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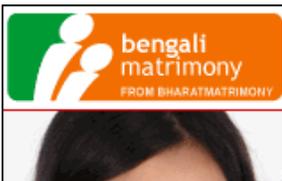
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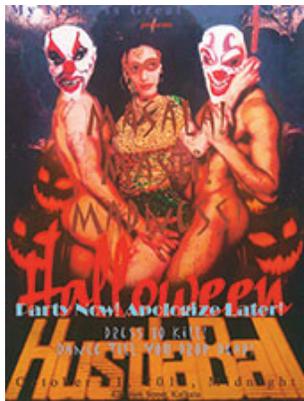
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A FEELING FOR THE MOMENT

Visual Arts -Bhasw ati Chakravorty



What strikes the viewer first about the exhibition being held in CIMA, *Adbhutam — rasa in Indian art* (till December 31), is a kind of youthfulness. The total impression is one of vividness and variety, of an imaginative restlessness that perhaps best conveys the many-sided world of contemporary Indian art that the exhibition aims to represent. Many of the artists whose works are displayed are not as widely known as the others; yet each has a unique vision and an individual style, even a specific area of interest. What unites them, as the literature on the show points out, is a preoccupation with Indian themes, reflections and forms of expression. That Indianness, though, is contemporary, the *rasas* peculiarly apt for the moment, although some of the motifs, metaphors, allusions and even methods may be drawn from tradition.

Some of the artists represented here are working overseas, but are rooted in Indian visual traditions, while others, such as Clare Arni, have come from overseas to settle in this country. Arni's archival inkjet prints of the *sadhvi*, Meera, capture the subject as if at one of the edges of experience — in one her dreadlocks are being shaved off as she sits still, about to enter a new life. The exhibition presents a mixture of media, themes and genres. There are more photographs, as those by Arjun Swaminathan, of fire rituals conducted by men in Karnataka, as there are many works with woman as theme. Tarun Jung Rawat is almost playful, with bright blocks of colour and printed words on slips of paper, in his two works suggesting the triumph of the girl over restrictions, *No Never Don't, Yes, Can and Will*. In the same way, Surekha's apparently lighthearted video shows a young girl against a peaceful blue sky, her hair flowing, trying to keep her feet on the ground through an unending hop, skip and jump along burning hopscotch squares.

A different paradox is wrought through Bandeep Singh's archival digital print, *Sa (Antarghat — the vessel within series)*, where the glowing outlines of a woman's body poised over the mouth of a round vessel evoke both sensuous matter and insubstantial metaphor in an almost architectural arrangement. Arpita Singh's *Ocean Dream* suggests woman's vulnerability in a way different from that of Surekha's: she is like a frail vessel on the sea, held down by force.

Each work has a different appeal, often many-layered, although it is not possible to

enumerate here all the different moods and techniques the viewer encounters. The piquant combination of horror, sinister beauty, consumerism, distortion, excess, frenetic life, showbiz glitter and contemporaneity in Uday K. Dhar's *Masala, Masti and Madness* (Top), digitally printed on canvas with oil paint, glitter and wax, is an example of the strange *rasas* Indian artists are now exploring. Nascent urban myths are juxtaposed with contemporary explorations of old ones, whether it is Viren Tanwar's Hanuman, heroic but somehow ironic in *Sankat Mochan I*, or Jogen Chowdhury's classic *Bakasur* (Bottom), terrifying in its predatory glee. Ganesh Pyne's *Speaking Stone* is more covert and mysterious skull than Ahalya or magic oracle. Shanthamani Muddaiah's *Jatayu/Icarus* in wood charcoal with cotton rag pulp is a quiet comment on seared ambition.

A similar theme is treated with more humour and trill in Nandagopal's welded copper and brass *The Monkey and the Moon*, but Sumedh Rajendran's untitled sculpture of a pair of walking feet in wood, leather and perforated steel suggests the imprisoned restlessness of the city. Urban life is a reiterated theme, whether in the attractive sweet shops and *paan* shops of Pratima Naithani in uv digital silkscreen on canvas, acrylic painting and mirrorwork, or Roul Hemanta's busy, uneven crowding in *Freeze — XI* and Baiju Parthan's *Street View*, envisioned like an image in Google Earth.

But visions differ. Shreyasi Chatterjee's panoramic — and calming — *Before they vanish* in acrylic, appliqué and embroidery is more nostalgic. A questioning tranquillity pervades V.S. Gaitonde's untitled work of 1996 and S.H. Raza's *Vikiran — Radiation* moves surreptitiously below its stillness. These last works touch another pole in the moods that move through humour, irony, wonder, fear and a colourful, if occasionally frantic, liveliness.

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MBA., Kolkatta



Riya Sen, 24
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