



# Remover of BY SUZANNE C. LEE Obstacles

**David Oscarson's new Lord Ganesha collection honors Hinduism and friendship.**

Every time David Oscarson unveils a new writing instrument, the public expects his signature artistry to be evident in the piece. Each is the product of certain intangible (and requisite) elements, all of which will be present in any forthcoming pen: first, embedded in the intricate work will be subtle elements of Oscarson's personal history, and his iconic fountain pens often nod to his cultural connections. Oscarson's intellectual explorations have often tilted toward Sweden, where his childhood is rooted and whose heroes, myths, and exquisite landscape all make frequent appearance in Oscarson's artistic oeuvre. Finally, every devotee knows that David Oscarson's pens will be, in a word, enchanting. Every time.

True to form, his newest fine writing instrument weaves personal memoir perfectly into the larger composition, maintaining overarching thematic integrity. So, while the Lord Ganesha collection preserves sacred iconography and subsequent meanings, it also speaks to the rejuvenation and triumph Oscarson now exudes.

Fresh matrimonial bliss coupled with the new blessing of a grandchild have, in many ways, nudged him further toward the navigation of uncharted artistic waters. With the even firmer encouragement of his dear friend Firdosh Patel, Oscarson embarked on his current pursuit with the same zeal he has brought to his previous creations.

Patel's fandom for Oscarson's work (and the pair's subsequent camaraderie) began when, in 2016, he met the artisan pen maker after falling hard for one particular pen: Oscarson's tribute to the Knights Templar—the luminous Jacque de Molay series.

"I held it in my hand and instantly knew this was something very special: it was not just a pen, it was an amazingly glorious work of art," Patel explains.

Patel, who grew up in Mumbai, India, made his way to Houston, Texas to attend Rice University for his MBA and stayed, having met his wife Anita there and distinguished himself in the oil and gas industry. Both the United States and India, he says, feel like home. Through his brother, Zubin, who had been the original fountain pen enthusiast, Patel stumbled upon Oscarson's artistry and then developed an interest in and devotion to the world of writing instruments—but it's Oscarson's work he continues to covet most, a collector who embraces wholly the particular song and texture of each David Oscarson writing instrument.

Larry Dromgoole, owner of Dromgoole's Fine Writing pen shop in Houston—the establishment where Patel was first introduced to Oscarson's intricate yet elegant style—happily set up a phone call between the two men. The rest, as they say, is history.

"I kept David on the phone for more than an hour asking him every possible question that came to mind. He gave me his undivided attention for the entire time with complete sincerity and humility," Patel recalls fondly.

David Oscarson Lord Ganesha fountain pen in translucent and opaque white hard enamel with gold vermeil accents, and Lord Ganesha fountain pen in translucent mossy black and opaque white hard enamel with gold vermeil accents.

वक्रातुन्दा ललाकार्या  
 इत्युया रतो इल्ला प्रलोभा  
 नोऽपेक्षेनाल रूपु लद वेदवा  
 इकारवा कल्पुदडु इकारवादे.

After years of pressing Oscarson to explore the Hindu deity Ganesha as a subject, Patel finally succeeded. Oscarson (with a little help from his friend) has done so with precision and respect. The instrument invites the viewer into a cultural experience and leads us with its many visual nuances to comprehend the detailed elaborations that are embedded in the composition's landscapes, its unique significance. Oscarson depended heavily upon Patel's knowledge of Hinduism and Lord Ganesha to ensure the pen's meaningful illustration be presented with respect and accuracy.

Patel says, "Hinduism was always referred to as *Sanatan Dharma*, which, translated roughly, equates to 'The Eternal Law of Mankind.' As such, Hinduism was a set of guidelines that, if followed, could enrich the lives of all human beings. The rich Hindu pantheon of deities, of which Lord Ganesha is one of the most cherished and beloved, has a meaning and message not just for the Hindus of India, but for all of humanity," says Patel.

The Ganesha fountain pen collection is crafted masterfully but, given the level of ambition, there were challenges: the item's more complex characteristics, such as the use of multi-colored enamel and the intricacy of the guilloche patterns in, around, and underneath Lord Ganesha demanded time and close attention.

At last, the heavenly Lord Ganesha collection is ready: a creation that employs Oscarson's distinct style but draws on and depicts new horizons altogether.

The Ganesha is available in both rollerball and cartridge/converter fountain pen versions with 14 karat gold nib and will be limited in production to 108 pieces per color: each beauty is made with gold vermeil and opaque white hard enamel and has a translucent quality to its coloration. A seemingly endless selection of shades are offered; ruby red, saffron (orange), emerald green, azure (light blue), mint green, mossy black, white, and teal.



Above, left to right—the Sanskrit prayer to Lord Ganesha that is etched into the fountain pen's section; Firdosh and Anita Patel pose in front of Houston's Dromgoole's pen shop with Oscarson.

Below—Ganesha pen cap in teal with Ganesha clip, Ganesha's head in opaque white enamel, "OM" symbol below the cap top, etched Sanskrit prayer on the section, and 14 karat gold bicolor nib with the David Oscarson logo.





Clockwise, from top left—Lord Ganesha fountain pens in mint green, saffron, azure, ruby red, teal, and emerald green. All colors are limited to 108 fountain pens or rollerballs.

Symbolism in the piece is extensive; the pen has three separate images of Ganesha on the pen clip, the cap, and the barrel. In appearance, the ‘Lord of the Masses’ appears as a human body with an elephant’s head, which alludes to the need to listen with discipline and dedication to eternal veracity. Introspection is also indicated by the elephant’s large ears—both hearing and wisdom are implied. Indeed, Ganesha’s protruding stomach is evidence of his “digestion,” the process of understanding what his ears hear and his intellect orders.

His trunk also refers to higher, mindful reason, a sign of Lord Ganesha’s superior capability to discern the material from the spiritual. Two tusks, one mighty and the other broken, speak to the binary nature of life, the dualities that one must accept—not just great joy but terrific sorrow, not just brilliant success but abject failure. The one constant of time is fluidity and change, and Ganesha has accepted that truth and maintains peace with it despite the grim fact of fate’s inscrutable tendencies.

Rats, notorious for their greed and accumulation, seem an unusual choice perhaps to represent discipline—but it is for precisely this reason that the rat drawn at attention in front of Ganesha, poised to act but totally obedient, is such an apt allusion. He has gained, in his pursuit of the ultimate state of human perfection, total control over his primitive rodent instincts. Master of his desires rather than yielding victim, the rat at the Lord’s feet is in total control of himself.



Above, left to right—Oscarson participated in the official 150th anniversary celebration of the meeting of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific rail lines; the original "golden spikes" that marked the completion of the project. Right—Oscarson's Golden Spike writing instruments in ruby red with gold vermeil and sapphire blue with gold vermeil.

Details, such as the invocation inscribed on the gripping section of the pen, are so numerous it's difficult to do justice to the rich imagery and cultural depth involved in each. The prayer is written in a particular font, Samarkand, which resembles Sanskrit—an ancient Indian language—and mimics its particular texture and depth. Roughly translated, it reads: "O Lord Ganesha/ One with the curved trunk,/ One with immense form,/ One whose radiance is more brilliant than 10 million suns,/ Please bless me so that my actions and my undertakings may be free from all obstacles."

Another symbol, *OM*, is written at the top of the cap three times in Sanskrit. The supreme reality is called "Brahman," which Western civilization might refer to as "God." Signifying that same concept, *OM* is the vehicle through which one can realize enlightenment, subtly encompassing the whole range of human sound—sounds that utilize all body parts involved in language. In fact many religions employ the same musical "OM"—for example, "amen" takes advantage of just such a noise in its first breath.

The numeral 108 is holy in Indian culture—a mathematical and geometrical triumph, the ramifications of which extend as far as space. Ancient Indians discovered that the distance from the Earth to the sun is around 108 times the diameter of the sun, one of the reasons the number is holy to Hindu culture. Limiting production, then, is also meant as a gesture towards, and reverence for, this sanctified sign.

Oscarson says, "Lord Ganesha is the supreme leader, one who has no leader himself. He is known by several names, including Vighnsvara, the Lord of Obstacles, meaning he is also remover of obstacles and all challenges of life. The Ganesha represents the beauty and difficulty of our craft."

Oscarson is off on a new adventure, to unknown lands that promise immensity and permanence, transition and duality, among the most fantastic topography on earth—India. Surely such breathtaking scenery and culture should be shared, and Oscarson's forthcoming work, the Lord Ganesha collection, offers us all a chance to travel, to learn, and to push ourselves beyond preconceived boundaries by embracing the dual, complementary nature of life—to delight in the messiness of existence by controlling one's desires and digesting the wisdom of this magnificent deity.

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Read more about Dromgoolé's Fine Writing in the April 2019 issue of *Pen World*.

