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Poonam is an Industrial designer, facilitator, entrepreneur and mentor. She graduated from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad India in 1986, specialising in Product Design.

Product Design

She began her career designing and prototyping a variety of products that include a Centralised Lubrication System, an Industrial Water Purifier, and a Public Telephone Booth. In this period of her career, she also managed Sur Engineering – a family firm manufacturing machine tools.

Workshops, teaching, education

Poonam has conducted several workshops on Art and Creativity and Innovation for a variety of audiences – from school children to corporate executives. Organisations that engaged Poonam in this area include Mallya Aditi International School (Bangalore), Newspapers in Education, Verifone, Wipro, Sun Microsystems and ITC.

Poonam is passionate about young people. Poonam is one of the founding faculty at Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology Bangalore. Apart from designing and delivering cutting-edge programmes for Srishti's design students (Foundation programme, Design Lab, Design for Community and Self, Unlearning), Poonam has also facilitated and managed student interactions with craftspeople, NGOs, industry/ corporates, academics from national and international design schools, government and other stakeholders. She currently holds the position of Visionary-in-residence at Srishti. She also consults with other educational institutions like Riverside School in Ahmedabad and is currently putting together a Business Design programme with a team at Prin L N Welingkar Institute of Management Development and Research, Mumbai.

Entrepreneurship

As an entrepreneur she founded IndusTree Crafts in the early 90's, and another company – Playnspeak – in 2000. IndusTree Crafts works with craftspeople to design, manufacture and retail/ export Indian crafts for contemporary customers. Playnspeak offers craft-based products for the home and office, products that poke fun at the values and ways of human beings, and also products that provoke reflection.

Design and Development

Since 2000, Poonam has spent a lot of time (amongst other things) writing papers on Design and how it impacts Development. Her continuing interest in the field has enabled her to speak at, design and conduct workshops and seminars for people from varied backgrounds – students, designers, NGOs and the government. She is also on the board of a trust called DESI which works in the area of livelihood generation in rural Karnataka.

Daily Dump

Her latest project – Daily Dump – involves the design, manufacture, distribution and servicing products related to home composting. This is a product – service system which is based on an open-source platform and is meant to encourage micro-enterprise formation and collaborative product development. It uses craft skills to address a primarily urban issue. Daily Dump's purpose is to reduce the waste generated by households, and thus reduce the pressure on the already-far-from-perfect public waste management systems. Daily Dump has been selected as one of the "Top Nominees" for the INDEX Design award 2007.

Poonam lives in Bangalore, with her husband Anand, and works out of her studio (popularly know as 'the shed') sharing the space with students, terracotta composters and the spirit of the raintree that is the canopy of this space.