

*Cover Story*



# THE INDIAN *experience...*

*POOL spends some time with Cagri Cankaya from Turkey, an intrepid 'Designer on the Road' who is in the India phase of his unique working trip around the world*







### Tell us a little about yourself.

**CC:** I was born in Turkey on 1 January 1984, and have loved drawing and creating things since I was a child. I studied art at the Anatolian Fine Arts High School in Bursa and then successfully graduated from the Dokuz Eylül University Fine Arts Faculty, Graphic Design Department located in Izmir.

As a fresh graduate I wanted to work and have fun in a well known company, creating successful ads for good clients with a lovely team, and doing good design. I have worked in many different areas since then, from game development companies to ad agencies. My work has been honored by well known design magazines, books, portals, workshops and competitions around the world. Some of the clients I have worked for include Alfa Romeo, Aygaz, Aviva SA, Burger King, CNR Expo, Danone, GSC Game World, Hillside, Iddaa, ING Bank, Iveco, Karagöz, Papia, Patlican, Silvium, SinemaTV, Topaz, and Yatas.



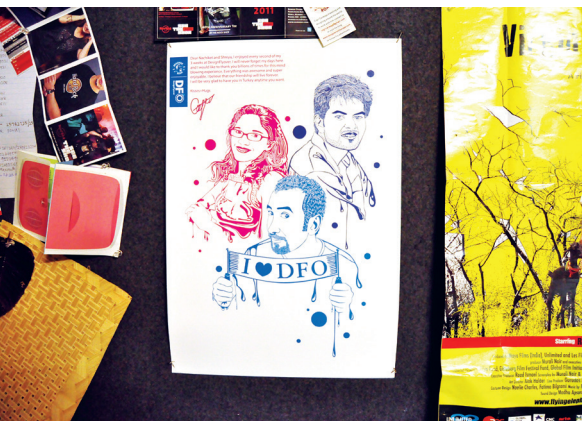
### How did you hit upon the idea of 'Designer on the Road'?

**CC:** I was working with Young&Rubicam and Republica as an art director. After three years of non-stop work, I was bored of doing the same things. In Turkey deadlines are usually very rigid and clients usually ask for too many bad revisions. That is ok but the ego wars in the advertising business were making me more tired than the actual work!

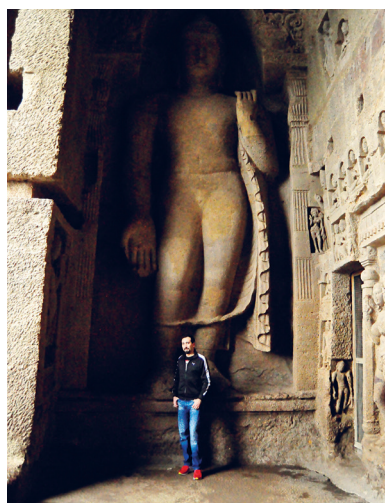
I love traveling and I love designing, so I decided to combine my two passions to create something more lovely and enjoyable. Making a world trip is a common dream - everybody wants to do that, but very few people can











afford it. I had no money but I thought that maybe I could do it with my design skills and it would be a nice challenge for me.

## So, who is 'Designer on the Road'?

**CC:** A designer traveling around the world without any money...sharing his experiences with the world via the Internet, and showing everybody that nothing is impossible.

## How did you go about planning this adventure?

**CC:** I had the idea a long time ago but I didn't tell anybody because I thought it was a childish dream, something beyond reality. Over time I tried to make it a more realistic project. One day while I was working in an agency in Istanbul I sent an e-mail about my 'Designer on the Road' project to my friend Sudhir Sharma in India. He was the first person to whom I mentioned my idea, and the next day I received an amazing and supportive e-mail from him. He wrote: 'It's a wonderful idea and you should do it. Why don't you start from my office?' And then he gave me many ideas and advice. The next day I quit my job and locked myself at home to create a website and materials for the project and began sending mails all around the world, looking for companies where I could work.

## Was it difficult to convince design studios about your initiative?

**CC:** I e-mailed everywhere I could about my project. I also attached my portfolio and gave a link to my blog. Many of them liked the project but usually had excuses about many things - I don't know the local language, I don't know the culture, I have no place to stay, they don't know how much they should pay me, etc. Or they had their own reasons like they already had enough designers or didn't have enough work for me. Because I am a problem guy with many unknown issues I can understand that! I didn't give up, however - I sent more than 1,200 e-mails, and created an Asia route with 6-7 stops, starting from India and ending in China.

## Why did you start with India?

**CC:** Because my first supporter, Sudhir, was there! And the idea of working in Asian countries sounds much more exotic and full of unknown adventures.

In Turkey our design is similar to that in Europe but no one knows what is going on in Asia. My plan was to start from India and go towards the Far East.

## What are your impressions of India?

**CC:** It's such a huge country where you can find any kind of stuff. The streets are full of surprises. Rickshaws are enjoyable, the culture is great and it makes you feel that you are somewhere magical all the time.

## What is your itinerary?

**CC:** I have no idea for now. I hope to spend three months in India. After Pune, I want to go to Goa, and then I will jump to Thailand. I have just planned my trip till China. I am ready to hug any company around the world! After China I don't know where I will go and where I will work. I don't even know when my trip is going to end or when I will go back to Turkey. I have no future plans and that's the nice part of this project. It's pure unplanned adventure!

## What was the response of Indian studios to 'Designer on the Road'?

**CC:** They welcomed me very well. They like the work I am doing and they let me choose the projects I would like to be in. We have had many meetings and brainstorming sessions together which were absolutely amazing.

## What do think about Indian designers?

**CC:** They are nice! I can't say anything in general - it depends on who you are working with - but they are mostly very good at what they are doing. They are peaceful and helpful. Everybody is so friendly and polite. The spiritual side of India shows itself here, I think. These people have no ego problems. Indians are good team players. They are not running after a goal, they are passing each other to make a score.

There is huge talent here. Many animators, graphic designers, fashion and product designers are creating nice things together. India has industries for all kinds of designers. They have their car brands, which is good for product designers; Bollywood is a huge cake for animators; local fashion brands are very popular and good for fashion designers; advertising is



also important because of the size of the population. But there are some challenges as well...

## What work have you been doing in India?

**CC:** I did some t-shirt, bed sheet and nightwear designs for an organic textile company in Mumbai. I made some logos for an in-house project of Design Flyover in Mumbai. Now I am working on a small book which includes 17 design laws for designers. I am also helping the Indi Design team in Pune with their projects.

## What would you advise Indian designers?

**CC:** Keep doing what you are doing; everything is going to be fine. Don't get stuck on European design; find a unique way to make things Indian. Just like Iran and Japan, India should also have a design language. Start to forget Helvetica for a while, and try to create nice looking Hindi fonts.

## What has been the driving force behind your venture?

**CC:** Actually many people didn't believe in me. My father didn't even listen to me; my doctor said, 'You will be back in three

weeks'. Many famous designers told me that what I was planning was impossible to do - they told me about economic crises and other things. Even some friends didn't believe in me. So my biggest driving force was to show them that nothing is impossible, it's just about how much you want it. And I want to say them, 'Hello, I did it!'

## What challenges are you facing on the road?

**CC:** Food can be a problem sometimes around Asia because I don't like spicy food much and I am not very good with vegetables. Weather differences can be dangerous sometimes; monsoon was a huge experience for me. Hanging around alone can cause bad situations sometimes. My biggest worry is what if one of my contacts changes his mind about my working in his company? Or what if he is not even working there any more! That can cause a big problem.

## What would you say to other young designers who want to attempt something similar?

**CC:** 'Zindagi na milegi dobara.' Focus on what you are really good at and do whatever you want to do. And do it now.

Not later. Don't wait for anything; find a way to do it with your resources.

Make people believe in you. Never give up; design first, travel later and earn people's trust. Never look for luxury things, focus on your survival. Bring extra sweatshirts even it's summer time! Some countries are obsessed about air conditioners - you can get cold in indoor places. Try to bring a nice camera and carry it everywhere. Don't carry things which you can buy from anywhere. Spend your money more for experiences instead of on shopping, but don't spend much. Listen to everybody but make your own choices.

## What's next after 'Designer on the Road'?

**CC:** I want to lock myself at home and play console games while I eat iskender kebab and drink raki! On a serious note, I haven't planned anything yet but Sudhir is pushing me to start my own design company! Yesterday an Indian fortuneteller told me that I would be very successful if I launched a business. I hope he is good at his job!

[www.designerontheroad.com](http://www.designerontheroad.com)

