people that form our everyday. So Madhav and I met a few times, and discussed that anxiety-making aspect of the drawings and living in Mumbai, which is where the text came out of.

SK: Absolutely! Madhav had made these drawings that were kind of a departure from his regular work – like Phalguni said, they were more abstract – but still retained this raw, decaying, organic essence of his work.

ZK: Just looking and hearing everyone's interpretation of everyday has been a revelation. The first volume with Phalguni and Madhav took quite some time (almost eight months) for us to figure since we were doing it for the first time and because we had to match timelines for four different people. But in the end, we were quite happy with what we had in hand. And the best part is that we did not know what to expect.

How do you decide the combination of the writer and artist/designer for a particular zine?

PD: So far, Sameer and Zeenat have led the artist curation, and I'm suggesting the writers; but we approach people on consensus. There are also things like deadlines and other jobs to consider when picking writers. We're hoping to streamline the process as we go.

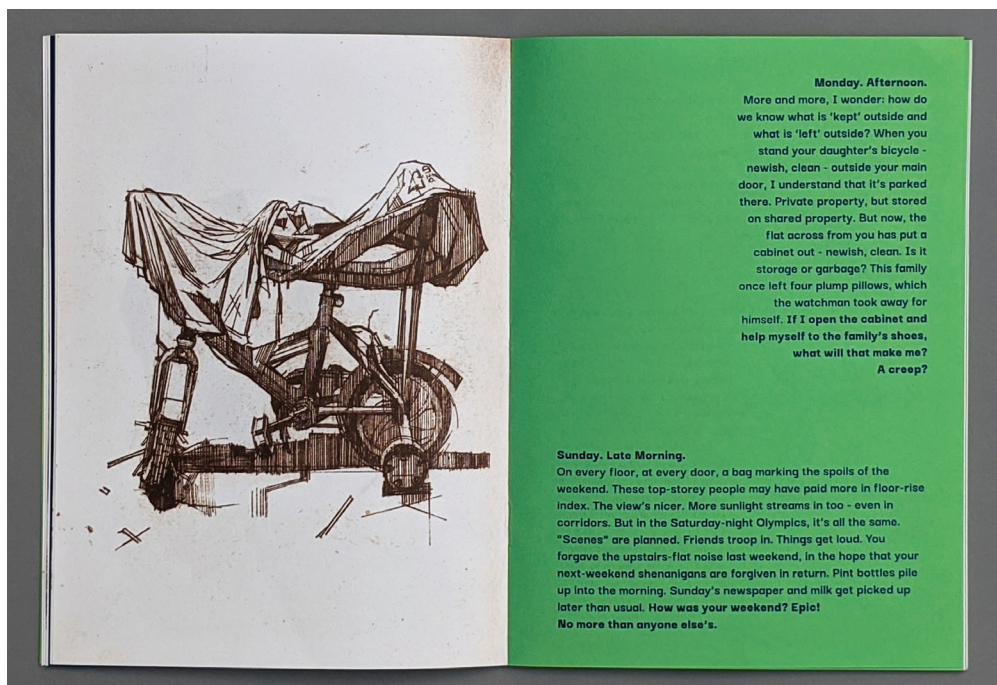
SK: I think we can never have a set formula of going about deciding the combination for this kind of publication. Our instincts as publishers and curators also play a role I guess.

ZK: There was some connecting factor (that I can't put my finger on) between Phalguni's writing style and Madhav's drawings. Even the way she posts her stories or comments on social media is distinctly 'Phalguni', and the same goes for Madhav when it comes to his drawings - you get his drawings and work when you get to know him.

What's the kind of brief/guidelines that's given to them?

PD: For the writing brief, it's basically 'don't do art-writing'. We've been looking at writers respond to artists and art in a very academic style, which is great from a pedagogical aspect but doesn't do much to endear the artist and their work. So this informal approach is a great space to experiment, whether it ends up as narrative, fiction, poetry, manifesto, agony aunt letters and so on. For me, it's important to get the writers to go outside their usual style.

SK: We don't really have a 'brief'. The word *Everyday* itself sparks a lot of different ideas for our contributors. We also look at their past work, drawings, notes, etc. to see if we have something there that can be expanded into an issue. For example, for volume two, we really liked one of Anand's (Anand RK) drawings that he had posted earlier and nudged him into telling us more about it. It turned out that it was part of a personal series he was working on - about things he noticed as he would go up and down the stairs in his building like objects, waste, discarded packaging, etc. that were lying outside people's doors - and he was happy to explore those drawings further. So he made a few more and we turned the issue into a sort of facsimile of his sketchbook. So the volume



two became an interesting take on consumerism, spending patterns, human actions and thought process, questions about private space and public space, and so on.

ZK: The only brief is a simple question - 'What is your everyday?'

Could you tell us more about the themes of the two issues that have been released so far?

PD: For me, volume one became about anxiety. From Madhav's anxiety of practicing specific brushwork, to my anxiety about getting (and being) out and about in a city like Mumbai.

SK: Like I said before, volume two became an interesting take on consumerism, spending patterns, on human actions and thought process, questions about private space and public space, and so on. Anand's drawings and gouache paintings show his razor sharp observations of very mundane subjects. And Rachel's writing adds a wonderful aspect of the mini conversations that we have with ourselves in our head.

ZK: Although we treat the drawing and writing as separate entities, the writing does bring in a sense of a theme. Madhav's drawings were all about the practice where one could see abstract forms of fingers, branches, twigs, and more. Phalguni's writing uncovered a sense of anxiety about living in a city. Anand's drawings were observatory and documentary in nature and Rachel's writing gave them a very human connect.

Could you throw some light on the logistical aspect of creating these zines - printers, distribution plan, and marketing?

ZK: Once all the drawings and write-ups came in, it was my job to collate and design the zine. We were all very clear that the words should not literally depict the drawings or vice versa, so I had to make sure they both maintain their separate identities. Hence, the introduction is of a different colour paper with screen print while the drawings are offset prints. The final zine is an outcome of numerous colour checks, trial prints, dummy making, visits to the printer etc. The zines are currently available at Filter shop, Bombay Duck Shop and online on Paper Planes.

In the Press Note, you have mentioned, "In an effort to explore new formats of art books and storytelling, each volume is an experiment created using images and words by one artist and one writer." What other innovations can we expect in terms of the format, printing techniques, design, etc. in the future?

PD: Wait and see.

SK: While the basic idea remains the same - experiments with images and words by one artist and one writer - we are really excited about the directions this can take. Rather than having pre-decided ideas about format, printing techniques, collaborations, etc, we will let the content decide all of that.

ZK: Yes, the content is the hero and decides everything right from design to production. ■

View more of Bombay Duck Designs' work here: [instagram.com/bombayduckdesigns](https://www.instagram.com/bombayduckdesigns)

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