

## Painting Walls with Imagination Interview with Samia Singh

Shriya Malhotra / Independent researcher

*Samia Singh is an artist and designer whose artworks overcome conventional language and communication barriers across contexts. Working across mediums, her art is rooted in themes that exalt the natural landscape. She has had work commissioned in municipalities of Italy, Spain and in Japan. Wherever and whatever she has worked on, she leaves a spirited mark of the timelessness of natural beauty and its related feeling of joy regardless of place. Her works are broadly categorizable as fantasy-laden images and site-specific nature-scapes often inspired by the surrounding landscape and seemingly by her childhood growing up in Punjab.*

1. What was it like to get commissions and work on making art in public spaces in Europe?

“I was working with the mayor of a small town of Carballo up in Galicia in Spain along with my friend who runs a street art organisation 'Derrubanda Muros con Pintura' which translates to 'Breaking Down Walls with Paint'. It was very interesting; the Mayor, introduced me to the lady who owned a house on the high street of the town. The mayor's mission was to have enough wall art in this small town to make the youth to feel proud and to not keep leaving for jobs to bigger cities. Galicia in Spain has good fertile soil, and its close to the sea. Beautiful and gorgeous landscapes! He wanted to increase the youth's pride in their heritage, cities and culture. So they commissioned me and many other artists in Carballo.”

2. Is there anything specific about process of creating the mural you can share with readers?

“I had come from the heat of the Delhi summer — 45c — and it was fantastic weather: cloudy and rainy so I wanted a cloudy rainy scene and a sketched a dog flying with two kids on his back, along with a stork carrying a present.”

The whole wall and its images were generated based on interviews with friends in India and in Spain talking about their happiest memory. I put in a few memories — the lady liked the whole idea but she said “please don't add rain and clouds cos we hate the rain here.” That was nice and contextual. And here I was starving for rain and clouds, coming from the Indian summer!

In terms of my visual technique, I love trees and especially loved the specific ones that are there—Cypress. These were landscapes I was not really used to: the mountains and the sea. Soft grass that makes you want to roll around in it. The wind is incredible — I decided to depict trees that were moving around and that was the starting point. The stork is the mayor, bringing a gift to the street — with the street name given in too — so I was looking to work with memories of happiness, something surreal and fun!”

3. Why do you create murals?

“I paint on walls because its beautiful to have a huge piece of work accessible to the public eye. Kids love it. These twins would come and play with cardboard box i put my paints on. I gave them one of the original sketches as a gift in the end. a street sweeper would tell me you're working as hard as Picasso and i'll buy you a coke today. These interactions make street art so special, and the opportunity to talk to the people who live there.”

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