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## STREET ART CHENNAI: THE FESTIVAL

January 20, 2015 • Steve Gray

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Chennai (formerly known as Madras) located on the Coromandel Coast off the Bay of Bengal, is the biggest industrial and commercial area of Southern India and has become known as the Detroit of India for its car industry. The fifth largest city in India and one of the most heavily populated areas in the world, Chennai has now become home to the Street Art Festival named *Conquer the Concrete*, which will feature five international artists working alongside Indian street artists and traditional cinema hoarding painters. The event going under the tag Street Art Chennai on social media is being curated by Georg Zolchow and is presented by the Goethe-Institut, Max Mueller Bhavan Chennai and Chennai City Connect. Widewalls are proud to be covering the first urban art event in the region and read on for some **exclusive** news!



## Exclusive: LOOK's Chronicles

Widewalls are very excited to announce the exclusive news that esteemed Berlin based urban artist LOOK The Weird, (you can read more in Widewalls *Interview With LOOK* and see more of his work in this article about his recent solo exhibition *Meanwhile in Ultraland*) who will be participating in the Street Art Chennai festival *Conquer The Concrete*, has agreed to keep us up to date with all the latest news from the festival. So keep your eyes on the site for the exclusive *LOOK's Chronicles* where LOOK The Weird will personally give us the low down on the latest works taking place along with exclusive photos from Street Art Chennai *Conquer the Concrete* Festival.



Hanif Kureshi and Local Sign Painters – Chennai Pilot Project October 2014

## Street Art Chennai Festival Artists

Let's have a look at who we can expect to see appearing in the exclusive LOOK's Chronicles from LOOK The Weird; perhaps Madrid based Okuda, known for his bold geometric designs (you can read here about his collaboration with Remed in the *Colored Streets of Toronto* article) or maybe some of the beautiful styling of Munich based SatOne (whom you can watch in action in this *URGE L'anteprema Presenta SatOne* video. The other international artists on show will be Miami based Axel Void (you can watch him chatting in this video about *Street Alps Graffiti Festival Italy*) and Berlin based Base23 (read more in this *Peachbeach at The Spree* article). A host of Indian based street artists may also get exposure through LOOK's Chronicles such as Mumbai based Ranjit Dahiya (read here about Mumbai urban arts festival *St+art*), founder of the Bollywood Art Project (BAP) who transforms the walls of Mumbai with glorious and colourful tributes to Bollywood or Delhi based Anpu Varkey (read here about the *St.Art Delhi Street Art Festival*) who outgrew her restrictive canvasses and turned to the streets to create her beautiful works that often feature cats in some form. Perhaps LOOK The Weird will give us a sneak peak at the work of Shilo Shiv Suleman whose wonderful illustrative works of art are often about social issues, she is also part of the Fearless collective who use art to speak out against gender violence. Full list of artists at *Conquer the Concrete*: Anpu Varkey, Amitabh Kumar, Artlab, Axel Void, Base23, J.P. Krishna, LOOK, M.P. Dakshna, Okuda, The Paintbox, Ranjit Dahiya, SatOne, Shilo Shiv Suleman / Fearless Collective.





Asma Menon – Chennai Pilot Project October 2014

## Street Art Chennai Conquer the Concrete

The Street Art Chennai *Conquer the Concrete* Festival aims to highlight four areas of interest during the event, firstly to bring street art to an area where at the moment it is a rare event and through this they hope to address Chennai as a city through artistic exchange and intercultural dialogue. Secondly to bring interaction where the art is being created and to get the broader public, who may not visit galleries, to become involved with public participation. Thirdly, to use street art to create vibrant communities in a city where the infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with the economic growth and for the art to reflect the urban development and bringing visual aesthetics to everyday life. Finally, Street Art Chennai *Conquer the Concrete* Festival hopes to bring attention to the dying trade of hoarding paintings. Once as with many Indian cities, Chennai had film hoarding painters creating massive works of art around the cities creating a colourful atmosphere; the festival will pay homage to these artists who will also participate in the festival as a new wave of street artists hit the streets of the Chennai.

The Street Art Chennai *Conquer the Concrete* Street Art Festival will take place between 20th January 2015 and 7th February 2015, Don't forget to check in regularly on Widewalls for the exclusive updates from LOOK The Weird in his *LOOK's Chronicles* during the festival.



SatOne and Dhakshna – Chennai Pilot Project, October 2014



SatOne and Dhakshna – Chennai Pilot Project, October 2014





SatOne and Dhakshna – Chennai Pilot Project, October 2014



Hanif Kureshi and Local Sign Painters – Chennai Pilot Project October 2014









## LOOK the Weird's Chronicles: Street Art Chennai Part 1

January 24, 2015 • [LOOK The Weird](#)

I am lying in my bed in the heart of the East Indian, 9 Million people filled, megacity that is Chennai, pretty much exhausted. India is such a blast, but let me begin a little earlier in the story. Last summer I was asked by Georg Zolchow, who curates exhibitions and cultural exchange projects, if I was interested in joining a bunch of other artists to go to India together for a project with the local Goethe-Institut Chennai. No question about it. The whole project should be in October 2014 he said. It was his first big project in India but it seems that India is a little complicated if you are arranging such a big project with at least 12 artists or artist groups. So the whole project was shifted to January 2015 (read the preview article [\*Street Art Chennai: The Festival\*](#)) because permission is hard to get in a country that actually has no idea what graffiti or street art is.

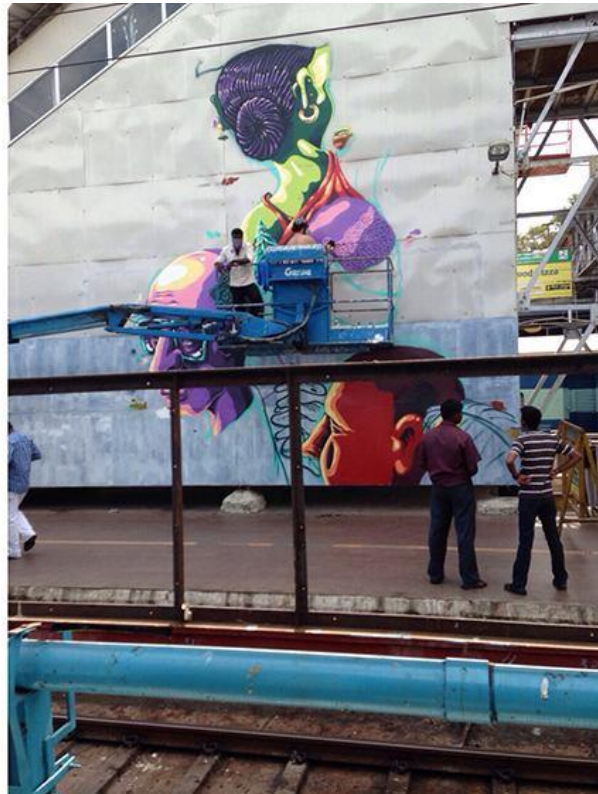




## LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

### The Journey to Chennai

[SatOne](#) (who you can see doing his thing in this [Urge L'anteprema](#) video), Georg, Base23 (see [Base23 in action in this video](#)) and myself arrived on Tuesday night after a hard flight over from Abu Dhabi along with a nice root canal procedure for me only hours before departure. It was 5 in the morning and the place smelled strange, it was dark, warm and loud. At the airport people were sleeping in the dirt, some others sat around a small fire on the sidewalk, burning trash or whatever. We opened the windows of Mr. Phandis' (our driver) taxi, to take a deep breath of the city and we smiled, happy to be in India. At the apartment we were awaited for by "*der Chirurg*", our housekeeper, who was looking like some random guy from the TV series *Scrubs*. We watched the sunrise and that was the shit.



## LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

### Cows and Suicidal Traffic

The next morning Base23 (his real name is Lars, that's why we call ourselves Klaus und Klaus Insider) and I went out to get some cigarettes. We ended up in a landscape of cows on the streets, locals shaking their heads and suicidal traffic. We had a fun time enjoying this culture clash and behaved like drunken teenagers, getting curious about every mysterious thing we saw. That was the jump into local culture and it was pretty fast. Later that day we had a meeting with Helmut (the Boss of Goethe-Institut Chennai) and the Conquer the Concrete crew, nice guys, then we watched a bunch of pigs living under a bridge and bought a couple of Kingfishers (the local beer) from the zombie-apocalyptic version of a Berlin Späti shop.





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

### The Painting Begins

Next day we started painting at “Eggie” Egmore Station, Chennai, the second biggest train station in Chennai. And that means big. We got some walls from the South Indian Railway, directly by the stairs of the platform, highly visible to thousands of people. SatOne (watch him some more in this [Spray Painting an Original](#) video) started really dynamically but got challenged by the quality of some of the cans of paint. Base23 (Klaus 1) (read a little more about Base23 in the [Peachbeach at the Spree](#) article) pumped tons of colours onto his wall like a “*Kopfkranker*”, which is a description of funky. On my platform, hell breaks loose every second hour, when a train arrives on the main platform and 5000 extremely colourfully dressed people try to squeeze through a small gap on the platform because my boom lift stands in their way. But nobody is angry; they stand there shaking their heads and smile a lot... I still don't know if it's a good or bad sign!

Cheers, LOOK.





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015







LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



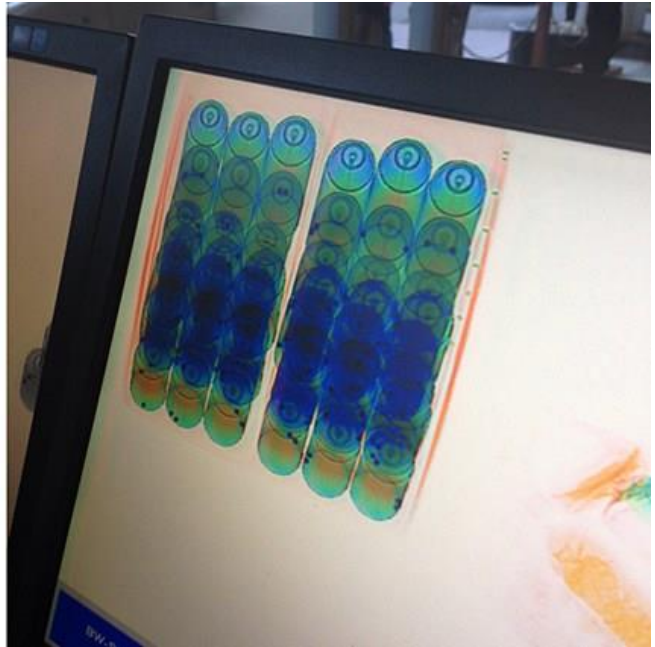


LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015  
All photos by LOOK The Weird.





# Look The Weird's Chronicles: Street Art Chennai Part 2

January 29, 2015 • [LOOK The Weird](#)

Oh my gosh! Where to begin? For some days my brain has soaked up so many things into its depths that I really can't tell when it will decide to release all that information, but let me try to dive in for some memories. (If you missed Part One then take a read of [LOOK The Weird's Chronicles: Street Art Chennai Part 1](#) to catch up and the original preview article about [Conquer The Concrete: Street Art Chennai](#)).



LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

## Super Fast Express to Tatooine

First of all, Chennai Egmore Station is done. Five hard days of painting big stuff with an achingly hot sun, long waiting inbetween, 10 to 12 hours of painting each day, odours so bad that you think your nose will never smell anything beautiful again, thousands of people and so much noise penetration that it could easily go under the name of torture. One day I was listening to this Babylonian buzz and it felt like the next *"Super Fast Express"* going to Mos Eisley full of *Tusken Raiders*. Base23 later came over to me and described exactly the same feelings. We had a serious conversation about whether George Lucas (take a look at the [Skateboarding and Star Wars](#) article!) took some of his inspiration for *Star Wars* from Egmore station in Chennai! It was a tough time there but the results were really worth it. [SatOne](#) "Gestatten Lucky", Base23, [Anpu Varkey](#) (who jumped in later) and myself really squeezed everything out of our cans to give Chennai some proper walls, who are now ready to make a starting point in some proper approach to art in public spaces. And the people love it, people of all ages were so interested in the art and in the process, they watched us for hours and probably missed their train to Mos Eisley!





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

#### Newspapers, Interviews and a New Generation of Street Artists

Some newspapers wrote about the street art, some interviews were given and the station manager runs around with a big fat smile while the East Indian Railway Corporation guys were so happy they offered us walls at central station where millions of people pass by in the blink of an eye. Imagine that, Railway Corporation asks for more graffiti in their stations, only in India! In the meantime all the other artists have arrived and started to work on some proper walls. Axel Void grabbed a wall at Greenway Station, a train station next to a stinky toxic wasteland which was once a river; it will also be artistically penetrated by SatOne and Shilo, who go large scale on the platform and outside. Base23 started a new wall at a school and also made a workshop with the kids, they went absolutely nuts on painting, I guess a new graffiti generation is born. Maybe the railway corporation will think differently about graffiti in future years but maybe things run differently here as it seems that people really respect the property of others even if it looks like shit to our eyes.





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

New Collaboration with Hoarding Painter Selvam

I started a special collaboration with 58 year old Selvam, a hoarding painter with a 40 year career in painting big cinema billboards for the famous Bollywood movies. Cinema is still very big in Chennai, the biggest cinema, where we are painting right now, has 20 screens. But things change and this famous and beloved tradition of billboard painting (perhaps take a look at the [Brandalism](#) article about a different approach to Billboards) is now being replaced with big prints but Selvam still paints billboards and when we met he brought me his collection of photos, which was a real treasure chest, because I have had my eyes on billboard works from the last four decades in Chennai. We started our collaboration today, he brought two helpers and I guess we will be done tomorrow. Then I head to the next location and there's still plenty of stuff to come from this far out planet at the outer rims.

Cheers, [LOOK](#).





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



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LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

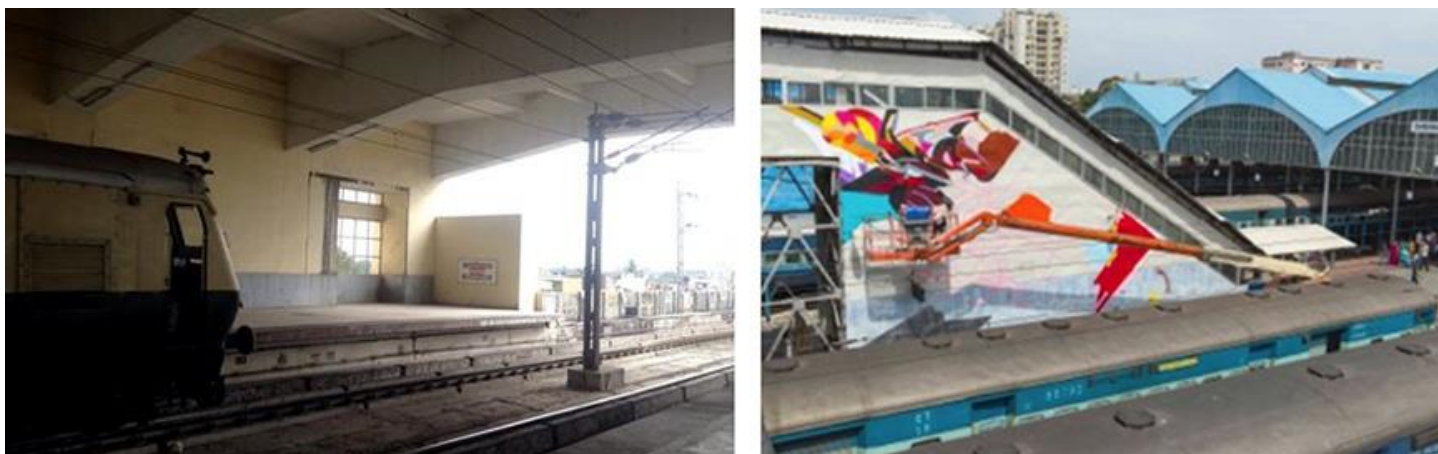


LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





LOOK – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



SatOne – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





SatOne – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



SatOne – Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

All images LOOK The Weird apart from last three courtesy of SatOne!



## LOOK The Weird's Chronicles: Part 3

February 4, 2015 • [LOOK The Weird](#)

I'm sitting by the pool and taking some rest after a really exhausting week that was full of powergraff, Kingfisher beers and Indian madness. If you are wondering what this is all about, then take a look at [Street Art Chennai: The Festival](#) for all the background info and catch up with my LOOK Chronicles [Part One](#) and [Part Two](#) before we carry on with our journey with Conquer The Concrete: Street Art Chennai and India.



Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

### Powergraff in the Torf

I finished my painting with the local hoarding painters and it turned out really nice, while [SatOne](#) punished himself by inhaling all the toxic smells at his wall and Base23 finished a wall at the school in Mylai. I also painted in that area and the neighbourhood is so nice and relaxed, Indian hospitality is well known and the people living there offered us all that they could give, nice guys. [Axel Void](#) went on with his own big painting of that old lady; she lives directly in front of his wall and is a homeless person, even the newspapers wrote about her, the story being that she has a house in a slum but couldn't go there because her son is crazy and beats her, so she decided to live by the wall. The word he wrote means 'life' in Tamil.





Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

## Food, Booze and Mosquitoes

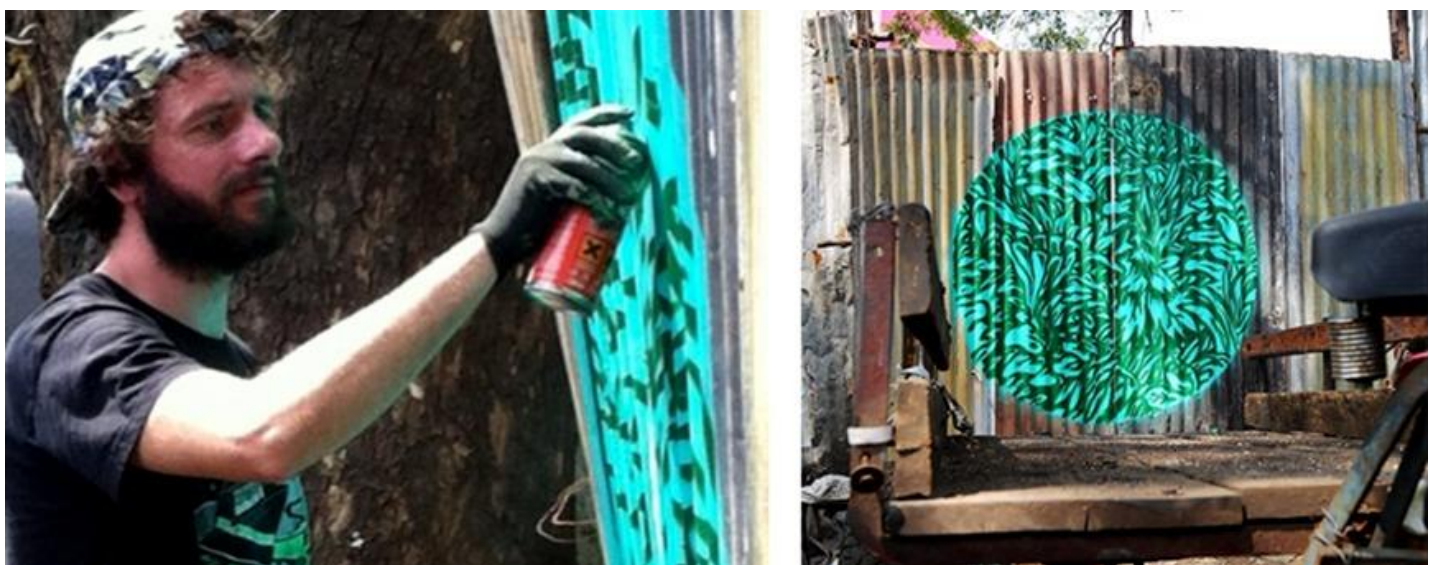
The nights have been filled up with extremely good Indian food, the local Kingfisher booze, mosquitoes and talking shit, really relaxing and very funny after the hard work. One day we packed our stuff to go to an art village, the Goethe-Institut organized a driver who he took us everywhere we wanted to go and he was very much the risky version of a young Niki Lauda and was driving his Toyota into the contraflow just honking his horn! We saw some temples, swam in the Indian Ocean and had a great relaxing time. Next day we packed our stuff for a street bombing tour, we entered the area of Triplicane Road and asked the owners if it's OK to paint on their walls, most of them said yes even when they didn't understand what we were talking about. They loved it and were offering us food and everything. I realized that I'm still in love with the oldschool graff and did some Weird Crew dedications, fun moments. Then we concentrated again on some proper walls on the Sathyam cinema, on track sides and in the neighbourhood, everything went well after some chaotic moments which almost took my patience and my life, but that's something for the big recap I will give to you when I'm safely home! I have to jump into the pool now and then we leave India later in the day, a lil' sad and happy at the same time, I guess that's how travelling is!

Stay Torf, LOOK.





Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

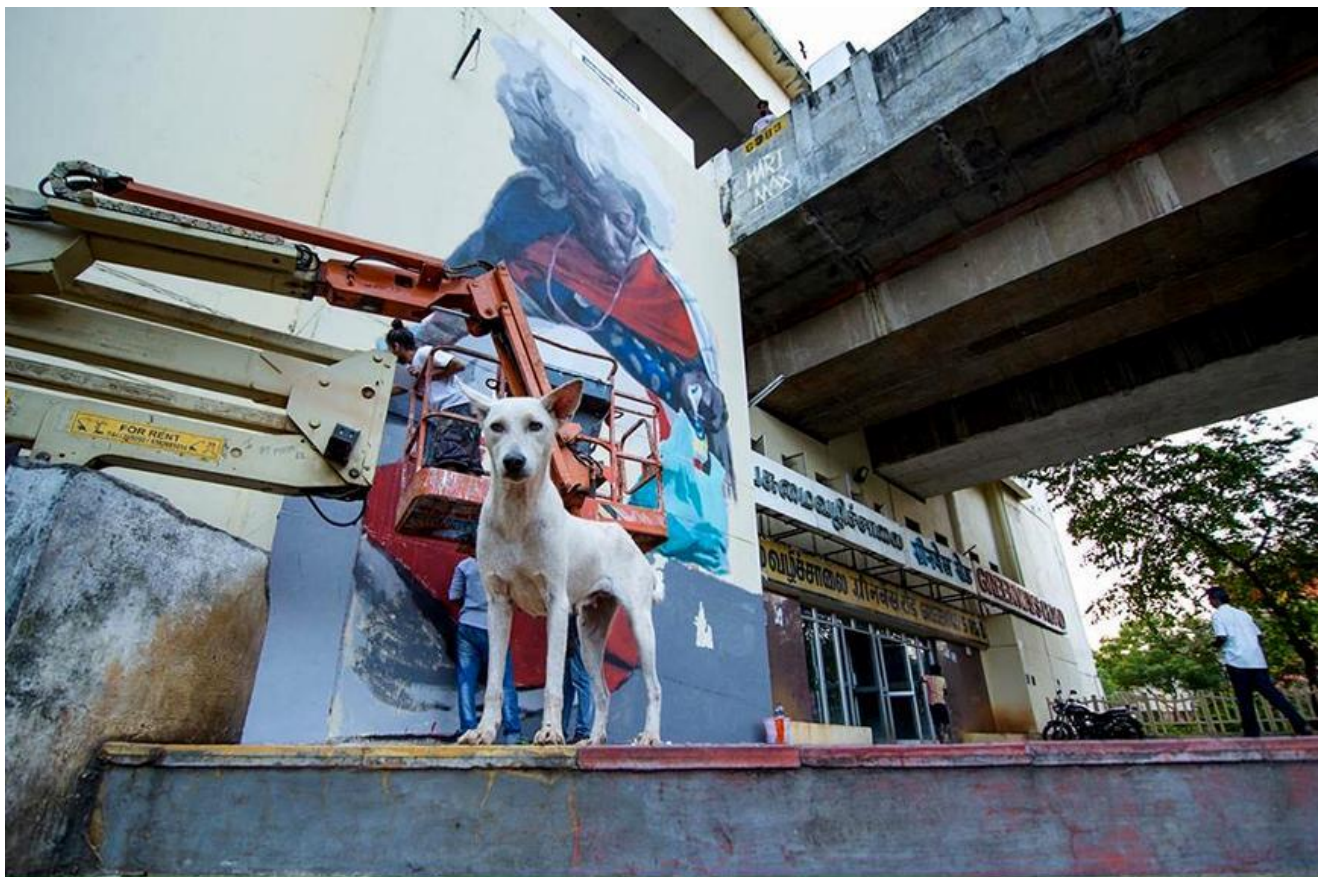


Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



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Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015

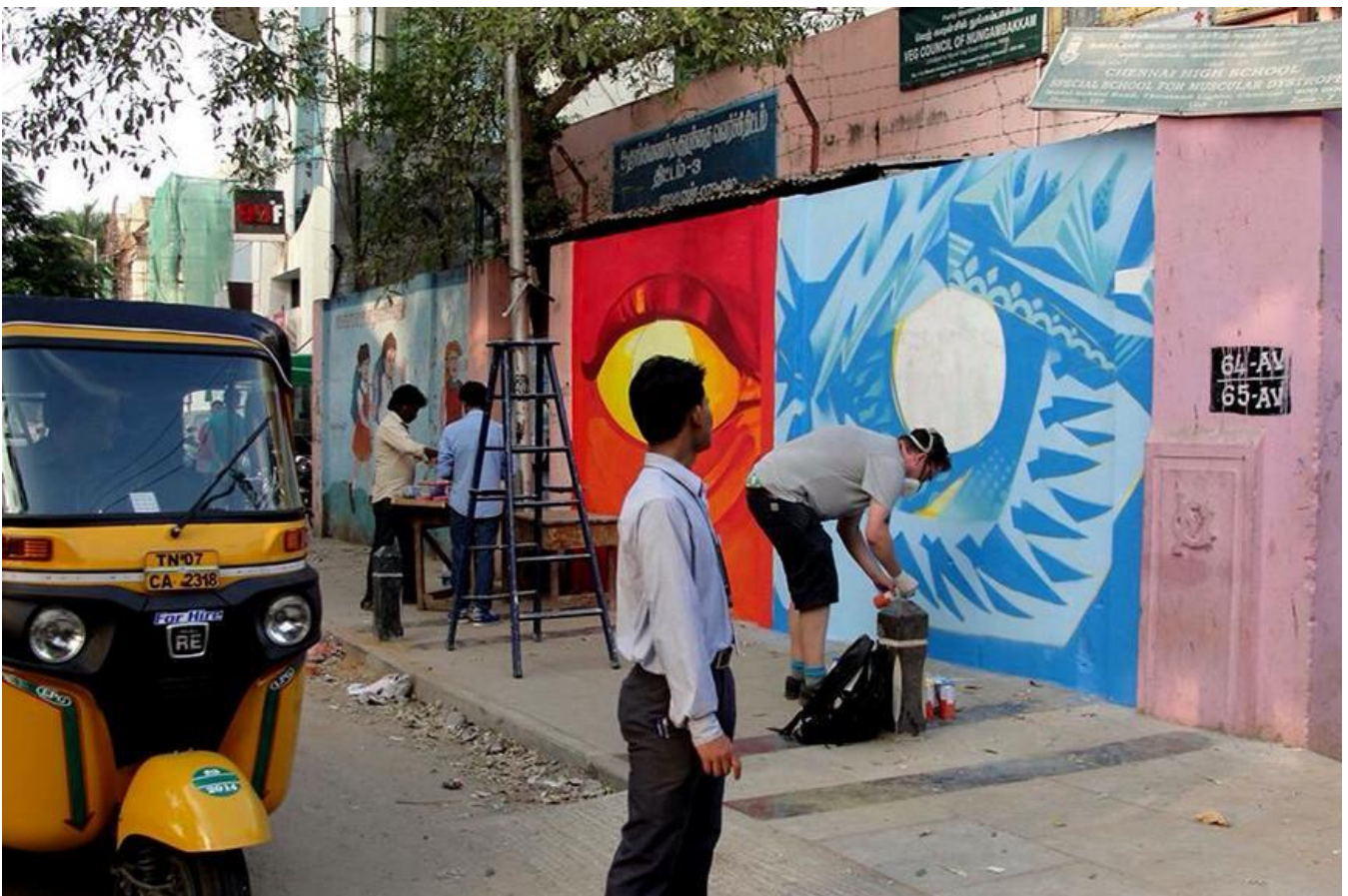


Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





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Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



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Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015





Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



Conquer The Concrete, Chennai, 2015



Photos by LOOK The Weird, SatOne, Base23 and Yaya Kumar.

Website: [www.widewalls.ch/](http://www.widewalls.ch/)