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The aesthetics of art

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Curator, author and art critic Alka Pande gave an overview of the Indian art scene

How does one classify art?

What makes something art? What is Indian art? In what direction is art in India heading towards? Though an hour is hardly enough time to answer all these questions, Alka Pande did her best to shed some clarity during her interaction as part of the Krishna Kriti art and culture festival.

An art critic, a teacher, a curator, and an author, Alka has engaged with the world of art for nearly three decades. And who could be more qualified to help one negotiate the complexities and intricacies of Indian art.

Alka took the audience through a journey of art; she introduced different styles and notions using simple terms and language with the aid of slides

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Stained glass artist Prabhakaran Kanichar runs a first of its kind Glass Art Museum 'Fantasies on Glass' in Kerala. Mr. Prabhakaran is also trying for a unique Glass Art Museum in the national capital, one which will capture and reflect the pulse of historical events in the country, apart from its achievements in various fields.

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Dr. Alka Pande. Photo: K. Gopinathan

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showing examples of Indian art.

From the modernism brought into Indian art by Raja Ravi Varma, the influence of gender in Amrita Sher-Gil's works, the vivid depictions of human form by Tyeb Mehta, to art practised by Indians abroad whether technology is incorporated into art like Uday K. Dhar does or the rich textures and colours used by Sunaina Bhalla.

She also talked about sculptors such as Dhruva Mistry who creates unique representation of forms using modern materials and Sumedh Rajendran who uses recycled materials, rubber and even stickers to create his works.

India has such a tradition of tribal and folk art and artists in India are reinterpreting and giving it a contemporary twist from Manisha Jha who practices Madhubani art but gives the women in her paintings modern hairstyles and clothing or Suresh K. Nair who is heavily influenced by art from Kerala. Though installation and video art hasn't caught on in a big way in India due to lack of infrastructure and understanding there are still some who practise it such as Tejal Shah, Vivan Sundaram and Subodh Gupta.

The future of art lies in design art where art, craft and design is blended to create an interactive form of art such as that done by Tarun Jung Rawat.

Ideas of aesthetics seem to be changing and what is novel and has not been seen before is considered art. Alka says that what is prized greater than skills is new ideas. According to her when it comes to understanding contemporary art it is necessary to be educated on the history of art, to be aware of the cultural context that gave rise to a piece of art and most of all to be confident in one's own taste and have a love for art.

Keywords: [Alka Pande](#)

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Pictures from the Sangeet Natak Academy awards 2009 presented by President Pratibha Patil at a function in New Delhi recently. Photos: Shanker Chakravarty, PTI. [more slideshows »](#)

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