

# Art thou a woman?



A piece on display at a show titled *Pink is the New Blue*, on at Suruchi Art Gallery, Sector 26, Noida, till June 30. It is a group exhibition of 49 works by 20 women artists.

## Damini Purkayastha

This past month saw a whole range of exhibitions of paintings by leading women artists of India. While some explored traditional art like warli or tankha in new avatars, some others broke free and made their own mould. Celebrating this spirit, we asked art circle veterans if there is indeed an emerging feminine aesthetic and how the market is responding to it.

Virender Kumar Jain, the 75-year-old owner of Kumar Art Gallery, has seen Indian art evolve over the past five decades. He recalls that about 20 years ago, there were hardly any women artists to speak of. "Then people started debating and discussing this discrimination about 15 years ago." Today, he says, the question of gender is irrelevant — the market only cares about what sells.

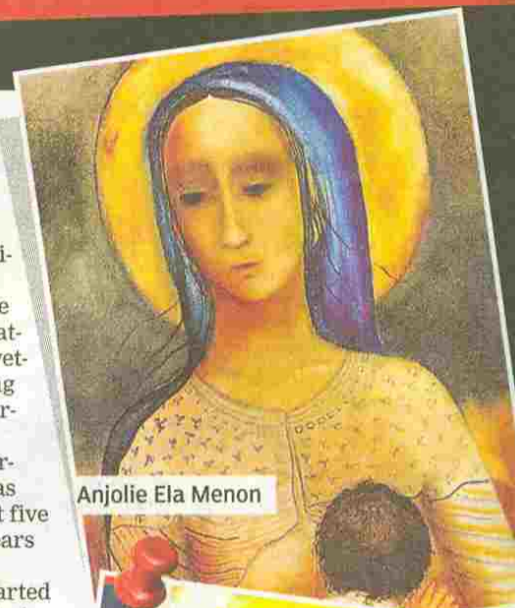
"Auctioneers like Christie's and Sotheby's see women's art as an 'in' thing internationally and favour it," he says. This is one major reason why today women's art also commands higher prices: buyers know the big auction houses are watching.

Women, feels Jain, are naturally more creative and have a more defined aesthetic impulse than men.

Anjolie Ela Menon, Arpita Singh and Arpana Caur are among those whose works have fetched prices in the same band as that of top male names. Artist Anupam Sud feels that though there is no difference in the way galleries respond to art, "women on their own are not aggressive and don't ask for much". That may explain why for years art works by women were undervalued.

Sud, who taught at the College of Art in Delhi for years, adds, "There were more girls in the class than boys, and the girls always did better as they were more hard-working."

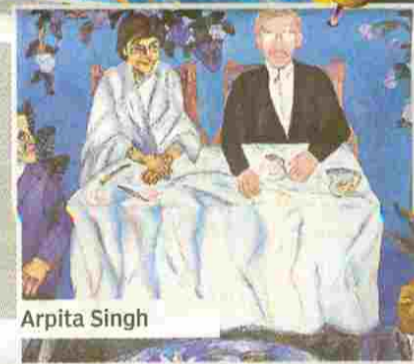
As in most fields, a glass ceiling exists here, too, says curator Alka Raghuvanshi. But it seems ready to crack.



Anjolie Ela Menon



Arpana Caur



Arpita Singh