

When I first met Satyendra Pakhalé, in 2001, he was spending a few months at the European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC) in 's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands. Its director, my husband Koos de Jong, drew my attention to his work, and I was immediately intrigued. Assisted by the technical staff of the EKWC, Pakhalé was pushing the boundaries of ceramic design by developing chairs that are technically advanced while simultaneously relating to the language of craft. Although he never associated himself with the Droog Design platform that had been a strong force in the Netherlands since the mid-1990s, with this combination of high- and low-tech he definitely had something in common with several of the most important representatives of the Dutch design movement, including Marcel Wanders and Hella Jongerius. Pakhalé's ceramic chairs also reveal a symbolic language that hints at ritual offerings. With this, he was adding something profoundly intriguing and idiosyncratic to his designs.

As I had just started working at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam as an industrial-design curator, I was looking for work by interesting young designers that could be shown in the museum. So I decided to organize the first solo museum exhibition of Pakhalé's work, called *From Projects to Products* in 2002. I have been following his career ever since.

From the beginning, Pakhalé has undertaken a wide range of projects with varied typologies and complexities. In the early years of his career, while at frog Design and subsequently at Philips Design, he worked mostly in the realm of high-tech industrial design. He produced innovative concepts for appliances, including the future-driven interior of a concept car in cooperation with Renault Design. Before training as an industrial designer in India and Switzerland, Pakhalé had trained as an engineer, which turned out to be of great advantage when working on such assignments. In the late 1990s, around the time he was establishing his own studio in Amsterdam, he developed a more personal design language by combining his sound technical knowledge with his ability to develop forms and meanings rooted in different cultures.

Influences of the social modernist legacy of Ulm, that came to him via Professor Sudhakar Nadkarni at the Industrial

Design Centre in Mumbai (who was himself trained by Dutch designer Hans Gugelot at the HfG in Ulm), of the culturally rich designs of Italian designer Ettore Sottsass Jr. (who used concepts of many compass points including India in his work), and of the internationalization of the design field – these all led to the multifaceted designer with a universal interest and human approach that Pakhalé is now. A true cultural nomad.

Over the years, he has created a remarkably broad oeuvre. It ranges from architectural design, interiors, exhibition concepts, appliances and table-top objects and furniture to toys – and from industrially manufactured pieces designed for the world’s leading companies to one-offs and edition pieces for galleries. He works in almost every material you can think of: glass, ceramics, plastics, metals, leather and wood.

I detect great perseverance in his working method. Starting with research, it leads to sketches in pencil or watercolour, and then making models – either in his own studio, or having them 3D-printed. He can work for years on the development of a specific design before he is really happy with the result, meaning that he can have the pieces made by craftsmen around the world or develops the prototypes for the industrial pieces in cooperation with manufacturers’ R&D departments. Typically, he does not let go when, for some reason, the piece cannot yet be produced.

All these qualities – his cultural sensibilities, perseverance, thorough research, technical insight, a great feeling for the symbolism of forms, and an ability to make use of inspirations from different backgrounds – are used by Pakhalé when teaching, too. With this profile he can inspire students to develop their own personal language. This has led to regular teaching posts, workshops and lectures at universities and tech conferences around the world. The Design Academy Eindhoven in the Netherlands invited him to devise and head the Master’s programme in Design for Humanity and Sustainable Living from 2006 to 2010.

With a background rooted in different cultures, a multifaceted way of working and cooperations around the world, Pakhalé is an interesting example of the very international design community of the past decades.