

**Iconic: Kunti (“Blue Lady”) Sculpture**  
**Royal Ontario Museum**  
**Navjot, artist**

*[Podcast begins with music and Iconic Objects logo, title reads: Iconic: The Must-See Treasures of the ROM]*

*[Cut to close-up of the “Blue Lady’s” head; title flies in: Blue Lady]*

*[Sound of women singing; Fade to animated spinning globe; zoom into satellite map; India glows red on the map]*

*[Zoom in on India; “Kondegoon” appears on map] **Navjot:** An incident that took place in this tribal area where I’m working where a woman was declared a witch.*

*[Cut to screen with two rows of still images scrolling across the screen; images show a crowd of people seated watching a smaller group seated before a smaller group performing a ritual] They believe that any woman possessing knowledge is valid to be called a witch [Cut to still image of a woman sitting cross-legged with a crowd of people behind her] and that lady was called kunti.*

*[Singing]*

*[Cut to panning shot of the Blue Lady installed in the Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery] So I called this sculpture Kunti. [Cut to close up of the Blue Lady’s face] She was very calmly sitting [Cut to shot of Navjot, artist, speaking in the Sir Christopher Ondaatje South Asian Gallery] and there was a whole ritual. 5000 people gathered from all kinds of villages [camera pans over to the Blue Lady] and buses coming from the city [cut to still image of people gathered to watch a ritual] would stop to come and see.*

*[Cut to shot of Navjot] **Navjot:** It was very de-humanizing. They told me that she herself is saying that she has eaten up so many people. [Cut to still image of a woman sitting cross-legged with a crowd of people behind her; camera slowly zooms in on the woman] Everyone was telling me there that her hands have turned inward and when I went to see, she was a normal, confident woman.*

*[Singing]*

*[Fade to panning close-up of a bronze goddess statue]*

*[Cut to close-up of a stone carving of a female figure in high relief]* **Navjot:** In Indian mythology especially, women possess so much knowledge. *[Cut to zooming close-up of a stylized female figure in bronze on a white background]* In earlier matrilinear societies, we know women played a very important role.

*[Cut to close-up of the Blue Lady's closed fist]* So I've shown her where she is *[cut to the open fingertips of her other hand]* possessing knowledge *[cut to profile shot of her face; camera zooms out]* but she has the ability to receive more. *[Cut to shot of Navjot standing beside the Blue Lady]* Just to make it more symbolic, if you see if you do this *[Navjot demonstrates by mimicking the Blue Lady's pose]* the thumbs are inside, but in this case, if you see, the thumbs are outside.

*[Singing]*

*[Cut to an engraving of a woman tied to a ladder beside a large bonfire]*

*[Cut to close-up of a classical European painting]* **Navjot:** I realize that it's not only in India but in many, many countries, *[cut to black and white illustration of a woman before a judge]* we have that witch, she is a knowledgeable woman. *[Cut to black and white illustration of ...]* She has a kitchen in the forest, and we have stories *[Cut to close-up of a black and white illustration]* where children reach there. She is not a bad person. *[Cut to shot of Navjot]* So sometimes people say women are very assertive, but women had to be assertive for some time.

*[Cut to inverted black and white still photograph with a broken mirror; Photo flips]*  
**Navjot:** Duchamp, he was using these ready-mades.

*[Cut to panning shot of a still black and white image of Marcel Duchamp's Fountain]* Even about that urinal, after he showed it in the museum, there was a lot of controversy and then it was found lying in the backyard of his house. And now we see it everywhere. *[Cut to still image of Marcel Duchamp's Bottle Rack]* He made ordinary objects seen as an artwork. *[Zoom out from Bottle Rack; Split screen with close-up of the bottle rack on which the Blue Lady is sitting]* So in this case, I brought it for utility purposes.

*[Cut to shot of Navjot]* I was trying to say that he just picked it up and now the museum has 'museumized' it, you know, so I brought it back from the museum, you know, it's come back to the museum.

*[Music]*

*[Cut to a series of still images showing a collection of Blue Ladies in various positions around a long room]*

*[Cut to still image of two Blue Ladies; one crouched on her elbows and knees, the other laying on her stomach]* **Navjot:** I first make the drawing *[Cut to split screen; on the left a still image of a Blue Lady holding a green tube; On the right side, a still image of a Blue Lady holding her foot]* and then from the drawing I make a clay sculpture *[Cut to still image of three Blue Ladies in various positions]* and then *[Cut to still image of a Blue Lady laying on her stomach with a yellow head on the small of her back]* it's carved. *[Cut to split screen; on the left a still image of a Blue Lady sitting cross-legged; On the right, a still image of two Blue Ladies laying on the floor]*

*[Cut to shot of Navjot with the ROM's Blue Lady]* **Navjot:** When I thought of wood, I felt that I wasn't getting to carve out this huge sculpture from one piece of you know, trunk, it was not possible. *[Cut to still photograph of Navjot carving the sculpture with another woman]* So these arms are made separately, *[Cut to split screen; on the left, a close-up of a bare wood head; on the right a panning view of various Blue Lady sculptures before they were painted]* the torso with the head right up in here is one and the legs are separate. In Modernism, *[Cut to shot of Navjot]* the brush, you know, stroke was associated with the artist. But in this case, I have done away with it. I feel that anybody can paint it.

*[Music]*

*[Cut to black background; ROM Magazine with Blue Lady on the cover flies in; Pan across the magazine]* **Navjot:** When I was given the copy of the magazine and on the cover of it is this sculpture, *[Cut to extreme panning close-up of the title of the magazine]* and I was wondering what this is doing here but at the same time I said wow, *[Cut to still image of Blue Lady installed at the ROM; cut to a view of the sculpture from the other side]* it's important to have contemporary art *[Cut to shot of Navjot]* in such spaces. After all, we are also drawing from our various cultures that we are exposed to or we know about and that is how artists sustain themselves.

*[Cut to zooming shot of Blue Lady installed at the ROM; Singing cuts in; podcast ends as the screen fades to black]*