

Using thorns and reclaimed wood, artist Sandilya Theuerkauf debuts in Bengaluru

Artist Sandilya Theuerkauf spoke to TNM about his new exhibition, 'A Trail of Thorns', at Bangalore International Centre.



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From a young age, artist Sandilya Theuerkauf not only found that he had an interest in creating art, but he was also drawn to natural elements around him, from mud, sticks and stones to flowers and feathers. And as he continued his work as an artist, that connection to nature stayed on as well. This time, in the form of a thorn.

Sandilya debuted his new exhibition, "A Trail of Thorns" at the Bangalore International Centre this past weekend, featuring 18 sculptures that use thorns and reclaimed wood. The exhibit, presented by online gallery [KYNKYNY.COM](#), will be on display from February 16 to 20.

Growing up in Kerala, Sandilya later moved to the outskirts of Bengaluru, where he was inspired by the thorny shrub forests in the area. In an interview with TNM, Sandilya said that he's been working with thorns for five years and in that time, he's learnt to appreciate each one's unique characteristics.



The exhibition is also a reflection of the destruction of nature around us, and how easy it is to take our surroundings for granted. "Life is sacred, and I feel it has become too easy to forget that we are not the only ones here," he said in his artist statement.

Sandilya spoke to TNM about his latest series, the process behind the creation of his art and what he hopes viewers will take away from the exhibition.

How long have you been working with thorns as a medium of art and what was it about the thorn that appealed to you?

It has been five years since I started working with thorns. It started with me noticing one particular thorn that drew me to want to do something with it. That one thorn led me to others and the work and ideas happened as a result of looking repeatedly. It is only through observation of the character of that particular thorn, and subsequently, the rest, that resulted in the pieces that are on display at my exhibition, "A Trail of Thorns", presented by [KYNKYNY.com](#).

From a practical perspective, how long does it take to create each sculpture and what are the challenges you faced in working with reclaimed wood and thorns?

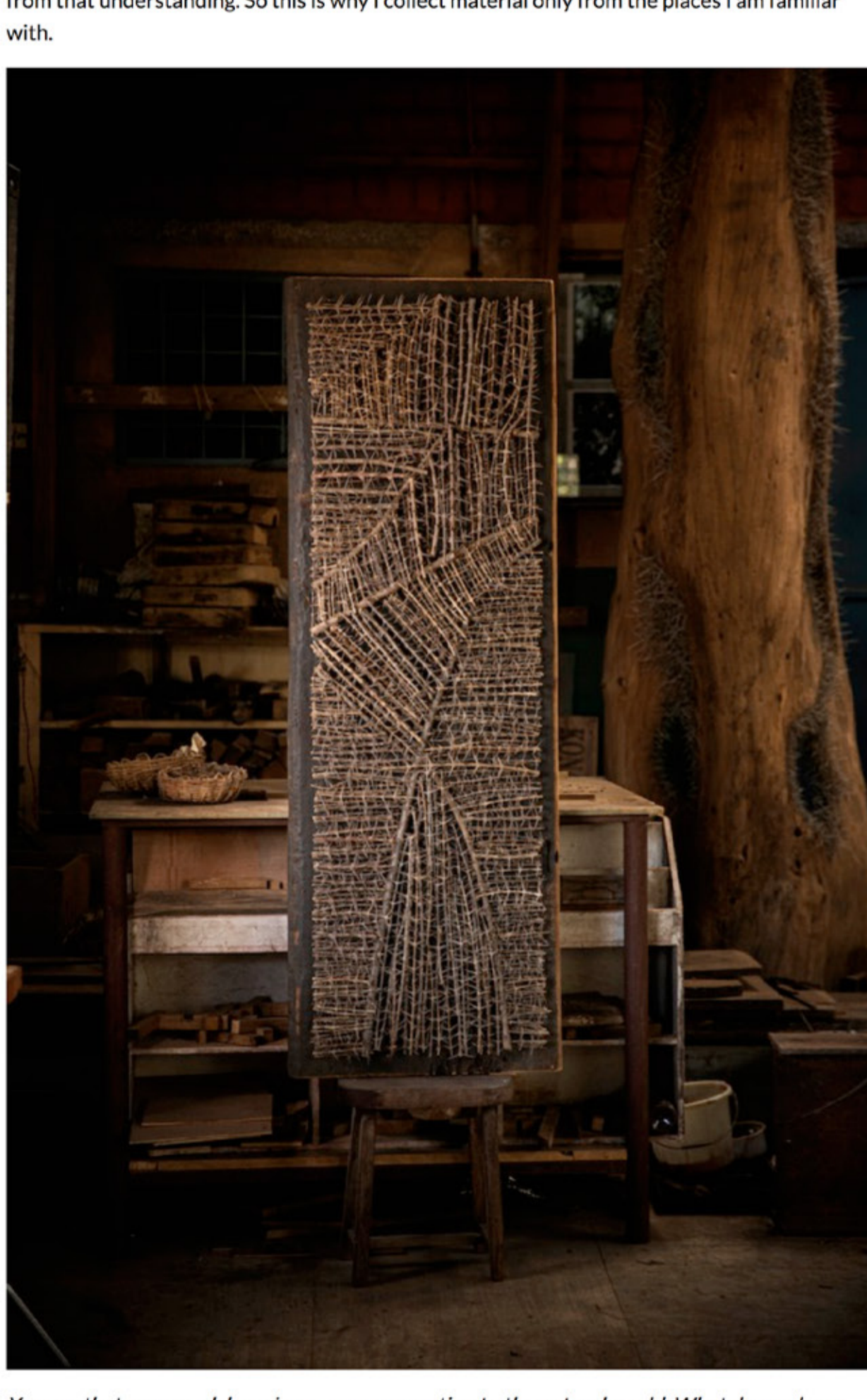
Each work takes weeks to make. The collection itself may take many days over many walks. This first part is critical as the landscape is where the inspiration comes from. Staying with the plant, looking at the surroundings and 'being' in places is something I would like to give importance to, so a lot of time may go in finding the thorns themselves. The only challenges that I faced were created by me by setting out certain parameters for a piece. By deciding on something beforehand and planning, I have to have a good understanding of what is possible and what is not with a particular thorn, otherwise my ideas and what the thorns actually lend themselves to don't match. There were no other challenges per se.



What was your process of finding the elements you required for your art? Were there particular forests and regions that you frequented?

Once I had an 'in' into the world of thorns, they stood out wherever I went. Be it someone's garden or the desert in Rajasthan. But this has been by looking and by being particularly attentive, because I am interested in them.

Most of the material I collected was from in and around the Centre for Learning, 40 km outside Bangalore, where I teach. This dry scrubland has numerous thorny plants and trees. Like I mentioned earlier I don't want to just procure the material, I want to see the plants repeatedly and hold them in my hands, understand them thoroughly and allow ideas to come from that understanding. So this is why I collect material only from the places I am familiar with.



You say that your work has given you a connection to the natural world. What do you hope your audience will draw from viewing your sculptures?

We as people are very alienated from everything that makes up this planet that we have; we feel separate from it. In this day, where this sense of separateness has allowed us to almost completely destroy everything, what would open our eyes to see that we are indeed part of nature, not just as an idea? What would it require for us to care for our surroundings and the places that we occupy? I feel we need to give attention to this. Learning more facts about the destruction of habitats or climate change is not enough. I am addressing this for myself in my art and I am bringing something out to show saying 'look!' I want to bring attention to these thorns and through these maybe it will kindle an interest for some to step out and take a walk. I wanted to highlight the raw quality of the thorns and the wood but at the same time contain the texture with a refined shape to bring the qualities of thorns themselves into focus.



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