

40-YEAR-OLD RARE PAINTINGS AT THIS ART DO By Ipsita Mitra

A series of rare, vintage paintings were displayed for the first time in India at the recently held art show in the capital by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art.

Around four decade old paintings, drawings and other artworks were showcased in the exhibition titled 'Crossings' that defined the paradox of permanence and transience with the passage of time. A connoisseur and an art collector, Kiran Nadar's motive behind sourcing the age-old and unseen artifacts was to make people aware and appreciate art in all its splendour. Says Kiran Nadar, "India is still far from achieving the status of an 'art hub' and this is an initiative to achieve the same. There is definitely an interest that seems to be growing but somewhere the sensibilities have not matured and there is less of an involvement with art."

A tour of Crossings: The museum housed paintings, drawings, illustrations and installations that took us through a journey of the mid 1950s to early 1960s, unfolded in its distinct vocabulary the historical chapters of the bygone era. An eclectic mix of works by contemporary artists conceived at different points in history had resemblances of conceptualisation and execution. From Jeram Patel's technique of applying blow torch to convey images of void to Bharti Kher's iconoclastic gigantic elephant (weighing nearly 800 kg) ornamented with sperm-shaped bindis, the amalgamation of references from history, mythology and the topical left the art lovers awestruck. Intersection of the stationary paintings with the new media, tradition with modernity, form and formlessness, abstract and meaningful, barenness and fullness were the thematic techniques that added an ephemeral quality to the displayed art at the exhibition. The fluidity of transition in expression, curatorial structure, narrative and visual vocabulary justified the title of the exhibition " Crossings" as we moved from one installation to the other.

Art as a witness to the passage of time: Works of other seminal artists in the likes of M. F. Husain, Zarina Hashmi, Nasreen Mohammadi, Ranbir Kaleka and many others were exhibited that evening. Effective metaphors, powerful renditions of mythology, use of antique furnishings and fabrics collectively brought together a narrative that unfolded the passage of time in visual completeness, adequate intimacy and emotive language. Akbar Padamsee's 'Grey Nude', a monochromatic work painted in 1960s is an excellent example of how absence of colours and the simple strokes of the brush can come to represent melancholy and despair. The reclining nude figure with a downward look mirrors the isolation, a theme that Padamsee's works predominantly revolves around.

Kiran Nadar made a pertinent point when she said that art cannot be perceived from a vantage point for that is a limiting view. "Multiple perspectives to contemporary art make art survive till posterity."

Art needs support to flourish: Expressing concern about promotion of art in India, Kiran Nadar said, "There are many roadblocks that need to be overcome before we can build a seminal museum building for our generation. Land accessibility is the major hurdle that needs to be resolved. To build something monumental we need land and for that we need government support and cooperation."