

writer unplugged



Human beings have, through millennia, felt the necessity to document lives and times with a range of available media. Clay tablets used in Mesopotamia date back to the 3rd millennium. We know of Egyptian scrolls written in hieratic, Roman and Greek scrolls on papyrus, Chinese bamboo books and palm leaf manuscripts.

Books made of any medium have an incredible connect with persons interacting with them. In 2011, I started making books out of clay at a three month residency in Shigaraki, Japan; small three inch books, to large 1.5 meter sculptural books-shrines. The books I have made for Art Bengaluru 2016 are all made with a clay body prepared at my studio, Mandala Pottery in Auroville. Techniques of slipping and stretching slabs of clay give them the texture one sees on the book surfaces. These textures are highlighted by the vapours of soda these books are subsequently subjected to, in wood and soda firings.

It is difficult to predict the future of the book in an era of fast-paced technological change. Anxieties about the "death of books" have been expressed throughout the history of the medium, perceived as threatened by competing media such as radio, television, and the Internet. However, these views are generally exaggerated, and dominated by fetishism, fears about the end of humanism and ideas of techno-fundamentalist progress. To theorize that the Kindle and subsequent digital phenomena will do away with books altogether is farfetched.

I have exhibited several books at solo shows, both titled "Secrets & Lies" in Japan and Bombay. These may last millennia! Wrapped as they are with iPhone cords, they are conversation starters. It will be interesting to know how aliens from another galaxy far, far away will react to these when they come unearth them soon!