

Art Alive Gallery

presents

## **When Images Speak Back**

Recent works by Sharmi Chowdhury

**Venue** : Art Alive Gallery  
S – 221, Panchsheel Park  
New Delhi - 110017

**Show dates** : 12<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2008  
(11 a.m. to 7 p.m.)

**Art Alive gallery presents a solo show of Baroda based artist Sharmi Chowdhury.**

Where facts meet fiction, animals converse with humans, the outside and the inside exchange places, and a strange universe is conjured into existence. Playful, daring and witty, the recent works of Sharmi bring to the fore a new facet in her dealings with the world.

There are times when young artists through sheer tenacity and a deep sense of commitment arrive at a style one fine day which would make all their previous works seem experimental. Sharmi Chaudhury has effortlessly and precisely accomplished the leap from the exploratory to a mastery over her medium with this body of works comprising Tempera on Silk, Oil on Canvas, Ceramic Platters and Watercolours on paper.

Her penchant for story telling continues but the mode of telling has metamorphosed dramatically. What earlier used to be elaborate tableau of puppet like figures set against theatrical backdrops seem to have acquired a life of their own. Releasing themselves from being characters of a play with prescribed roles, the figures seem now to assert their new-found identity which is as much based on masquerade and duplicity. They move in a fictitious world where mirrors don't speak the truth, and where animals and humans live in a strange camaraderie.

It was the large scale of a canvas that suggested to Sharmi that she could knit stories within a story. Like a craftsman, she wove the waft and weft of her narratives between the axis of reality and fiction. As one reads them, one felt swept into them in a dizzying encounter and is dazzled by her skill in suturing different stories on the same surface.

The man-woman relationship underpins Sharmi's narratives as a leitmotif, but what disrupts the gendered binary is the subliminal world invoked by the animal world. The animals parody the human world by mimicking it or open up a new world ruled by

different norms and morals. At times, markers of femininity from the human world are mapped on to the animals, as when one of the platters depicts a man carrying a crocodile with a red bangle adorning each limb!

The artist has tried to create her own theater in these works and altogether this body of work can be seen as an attempt to present a 'play', a 'performance' which occurs in her world of theater. In the words of Sharmi "The representational mode which I have settled with is a visual equivalent of the theater which I have been seeing in Kolkata since my childhood. The idea of 'presenting' a performance is to recreate the brilliant atmosphere of theater, with all its artificiality on canvases. The use of backdrops in my works is specific in this context; and deliberately displayed the artificiality of the situation, the absurdity of performance for a better, a nuanced sense of 'life' in a given situation. The backdrop stands for a sign, stimulation for the performance to be carried on, and what goes on the sets is the performance with its fullest zeal and energy.

There will be around 20 works on display in different mediums – Tempera on Silk, Oil on canvas, Ceramic platters, Watercolour on Paper and Drawings.

*For further enquiries please contact:*

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