

# THE INGÉNUË

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## Anousha Payne

Words: *Whitney Bryan*

It was once said you should always take the road less travelled, but throughout the bustling streets of London, sculptor Anousha Payne is carving out a lane all her own. With her brand of quiet confidence we discuss: inspirations, insecurities and what it means to be a woman in sculpting.





***When you graduated, did you have any idea where you might end up?***

Not really, but I did know I wanted to continue my practice and get straight into a studio. I think the period of time immediately after graduating can be quite challenging, as you have to figure out how to continue your practice without all the facilities and critical conversation you have at university. This makes things more difficult, but it can also push your work to new and more interesting places, you become more resourceful and find your own way of doing things. The process you go through to make work can be very different once you are out of the comfort of an institution.

***You started of sculpting at Camberwell to having your own exhibition with LOVE. What was the path like in getting to that point?***

I found the first two years after Camberwell very difficult to adjust to as I felt I had got into a pattern of making work through over conceptualizing before producing work. The Love-Objects show was during that time and feels very distant from my work now.

In the last couple of years, I feel I've liberated my practice; moved away from that controlled way of working, focusing more on expressing idea's and research through material exploration and allowing the work that emerges through experimentation and instinctive making. That's not to say I don't ever plan work, but I think it's important to use that process of painting and drawing to get out of that headspace.





***How did it feel having your first solo exhibition?***

It felt exciting and intimidating to remove the work from the studio – in hindsight, I think I focused too much on the placement and curation of the work within the space and it lost some of its honesty in the process, but it felt good to get the work out of the solitude of the studio and into a gallery space.

***Even now having had exhibitions in so many places, do you still feel insecurities when it comes to your work and how it's perceived?***

It doesn't feel as though I have had many exhibitions yet – it really feels like I'm still at the beginning. I think it's natural to have insecurities, although I feel in a very good place with my practice at the moment.

My main anxieties often come from finding the best way to show the work's together rather than worrying about the actual work itself and trying to relinquish control and allow the curator to do their job.

***What is the inspiration behind your work?***

I'm fascinated by the material qualities of religious and spiritual objects and spaces, and how they affect our experiences: in the spiritual energy of a place, whether it is religious or not, and how this feeling comes about. I frequently end up expressing this through semi-figurative works (I'm obsessed with feet at the moment), as I feel often human figuration allows us to relate to spiritual feeling with more ease. I'm often trying to create something that's almost human, almost animal; leaning towards becoming something else altogether. I'm also very inspired by the carving's in the cave temples of Tamil Nadu and Bharathanatyam dance hand gestures.



***What do you like viewers to take away from your work?***

I like to leave people to take what they will from it rather than over-explaining, or telling people what to think of it. I think it's important to allow people to have personal experiences of art.

***As a woman, especially a woman of colour, do you ever find it difficult to navigate in what seems a mostly male field?***

Absolutely, but I think there have been many amazing all female shows recently and it feels like things are finally starting to change. I was part of show in January called, If You Can't Stand the Heat at Roaming Projects (curated by Ruth Pilston, Lindsey Mendick and Paloma Proudfoot) with the aim of the show being partly to create a network of female artists working with ceramics. I think it's important to work together and help each other out in such a male-dominated world. I also loved seeing Surface Works at Victoria Miro, an all female painting show earlier this year.

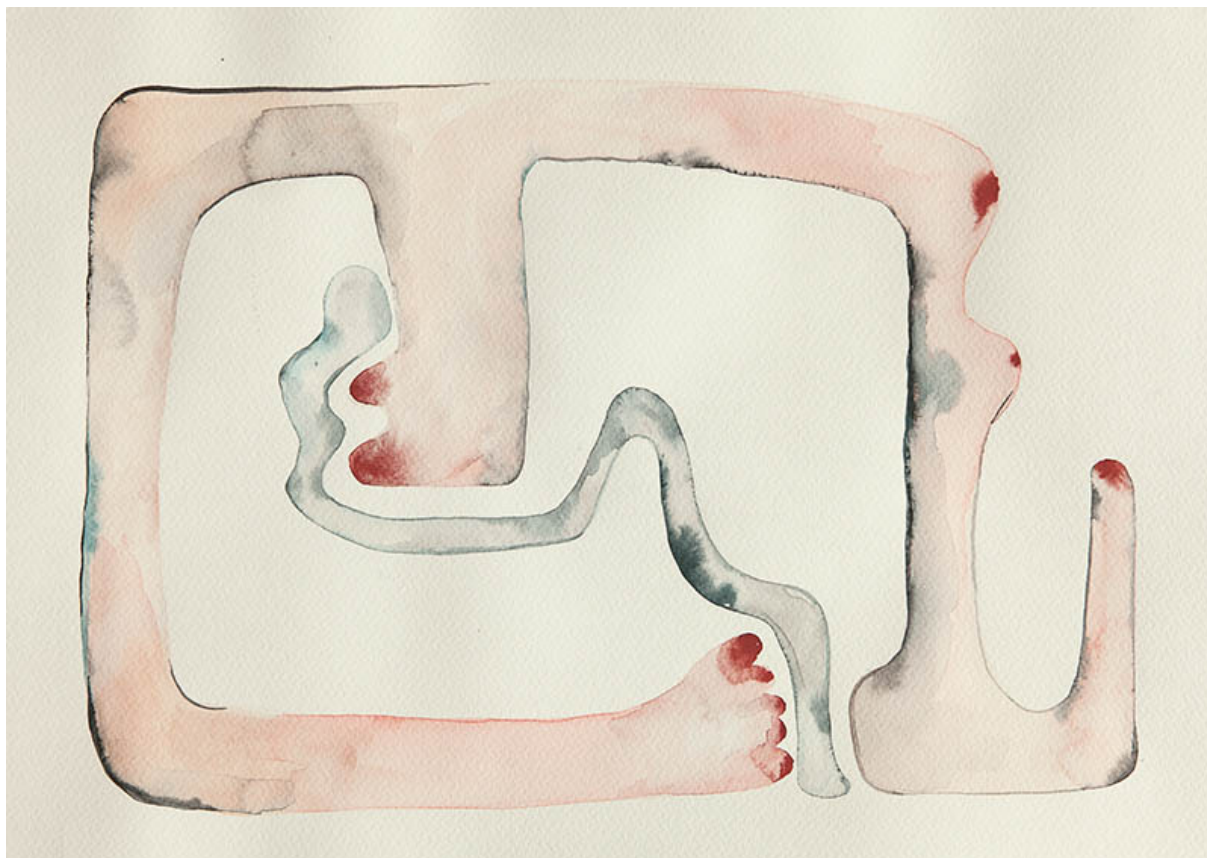
Having grown up in London, I don't feel that being mixed race has been a disadvantage in any way. But I think I've been very lucky with my experience's and this definitely isn't always the case. If anything I feel privileged to be able to experience two cultures. I think there is a bigger problem with the class divide and nepotism in the art world at the moment.

***Where do you see yourself in the future?***

Hopefully continuing to exhibit and make some more ambitious works.

***Overall, if you could've given your younger self any advice. What would it have been?***

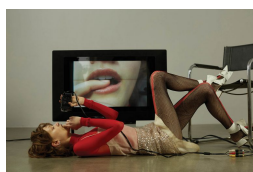
I would have told myself to care less about what people think of my work and to have more self-belief – it has taken a while to feel good about my work – and now I wish it hadn't taken so long.



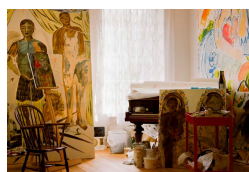
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