



MEET THE MAKERS

CLAYMEN

KNOWN FOR THEIR STONEWARE CLAY AND TERRACOTTA FIGURINES, CLAYMEN'S QUIRKY SIGNATURE IS UNDERPINNED BY A ROBUST, WELL-OILED OPERATION

WORDS VAISHNAVI NAVEEL TALAWADEKAR PHOTO COURTESY CLAYMEN

Aman Khanna could never have predicted that he would one day be selling faces. And yet, today, his signature stoneware clay and terracotta figurines, christened Claymen, take pride of place in the homes of fashion designers, musicians, friends and artists, and enjoy a cult Instagram following. “The pursuit started out as something I wanted to do for myself. I had no intention of Claymen being where it is today. I certainly did not envision dedicating most of my time to a venture like this,” he smiles. C

After ten years running twin design businesses across London and New Delhi, the London College of Communication graduate felt a more primal calling. “I took classes at New Delhi’s Sanskriti Foundation and started experimenting with clay. Due to my background as an illustrator and infographic artist, I had amassed sketch books of characters and icons, which started to manifest into little creatures, each with their own personality and face and imperfections,” he shares.

2014 proved to be a watershed for Aman; his multi-headed ‘Clayman’ sculpture was accepted for Pictoplasma, an art and design festival in Berlin. “The show cemented my resolve to bring this experiment to the world and I began my ceram-



From top: Claymen’s Eager Reader and Writer sculptures; Founder Aman Khanna, hand-moulding a clay head; An Envy Suppressor sculpture being hand-finished (OPPOSITE PAGE) Claymen’s Envy Suppressor sculptures, are intended to suppress the envy and spreading good vibes

ics practice out of my home and my design studio in Hauz Khas Village, New Delhi,” he reflects.

What began as a one-man show, is now a flourishing multi-faceted enterprise with a storefront. But Aman avers that each item remains a labour of love, taking 2-4 weeks to create and going through a fastidious process from conception to completion: “When we create a prototype, it goes through several rounds of iterations until it assumes the perfect physical form. Thereafter, starts the technical process of drying, firing and glazing.”

Being labour-intensive, the business is not without its challenges. “There is almost 20-25% breakage during the making process. We recycle the clay if it happens during the drying process, but any later and it’s difficult to save,” rues Aman, adding that they often turn broken items into planters or store displays. The bigger issue, he laments, is plagiarism. “I’ve seen my designs copied many times and I make it a point to stay away from trends.” The silver lining for the business is that the sourcing is minimal. “Basic elements like air, water and fire take care of most of the process. We get our clay custom-made per our tried-and-tested compositions. The stains are sourced from a few different places and we prepare the glazes in-house,” he signs off. ♦ claymen.in