

## Plurality of Abstraction

It is now widely recognised that one of the most vital trends in contemporary Indian art is that of abstract art. While it can be seen as recapturing of the legacy of S H Raza, Akbar Padamsee, V S Gaitonde and J Swaminathan, it also shows a certain exhaustion with the dominant neo-narrative art. It is amazing to see so many artists of the younger generation are drawn towards abstraction coming as they do from varied social and religious backgrounds. Since search for freedom is an eternal concern of all artists, it seems abstraction allows these artists a space of freedom which can accommodate a variety of experiences, emotions and insights. It also embodies their restlessness, passionate search for form and spiritual and aesthetic anxieties. More than anything else, abstraction allows each of them to develop a personal poetics of form and meaning, indeed an individual idiom of articulation. Some of this freedom is also transferred to viewers who are free to discover elements of meanings in these works of art, each according to his or her viewpoint, experience and sensibility. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that this youthful art tends to put together a new aesthetics of liberation and daring. It reaches out to the ineffable in many different ways reaffirming the prominent role of imagination both in artistic creativity and receptivity.

This exhibition presents works of ten artists who could be said to exemplify the new trend of abstract art in its rich and complex plurality. They have different visions and idioms; their aesthetics are vastly different from each others; they use different media; they arrive at different destinations. They resort to abstraction for different purposes. Yet, they are together and do succeed in asserting a comradeship of spirit and imagination. Most of them have chosen significantly not to give titles to their works indicating that they do not wish to engage their works in thematic straight-jackets. They have made them enjoying visual freedom and would like to leave them still pulsating in and breathing freedom. One cannot fail to notice that most works have structures meticulously evolved devoid of any casualness. In other words, the ten artists know how to paint, to excavate, to layer, to use geometry, to construct, to orchestrate colours and shapes, to create and accentuate textures etc.

Seema Ghurayya continues to be reticent in spite of enormities of dimensions. Akhilesh through the corporeal warmth and recurrence of motifs achieves an inner musicality. Yusuf paints his works to be windows from where one can peep into vast reality. Sujata Bajaj makes her works metaphors of energy and passion. Manish Pushkale continues to aspire, through renunciation, to layer essences. In Yogendra Tripathi painting is discovering, excavating to reveal what lies hidden beneath. Smriti Dixit's mixed media on canvases are looking for a lost or at least dimmed divinity. Rahim Mirza makes leaves to hang in the air or crowd in evocative and unfamiliar spaces. Sanju Jain creates a quiet theatricality between the foreground and the background and Saba Hasan's painted and overlaid canvases remain pages, remembered and forgotten, from a book of disquiet. It is evident that these artists in their works are evoking many emotions. The art embodies search and struggle, spiritual anxiety and aesthetic restlessness, responses to reality and creation of alternative reality, raids on the inarticulate and surprising discoveries.

Fernando Pessoa, the great Portuguese poet, has said, 'Be plural like the universe'. This could almost be the brief joint manifesto of these ten artists. They have all been recipients of the Raza Foundation Awards in the last 5 years. It is but appropriate that they come together in an exhibition being organised as part of the celebrations of the great master SH Raza attaining the age of 85 years. In a way the exhibition is a vindication of Raza's oft-articulated belief in the vitality and plurality of contemporary Indian art.

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