PHOTO



STORY



ARTISTPORTFOLIO

SPECIAL INTERVIEW

MANOJ SHUKLA

SCLUPTURE ARTIST & NDEPENDENT FILM MAKER

INTRODUCTION:

SCULPTING STORIES, PAINTING SILENCES, AND BREATHING LIFE INTO ART

"The medium is not the limit—it's just the voice chosen by the idea." – Manoj Kumar Shukla

Manoj Kumar Shukla, a multidisciplinary artist from Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh, is not just a maker of art—he is a storyteller, a seeker, and a silent listener to the unseen rhythms of life. For Manoj, art is not confined to a single form; it is a living language that takes shape as sculpture, painting, photography, film, poetry, or narrative—whichever the idea demands.

At the heart of his practice lies sculpture—his most resonant strength—where memory, time, and emotion merge into form. His sculptures are not merely physical objects; they are vessels of stillness, symbols of continuity, and embodiments of untold stories. Alongside this, his paintings offer deep sensory layers of Indian culture and introspection, while his explorations in photography and film capture fleeting moments, subtle silences, and the deeply personal.

INTRODUCTION:

PHOTO STORY

Manoj's artistic journey has been nurtured not only by his lived experiences but also by the mentorship of remarkable teachers who shaped his foundation:

- Mr. Prabhakar Rai, a renowned painter, instilled in him a deep sensitivity toward the visual language.
- Mr. Devendra and Mr. Gyanendra played formative roles in his early development as an artist.
- In sculpture, he was guided by Mr. Pandeya Rajivnayan, an acclaimed sculptor and the then Dean of DSMNRU, Lucknow, whose insights and philosophy helped Manoj find his own artistic voice.
- In photography, Mr. Atul Hundu recognized and encouraged his emerging talent, helping him expand his visual storytelling.
- He also draws lasting inspiration from Dr. Jaikrishna Agrawal, former Principal of the College of Arts and Crafts, whose legacy influenced many of Manoj's mentors and whose ideals of balancing tradition with innovation still resonate in Manoj's work.

Academically, Manoj completed his Bachelor of Visual Arts in Sculpture from the College of Arts and Crafts, University of Lucknow (2016–2020) and earned his Master of Visual Arts in Creative Sculpture from Dr. Shakuntala Mishra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow (2020–2022). But his true education, as he often says, comes from observing life—its textures, silences, and emotional threads that connect us all.

His work spans the spectrum of memory, identity, and time. Whether sculpting a figure from clay, capturing a quiet moment through a lens, or writing verse that speaks in whispers—Manoj's art invites the viewer not just to see, but to feel.

INTRODUCTION:

Exhibitions & Artistic Presence

State Lalit Kala Academy, Lucknow – Group Show (March 18–22, 2021)

AIFACS, New Delhi – Nakshatra National Group Art Exhibition (October 15–20, 2022)

Awards & Recognitions

Painting selected for International Art Competition, Germany (2008)

Nominated for the Rashtrapati Puruskar by Bhartiya Scout Sansthan (2013)

Recipient of Rajya Purushkar, Bhartiya Scout Sansthan (2012)

Manoj's artistic journey is not about perfection or permanence—it is about presence. His work transcends disciplines, blurring the lines between visual and verbal expression. Each piece becomes a living dialogue, a way of listening to the world and responding without always needing words.

INTRODUCTION:

"Art, to me, is not what I make-it's what I become in the making."

- Manoj Kumar Shukla

Presenting a Special Interview in Our Photo-Story E-Magazine
With Manoj Shukla — Sculpture Artist & Independent
Filmmaker

In this edition of our photo-story e-magazine, we are delighted to present a special feature interview with the visionary Manoj Shukla — a celebrated sculpture artist and a passionate independent filmmaker.

Manoj Shukla is a skilled sculptor who constantly experiments with new forms and ideas in his art. Through stone and metal, he doesn't just carve shapes — he brings emotions to life. But within him resides more than just a sculptor; he is also a filmmaker, a storyteller, and a lyricist. His creativity knows no boundaries — as effortlessly as he creates with chisel and hammer, he also weaves narratives through the lens, words, and melodies. In the everevolving world of visual expression, Manoj Shukla's journey continues to expand in remarkable ways.

Join us as we explore the mind of a true artist who molds both stone and story.

-**Jyotirmay yadav** editor-in-chief photographer 1. PHOTO-STORY: When and how did your journey into art begin? Was it something you discovered in childhood?

MANOJ SHUKLA: Yes, it began in childhood. Whenever construction sand (maurang) came to our house, I used to find wet clumps of clay in it. I would pick them out and make small figures. It felt like play, but in truth, it was the first taste of creation for my soul. For me, clay was never lifeless—it was a language of sensitivity.



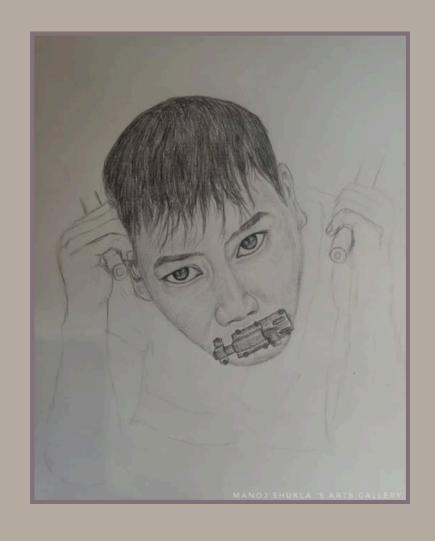
2. PHOTO-STORY:

During your school days at Kendriya Vidyalaya, one of your paintings was selected for Germany. What was that experience like?

MANOJ SHUKLA: That was a memorable moment in my early years. One of my paintings was selected to be international sent to an exhibition in Germany. I received official even an school. from the letter However, due to some family issues, I couldn't travel. It was a big opportunity, but it taught me that art is not just for display—it's also a form of silent devotion.

3. PHOTO-STORY: You dropped out of B.Com to pursue fine arts. How defining was that decision?

MANOJ SHUKLA: In the first year, I couldn't secure admission to the College of Arts and Crafts, Lucknow University, as I missed the BVA entrance exam. So I enrolled in B.Com. But my soul resided in art. In the very first year, reapplied and finally was admitted to the Lucknow College of Arts and Crafts. I completed my BVA (Visual Arts) in 2020 and did my MVA from then Shakuntala Mishra **National** Rehabilitation University. **This** journey was like a spiritual pursuit for me.



4. PHOTO-STORY: Your sculpture "Locked Tools, Silent Flames" gained attention during the lockdown. What inspired it?

MANOJ SHUKLA: During the lockdown, I witnessed the silence and hunger of migrant workers—their tools were locked and their kitchens cold. I transformed that feeling into form. Padlocks were sculpted onto trowels and stoves, symbolizing the stillness of labor and hunger. It was an artistic protest, a cry carved in metal.

- ** Artwork 1: Locked Tools, Silent Flames
 - Medium: Scrap Metal
 - Size: $36 \times 12 \times 10$ inches (2022)
 - Statement:-"During the lockdown, the tools of labor were locked, and so were the hopes of daily bread. My artwork speaks of the silence that spread in the homes of migrant workers."



5. PHOTO-STORY: You also created another sculpture on the same theme using stone and metal. Please elaborate.

MANOJ SHUKLA: The pain of laborers is not just etched in metal but also in stone. In this sculpture, I used scrap metal and stone together to portray the frozen stream of labor and the haunting silence of that time. It is a symbolic composition, a frozen moment of lost livelihoods.

- **Artwork 2:** Locked Tools, Silent Flames
 - Medium: Stone and Scrap Metal
 - Size: $4.5 \times 13.5 \times 10$ inches (2022)
 - Statement: "During the lockdown, the tools of labour were locked, and so were the hopes of daily bread. My artwork speaks of the silence that spread in the homes of migrant workers."



ARTIST PORTFOLIO MANOJ SHUKLA

6. PHOTO-STORY: Let's discuss your sculpture "Housewife," where you depict the role of a woman through an architectural structure.

MANOJ SHUKLA: In our rural life, a housewife is not just a role but the foundation of the entire household system. I used elements like clay stoves, shelves, oil lamps, and girl figures to create a scene where the woman isn't just visible—she is structural. She is the light that binds the home together.

** Artwork 3: GRAHNI (In English HOUSEWIFE)

- Medium: Fiber
- Size: $12 \times 10 \times 08$ inches (2022)
- Statement: "A woman's presence in the home is not just visible—it's structural."



ARTIST PORTFOLIO MANOJ SHUKLA

7. PHOTO-STORY: Your sculpture "Future" uses scrap metal. What kind of future are you imagining here?

MANOJ SHUKLA: 'Future' poses the question: what are we passing on? The ruins of our present—our waste, neglect, and disregard—could become the foundation of tomorrow. This sculpture is both a warning and a vision, urging us to reflect on what kind of world we're building.

Artwork 4: Future

• Medium: Scrap Metal

• Size: 26 × 11.5 × 9 inches (2022)

• Statement: "A reflection on the inheritance we leave behind—a future born from our discarded realities."



8. PHOTO-STORY: Your recent sculpture "Creative Frog" has a playful yet thoughtful tone. Tell us about it.

Answer:

MANOJ SHUKLA: 'Creative Frog' is a whimsical yet meaningful piece. Created in terracotta, it suggests that creativity can spring from anywhere—even a humble frog. It's dedicated to those artists who, despite limited resources, leap into infinite creation.

👛 Artwork 5: Creative Frog

• Medium: Terracotta

• Size: $06 \times 06 \times 02$ inches (2024)

• Statement: "A symbol of spontaneous creation and artistic instinct that leaps beyond limitations."





9. PHOTO-STORY: In one of your paintings, you depict clock hands on a human face. What does it symbolize?

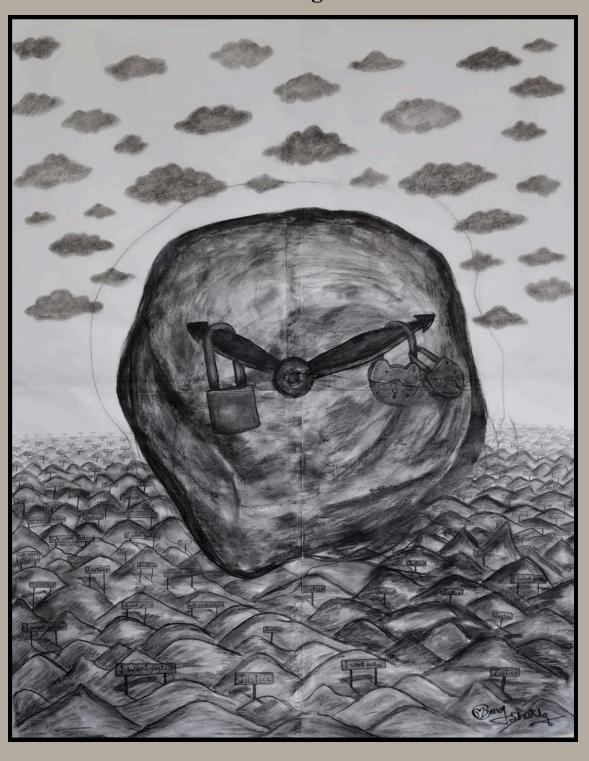
MANOJ SHUKLA: I've explored the concept of time using portraiture. The clock hands on a face reflect how time leaves its mark—not just on within The walls but us. distorted or balanced hands difficult indicate both harmonious times. It's a visual metaphor for our emotional experience of time.





10. PHOTO-STORY: You have another painting where a giant stone rolls down with a clock drawn on it. What does this mean?

MANOJ SHUKLA: That painting is titled "The Huge Stone of Life." It symbolizes the burden and continuity of life. The massive rolling stone represents life's challenges, and the clock carved onto it reminds us that time keeps moving, regardless of how heavy our lives may feel. It's about resilience and motion in the face of weight.



11. PHOTO-STORY: Who were the key mentors in your artistic journey, and how did their guidance influence your creative vision?

MANOJ SHUKLA: During the early stages of my academic and artistic journey, I was fortunate to receive the guidance and blessings of several esteemed mentors who played a pivotal role in shaping my identity as a sculpture artist.

Among them, the most influential was Shri Prabhakar Rai, a renowned painter and visual artist. Under his mentorship, I developed a strong foundation in visual art and learned to approach creativity with both depth and sensitivity. Alongside him, Shri Devendra Sir and Shri guided Gyanendra Sir also during my formative years, helping to shape my initial artistic thought and expression.

During my BVA studies, I had the privilege of learning under Shri Umendra Pratap Singh Sir, renowned painter whose guidance sharpen visual helped my understanding and aesthetic sensibilities. Later, in my MVA, I was mentored by Shri **Pandeva** Rajivnayan Sir, whose insights deeply

enriched my journey as a sculpture artist. He was not only my professor but also my academic guide, offering invaluable support in refining my creative voice.

In the field of photography, I received encouragement and appreciation from Shri Atul Hundu Sir, whose recognition of my work boosted my confidence and inspired me to explore visual storytelling with a renewed perspective.

I have also been profoundly influenced by the philosophy of Dr. Jay Krishna Agrawal Sir, the former Principal of the College of Art and Craft. Although I did not study under him directly, many of my teachers were his disciples. His legacy and artistic ideology—emphasizing the harmony between tradition and

innovation—have left a lasting impact on my growth as an artist. The mentorship and inspiration I received from all these gurus helped me evolve into a mature artist. Their influence nurtured not only my technical s

skills but also enriched my conceptual and emotional depth, enabling me to grow into a sensitive, thoughtful, and expressive creative individual.

12. PHOTO-STORY: You are also involved in songwriting and filmmaking. Could you share more about this creative expansion?

Answer:

MANOJ SHUKLA: Yes. My creative expression isn't limited to sculpture. I've written songs focused on rural life, women's sensitivity, and social disparities. Now, I'm planning to create short films and documentaries on these themes. I want my art to go beyond form—to become a visual poem that touches the soul.

Final Thoughts:

Manoj Kumar Shukla's art is not just something to be viewed—it's something to be felt. In his work, you find the softness of clay, the silence of metal, and the heartbeat of time. He is one of those rare artists who sculpt not from the outside—but from within.

