



The Pencil

EST · A PENCIL CAFÉ QUARTERLY



ARS · MANUS · MORA

— art, the hand, and slowness —

The Geometry of Stillness

Eleven artists on quiet, discipline, and the long line.



PORTRAIT · AARAV SHARMA · POTTER · BENGALURU

A letter, folded twice.

From the editors — on why we count in thousands, and why we start with three.

This magazine is a small, stubborn project. Every quarter we walk into one Indian city, sit in cafés, and listen. We are looking for the people who make the city quietly beautiful — the potter, the poet, the paediatrician who paints on Sundays, the tailor whose stitch is a signature. We photograph them, we write their stories, and we honour a thousand of them each year, in each city we visit.

We do this because recognition, given carefully, is a kind of light. It travels farther than money and lasts longer than applause. A Golden Pencil in the hands of a twenty-year-old ceramicist in Jaipur will, in ten years, become a studio, a school, a small economy of care.

Issue 04 begins with three portraits. Aarav, who left engineering for clay. Anaya, whose bowls weigh nothing. Ishaan, who draws cities on napkins. Behind them stand a thousand more, and behind those, a hundred cities.

Read slowly. There is no hurry here.



GOLDEN PENCIL · 2026

Aarav Sharma

Potter · Bengaluru

At twenty-nine, Aarav quit an engineering post to sit at a kick-wheel for a year in silence. His first collection — thirty vessels shaped in a single monsoon — sold out in one afternoon at Oaktree Café. He now trains twelve apprentices, most of them women from Kumbharwada, and refuses to sign his pieces. 'The clay remembers,' he says. 'That's signature enough.'

“The clay remembers. That's signature enough.”



FEATURED · ISSUE 04

Anaya Rao

Ceramicist · Jaipur

Anaya works only with clay dug from the Aravalli foothills, fifty kilometres from her studio. Her celadon-glazed bowls have been served at three state banquets, but she is proudest of the tea sets she donates to the city's cancer wards. 'A cup held by a sick hand,' she wrote in a recent essay, 'must weigh nothing and feel like everything.'

“A cup must weigh nothing and feel like everything.”



GOLDEN PENCIL · 2026

Ishaan Mehta

Architect · Mumbai

Ishaan designs homes that begin as sketches on café napkins. His practice, Long Line Studio, has quietly reshaped how Mumbai thinks about small urban dwellings — 320-square-foot flats with reading nooks, indoor courtyards, and light that moves like a slow guest. He credits his practice to a single childhood summer spent watching his grandfather draw temple plans on the back of rice sacks.

“Draw the room before you draw the wall.”

Three long reads, *for a quiet evening.*

NO. 01

The Long Line

An essay on drawing as devotion, on the years it takes to earn a single confident stroke, and on what our cities lose when they forget the hand.

By the Editors · 12 min read

NO. 02

Cafés as Cathedrals

Why the Pencil Café model — food plated as art, walls as gallery, tables as studio — may be India's most quietly radical civic project.

Reshma Iyer · 8 min read

NO. 03

Art Therapy in the Age of Speed

Six practitioners on what happens when a burned-out generation is handed charcoal, clay, and permission to be slow.

Dr. Kavita Menon · 10 min read

One thousand, *per city, per year.*

The Pencil is printed in Bengaluru on 90 gsm recycled stock, in an edition of six thousand. Portraits are commissioned. Stories are reported on foot. The Golden Pencil is a small, physical object — a brass pencil in a wooden box — presented in person, over coffee, in the city where the honouree lives and works.

Editor · Reshma Iyer Design · Long Line Studio Print · Manipal Press

To nominate someone in your city: nominate@pencilcafe.in