

## **Priti Paul launches her first alphabetical art book ABC Desi at Apeejay Kolkata Literature Festival**

**Kolkata, 15 January, 2017:** Entrepreneur, bookstore owner, writer, architect, designer and mother of three energetic young boys, Priti Paul launched her first visionary illustrated art book ABC Desi at the first edition of *Oxford Junior Literary Festival* at the *Apeejay Kolkata Literature Festival* today. The event also celebrated the arrival of Priti Paul's niece **Uma Kismat Paul** who unveiled the book with her mother, Indrani Dasgupta Paul along with veteran educationist Sister Cyril. The evening also witnessed a specially curated interactive performance by well-known dancer Anita Ratnam, which was immensely enjoyed by the audience.

*"ABC Desi has emerged from my deep love for India, its incredible art forms and of course my love for children. I perceived the dearth of a good children's book with an Indian background and cultural references that our children can relate to, and I have, in my own way tried to fill this void. I also consider it important to keep in mind the international influences that are inevitable - and desirable - in a globalized world, by working around the English Alphabet.*

*Kolkata is the city where I grew up and where my roots are, there is nowhere else I would have launched my first book. Kolkata's very own, Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival is the best platform I could have given ABC Desi."* said Priti Paul, author and creator of ABC Desi, at the occasion.

ABC Desi, a typical ABC book is given a charming new life through the revival of the almost lost Indian craft of billboard painting. An art form that has, until recently, been deeply connected with popular Indian culture — but today battles extinction with the onslaught of new media technologies. Today, as we revel in a uniquely "Make in India" moment ABC Desi is a perfect English alphabet book to teach little Indian children the English alphabet using a uniquely Indian vocabulary and set of images and style of rendering. Created from Priti's many years of research, experience of reading to her 3 boys and her rooted Indian values, ABC Desi is a unique learning tool for children, and a whimsical yet precious object for the lover of all things Indian and beautiful.

Handcrafted, using various techniques, billboard artists skillfully recreate scenes, objects and portraiture from photographs and magazines, bringing the magic of Bollywood and the sycophancy of Indian politics to the masses on the street. Often, western themes are given a unique cultural stamp, resulting in pieces that are a mix of humour and irony, among the rich visual chaos of the bustling Indian streetscape. These vibrant graphics, an assault on the senses with their boundless colour palettes also serve as a window to fantasy and escapist entertainment.

An alphabet book with a distinct Indian Flavor, ABC Desi is an attempt to pique curiosity and appreciation for this unique art form in both children and adults across the globe. The book is a visual celebration and hopes to be a rich source of cultural reference and inspiration. The imperfection and flawed beauty of hand painted creations juxtaposed with bold typography and clean contemporary layouts, makes ABC Desi a unique learning tool for children.

By using this form of painting to illustrate the English alphabets Priti hopes to root the alphabets firmly in an Indian imagery. In addition, she hope to continue to support the work of the artists and to bring to a larger and global audience the drama, beauty and uniqueness of their work.

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### **About Ms. Priti Paul**

#### **Director, Apeejay Surrendra Group**

Educated at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University and Architectural Association School of Architecture, UK, Royal Institute of British Architects, Priti Paul has been at the forefront of taking over the business of the century old Apeejay Surrendra Group post her father's assassination in 1990. Since then, she has spearheaded the real estate division of the Group which included expanding the business of the Oxford Bookstore in India and abroad, launched India's first gallery on new media art – Apeejay Media Gallery, conceptualized, designed and launched a range of projects in India and abroad and set up the London Office of Apeejay Shipping Limited.

Priti Paul, is also the creative force behind the iconic Oxford Bookstore, the best equipped 'base-camp' for journeys of the mind established in 1919. In 1995, on the Heritage store's platinum anniversary, the iconic store was refashioned as Oxford Bookstore - Gallery. Since then, she has made Oxford into India's favourite bookstore, taking the Brand to unprecedented heights and across India. She is also the creator of ABC Desi, an alphabet book with a distinct Indian flavour, handcrafted using various techniques giving a charming new life to the typical ABC book, through the revival of the almost lost Indian craft of billboard painting. The book is a visual celebration and a rich source of cultural reference and inspiration.

She has also been at the forefront of education for children coming from economically weaker sections of the society which is manifested through the Apeejay Anand Children's Library run for the benefit of street children.

Priti Paul is a member of prestigious organizations like Royal Institute of British Architects, Women in Shipping and Trade Association (WISTA), England, India Committee of American Bureau of Shipping, USA, FICCI Committee of Art and Business of Art, India, Harvard Club India, MIT Club India. In 2013, she was conferred with an honorary degree of Doctorate of Business Administration by the Rai University, India.

## **About AKLF**

Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival is India's first major literary initiative of the year, India's only literary festival created by a bookstore and Kolkata's first literary festival. AKLF's eighth edition from Jan 15– 18 is woven around conversations to make the world a more inclusive place. Spotlighting Kolkata's unique cultural heritage of inclusiveness, the programme of AKLF 2017 was announced aboard a cruise on the banks of the Ganges. Created by the nearly 100 year old Oxford Bookstore, the Festival programming spans the entire spectrum of inclusion, from women and children to the underprivileged, including a tribute to the late Mahasweta Devi who brought the most marginalized into the fold of literature. The era of Post Truth, where facts are fast losing out to rhetoric, the reality globally, will be discussed by experts; as will be the impact of different media on our reality today. Every evening for three days, AKLF will pay tribute to Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan through poetry and contemporary music at Poetry Café and Plug in, hosted at the festival's main venue – St. Paul's Cathedral grounds – chosen for its welcoming, accessible and inclusive nature. For the first time, Oxford Bookstores will host Oxford Junior Literary Festival (OJLF), a two-day festival to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Jan for the young readers. Renowned children's authors, publishers of children's books, storytelling and creativity will form part of OJLF. This year, we have tied up with UNICEF@70 to conduct its global short stories campaign titled "Tiny Stories" at OJLF. AKLF 2017 will be held at St Paul's Cathedral, established in 1847, and Oxford Bookstore, established in 1919. The festival's closing event will be hosted at St John's Church, built in 1787. The Festival conversations will also be hosted at Royal Calcutta Turf Club, Tollygunge Club, the campus of iLead & Presidency University, Daga Nikunj and the Harrington Street Arts Centre.

## **About Oxford Bookstores:**

Established in 1919, Oxford Bookstore is the best equipped 'base-camp' for journeys of the mind offering its customers the widest range of outstanding titles and consistently courteous and informed service for close to a century. Today, with stores in major metros, India's first dedicated Children's bookstore, Oxford Junior, India's first of its kind tea boutique, Cha Bar, India's only literary festival created by a bookstore, Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival, Oxford Bookstore offers booklovers access to the very best in publishing enhanced by a variety of events which salute books, visual & performing arts and celebrate the word. Oxford Bookstore measures its success by the smiles on millions of happy customers that the brand has served over the last nearly 100 years. There are a few treats as sumptuous as a visit to Oxford Bookstore in India. Each time you walk into our iconic store in Kolkata where the brand started in 1919, its charm leaves you wanting for more. Our fleet of happy to help expert booksellers and informed hosts work day and night to bring to customers world class reading experience be it through our books or our fine teas and live by the brand's motto - Much more than a bookstore – at every Bookstore. For more information, please also log on to: [www.oxfordbookstore.com](http://www.oxfordbookstore.com)

### **AKLF 2017 Partners and Associations:**

The AKLF 2017 edition has forged several new, prestigious associations, to add to its impressive repertoire of collaborations since the first edition in 2010. We are proud to have as our partners major national and international institutions and corporates such as the Australian Council for the Arts, Alliance Française, Australian High Commission, Instituto Cervantes, Consulate General of Italy, MAKAIAS, Presidency University, Future Hope, UNICEF, The Teacher's Centre, Jaipur Literary Festival, Sahitya Akademi, Prabha Khaitan Foundation, Development Corporation Limited (DCL), Vivada Cruises, FACES, Open Doors, The Creative Arts, Zoomcar, Art Rickshaw, Times Fibrefill, Aishee, Sienna and several others. A wide cross section of publishers like Niyogi Books, Future, Oxford University Press, Tulika, Duckbill, NBDS The Book Council are also partnering with us. Venue partners include Tollygunge Club, iLead, Harrington Street Art Centre, Alka Jalan Foundation and Royal Calcutta Turf Club. We welcome 93.5 Red FM as our radio partner, Vistara as aviation partner, Typhoo as beverage partner, Kenilworth as hospitality partner, Apollo Gleneagles Hospitals as wellness partner. AKLF is very proud of these associations and hopes to keep growing year on year.