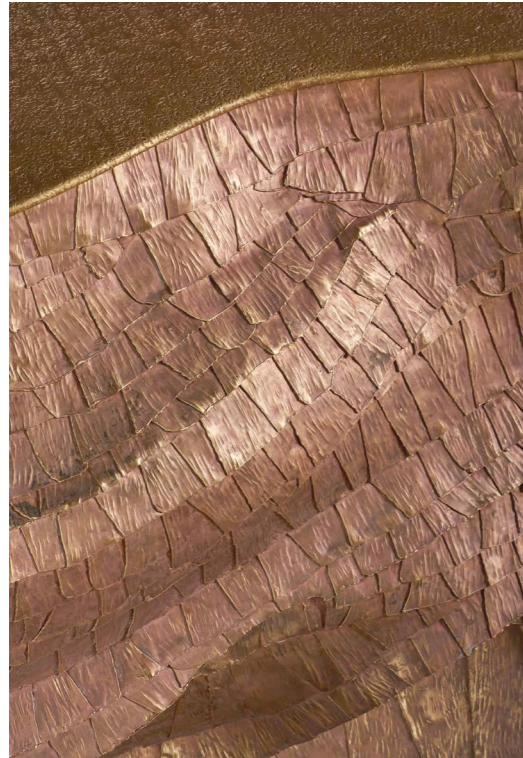


# Brass Tacks

*Text by Vaishnavi Nayel Talarwadekar*



Working exclusively with brass sheet, Indian designer Vikram Goyal explores and celebrates the country's metalwork traditions, refining age-old techniques to create collectible design pieces.





Vikram Goyal never meant to pursue design, much less make a career out of it. 'In a way, design found me,' says the celebrated New Delhi-based designer, who has in the past two decades emerged as an *éminence grise* in the Indian design world. His oeuvre of brass creations has found resonance on the world stage, speaking to a global audience while echoing and amplifying India's rich artisanal legacy.

An engineer by training, Goyal completed his master's in economics at Princeton before embarking on a career in finance, first in the US and then in Hong Kong. But in 2000, when the world was on the cusp of a technology, media and telecoms boom, Goyal decided there was no better time to return home to try something new.

It was a homecoming in more ways than one. Not only did Goyal move closer to his roots, he rediscovered them. 'I always knew I wanted to do something related to legacy, where I could take some of India's ancient wisdom and share it with the world,' he says. In 2002, he co-founded an Ayurvedic beauty and wellness label and then a year later he set up Viya Home, a home decor line of furniture, sculptures, hardware and lighting. It was also during these years that he set up his eponymous studio, which has since become known for producing collectible brass furniture pieces and objets.

Whereas many designers work with cast metal, Vikram Goyal Studio works exclusively with brass sheet, a medium considered far more exacting and complex. Having access to a reservoir of artisanal knowledge has certainly been helpful for Goyal's practice, but his skill set also relies on technical interventions, such as fastidious prototyping, digital image mapping and continual training and upskilling. Goyal continues to innovate, most recently experimenting with applying *pietra dura*, a stone inlay technique similar to mosaic and often used on marble, on brass sheets — one of the first such applications in the world.

Over the years, Goyal's work has developed a contemporary design language that focuses on three areas, namely repoussé and what he calls brutalist joinery and hollowed joinery. While repoussé involves hammering to create a design in relief, brutalist and hollowed joinery use multiple welded parts, with joints left visible in the former and invisible in the latter.

Goyal takes inspiration from everywhere. For example, a console may demonstrate curvilinear lines that evoke Art Nouveau but be so monumental that it nods to the undulating terrain of the Thar Desert. A wall panel may appear to be Art Deco in style, but be characterised by concentric proportions that represent the chakras of the human body.

Goyal set a string of precedents in 2023. He was the first Indian designer to be invited to showcase at curator Nina Yashar's prestigious Milan gallery, Nilufar, and the first Indian designer to have a solo booth at PAD London design fair, where he exhibited a ten-piece collection of furniture and lighting. But despite this ascent, Goyal wears his success lightly. 'I'm always dreaming, doing, experimenting,' he says. 'The wheels are always in motion.'

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Over more than two decades, Vikram Goyal has refined a contemporary design language that uses traditional craft techniques  
*Images by Federico Floriani*

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Goyal is making a name for himself on the international stage. In 2023, he was the first Indian designer to showcase at prestigious Milan gallery Nilufar and the first Indian designer to have a solo booth at PAD London design fair  
*Image courtesy of Vikram Goyal Studio*

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One of his primary techniques is repoussé, seen here in Maya, a large wall panel depicting abstract intersecting circles related to the concept of the chakras

*Facing page, bottom*  
The patinated gold finish of the Thar console was inspired by the sweeping sand landscapes of the Thar Desert. Its undulating surface is made of thousands of hand-beaten metal bars cut and welded together  
*Images by Federico Floriani*

