

**July 18 2005**

**ART**

**Reclaiming gestures**

A gallery in the Chitrakala Parishath has displayed another array of Ravi Shah's wooden sculptures and the show is on till July 19. The free standing wooden figures celebrate common notions of the human; while they also act as a response to this contemporary artists' interest in re-creating the human body... applying his signature 'axe-effect'.

In producing the wooden sculptures, Ravi consciously renounces elaborate or perfectionists' techniques in rendering the human forms. The forms, scarcely clothed, possess the naivete and awkwardness, exposing incompleteness and compelling humanistic attitudes, a rawness of material, as if emerging out of nature. Realities with their contemplations often cross lines, where it appears that the one character, which maybe the artist himself takes over the qualities and idiosyncrasies of several real individuals.

These figures vary in sizes. Not many artists are known to be doing such magnificent sizes in wood. The display combines the life-size figures leading to the huge monumental ones asking the onlooker to participate or proceed. As you walk along the path, as maneuvered by the divider in the gallery space, the figures grow bigger in size.

Soon after the free standing figures at the entrance which interrogate blankly, you arrive towards the colossal form in a corner positioning itself to sit... in turn settling you within the space. The dancer appearing as a three-dimensional relief, with an unequal head, greets with clasped hands. The stunted youth figure adds sudden alertness to the surrounding... but strangely closing his eyes, may be to reality. The largest, a huge monumental figure much bigger than life gestures an ultimatum, as he raises his finger... seeming like a supreme power acclaiming the heterogeneity of attitudes present around.

Ravi's rendering with ruthless marks of the axe give his sculptures a unique genuine quality. The show incorporates figures with sometimes huge disproportionate heads. It appears that Ravi's frequent shows, is his grappling with people and their stances together; in turn forming a crucial part of his ongoing development as an artist. Not many artists in the contemporary art world work in wood. Ravi Shah's sculptures can be compared to German artist Balkenhols' works in the 1980s; but where Balkenhol aims for objectivity and neutrality of representation, Ravi Shah's work imbibe deep individual characteristics portrayed through posture or expression.

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