

## Performance & Video



8/1/2013 8:32 PM: Puja: Hi Somu

8/1/2013 8:32 PM: Puja: What's happening?

8/1/2013 8:33 PM: SOMU DESAI: Nothing much, just finished my new body of works

8/1/2013 8:33 PM: SOMU DESAI: And what r u up to

8/1/2013 8:33 PM: Puja: Great!

8/1/2013 8:34 PM: Puja: I told you..finished work for my solo..finally took pictures of all the paintings and sculptures.

8/1/2013 8:34 PM: SOMU DESAI: Ok and when is your show

8/1/2013 8:34 PM: Puja: 6 th September

8/1/2013 8:35 PM: SOMU DESAI: Aha

8/1/2013 8:35 PM: SOMU DESAI: And what are you showing this time

8/1/2013 8:36 PM: Puja: Btw...planning to show the video we shot together too

8/1/2013 8:36 PM: SOMU DESAI: That's good

8/1/2013 8:37 PM: SOMU DESAI: Ya you wanted to go for truck ride just after I travelled from Vapi to Delhi

8/1/2013 8:37 PM: SOMU DESAI: I didn't ask you then

8/1/2013 8:38 PM: SOMU DESAI: But why did you want to take this truck ride. It's a unusual idea from the kind of background you relate

8/1/2013 8:42 PM: Puja: I think it was a sub conscious effort from my side to grow from the timid and shy daughter....wife..mother to asserting my adventurous spirit.Ofcourse Gautam thought I've gone crazy, because in India its still some sort of a taboo for a woman to be travelling alone in a truck.

8/1/2013 8:43 PM: SOMU DESAI: Yes that's true

8/1/2013 8:44 PM: SOMU DESAI: But tell me what was his reaction on this idea.

8/1/2013 8:49 PM: Puja: See after the initial shock, I explained him the whole concept, even if it was about my adventurous spirit, I told him that it won't be a woman making the journey but "Munna".the idea of the journey is about "dressing" as a male, camouflaged in the male dominated surface transport world. Besides I had you with me...think that made him a little comfortable with the idea. it was an attempt to fuse the busy life of the highway with the hermetic life of the studio.

8/1/2013 8:51 PM: SOMU DESAI: Ya Munna. I remember that name

8/1/2013 8:51 PM: Puja: Yaya..of course u do! You gave me that name

8/1/2013 8:53 PM: SOMU DESAI: You know I remember a documentary I came across on discovery channel about Taliban in Afghanistan

8/1/2013 8:53 PM: Puja: ?

8/1/2013 8:54 PM: SOMU DESAI: As in Taliban raj in Afghanistan girls were not allowed to go to school

8/1/2013 8:54 PM: SOMU DESAI: So one mother used to dress her daughter like a boy and send her to school

8/1/2013 9:03 PM: Puja: Yes..I think I heard about it. In this case it's not being allowed to, but I guess also the social stigma attached with these drivers that made my family a little uncomfortable. The truck driver is India's lifeline-as anywhere in the world-but yet the Indian driver's life and well-being are not respected. It was a bid to be 'one of them' and get into the skin of the real world and experience it from within which also becomes part of my performance. What I'm trying to do is make art that's as close to real life as I can without it being real life.

8/1/2013 9:05 PM: SOMU DESAI: But what difference does it make if it would be someone else with the makeover of a man

8/1/2013 9:06 PM: SOMU DESAI: As per my idea

8/1/2013 9:15 PM: SOMU DESAI: Just to go on a truck ride, you changing a gender itself is issue

8/1/2013 9:15 PM: SOMU DESAI: Which really got me involved

8/1/2013 9:16 PM: SOMU DESAI: And let me tell you frankly



8/1/2013 9:16 PM: SOMU DESAI: From no angle were you looking like a boy

8/1/2013 9:19 PM: Puja: Hahaha...Yes true. Though I tried very hard with my make up, but you have to agree that I was somewhere in between..You know me and my family background well. For me to have to change my gender to undertake the journey shows the kind of social pressure a woman has to go through. why couldn't I just go the way I am? But on the other hand, the very fact that I would have to change my gender, made it all very interesting and I decided to make it part of my body of works.

8/1/2013 9:23 PM: SOMU DESAI: Puja it's a dinner time. Can we continue this talk tomorrow.

8/1/2013 9:24 PM: SOMU DESAI: Say hi to Gautam from me

8/1/2013 9:24 PM: Puja: Sure. let's need to talk to you more on it.

8/1/2013 9:24 PM: Puja: Yes. Will do.btw when are u coming to Delhi?

8/1/2013 9:25 PM: SOMU DESAI: Ya can do that

8/1/2013 9:25 PM: SOMU DESAI: Need to get my works framed before I come

8/1/2013 9:25 PM: Puja: K catch you tomorrow

8/1/2013 9:25 PM: Puja: Good nite

8/3/2013 8:33 AM: Puja: Good morning!

8/3/2013 8:34 AM: SOMU DESAI: Good morning

8/3/2013 8:34 AM: Puja: What's happening?

8/3/2013 8:35 AM: SOMU DESAI: Having tea

8/3/2013 8:36 AM: Puja: Ok.u want to complete our conversation? you really got me thinking the other evening

8/3/2013 8:38 AM: SOMU DESAI: Where were you yesterday

8/3/2013 8:39 AM: Puja: Lot of work happening..was busy with photography..went to see dad etc



8/3/2013 8:40 AM: Puja: And Fridays usually is all kids evening...Saturday again I want my time back!

8/3/2013 8:40 AM: SOMU DESAI: Ok

8/3/2013 8:41 AM: SOMU DESAI: We shall talk after an hour

8/3/2013 8:41 AM: Puja: Ok

8/3/2013 8:41 AM: SOMU DESAI: Need to get ready for studio

8/3/2013 8:41 AM: Puja: Sure

8/3/2013 9:52 AM: SOMU DESAI: Hi

8/3/2013 9:55 AM: Puja: Hi

8/3/2013 9:59 AM: SOMU DESAI: We were talking on your Video

8/3/2013 10:01 AM: SOMU DESAI: Do you know something

8/3/2013 10:02 AM: SOMU DESAI: When you spoke with GB and told me that you are finally going for a truck ride, and I have to join you

8/3/2013 10:03 AM: SOMU DESAI: As I am a common friend of GB and you. And you want someone to accompany you.

8/3/2013 10:04 AM: SOMU DESAI: And I was aware that you were going to dress like a man

8/3/2013 10:05 AM: SOMU DESAI: Initially I didn't want to come as I just traveled 1500km in a truck

8/3/2013 10:06 AM: SOMU DESAI: But what interested me was the idea that you were going to do a makeover like a man

8/3/2013 10:10 AM: Puja: Yes I know..I was also very pleasantly surprised when you agreed to come along considering your long journey...

8/3/2013 10:15 AM: SOMU DESAI: And this is the first time we are talking so extensively about your Truck trip

8/3/2013 10:15 AM: Puja: Yes..we havn't really discussed it much before

8/3/2013 10:16 AM: SOMU DESAI: So tell me something about your experience to be in man's getup

8/3/2013 10:23 AM: Puja: I was conscious at first, wearing a wig and all that makeup..but by the time we reached the transport office,I guess I got comfortable in my skin..of course I didn't speak much (remember my abba dabba jabba)lol! The initial hesitancy from climbing such a huge truck without acting dainty/feminine to being checked by you to sit like a man.and it also made the truck driver comfortable with the fact that he just had two men accompanying him.For me I just withdrew from what I am as a person and took on to myself my new role.

8/3/2013 10:27 AM: SOMU DESAI: You know this is really a daring act. I realized later.

8/3/2013 10:29 AM: SOMU DESAI: I have striped my clothes so may time and sometime in public but after seeing you a thought passed by my mind " would I like to change my gender for some reason"

8/3/2013 10:30 AM: SOMU DESAI: And honestly speaking I was not so comfortable to the idea of changing my gender.

8/3/2013 10:32 AM: SOMU DESAI: And that made me think about the issues where one has to change his/her gender due to some pressure.

8/3/2013 10:32 AM: Puja: U know,I read an interview once of an American female truck driver



8/3/2013 10:32 AM: Puja: Even there she said she was always prejudiced because of her sex and wished she was invisible

8/3/2013 10:33 AM: SOMU DESAI: That's how I started looking at this project with interest.

8/3/2013 10:33 AM: SOMU DESAI: Now just imagine

8/3/2013 10:34 AM: SOMU DESAI: To continue her profession, if she has to change her gender is this not a big question!

8/3/2013 10:35 AM: SOMU DESAI: A question to society.

8/3/2013 10:36 AM: Puja: Yes and all she said was that wish she could get more respect in this job coz of her gender.that's what made me wonder too..

8/3/2013 10:38 AM: SOMU DESAI: Look we have 364 days a good day but just one-day bad is enough to shake up our lives

8/3/2013 10:39 AM: SOMU DESAI: Same way she must be getting appreciation but what about that criticism that she has to face take

8/3/2013 10:39 AM: SOMU DESAI: And what about that time when she decided to be a truck driver.

8/3/2013 10:40 AM: SOMU DESAI: I am sure it must not been easy for her.

8/3/2013 10:41 AM: SOMU DESAI: Look

8/3/2013 10:41 AM: SOMU DESAI: Now after this performance you must be getting appreciated for what you have done

8/3/2013 10:43 AM: SOMU DESAI: But what if you would had told this idea to your dad, in laws and your society close ones.



8/3/2013 10:53 AM: SOMU DESAI: But when I saw you.

8/3/2013 10:54 AM: SOMU DESAI: It was really interesting and started documenting you

8/3/2013 10:54 AM: SOMU DESAI: And I was trying to click your effort to behave like a man.

8/3/2013 10:56 AM: Puja: Yes..and that's how this stop motion came into being...after seeing all the footage I realised it was an interesting concept..since what I was painting was also inspired from the highway..and my course in the truck also made me a part of the highway and the people I paint!

8/3/2013 11:13 AM: SOMU DESAI: B R B

8/3/2013 11:39 AM: SOMU DESAI: Someone in Studio

8/3/2013 11:43 AM: Puja: Ok

8/4/2013 9:07 AM: Puja: Hi

8/4/2013 9:39 AM: SOMU DESAI: Hi,

8/4/2013 9:39 AM: SOMU DESAI: Give me 30mnts

8/4/2013 10:11 AM: SOMU DESAI: In short the most interesting part was

8/4/2013 10:11 AM: SOMU DESAI: We both were on truck

8/4/2013 10:11 AM: Puja: Yes

8/4/2013 10:12 AM: SOMU DESAI: Where you were not pre decided that what will be the final output and I was not sure what's was going on and what was your idea

8/4/2013 10:12 AM: Puja: True...

8/4/2013 10:13 AM: Puja: And now chatting with you I've realized how much there was to it!

8/4/2013 10:13 AM: SOMU DESAI: But in final out I can see that this video you have tried to generate a dialogue on gender issue.

8/4/2013 10:15 AM: SOMU DESAI: And a question on the culture of Indian society

8/4/2013 10:15 AM: Puja: Yes. Starting with just doing something daring...it did become a sensitive issue and a question to the society. Indian or anywhere in the world!



Somu Desai is an artist from Pardi, Gujarat and a friend of Puja's.