

ANANTA

अनन्तः

In the solid, there is fluidity, motion within stillness, there is form within form ... there is always more to see.

In Hindu art the universe is expressed, stories are shared, and the sacred is kept safe. Unchanged and yet repeatedly reinterpreted, the Hindu gods and goddesses have travelled across millennia.

In this exploration there is a journey into a new dimension of a familiar world, from seen to unseen, from human to divine, from drawn to digital, and into 3D. The Hindu deities and stories invite us to play, to entertain and then discard ideas of absolutes like beginning, end, eternity and annihilation, or traditional materials such as sandstone, lime or granite.

Here is a realm that brings the future into the now, leapfrogs limits of vision, and allows for the transformation of ideas that are as old as life itself. Is it new or just different?

Evolution or altered expression? In the serpent Ananta, who is the 'unending', constant and temporary share one space. Ananta's skin is shed again and again in refreshing rebirth; just as, through time, concepts morph, repeated yet renewed. Appearances can be seductive.

Sumit Sarkar uses complex digital processes to create 3D images that are then converted into sculpture using stereolithography and selective laser sintering. Hindu iconography as you have never seen it; manga-esque street style converging with ancient art; futuristic play with unchangeable religious themes.

Welcome to your journey.

words by Harriet Sharkey



GANESHA

Ganesha, trunk coiled endearingly, welcomer and friend, loyal son and bestower of success and prosperity, marks the threshold between worldly and divine. He is always at the door, guardian of the journey from the known to the new. In each moment as life rises and falls he is a joyful guide, giggling the future into today.

Worshipped at all beginnings, at the entrance to houses and temples, Ganesha is a favourite among Hindus. His playful levity comes with sweetmeats and the pot bellied contentment of one who is wise and generous, unafraid of the new.

This humble god removes obstacles and shatters illusions. He tempts our eyes and hearts to open to what lies beyond.



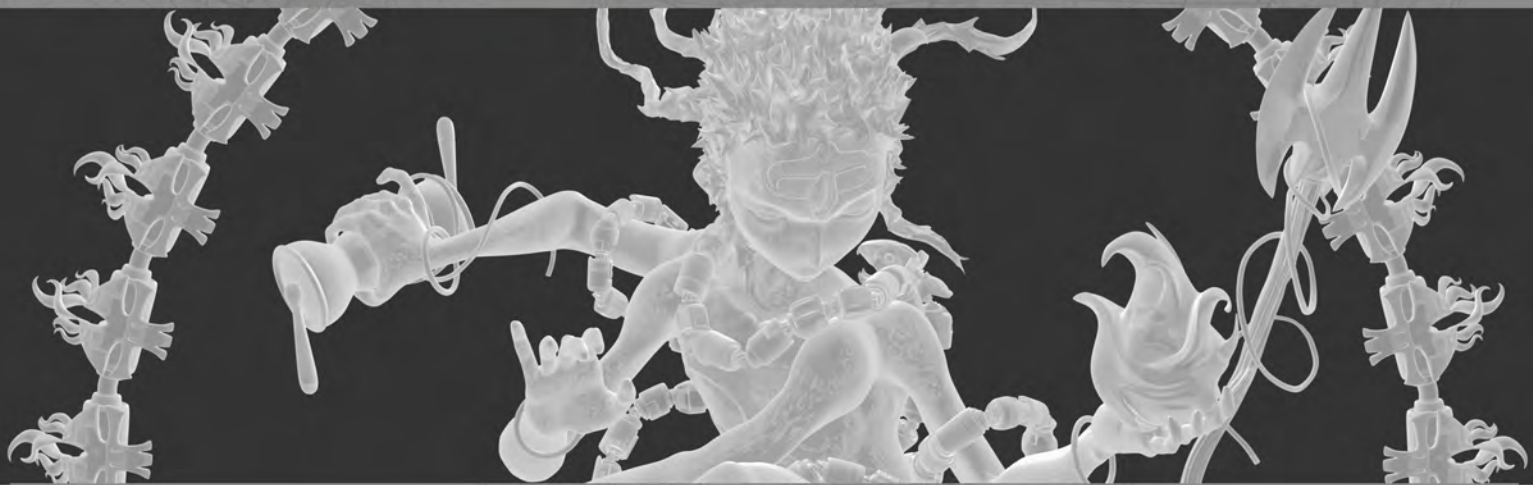
SHIVA NATARAJA

This dance of life and death gives form to the constant truth that all that arises will fade. All that is born will die, from the sub-atomic particle to the universe.

Shiva Nataraj, daring, bold, light footed and strong, treads down the demon of ignorance, of samsara, the endless cycle of suffering, of illusion. Shiva guarantees destruction, without which there cannot be life. The god with the human side, he is playful, he is fierce; he enjoys worldly frivolity and intoxication.

He is Lord of stark reality in which opposites dissolve, his bright fire in one moment illuminating the truth and consuming the universe. His dance obliterates all we know but is never final, it repeats and repeats to the rhythm of his drum, the pulse of a heartbeat, the ebb-flow of tides or the on-off binary beat of digital machines.

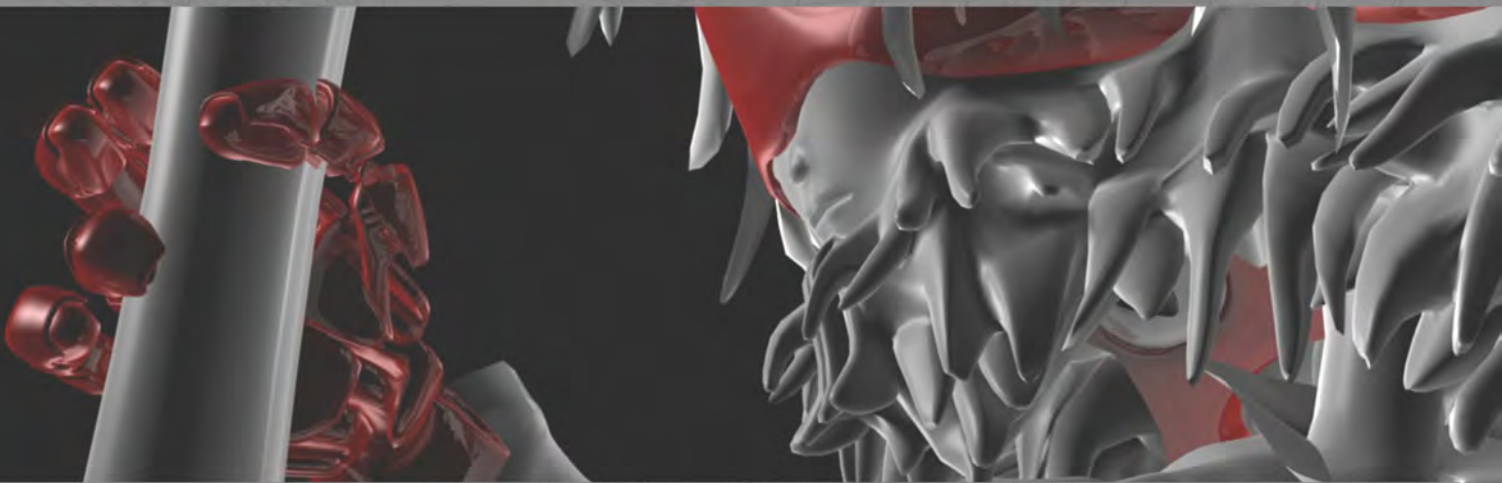
Shiva holds the power to destroy, yet his dancing spins with joy and seduction. It makes light of the fear of finality, it toys with the truth that there are no absolutes: an ending is only a trick of the light, a shift of playful feet and a change of tune, another turning of the wheel of life. Something new, in the seer or the seen, always emerges from the waning of the old: the future is always contained in the present, and the past comes round again and again, with faces that seem new yet feel familiar. Shiva's dance is existence at play.



BRAHMA SARASWATI

Brahma, endless being, ultimate creator, once bedazzled by the beauty of the goddess Saraswati, was unable to divert his gaze. She moved, he followed, manifesting new heads, new eyes, one head for each direction.

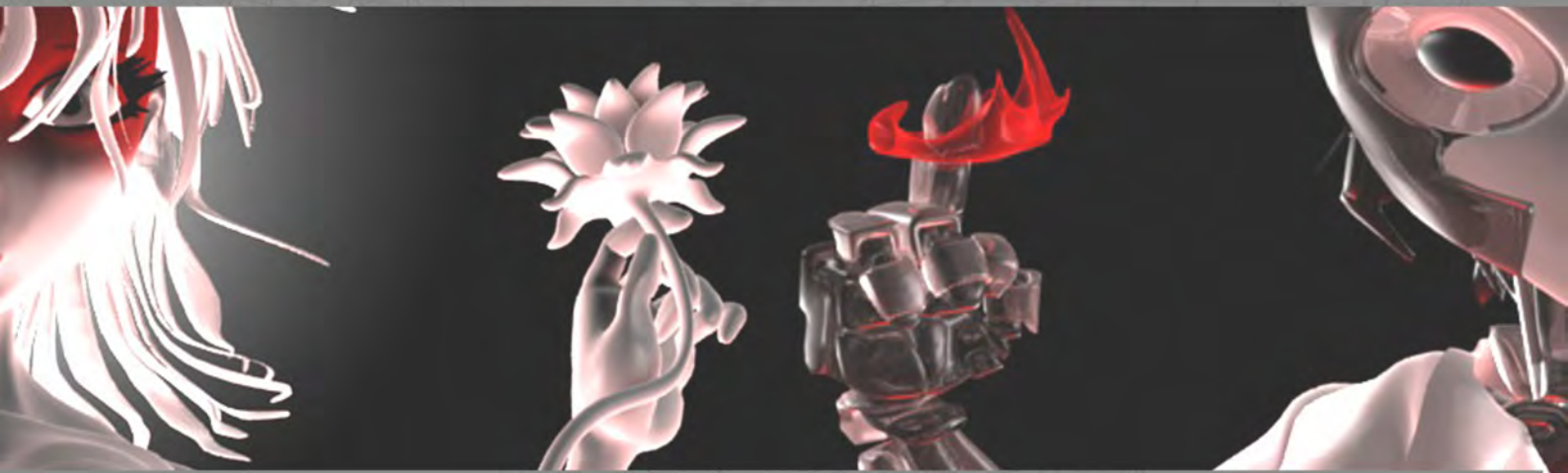
Without Saraswati, Brahma is like a thought without a voice. She is goddess of eloquence, queen of art and music. Through her, Brahma's creation finds expression in the world.



VISHNU LAKSHMI

Vishnu, god of preservation, maintains the balance between darkness and light, creation and destruction. Lakshmi, goddess of luck and fortune, joins Vishnu as his consort, lending her playful energy of love and beauty.

Life goes on, the cycles continue, energy keeps flowing and nothing is still. And what appears, at first, to be preserved, is, after all, always changing.



SHIVA LINGAM

Past and future are alive in this moment. Stillness and movement together. This ancient symbol of energy and power is unchanged, yet it is new: it is unlocked to reveal stories and whispered secrets of sacred mysteries.

This shiva lingam is repeated and repeated in the hushed sanctuaries of temples across India, wreathed in marigolds, caressed by incense smoke, bathed in ghee, resonant with the chants of aum and shiva ...

The shiva lingam is both Shiva and Parvati, for Shiva cannot exist without Shakti, life's feminine power. Their union is the energy that fuels existence. It is the balance that tempers Shiva's destructive urges. In their union the seed of life is continuously sown and re-sown in a universal cycle of rising and falling, of birth and death, pleasure and pain, light and dark, stillness and motion. No beginning and no end. Male and female flowing as one.

Nothing has changed but the digital dimension bestows x-ray vision to the 21st century traveller. Within immutable stone dwells a blood red pulse of passion, a dance of divinity, the dark and vibrant force of sex and creation, symbiotic synthesis. In this apex of bliss all differences dissolve, all reality is transcended.

And still Nandi guards their sanctum, and the hooded cobra lends protection. Old patterns, new viewpoints. Tradition transformed.



DURGA

Eyes of a warrior gaze ahead. Street-wise world-wise, Durga pierces the demon Mahisha with her trident-headed spear.

Durga is the essential goddess, with many faces. As Uma she is mother, as Kali she is death, as Parvati she is consort ... and as Durga she is effortless strength, ultimate power. Born from the glare of the gods' collective gaze, Durga was created to save the universe. She kills the demon first as a bull, and then in human-like form. For although this demon may have defeated the world and the underworld, even the heavens, he is powerless beneath Durga's whim.

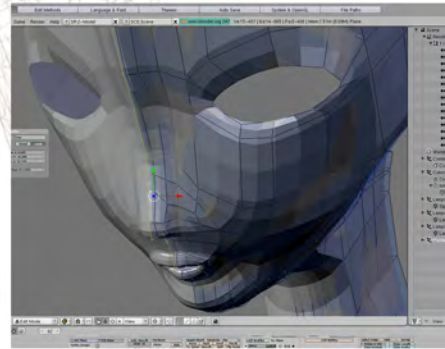
In Durga the cosmic female force finds face. Love, passion and beauty are here. And rage, potency, power; seduction, repulsion, creation and death. And more. Each quality in one of her thousand hands. She is present from the birth of the oceans to the evolution of the micro-chip, from the first smile to the final dying star: protecting and fighting, through the rising, falling and rebirth of each universe. Her sons, Ganesha and Kartik, rest at her feet; her daughters, Sarawsati and Lakshmi, are reflections of her own essence.

Her victory is not a one-off. Not filed, stored to be later downloaded. This fight goes on, and on. Protective mother, fearless warrior, seductive beauty, Durga endlessly defeats the demon Mahisha, just as the feminine force is called forth moment on moment to rise up and stamp out the threat of darkness. Hers is the cosmic battle, played out in the universe, and in your heart.



PROCESS

The models for the sculptures and animations are made using computer software called Blender, a 3D modelling program used to create meshes within a virtual three-dimensional environment using geometric and sculptural techniques.



The Sculptures

The final digital files are then handed over to the rapid prototyping (RP) company who process the data and feed into the machines. Two RP processes have been used to make the Ananta sculptures, selective laser sintering (SLS) and stereolithography (SLA).



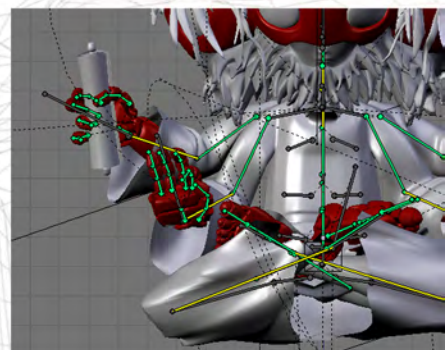
SLS is a technique that uses a high power laser to fuse small particles of plastic, metal, ceramic, or glass powders. The laser selectively fuses powdered material by scanning cross-sections on the surface of a powder bed. After each cross-section is scanned, the powder bed is lowered by one layer thickness, a new layer of material is applied on top, and the process is repeated until the part is completed.



SLA is a fabrication process utilising a vat of liquid UV-curable photopolymer "resin" and a UV laser to build parts a layer at a time. On each layer, the laser beam traces a part cross-section pattern on the surface of the liquid resin. Exposure to the UV laser light solidifies the pattern traced on the resin and adheres it to the layer below.

The Animations

The Ananta animations are created using the same program used to create the models. A variety of techniques are employed to achieve the desired effects; the rigging of meshes to armatures to control movement, timeline sequencing and physics simulations to create material and natural effects (such as clothing or wind).



ABOUT

The Artist: Sumit Sarkar

Sumit's interest in Hindu lore stems from his own roots within both Hindu Indian and western cultures. His fascination of the Hindu Gods and their theologies has led to an increased study of the pantheon through a body of work that has spanned the last ten years: most recently through his year long residency with Lanternhouse International and folly and culminating in 'Ananta'.

Sumit is based in the Northwest and, since graduating from Manchester Metropolitan University in 2001, has exhibited extensively in the region and is regularly involved with live art events around the UK from aerosol art and drawing battles to a live digital painting on the Royal Festival Hall as part of its Overture reopening festival.

Beyond his personal production as an artist, he brings his skills as a painter, digital sculptor and aerosol artist to his work as a designer, illustrator and workshop leader.

www.kriksix.com www.ananta8.com

The Writer: Harriet Sharkey

Harriet's love of the Indian sub-continent was sparked in 1989 when she taught in Pakistan, and travelled through India and Nepal. She went on to study Indian religions, philosophies and languages at Manchester University, and then continued to visit India frequently as a co-writer of The Rough Guide to India.

With the arrival of children Harriet switched to editing travel guides, and then turned to health issues. She has written Need to Know Pregnancy (Harper Collins, 2006) and co-authored Birth and Beyond (Random House, 2003) and The A-Z of Mother & Baby Health (Random House, 2007). Other co-authored books include Easy Miles, No Steps, No Stiles (Sigma Press, 2005), a compendium of accessible Lake District paths. Harriet lives in Cumbria.

Harriet was commissioned by Lanternhouse International as the Critical Writer for Ananta.

The Organisations

Lanternhouse International creates socially and culturally significant programmes of work that move beyond the narrow demographic of usual arts audiences. The company is based at Lanternhouse, the National Creation Centre, in Cumbria: an artist-designed and built creative toolbox, and centre for research and development of new work in all media. www.lanternhouse.org

folly is one of the Northwest's leading digital arts agencies and is committed to enabling new audiences to explore art through technology. folly are specialists in the creative use of technology and arts participation online, and also provide a consultancy service specialising in free and open-source software.

www.folly.co.uk

