

A Corporate 'encounter' with Art

Earlier notions of art, which acclaim the artist as a loner, away from the rest of the society are disrupted by the modern alliance of art with community. The culture today inter relating art and society, and thus developing a new rhetoric, which defines a different kind of 'intellectualism', aestheticises the global culture created by the corporate world. This is reflected in the Sculpture Camp organized by the PSC at their very own construction site. Different sensibilities intermingled allowing a unique interaction between technology and art. Fine arts no longer being an exclusive domain but now also gaining potential in the corporate imagination.

Ironically linking Fine arts and the artisan's crafts and working amongst the engineers, plumbers and technicians is reminiscent of the architecture/sculpture practice, in ancient India, where the artisans and the builders all worked together. But what is fashionable here, is the trend set in the new age.

The mastermind behind this highly post modern agenda Mrs. Usha Narendran of Shreshtha Art resources, along with Mr. Bob Hoekstra, the CEO of Philips Software Centre, who generates the philosophy of 'commitment to community', gave birth to this 11 – day program.

As art today is very much determined by the response it gains, PSC allowed an unique exposure to art. Software engineers and corporate citizens visited the camp site, both intrigued and impressed reflecting a trend befitting our times.

Another significant aspect of this agenda is that the sculptors were not only the award-winning artists, but also traditional craftsmen. Each artist exploring newer possibilities, in an attempt to cope with the new environment.

Man today is not oblivious to the disasters of the coming times, yet with a positivist claim, he ignores them.... but yet again he creates an awareness to them. It is this attitude which is fore played in Arun's work. His tree, 'made of wood' carries with it a new environmental consciousness. An irony portrayed, in questioning destruction by recreating a 'symbolic tree' made of wood, using wooden kitchen utensils and wooden toys as branches and leaves.

As Arun's tree is to reflect the new consciousness in man today, i.e. to be alert but to keep 'in control the changing world'; G. Reghu's terracotta's sculptures are simple but subtle and undoubtedly highly contemporary. His work reflects the human centered content of today's world. The limitation of man chains the world within the being. A world dictated and seen through a man's eye. He has very directly and clearly conveyed this, through the simple suggestive forms created. The persistence on the 'rural' is testified through his style. His work globes the human encounter with the world; interpreted as the greed of man which halts the nature of progress.

Where these two artists have an ideological base, Shambhu Shastri's iron rod bulb contains the philosophy ideal for the times. The bulb relates to the corporate world created by the multinationals. Accented by the company's philosophy he applies the same motto 'Let's make things better' to his work. Making it 'better' by giving his bulb an artistic frame. It becomes the signifier of a new art – tech link.

Mario's work is unique in its attempt to interrogate the past and the present. Taking 'river' as a theme, the work historicizes a frame as set in by the new world today. Creating an authenticity, for the product items manufactured today, by illustrating that they also have a genealogical or natural existence, as natural objects evolved in the past. Based on the river concept, the work showcases the ancient relics left behind by a river, as new products are displayed today.

In the motion picture 'The Gods must be Crazy', a 'bottle' performs as a hero, in a tribal area. This rural folk were unaware of the existence of urbanisation... and the bottle, which was thrown from a flying plane in their area, fascinated them; Gopi's bottle made of wood, works on similar grounds. But with a completely different philosophy. Where in the movie, the rural people were completely unaware of its existence, Gopi goes one step further in realising its existence. In his work, he attempts to, as the tribal folk in the movie, to personalize the bottle, but by relating it to the frame as set in by modern societal structures. The modern society which 'gives importance to brand names rather than the 'being' itself'.

Painter Mr. Soumen Chakraborty whose vast experiences while venturing out in the Himalayas, gives a spiritual base to his ideas. He aims at creating an eco-friendly atmosphere for Philips. Picking up various objects related to music, he paints them in silver, as if putting them on a pedestal.

Traditional craftsmen working along with fine artists relate to the earlier cultural dialectic in India. The genealogical balance between tradition and modernity, between craft and art, and the rift between the past and the present ...makes us realize our being; the transformations we have undergone. A stone carver, a wood carver, a metal embossing artisan and artisans who work with terracotta, all grouped together in this space reinforcing the cultural dialect. Trained in traditional artisans schools in the rural areas of Karnataka, these artists recreated the ancient genres with folk idioms, an Hoysala apsara made of stone, by Rajesh M. Pattar, a metal embossed forest scene by Someshkar, Vijikar made the wooden Hoysala figure, and Shivappa and Aatisha made various types of terracotta figurines.

The camp which proved to be a huge success, raised various queries in the corporate minds. What is 'Art' today?, and what is its impact on society? How does today's art relate to the past?... and why does it lay emphasis on individuality?!!

To this I would say, that art today, which has exhausted all its previous glory aims at reinforcing a new cultural idiom, which is all inclusive, of the past and the present, and the today and the tomorrow. And the sculpture camp at the PSC construction site, has certainly imbibed this prerogative.