

The Point is the Same

For an established artist to ascertain himself is far more complicated and challenging than for an upcoming one. S.G.Vasudev has had a number of shows in the recent years, be it paintings, tapestries or metal extracts. As art should provide fresh visual experiences, the artist is at stake to remain at the “esteemed” position but yet arrange for different approaches while working. The show at the Sumukha Gallery, which displays ‘Copper Extracts’, pronounces this inevitable dilemma an accomplished artist goes through.

S.G. Vasudev, one of the early protagonist of the Cholamandal School, has been working with copper sheets for the last 25 years. The recently displayed tapestries too, seemed to be aimed as substitutes for paintings, surrendering to a single over-powering concept... that of being a ‘Vasudev’s’ work’.

‘Soliloquies in Sheet-Metal’ relinquish the object-subject divide. Where his paintings show the distinctions in forms and in spaces by various colors, the ‘single’ metal differentiates between forms and spaces by depths and textures. Different materials provide different experiences for the artist and the viewer. Here the copper metal reduces the nuances the colors offer and reconciles to textural expressions, provided through the method of metal embossing that ironically infest a vastness of space and textures. Like in the two-dimensional surface of a painting, the artist expresses his themes and ideas through paint; in the same way using other ‘tools’; an assuming two-dimensionality is retained on the metal sheets. On a colored flat surface one is informed of depth and lightness through colors, creating polarities of space. Vasudev uses this painterly equation on his metal works; where the positive area could be expressed by the protruding plain surfaces and the detailed cluster is the negative space, like black and white or dark and light. The glossy finish of the copper performs as highlights equivalent to very ‘bright spots’ in paintings. We can take the liberty of calling his copper works ‘paintings’ in its conceptual sense; as the presentation of these works is similar to painted canvases displayed in a gallery space. The distinction lies in their creation; the metal allows an expression that pronounces new outlines resulting in a new conception.

The subjects in his copper extracts are his own. In Art all is universal, it is the artist who makes it personal by his interpretation or disguise; the artist cultivates a style and designs forms. For a well-informed Art Enthusiast, titles like the ‘Theatre of Life’, ‘She’, ‘He’ and ‘Earthscape’ are instantly associated with Vasudev. The well-known lyricism of lines and forms in his paintings, illustrate an instantly recognizable celebration of nature, belonging to a different world created by the artist. Most obviously, this usage of material is from his Cholamandal involvement. As one of the earlier constituents of this Art school, Vasudev was drawn by the upcoming trends this school promoted. An ideology based on the negotiation between Art and Craft; where the idea was to incorporate craft techniques as reminiscent to our previous ornamental legacy carved on the temples. In these metal sheets, art has presupposed the techniques used by crafts men to produce ‘Fine Art’; thus creating a heritage in Fine Arts.

A recurrent theme is the ‘Maithuna’ or ‘Act of Love’. The naked forms spread out on an ornamental surface recite a glorious union between man and woman. Be it the rider who triumphantly rises on the elephant or the ‘Surya’, which sends its rays beneath resulting

in a joyous festivity of forms below. The persistent 'nature' in/of his work creates an indigenous authenticity of ideals/ideas corresponding to his roots, associated with the Madras school. Engraved simplified standard designs like the crosshatch pattern, dots or the playful lines can be called 'fundamental' to Vasudev. The aim is to resemble a nature and to shape a structure derived from experiences collected over time, which constantly evolve new possibilities in Art making.