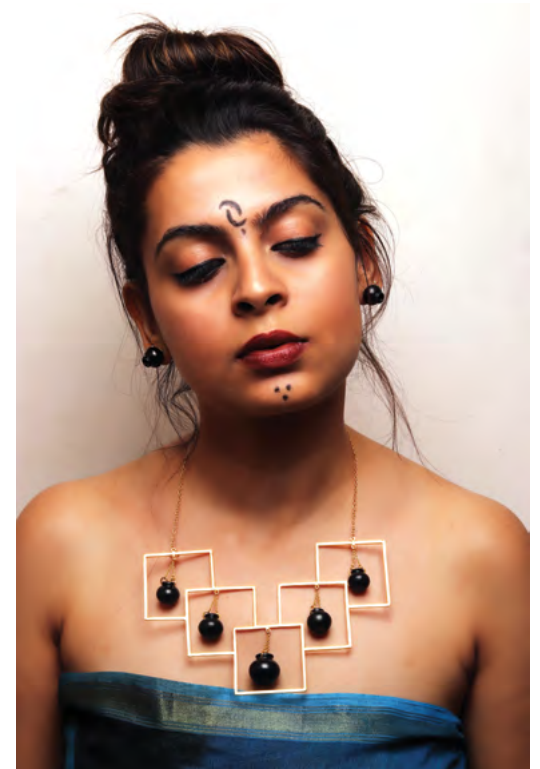
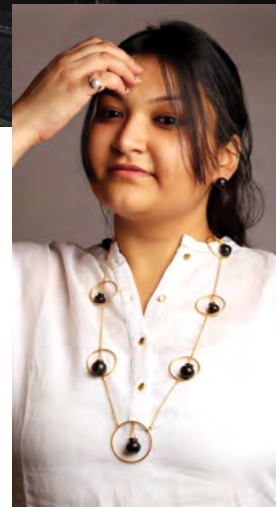


wearable pots

Craft designer **Parul Agrawal** has created a unique jewelry line to commemorate the black pottery of her hometown



Sikahar earrings (Photo by: Tanjul Sarkar)



Left: Handi neckpiece back; Above: Handi neckpiece

How did you become passionate about black pottery?

PA: Black pottery is a GI craft from Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh. A languishing craft, it needs a lot of involvement, improvement and innovation in order to again attain the status of a unique pottery craft. I belong to Azamgarh and decided to take this craft forward and help it grow again.

I did my graduate studies at the Indian Institute of Crafts and Design, Jaipur, specializing in Ceramics. It is the only Craft Institute that connects us to the roots of our culture and traditions, and that is where my thinking completely changed. When I went home to Azamgarh for the holidays, I would spend time with the artisans and learn more about the craft of black pottery. For my final graduation project I decided to focus on the development of black pottery. This was a most crucial decision and the beginning of a new journey, even though I didn't realize it back then. I started researching the problems and strengths of the craft, and exploring the market, and soon I was passionate about the subject.



Handi neckpiece

How did you come up with the concept of 'a pot you can wear'?

PA: During my time with the artisans, I was working on miniatures, which served as decorative pieces. I decided to try to give them a different purpose. I worked on a few wearable samples for myself and showed them to my professor, Mr. Mangesh Afre, who guided me to explore the jewelry category as it had potential in the market. After much exploration, I achieved something unique - India's first pot jewelry brand. A pot is so versatile; it is used as a container for water, in rituals, as a musical instrument, etc. I decided to introduce 'A Pot You Can Wear'. I find this type of jewelry very fascinating and started wearing it regularly to get feedback from people.

What is the story behind 'Kabbish'?

PA: 'Kabbish' is one of the main elements in the black pottery of Nizamabad. It is made of four different ingredients, which are locally called 'Kabbish ki mitti'. Kabbish in liquid form is applied on each miniature piece –

this is what creates the shining surface of black pottery. I decided to use 'Kabbish' as my brand name to connect with the artisans - so they also feel proud to work for the brand.

I started Kabbish about a year ago in Jaipur. Building the brand was the biggest challenge but I always say, 'Do your best, and everything else will fall into place.' Branding, marketing and packaging were new to me but I didn't lose hope. I did a lot of research to make Kabbish stand out in the market. I started my journey at an exhibition called INDIA STORY'18 Kolkata, which was really a good decision and motivated me considerably. Later I collaborated with a fashion brand and had a wonderful show at LAKME FASHION WEEK ss19. It was an amazing experience!

What is your approach to designing a collection?

PA: Each product has a story behind it. The humble terracotta pot used to store water is called 'gagri' locally, and it is the inspiration



Sihahar earrings



Sihahar bracelet-neckpiece

for the Gagri Collection; every piece speaks of the age old Indian terracotta tradition. Our process starts with the pottery. This is followed by research, market survey, inspiration, mood board, ideations, prototyping, sampling, final product, packaging and then marketing.

How do you market and distribute your products?

PA: We have collaborated with some multi-designer brands like Jaypore, Gaatha, TLBB, Nykaa Fashion, and Como Collective. We have our own fully functional e-commerce store and have a presence on Instagram. We also do selective exhibitions.

What are your views on working with artisans?

PA: Supporting the artisans who are dependent on traditional art forms for a livelihood is equal to supporting the craft sector in India. Some people think that nothing can be changed but I feel that one

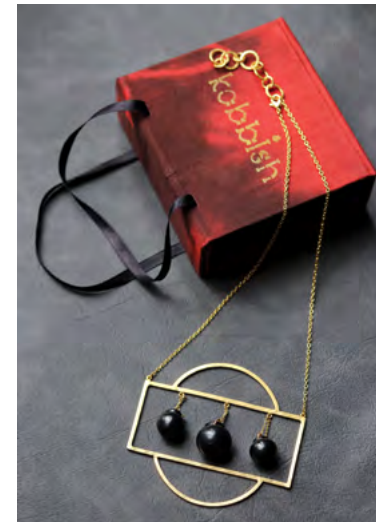
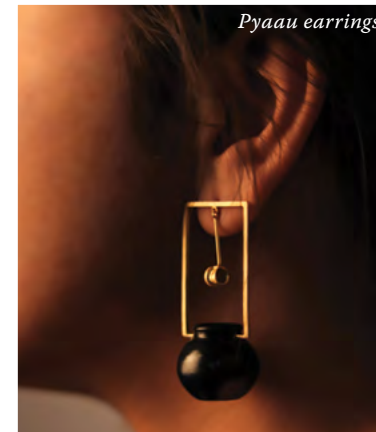


Handi earrings

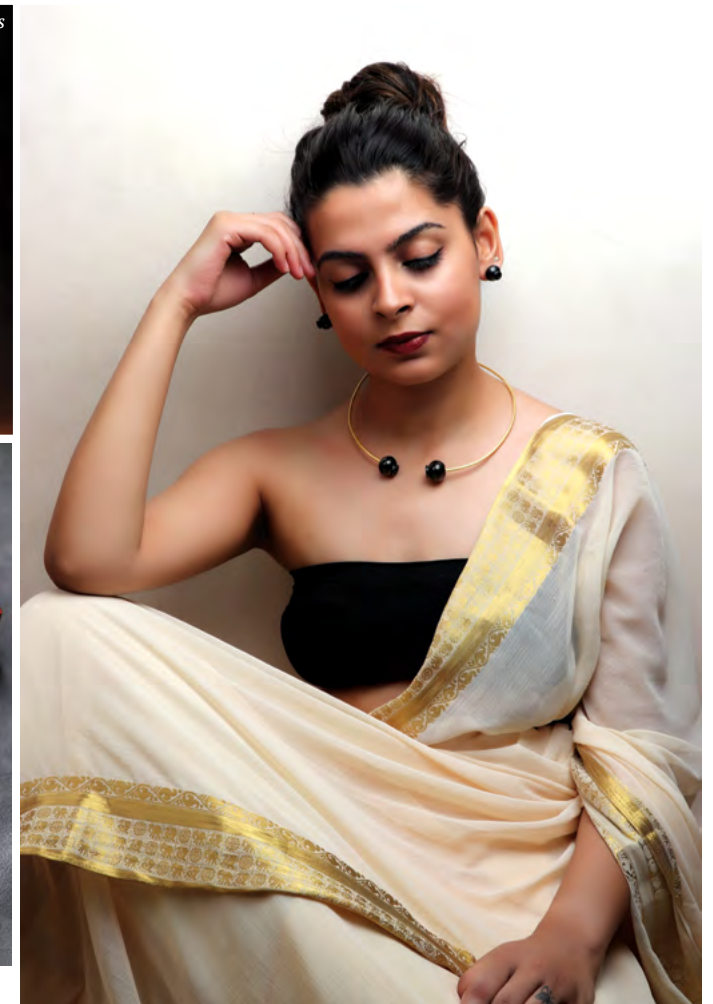
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Handi neckpiece with shibori box



Kalash neckpiece from Gagri Collection

should initiate something that helps artisans hold on to their craft – others will then slowly follow. This is the right approach to preserving traditional skills. Being a craft designer I am in love with crafts. I will always choose to add more craft techniques and engage more artisans through Kabbish.

What are the challenges you have faced so far?

PA: I think challenges come at every step of the process. Working in clusters is slightly tough for me. I have to manage many things and also convince the artisans to experiment. Making space for a unique brand in the

market is tough. Even though I belong to a business family I have never had to think in such a way. I have zero experience of the market and how to start. I just try to refine myself more and more, through reading, interacting and socializing.

How do you plan to expand your brand?

PA: Kabbish completes one year in December. I'm planning to expand it to the international market. I want the world to know about black pottery.

kabbish.design@gmail.com