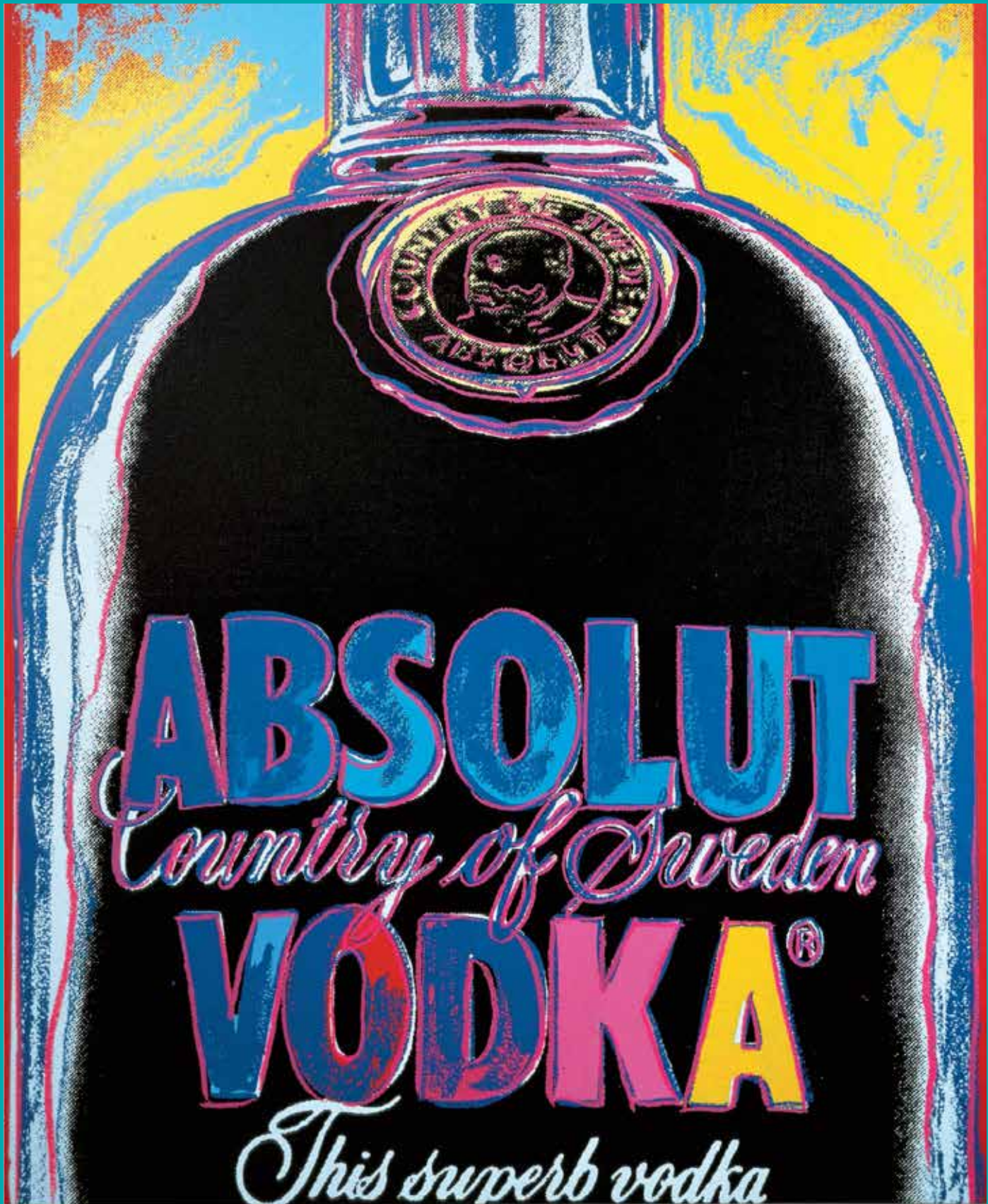




ARTS ILLUSTRATED





ABSOLUT WARHOL.

The Bottle and its Muse

By Saritha Rao Rayachoti

A BOTTLE BY ANY OTHER NAME MAY JUST BE A BOTTLE, EXCEPT IF THE BOTTLE IN QUESTION IS PART OF ABSOLUT VODKA'S LIMITED EDITION SERIES. OVER THE YEARS, THIS ONE BRAND HAS RE-IMAGINED THE BOUNDARIES OF ART WITH RENOWNED CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD, GIVING THIS HUMBLE BOTTLE QUITE THE VARIETY OF FLAMBOYANT PERSONALITIES!

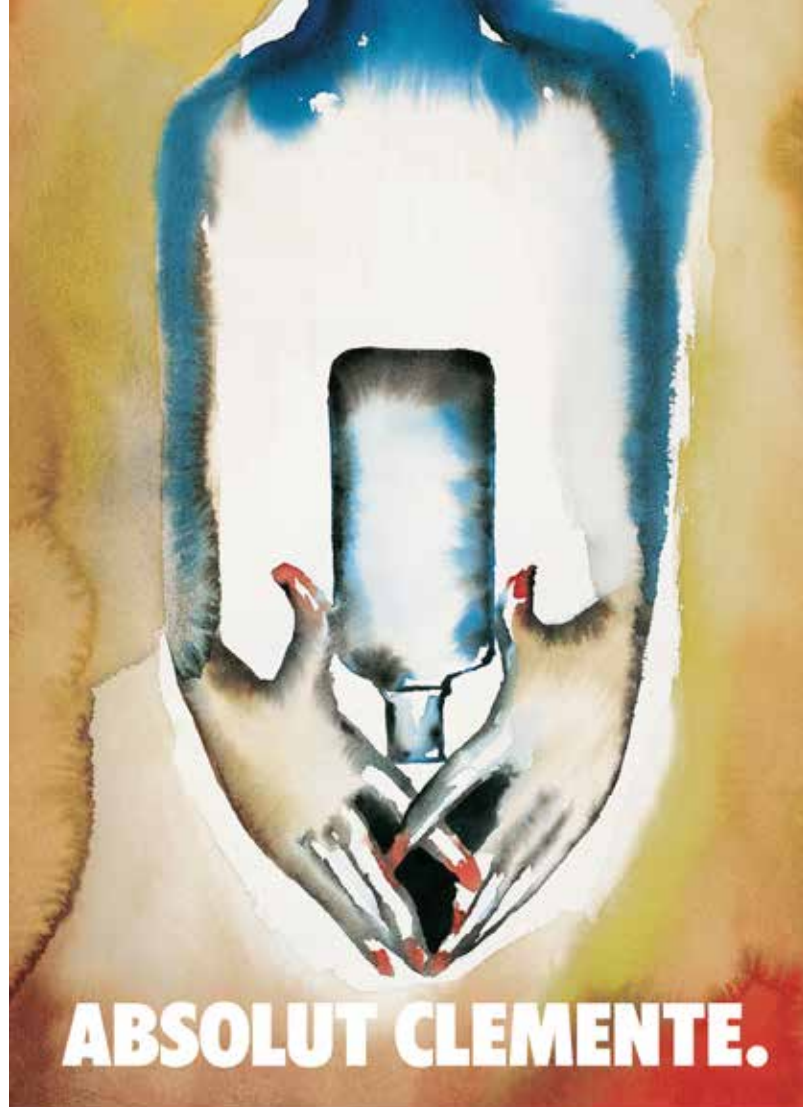
In the 1970s, a compelling brand identity was created for an unknown Swedish brand. The work involved a change of name, packaging and an ad campaign to popularise the product in the US market, while retaining the brand's Swedish roots. The unknown brand that would take the US market by storm, whose iconic bottle silhouette would inspire one of the largest collections of collaborative art, was Absolut Vodka.

One could say that Brand Absolut's association with art began with the design of the bottle. The inspiration was an elegant vintage apothecary bottle spotted in a Swedish antique shop. The new bottle was designed to be made of clear glass to showcase the clarity of its contents. In place of a paper label, coloured lettering was used, with the brand name in blue. The brand's Swedish roots were established in a descriptive passage on the origins and the portrait of the Swedish founder, Lars Olsson Smith.

Absolut Rent Brännvin became Absolut Vodka. While the bottle design itself is iconic, the Limited Editions are a creative collaboration between the dominant flavours in the variant

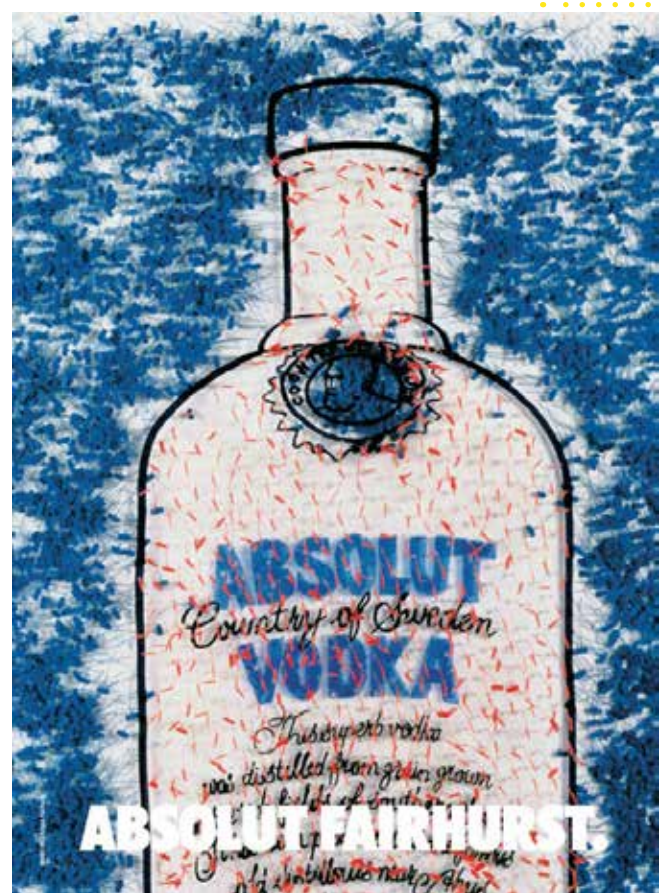
and the artist's inspiration. Some are inspired by the geography of the artist – the bottle for the Texas variant with cucumber and Serrano chilli flavour was designed by San Antonio-based contemporary artist, Cruz Ortiz. Some variants feature the work of artists, like the Swedish fashion illustrator and artist Liselotte Watkins, who designed the packaging for the spiced coffee and almond flavoured Absolut Watkins. A zingy Australia-inspired artwork was created by film director Baz Luhrmann for Absolut Oz. For Absolut Colors, the bottle was draped in the pride flag originally designed by San Francisco-based artist Gilbert Baker.

While the bottle itself acts as a canvas, it is also a muse, inspiring a series of art installations beginning in 1986 with Andy Warhol. The choice of Warhol was unusual but sound – his 'Marilyn Diptych and Campbell's Soup Cans' were pivotal to the use of icons, objects and brands in art. Warhol's collaboration with Absolut began with the commissioning of a work of art that interpreted the bottle in his inimitable style.



In 'Absolut Book: The Absolut Vodka Advertising Story, Richard W. Lewis' narrates, 'Over dinner one night, Warhol tells Michel [Roux] that he's enthralled by the artfulness of the Absolut bottle. He reminds him that while he doesn't drink alcohol, he sometimes uses Absolut as a perfume . . . Warhol proposes painting his own interpretation of the Absolut Vodka bottle . . . When Warhol was finished, Roux loved it and thought it would make a great Absolut ad.' Warhol's interpretation, screen-printed on paper, made for a riveting association between pop-culture and the brand. This was not only the first of many works of art inspired by the bottle, but it also complemented the ad campaign by celebrating the brand's association with art. More recently, Warhol has been an inspiration for a Limited Edition bottle series replicating his original painting.

The Absolut Art Collection today contains the interpretations of artists such as Francesco Clemente, Keith Haring, Louise Bourgeois, Rosemarie Trockel, Angus Fairhurst, Jan Saudek, Béatrice Cussol and Damien Hirst.





ABSOLUT SETH.

In blue and gold I watch the evening sky
Darken, till neither it remains nor I.

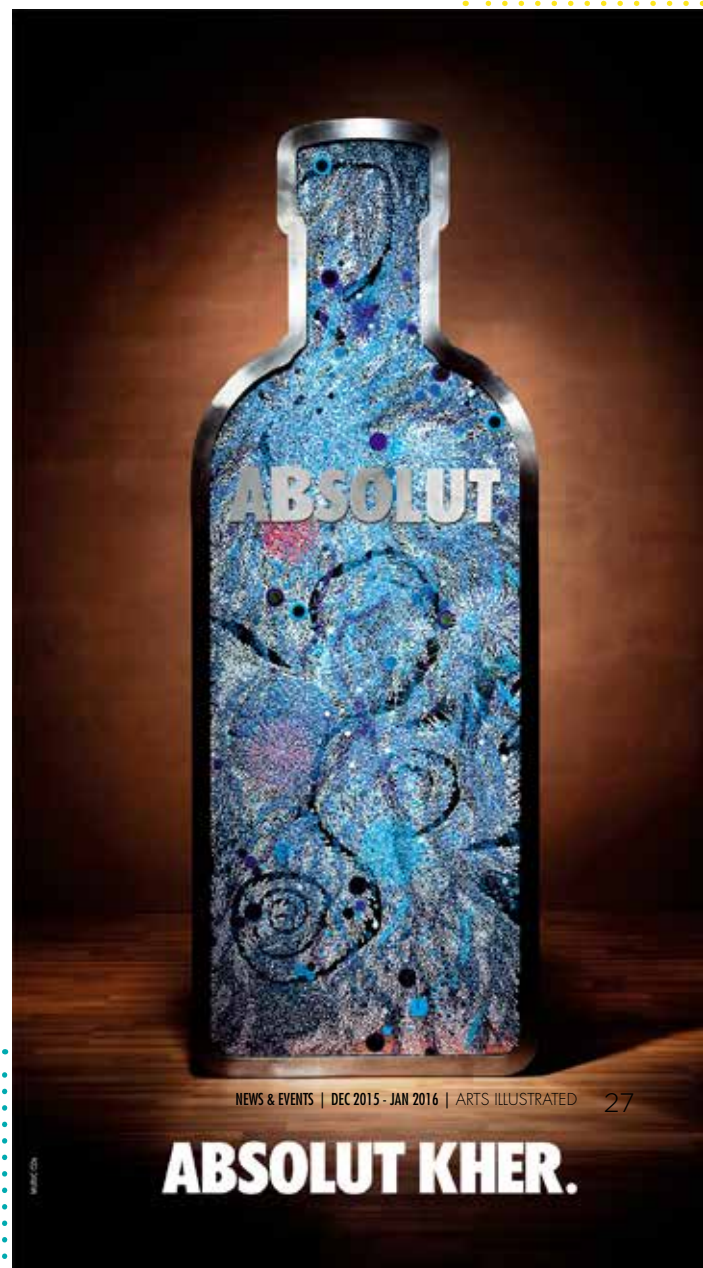
In India, Absolut has built a strong association with art and creativity with both a Limited Edition as well as collaborations with leading artists of Indian origin.

The vibrant mango and pepper flavoured Absolut India Limited Edition was launched in October 2015 featuring artwork by Mumbai-based Shaheen Baig that captures the ecstatic chaos that is India. Collaborations with artists like Subodh Gupta, Bharti Kher, Vikram Seth and Anish Kapoor bring to the Absolut Art Collection their individual interpretations of the silhouette. Subodh Gupta celebrates the mundane with a six-foot installation in the shape of the bottle, filled with his chosen medium – utensils. Bharti Kher interpreted the bottle through the use of the Bindi, a recurring motif in her work that places the bindi at the centre of social and cultural identity, and as a link between the material and spiritual worlds. Vikram Seth's triptych combines his love for art, poetry and the written word. Each of his evocative canvases celebrates a rasa, a colour and a calligraphed word or phrase that alludes to an aspect of the depicted bottle. A couplet accompanies each canvas, adding an additional dimension to the

interpretation. Anish Kapoor's work uses the interplay of form and light, and in his installation for Absolut, he creates a minimalist juxtaposition of two bottles in bold red.

When it is not on tour at venues and galleries across the world, The Absolut Art Collection is on display at a most unusual structure – an 18th century naval building that houses the Spritmuseum or Museum of Spirits on the island of Djurgården, Stockholm.

Absolut is the supporting partner of India Art Fair.



ABSOLUT KHER.

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