

**Monday, August 8, 2005**

## **ART**

### **Distinct style**

At first glance, the exhibits at the show, The Art for Children 2005, an Indo-Japanese artists' venture, previewed first at the Welcom Art Gallery and then at Gallerie Sara Arrakal till August 6, appear as an inter-cultural activity between two countries that have a backdrop of rich tradition and history. On investigating further, the show is a potential space to debate the existence or non-existence of indigenous contemporary art and arrive at some significant conclusions on present day status of art. The exhibition was in support of Vishwalaya, a resource centre based in Bangalore which provides home and education for children.

Contemporary Japanese art, like Indian art, has accumulated diverse styles and concepts, with Eastern and Western characteristics mixed in varying degrees. With growing demands from the art market, expressions are catered by galleries and tastes from 'outside'. The future of Japanese and Indian painting which formerly possessed an 'exoticism of the East' is now dictated by Western or International norms.

The growing internationalism in art today, diffuses boundaries, and creates dilemmas in differentiating origins of art ideas and styles. Though people knowingly or unknowingly succumb or acknowledge their cultural tradition, art has attained an internationalism which unites subjects or causes.

The exhibition adds to the belief that depiction in art is not as important as the reason to create art; as it houses different ideas; primarily paintings, with also instances of pottery.

The show has a variety of subjects from landscapes to still life to figurative and abstract works of art. Mrs Tomoko Mukasa's painting — Standing — thinks about the relationship of the two-dimension surface of the painting with the seemingly irregular arrangement of simple flat forms painted in it.

The painting, done in a minimalistic fashion has continuity, that grapples with a movement and momentum extending outside the frame.

Decorative works by Hisako Teruyama, Saeko Amakawa and Kyouko Saitu have a 'flowery arrangement', conceive a progressive stability and simplicity.

### **Unique mixture**

The forms subduely reveal Japanese style lines. A beautifully glazed pot created by Hirokatsu Kondou, adheres to the age-old rich history of Japanese work-man ship. This designed pot has pores all over its surface, creating a lattice which illuminates and reveals

the bright brown surface behind.

In the Indian contemporary art section, a unique mixture of works by well-acclaimed artists like M F Hussain, S G Vasudev and talented newcomers like Vishnu Kumar S along with the Japanese artists' work ascertain the collaborative objective of the exhibition. Babu Xavier's *On Guard Duty*, appears as an environmental friendly work, with a distinctly created subject lapped with green planes hovering in front of a stylistically created 'natural' background.

Vishnu Kumar S, a young promising painter, creates connotations in his semi-abstract, symbolic work.

G Raghu sculpts a composed head with eyes closed capturing a moment of contemplative or debating thought. In the prominently blue print done by M F Hussain, the angular form of the horse used in many of his paintings moves onwards, with a human guide towards an arched streak of shadow.

The inevitability of adhering to norms dictated by the today's market-oriented world, is realised.

But, does this dilemma reduce or lessen the quality of art? To this, there is a befitting answer by Octavio Paz, "...one must not confuse the hegemony of the market place with fruitfulness, imagination, and power to create".

### **Mixed similarity**

The show at the Kannada Bhavan between the July 30 and August 5 gave expression to writings of the well-acclaimed literary figure, Kuvempu through paintings. Kuvempu, an extraordinary poet, novelist and scholar stands as a great name in Kannada literature. Along with portraits of Kuvempu, 50 artists from different places, mainly from Karnataka, created paintings based on his famous works namely the *Ramayana Darshanam*, *Kanooru Heggaditi*, and a number of popular poems. This venture of exhibiting the works together, dedicated to the renowned literary figure, not only creates a dialogue between the various artists, their styles and preferences; but also maps a relationship between the verbal and the visual.

The series include direct narratives, symbolic gestures, 'straight-right' portraits and intricately rendered paintings. The rectangular painted surfaces in various sizes represent the narratives attaining interesting forms, giving importance to the depiction/content rather than the technique used in the painting. It speaks of an inconsistency, where style and technique is concerned, as one can see diverse styles on one platform; however, the paintings form a coherent whole of being associated with Kuvempu; in turn reflecting the notion that the very idea of contemporary art implies multiple possibilities to experiment or include, and also depict contradictory narratives.

Kuvempu's literary works are noteworthy as they generate a subjective interpretation of

the mythical episodes or creations. Likewise, when an interpretation takes another form; in this case painting, it includes the experience of an artist.

Hence, the visual manifestation of Kuvempu's life and works also depend upon the diversity of media and techniques used in conveyance, reflecting the individual stance of the artist. Upon entering, portraits of Kuvempu and his wife are done in a realistic academic rendering followed by Yusuf Arrakal's repetitive images which takes the guise from Andy Warhol's work.

### **Modern interpretation**

Basavarj Musavalgi's Sacrificial Goat is a modern interpretation of an age-old ritualistic practice created by using computer-aided technology. The painting puts across the situation of animal sacrifice. Based on an incident in Kuvempu's novel Kanru Heggadithi, it recites the episode where a goat is brought by the servant to the sacrificial spot and upon seeing the gory blood around him, signified by the red colour spread across the painting, the goat flees as he is scared out of his wits. This instance precedes the event, when he is pursued by the crowd to surrender, in an attempt to escape them he jumps into a tank, to save his skin, literally.

Baby Eshwar Prasad sticks to an adherence in applying paint using his signature techniques, illustrating a story from another narrative in Kuvempu's writings.

The show raises queries pertaining to the freedom of expression sanctioned to artist, which also questions the freedom of choice granted to a curator or organiser or conceptualiser to exercise or exhibit a subject or an idea? What standards can be applied to exhibit works?

Where this show did have potential in its varied stories and renderings, it also investigates the way in which visual expressions reflect the historical background, politics, geography, social structure, religious beliefs, and also the role of the contemporary artist in the context. And thus, with the clutter of imagery, the show consequently states the popular genre of today's art — subjective, kitsch, freedom of media and a curated show with independent ideas.