

GUGGU THE ART TOY REPORT

A PROJECT REPORT

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE
OF

MASTERS IN DESIGN
IN
VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN

Submitted by
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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, Anant Sindal (2K21/MDVC/01), student of M.Des (Department of Design), hereby declare that the project report titled “**GUGGU THE ART TOY REPORT**” which is submitted by me to the Department of Design, Delhi Technological University, Delhi in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Design is original and not copied from any source without proper citation. This work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma Associateship, Fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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Date: 15 May, 2023

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the Project Report titled “**GUGGU THE ART TOY REPORT**” which is submitted by Anant Sindal (2K21/MDVC/01), DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN, Delhi Technological University, Delhi in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Design is a record of the project work carried out by the students under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge this work has not been submitted in part or full for any Degree or Diploma to this University or elsewhere.

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Place: New Delhi

Date : 13 May 2022

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ABSTRACT

Art toys are a category of collectible sculptures or figurines that are produced by toy companies, designers, and artists. These toys are frequently produced in small quantities and are highly prized by collectors. The focus is on design and aesthetic expression that distinguishes art toys from ordinary toys. They frequently have elaborate detailing and distinctive patterns and are constructed of premium materials. While some art toys are completely original inventions, others are based on pop culture or popular characters from movies, TV shows, or comic books. In recent years, art toys have become more well-liked in India as more artists and designers produce distinctive and cutting-edge toys to meet the demands of an expanding community of collectors and aficionados. Numerous of these art toys get their inspiration from Indian mythology and culture, and many of them have elaborate designs and finishing touches that honour the nation's illustrious creative legacy. In this project, I create an original art toy character, called “Guggu” the owl, which is focused towards the Indian young adults who are increasingly becoming more passionate about this collectible industry. I explore the method of storytelling through social media and illustrations, by depicting the character in relatable Indian scenarios and help the audience connect to it through the display of our culture.

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ABOUT ART TOYS

In the last ten years, the popularity of art toys, a kind of contemporary art, has skyrocketed. Collectible figurines known as "art toys" are typically created by artists or designers that specialise in this field. They can be constructed of a variety of materials, including plastic, vinyl, resin, and metal. Since they are often only made in small quantities, they are highly sought-after collectibles.

Art toys may be wholly unique works of art or they may be based on figures from popular culture.

A close-knit group of collectors and artists who are passionate about these distinctive figurines has emerged thanks to art toys. Many collectors visit exhibits, conferences, and art fairs to network with like-minded individuals, exchange toys, and learn about the craft of creating unique art toys through workshops and seminars. The fact that art toys are frequently made to be customised by their owners is one of their distinctive features. Some art toys are sold in blank forms, allowing collectors to customise them with paint, embellishments, or other elements to produce a one-of-a-kind creation. This characteristic gives art toys a more unique quality and raises their value and attractiveness. Focusing on design and creativity is one of the defining characteristics of art toys. A lot of art toys are made to be aesthetically pleasing and have distinctive or uncommon design characteristics that set them apart from other kinds of toys. Adult collectors who value the artistry and skill that go into creating these one-of-a-kind and valuable pieces are frequently the target market for art toys.

History of Art Toys

In the early 2000s, collectible vinyl figurines like Kubrick and Bearbrick were first produced by toy producers and designers in Japan, which is where the history of art toys can be found. These representations were made with the intention of appealing to the art market, which at the time was dominated by more conventional types of art. These vinyl figures immediately gained fame outside of Japan and were in high demand among art fans and collectors around.

In Japan, the popularity of vinyl toys paved the door for the development of designer toys, which are handcrafted toys made by designers and artists. Due to their distinctive features and artistic significance, designer toys are often marketed in limited quantities and are highly prized by collectors. Designer toys can be totally unique inventions or they can draw inspiration from popular culture, including comic book characters, anime, and video games. The designer toy business Kidrobot has had a major impact on the art toy movement. Paul Budnitz, a designer, established Kidrobot in 2002, and it swiftly rose to prominence as one of the leading businesses in the sector. The success of Kidrobot contributed to the rise in popularity of art toys and spread awareness of the idea.

New designers and artists started to enter the market as the demand for art toys grew. Michael Lau, a Hong Kong-based artist who is recognised as one of the founders of designer toys, is among the most well-known artists in the art toy sector. Lau's art has been displayed in galleries all over the world and is highly sought for by collectors.

Frank Kozik, a graphic designer and artist who has created countless figures for Kidrobot and other designer toy businesses, is another important figure in the art toy sector. The edgy and irreverent aesthetic of Kozik's designs are well-known, and many other designers have been influenced by him.

Art toys have recently grown to be a crucial component of the contemporary art scene, and many galleries and museums now display collections of these toys. As more artists and designers join the market each year, the need for art toys is only growing. Art toys may become increasingly more interactive and individualised as technology develops, enabling collectors to make their own personalised creations using computer software.

Art Toys in India

A thriving community of collectors and aficionados has been developed in India as a result of the art toy movement. There is a sizable but developing market for art toys in India, and many collectors go to art fairs and exhibits to buy, sell, and exchange their toys. Some collectors even alter the appearance of their own figurines by adding special patterns and touches that make them one-of-a-kind.

In India, the popularity of art toys has also sparked a growth in demand for other types of designer toys, including action figures and pop culture memorabilia. The demand for collectibles that reflect Indian pop culture is rising, and businesses are filling the void by coming up with one-of-a-kind and innovative designs that highlight Indian culture.



Fig. 1 Channapatna Toys

Increased cooperation between Indian and foreign artists and designers is another result of art toys' success in India. International artists and Indian designers have worked together to produce distinctive creations that honour India's rich cultural history. These partnerships have aided in the internationalisation of Indian art toys and the expansion of the country's art toy market.

Big Boy Kicks India, one of the nation's top sourcing and reseller platforms, was created by Aavesh Malik. Malik initially dealt in high-end footwear, but as demand for questions regarding collectibles grew, he finally began trading in them. His page now boasts selling incredibly rare and sought-after items, such as KAWS and Bearbrick. "Buying KAWS' Companions is comparable to buying gold, as a collection. They will always have a high resale value and, over time, will be an asset that pays you over 300 percent or more of its initial worth since there isn't enough demand to match supply, he claims.

However, authenticity is crucial for every work of art. Art toys are susceptible to the "gandi copy" industry, just like any other product out there. By using reliable and approved suppliers, trusted sellers such as Unicorn Art, Big Boy Kicks, and others guarantee this. When holding the item, little particulars such the weight, construction, and packaging are checked.

A unique NFC tag that is included with the new Companions functions almost like a digital proof of authenticity. Upon scanning the distinctive NFC tag, buyers and sellers may determine if the goods is genuine or not. Even while many people would consider these artefacts to be superfluous or immature purchases and refer to them as "toys," a young, select group of Indians has already discovered its true worth. Collectibles may be a method to both support the artist and their work while also making a wise financial decision. Even though they are precious enough to be in a vault, you don't store them there. Instead, you put them on display in the living room to add to the décor while subtly allowing their value to soar.

Purpose of Project

India is a diverse and culturally rich nation. The nation has a distinctive character due to its many traditions and customs. The purpose of this project is to develop a unique art toy figure that depicts and celebrates Indian culture as well as everyday situations that the audience can identify with. This character will appeal to Indian viewers because it was created especially for them.

The persona I intend to develop would be a portrayal of a regular person to whom the Indian audience may connect. The design of this character will emphasise the distinctiveness and variety of Indian culture. It will serve as a reflection of the essential principles, notions, and customs of Indian civilization. The persona I intend to develop would be a portrayal of a regular person to whom the Indian audience may connect. The design of this character will emphasise the distinctiveness and variety of Indian culture. It will serve as a reflection of the essential principles, notions, and customs of Indian civilization.

Additionally, the character would have components that speak to the annual festivals and celebrations that are celebrated in India. The figure may be seen carrying a Durga puja object or dressed in a Diwali attire, for instance. These characteristics will help the character resonate with the Indian audience and evoke positive recollections of their customs and culture.

The plot of the character will also centre on relevant situations that the Indian audience would encounter on a daily basis. The figure could be seen partaking in a festival with their family, or they might be portrayed as a roadside food seller. The Indian audience would be able to relate to these situations and develop a personal relationship with the character.

Additionally, the character will be created using sustainable materials and eco-friendly design principles. Given the present environmental issues in India, it is imperative to include sustainability in the character's design.

The character I intend to develop will honour and represent the Indian culture and the realistic situations that the Indian audience encounters on a daily basis. It will serve as a depiction of the essential principles, notions, and customs of Indian civilization. The character's design will be influenced by several Indian states, and it will have components that stand in for the annual festivals and festivities that are celebrated in India. By developing this persona, I intend to highlight the distinctiveness and complexity of Indian culture and inspire feelings of pride and nostalgia in the Indian audience.

Concept Development

Shape Design

Character designers can use the effective tool of shape language. To portray a character's personality, feelings, and motives, many shapes and forms are used. Character designers may develop distinctive, memorable characters that connect with the audience by carefully choosing and fusing various shapes and forms.

Different emotions and personality traits are expressed by each form. For instance, whereas squares and rectangles might represent rigidity and power, circles can convey gentleness and friendliness. Triangles can represent tension and danger. A designer may make a character more complicated and subtle by utilising these shapes and forms. In a character design, shape language may also be utilised to construct hierarchy and generate contrast. A designer can convey hierarchy and importance by employing bigger, more prominent forms for specific character components. This can make the character's design more engaging by directing the viewer's attention to particular aspects of the character.



Fig. 2 Shape Design Guideline

Toys for artists are a special way for them to express themselves and show off their ingenuity and creativity. The usage of figures that do not exist in reality, such as animals or monsters with human bodies, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of art toys. The choice of the character's shape and design is crucial in this situation. It can help the viewer understand the character's motivations, feelings, and personality.

I decided to model the figure for this specific art toy after an animal native to India that is well-known in mythology and folklore tales. I began with cats and cows, which are frequently spotted in Indian streets. However, while not fitting my idea, their angular forms suggested danger or unfriendliness. After some trial and error, I decided to use the owl as the model for the character. The owl is a well-known animal in Indian mythology and has appeared in several children's tales. I thought the owl's spherical shape and large, bright eyes made him a very endearing and charming figure.



Fig. 3 Early character sketches



Fig. 4 Early character sketches (2)

The owl was chosen as the inspiration for the character's design, demonstrating the use of form language in creating characters. The owl's rounded, feminine form embodies warmth, generosity, and friendliness, which is consistent with the illustrator's conception of the character. The owl's wide, brilliant eyes give it a feeling of intellect and curiosity that enhances its attractiveness.

The usage of an animal that is indigenous to India and well-known from mythical and folklore tales also gives the character's design a cultural touch. By establishing a link between the character and the audience's culture, it increases the audience's ability to relate to and understand the character.



Fig. 5 First Owl Sketch



Fig. 6 Owl expression sketch

I included cultural components to the character's design in addition to the form language. The persona is given a distinctive and recognisable cultural flare by the Indian-style dhoti, slippers, and bangles. In the future, depending on the state of India the figure is portraying, I also intend to give it varied dress styles. By taking this method, the character's visual design becomes more adaptable, relevant, and diversified while also gaining a deeper cultural importance.

I wanted to investigate how the art toy figure may exhibit exaggerated expressions to appear more approachable and real to the viewer. I explored with the owl's reactive face in the second sketch by merely moving its eyes and brows. This strategy, in my opinion, works well since the character's lack of a mouth restricts its ability to communicate emotions through its beak. I was able to portray a variety of emotions and give the character a more approachable and expressive personality by focusing on the owl's eyes and brows.

After finishing the designs, I started sculpting the character to have a better idea of how big it would be as a toy. However, because of its distinctive face characteristics and feather texture, creating an owl was difficult. Since it was my first time sculpting feathers, I had trouble with the character's face and first feather sculpt. I tried to make soft, amiable-looking feathers in the initial draught, but they didn't match the true texture of feathers.

As I worked on the character's sculpt, I discovered a happy medium between realistic and toy-like feather textures. I meticulously shaped the feathers to give a whimsical, toy-like appearance while yet seeming realistic. Through this method, I was able to better comprehend the toy's size and material restrictions as well as how to strike a balance between the character's aesthetic appeal and the usefulness of the toy.

In order to properly portray emotions, I also understood that the character's face needed to have more natural-looking expressions. To give the figure a spectrum of emotions, I improved the face characteristics by giving the eyes and the beak additional complexity.



Fig. 7 Early Owl Sculpt Phase

Connecting Through Online Art

The way artists interact with their audience has been revolutionised by social media. Artists may publish their work and interact with followers worldwide in real-time on websites like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. Making relevant, everyday work that connects with their audience on a human level is one of the best methods for artists to develop a devoted following. Art that appeals to individuals on a personal level is referred to as relatable art. It frequently represents the events, feelings, and challenges that we all encounter on a daily basis. For instance, a painter may depict a lone figure on a park seat gazing off into the distance. This picture could make someone feel lonely, reflective, or contemplative, which makes it relevant to plenty of others who have felt similar things.

There are numerous different types of relatable art, including drawings, paintings, comics, and even brief movies. These pieces all share the capacity to engage viewers in a way that seems genuine and important. Sundae Kids, comic book and illustration artist, is one who has perfected the craft of producing relatable, day-to-day art. In her work, they frequently share personal experiences and offer self-reflection on issues related to relationships, self-care, and mental health. They are one of the most well-known artists on Instagram since their work has found an audience with millions of individuals all around the world.

Puuung, a designer and artist based in South Korea, is another artist who has achieved success with approachable, everyday art. Simple, hand-drawn images that address difficult subjects like worry, self-doubt, and creativity are a common aspect of Adam's work. On social media, his art has attracted a cult following, and his followers are always looking forward to his new work.

So why do people respond to relatable, everyday art on social media so strongly? One explanation is that it gives those who might be going through similar problems a sense of affirmation and comfort. Even if we have never met the artist, when they produce a piece of art that resonates with us, it may make us feel seen and understood.

Additionally, relatable art has the power to reduce division and unite people. Artists may foster a sense of belonging among their audience by producing works that speak to common themes and experiences. This has the potential to be especially potent at a time when the COVID-19 epidemic is causing a lot of individuals to feel alone and alienated.

It's not always simple, though, to make work that others can relate to. It necessitates a thorough comprehension of one's own sentiments and experiences, as well as the capacity to convey those emotions through visual means. It also necessitates a readiness to be open and honest about one's own challenges. There are a few crucial tactics for artists to remember if they want to produce more relevant, everyday work. First and foremost, one must be genuine and loyal to themselves. Genuine and honest artists are more likely to establish a personal connection with their audience.

Second, it's critical to pay attention to the minute particulars that characterise our existence. A cup of coffee in the morning or a stroll in the park are examples of everyday activities that may serve as the basis for stirring and relevant works of art. Finally, it's critical to recognise the influence that social media has. Platforms like Instagram may be highly effective communication tools for artists.

I started by drawing Guggu in various positions and settings in an effort to predict his reactions. He was going to be more than simply a beast in my artwork as I created the character. Guggu was intended to serve as a metaphor for how individuals respond to and adapt to changing circumstances. With that in mind, I began producing a collection of artworks that illustrated Guggu's tale of novel and thrilling, occasionally monotonous but comfortable, situations that he had while touring the nation. Every piece of art I created was an adventure for Guggu, and I attempted to capture the many ways that people reacted to him as well as how he assimilated into Indian society.

The utilisation of vibrant colours and complex details was one of the series' most significant elements. By included minute details in each piece of art that allowed readers to experience the sights, sounds, and scents of the locations Guggu visited, I hoped to bring his narrative to life.

One of the series' high points was the artwork showing Guggu in Rajasthan, surrounded by a sea of mojris. The illustration sought to convey the colour and elegance of Rajasthan's traditional footwear as well as the disorienting sensation of being surrounded by so many choices.

The artwork had a feeling of disorder that was reminiscent of a busy market since it was covered in complicated patterns and vibrant colours. The big owl monster, Guggu, was positioned to the right of the piece of art, surrounded by a plethora of competing mojris.



Fig. 8 Guggu in Bazaar

The illustration in the Guggu series where Guggu meets a young boy named Anant is one of my favourites. I had fun picturing the small boy and the huge owl's odd connection.

The illustration depicted Guggu and Anant having a great time soaring about the city as the young man held on tightly to the owl's feathers. The enthusiasm and delight that come with discovering new locations and meeting new people were well represented in the snapshot. The moment where Guggu and Anant played with pups was also one of my favourites. The illustration showed the two of them surrounded by a bunch of cute, fuzzy dogs who were all wagging their tails and looking for a game to play. The little, active puppies and Guggu's bulky body made for a lovely juxtaposition that was sweet and amusing.



Fig. 9 Guggu on adventures with new friends



Fig. 10 Guggu and Anant Playing with a Pup

After a day filled with excitement and adventure, the huge owl in the final installment of the Guggu series slept down beside a blossoming tree. His peace was short-lived, though, as some local monkeys discovered him and started jumping on him while he slept. The picture was a satirical take on how unpredictable travel can be and how discovering new areas may lead to unexpected events. The cheeky monkeys broke disturbed Guggu's restful slumber, causing a scene of mayhem and hilarity that wonderfully encapsulated the whimsy of the series. The picture also suggested acceptance and flexibility despite the disruption. Guggu was able to accept the monkey's antics as part of the experience and enjoyed the situation despite them. It was a suitable way to wrap up the show since it served as a reminder to viewers that travelling is not always easy but that the memorable experiences are frequently those that are unexpected.

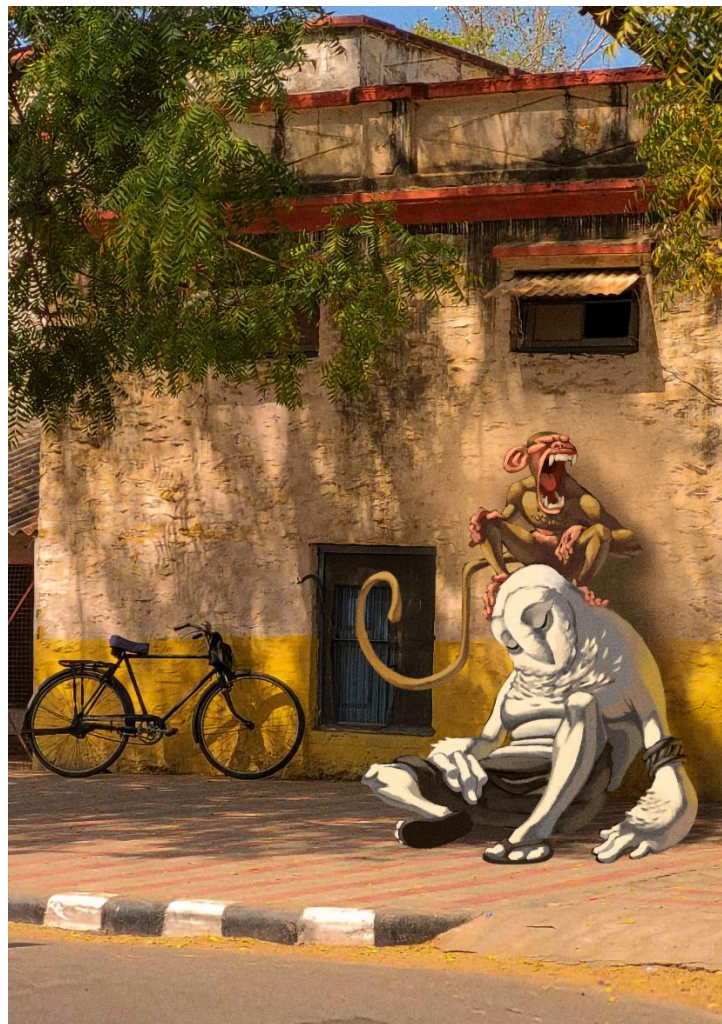


Fig. 11 Guggu Asleep with the Monkeys Playing Over

RESULTS

When I first started sharing my art toy designs on Instagram, I was eager to get them out into the world. I spent a lot of time making sure that the toys looked muscular and cool, like some of the superheroes that I admired. However, despite my efforts, my designs only reached a limited audience of **100** accounts on average. It was disappointing, but looking back, I realized that it was my lack of empathy that caused my art toy projects to fail.

In my eagerness to create eye-catching designs, I had neglected to consider the relatability of my characters. I hadn't given much thought to whether or not my audience could connect with them emotionally or culturally. It was a mistake, and it meant that my designs didn't resonate with people the way I had hoped. I concluded that if I wanted to produce interesting work, I needed to focus more on storytelling. My characters appeared one-dimensional and shallow without context or background. I had squandered an opportunity by failing to build a universe into which my audience might escape. I was aware that I needed to make art that people could relate to more deeply if I wanted to get more fans and develop a community.

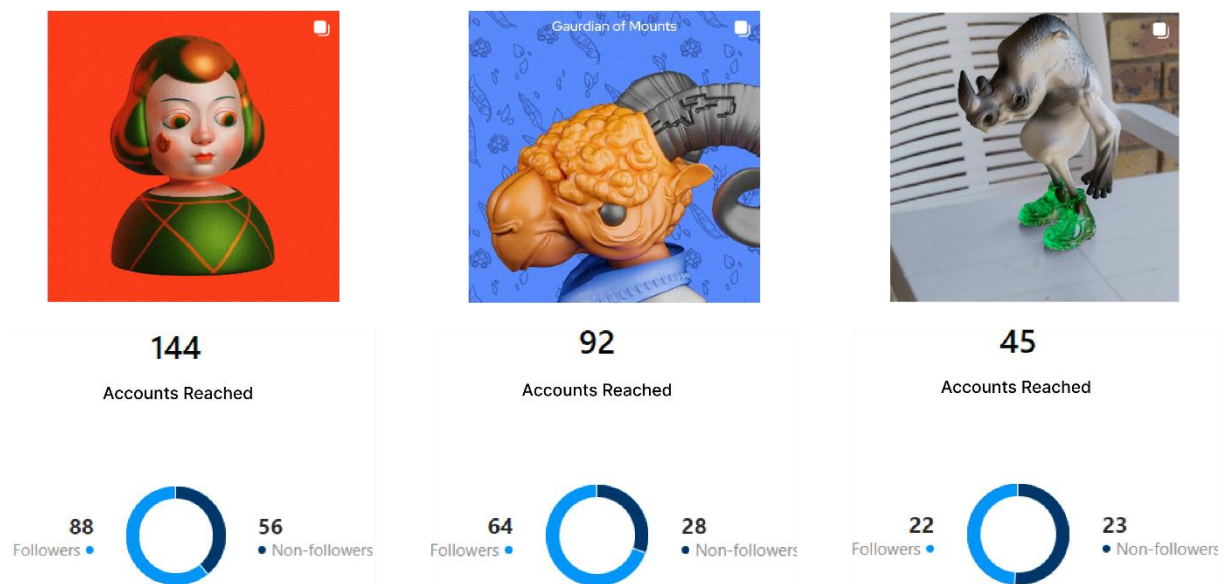


Fig. 12 Instagram Reach Before this Project

The moment I became aware of these flaws was a turning point for me. I started to change my emphasis to developing more likeable characters with deeper backstories. I started incorporating narrative into my designs to make more immersive and interesting environments. Additionally, I worked harder to establish emotional and cultural bonds with my audience, doing study on various groups and cultures to better understand what would appeal to them.

With time, I began to see greater success with my art toy creations. My audience participation rose, and I started to assemble a small group of fans who were enthusiastic about my work. It was a satisfying experience that demonstrated to me how I could make work that genuinely resonated with people by putting an emphasis on empathy and connection. I can see how my lack of empathy held me back when I look back on my early ideas. It was a lesson I had to learn, and I have used it to guide my artistic process ever since. I've been able to produce art that has a greater effect and that has helped to build a feeling of community around my work by placing a greater emphasis on relatability, narrative, and emotional and cultural connections. I'm eager to carry on with this trip and see where it leads.

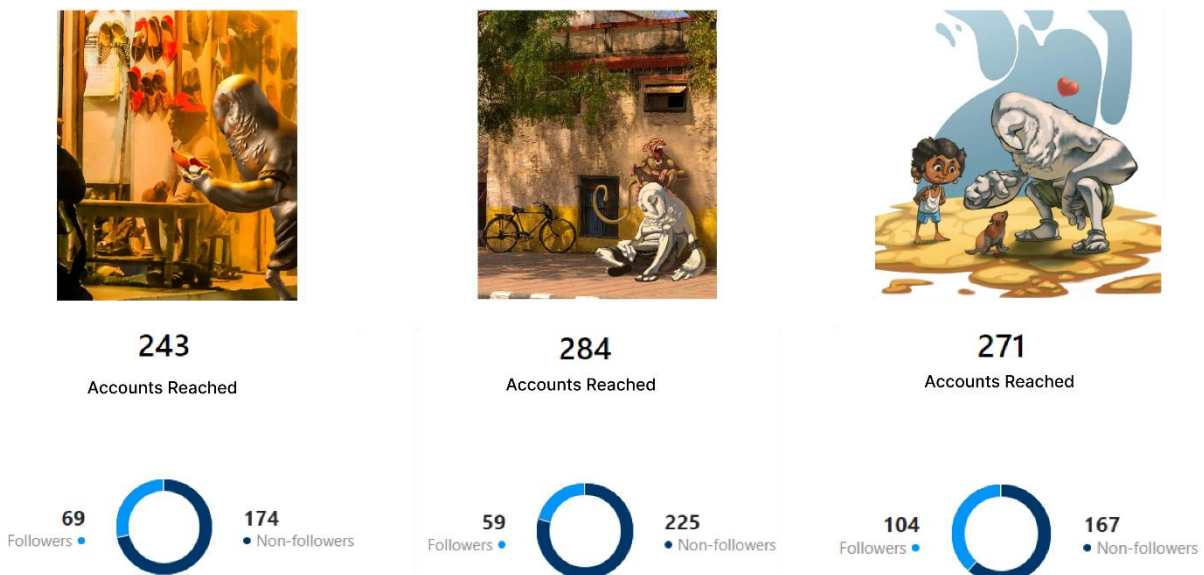


Fig. 13 Instagram Reach After this Project

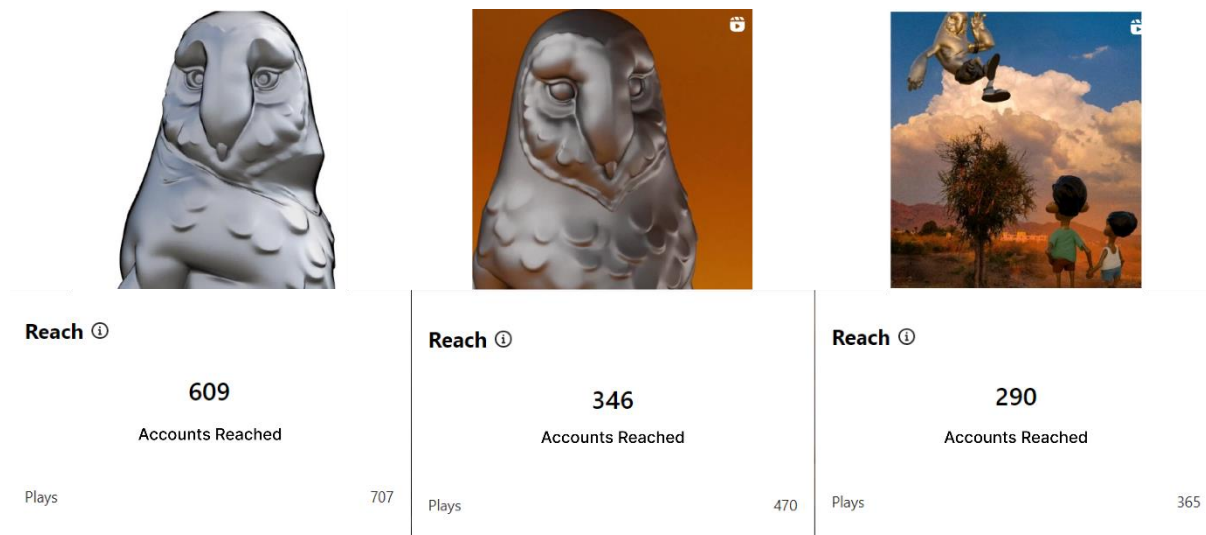


Fig. 14 Instagram Reach After this Project(2)

I built a character that people could identify with and enjoy creating an emotional connection with as I adhered to these criteria. With these tales and pieces of art, I was able to immediately witness an increase in the amount of viewers I was reaching. I could easily reach **250+** audience on average with these tales, as seen in the figure. I saw how simple and commonplace stories in pictures attracted so much internet attention. As an artist, I learned a lot from this, and it helped me to understand the value of an audience-relevant plot and authentic characters with cultural resonance.

Building an engaged audience requires more than simply developing a character with a background and sympathetic features. Additionally, I wanted to make sure that my designs were eye-catching and distinct from those of my rivals. I experimented with various colours, forms, and sizes until I came up with a combination that suited my character nicely. Another aspect that I paid close attention to was the quality of my content. I knew that in order to attract and retain a larger audience, I had to consistently produce high-quality content that was both visually stunning and engaging. I made sure to post regularly, interact with my followers, and respond to their comments and feedback. This helped me to build a strong sense of community around my character and my designs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I was able to see a sizable improvement in the performance of my art toy creations on Instagram after putting the suggestions made by my study into practise. My posts' reach grew by approx. 150%, which indicates that a larger audience may now access my material than before. Additionally, I saw that my audience engaged with the character and the narrative more. The viewer and the character developed a stronger sense of empathy and emotional connection as a consequence of this exchange. I was able to forge a connection between my character and the audience that had previously been lacking by giving my character greater cultural significance and relatability. This connection helped my audience identify with my character more deeply, which increased their degree of emotional engagement with my work. The engagement and reach of my postings rose as a result of this answer.

Understanding the significance of developing a relatable and culturally relevant figure that can connect with the audience on an emotional level led to advancements in my art toy creations. I was able to increase my audience's involvement and emotional connection by putting this insight into practise, which led to a more fruitful project.

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