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Sculptures with an edge

Adolescent yet spiritual, fresh, a raw surface bristling with axe marks, a ruthless yet refreshing quality--these are the words that come to mind when one looks at the wooden sculptures by Ravi Shah.

The young artist who graduated recently from the College of Fine Arts, Chitrakala Parishath, Bangalore has exhibited 12 sculptures, life-size wooden ones accompanied by smaller stone works, at Gallery Sumukha in a show titled 'Wood and Blues' . The show will be on till August, 21, 2004.

The figurative sculptures have an air of spirituality and the elements necessary to make them complete works of art but even then props like mud, charcoal and a mattress are placed to define the works further, interpreting the works as installations. The innocent looking wooden figures, rendered with fervour have the visible traces of the artist's axe. These sculptures portray deep sensitivity and intensity, influenced by the unique and painful experiences encountered by him. But the sand, charcoal droplets in the display, work as unnecessary accessories.

The wooden figures that are extremely individualistic are wholesome by themselves and with an inherent, heartfelt awkwardness; Ravi's art-works balance well with other meditative activities that are central to his life.

With natural discomfort, the exhibits bring people together. The solitary wooden forms, standing or lying down, are all about communication and interaction with people. His models are people he knows and there is a subjectivity in the work that is hard to escape.

The intertwining of artist and model is so evident in many works, which consequently become an extension of the artist himself.

Ravi's faces have a sought of verve in them.

Either in contemplation or deeply engrossed, these still figures are full of life with questioning, blank expressions.

These 'down-to-earth' sculptures possess an essentialism of character, though not idealistic, placing them in exclusive realm altogether.

The show also has his drawings as exhibits. Though the stringing up of his realistic/creative life-study drawings done in charcoal and his stressing on the 'blues' music connotation, work as an added indulgence; they could also engage the viewer in a discussion, involving the process of an artist at work.

Ravi's wooden forms valorizes an awkward incompleteness, a condition of silence...or contemplation, a sought of contraction in attitude. But in process, paradoxically, Ravi Shah and his figures chant in a direction that echo a far-reaching consequence.