

‘Images appear in dreams... Emerging from nothingness - to perfection’

Arati Rao's paintings have many dimensions, and consequently many visions. Physically, it includes acrylic paints, glass, the past and her present. The expressions conveyed, using paint on glass reveal an expanse of creative impulses, influences from works by Gustav Klimt and human instincts relating to love and sexuality and her own experiences of motherhood.

She paints on the glass surface, unknowingly challenging conventional approaches, which always associated painting to a canvas surface; ‘Glass’ whose essence is considered an absence; embodies an immateriality. Arati has always been intrigued by the null space and enjoys the task of making a tangible/visual surface from it, in turn strengthening it. Where other surfaces like paper and canvas have attributes to retain their physicality and allowing the ‘paint’ to demonstrate its textures, Arati’s challenge has been creating dimensionality on the void surface of glass; how to confront the fact that the painted surface is created, and consequently is on the reverse and hence the viewing surface appears, basically flat. She therefore pushes the medium and experiments with varied textures creating depth and a third dimensionality.

Her brush strokes appear complex and seem to have a crackling, spider web like effect, coming from multi-layering of the paint. This is achieved by applying paint in layers at different stages of drying, hence creating depth. Added to this is her experimentation with mixed materials such as crayon and glue, which she uses along with acrylic

paints. The colors are bright and have strong contrasts, portraying an indulgence in the world of colors.

Much of the excitement comes from the fact that her works engage the understanding she obtains while encountering various situations and influences. While Arati has been a filmmaker in the past, she now indulges in the medium of paint; where the colours render opaque the transparent glass surface, giving a feeling of starting from scratch. The transparency or ‘nothingness’ of the glass surface is negated, as if it is resisting being perceived as it is supposed to be; instead the emerging forms and colours give it the illusionary multi-dimensionality seen in paintings. The glass performing as canvas, recites unconventionality in choice of medium and demonstrates an array of imagery and concepts, created and incorporated by her; corresponding to the multi-dimensional aspect of a film, which initially starts as a non-tangible idea or vision, but then proceeds to become a full-fledged art form.

Arati moved from Bombay fifteen years ago and settled in Bangalore, where she began her painting career. This is Arati's second solo exhibition in Bombay. In today's age, with the emergence of various ideas and styles, and a prominent marketplace defining the status of almost everything, art is perched on level where it is interrogated with intense fascination. Major shifts, as the sudden rise of a market value for art works or the prominence of individual idioms, which allow or do not allow personal expressions to be maneuvered, give consent to artists and their art to exist with a flamboyant and successful countenance.

In few of her squares the soft, unmediated, streams of lines and flows of pigment seem to spring directly from the artist's impulses.

Her works have the lyrical, romantic symbolism derived through influences retained from masters, such as Gustav Klimt, an Austrian painter who straddled the late part of the 19th, to the early years of the 20th century. The sensuous, self-indulgent forms or flowing soft designs have

the striking two-dimensionality with which Klimt surrounds his figures, evoking the gold ground of Byzantine art; this platform of directly adopting from the past negates the space in which the painting is done, as in negating time, and thus creating images of eternity, similar to Klimt's borrowing from an earlier period.

In fact the present show performs as a tribute to this great master. Many of the figurative works retain a similar identity, but yet transfigured by Arati's choices and impulses. With the proliferation of images in our world today, the choices are vast, thus an artwork is a result of preference, and directly or indirectly artists are influenced by what is around. Arati's choice in picking imagery, symbols, designs incorporated by Klimt, rejoices or pronounces her awareness and love for his work.

All the paintings are bright, discussing her relationship with her experiences. The experience of being a woman, a mother, a lover, an artist, and through it all emerges her persona... celebrated through these beautiful glass paintings. The rendering on the glass is delicate and intricate and the paint wanders spontaneously, but softly.

Intrigued by the detailed symbolism, coveted by Klimt, Arati picks up fragments from his work. 'At Play', 'On My Mind' and 'Love' are active, and decorative but yet contemplative paintings. Textiled backdrops, brightly hued forms and symbols, the mother child stylized personas or the designed Klimt's Kiss, together unite and revel in colours which move stealthily on the glass surface; the initial decorativeness which appears flat is in actuality multi-textured. Their colourful playfulness and our delight in the paintings discuss and assure us of a similar potential in ourselves.