

August 29 2005

ART

Bridging time

The retrospective show of G S Shenoy between August 21 to 27, at the Venkatappa Art Gallery acknowledged and revived memories that comprised of not only the growth of an artist, but also his vast contributions in enhancing the art scenario in Karnataka for more than three decades.

Looking at the paintings, one realises that the paintings not only disclose the era they were done in, but also describes the inclinations at the time. Likewise, in context to the space during and after the 1950s, works of art had a rebellious streak, as individual works preferably did not succumb to rule or routine; instead the trend-setter was the individual artist and his choice.

Shenoy belongs to this decisive epoch in Indian history, when modernists or western thoughts had intervened Indian minds, in consequence creating fluctuating ideas, confused with traditional and modernists' choices. The show brought to mind this changing milieu. Also, the glimpses of his paintings unveiled the vast dimensions and experiments undertaken by the artist in producing and revealing a monumental array of works along with the different experiences that went through it. Coming from Udupi, Shenoy travelled to Mumbai and studied at the J J School of Art in the 1960s. From then on, his contribution and commitment to painting did not go unnoticed; the process involved going through various phases in choice of subject and medium creating a persona that linked the under-exposed art of Udupi to the performing space in Bangalore and Mumbai.

The present exhibits gave a glimpse of varied range of subjects and medium adopted by Shenoy down the years. These paintings have a quickness of strokes along with a softness of feeling. The show began with few life study sketches and then proceeded to include portraits done in oil, the form of Ganesha rendered in 'planes', metal embossed murals and an array of landscapes done in the wash technique and abstract works done using Fevicol for a slight relief.

Shenoy painted landscapes on the basis of his impressions using water colours, pastels and charcoals. In the use of paint, he did not hesitate to use any medium to get a required effect, thus in result the paintings are a combination of textures and colours. The forms dwelled in flat rectangular planes. Whether in figurative or abstract paintings, Shenoy's love for planes is seen in most of his work. His 'rock-cut' paintings demonstrate the galore of colours contrastingly to the generally single-hued rocks, in process exposing a festivity of colour

over the rigidity of form. The nature paintings reveal an inborn accumulation of impressions diagnosed in different textures, gained through water colours, pastel, charcoal and oil. In portraiture, the broad impressionist strokes reconcile to an inevitability of influences of styles inherited or imposed upon the artist.

The show regards the contributions made by the artist for the enhancement of the art scenario in Karnataka, along with reciting the potentiality of art through its visual magnetism.

All in one

The analogous display of paintings of clothing of famous preachers in boxes with glass doors in the show titled Preaching Museum by artist Suchender P; (Aug 21 to Oct 3, Gallery Ske) raises certain concerns.

The paintings that are enclosed in boxes are attires of well-known figures made obvious through their signature posture and clothing, demonstrating the freedom sanctioned to and by art to create light trendy connotations of profound intense subjects. The ideas initiated, practiced and promoted by the preachers over time are grappled by the onlooker while passing by each box in the gallery. The show encapsulates each preacher in a box, like in a museum, giving him an importance which the viewer is already well aware of.

Based on the pre-conceived knowledge or the imagination of the viewer, it also probes the social capabilities of art as the preachers are from different religions, questioning the 'materialistic' implications, in this case literally of a single rendering passing through various ideologies, space and era. The figures outlined by the clothing and posture, are all given an importance as the paintings displayed, are enclosed in individual boxes, appearing as reproductions of artifacts in museums which store such objects. The idea in all the paintings is similar, only the clothing differs. Suchinder creates shifts in perspectives, combining the obvious symbolism of clothes rendered very skillfully along with the museum connotations of boxes which house them. Sai Baba's serene stance, Osho's pose or Swami Vivekananda's stance along with other forms relive great eras of thought. The exhibits on the whole are a light moment ironically dwelling in significant, deep philosophies and information.

Beautiful people

The show Beautiful People (Aug 28 to Sept 10, Right Lines Art Gallery) displays ink sketches on canvas by Bishnu Dhar which are cute and meaningful. For Bishnu, beautiful people are animals. He understands that all the evils and calamities in the society such as pollution, excess population, greed etc. are because of human intervention. As a gesture, he sketches cheerful forms of animals to celebrate and respect these beings for existing within their own space. Intrigued by their innocence and straightforwardness,

he creates interesting parodies drawing their faces as he imagines them.

Bishnu Dhar, originally from Calcutta, stays in Mumbai; usually displays colourful oil paintings on canvas. The present show displays for the first time, his ink sketches done about two decades ago. Where the heads are intricately rendered with fine lines, the body is suggested by an abrupt single line discerning the outline of the animal form, connecting to the lower part of the animal which is again intricately rendered in result giving fullness to the form. The subtle gestures rendered demonstrate a gaiety or sobriety in the mild expressions. The singular lines that define the forms balance with the detail rendering of the faces and the feet.

Bishnu sees a naivete in 'Holy King' — a form of an elephant, The Beamer Lemur or in Mausī the cat. Creating playful personifications, these works enter into an animal world of delight and wonder. Enamoured by their simplicity, Bishnu feels that humans should realise the pureness behind the ferocity or ignorance of animals and in turn respect them. The show highlights the notion that contemporary art can reclaim or suggest individual beliefs through different approaches and styles.