

Statesman Curated shows

Date: 13-06-2008 | Edition: Delhi | Page: 10 | Source: Bureau | Clip size (cm): W: 27 H: 17

Clip: 1 of 2

Curated shows



Thematic shows are generally reduced to mundane exercises of collect and sell, says **Aruna Bhowmick**

and not art.

Just a few years ago in a rather extensive collection of works under a title to the effect of Art and Cinema, there was a painted near replica of the famous poster with Nargis-Raj Kapoor walking in the rain together under one umbrella. In another show called 'Kites' almost all the artists painted their usual style and subject only on a kite-shaped surface. The extent of unimaginative artistry must have broken the heart of the organiser who in all good faith would naturally have expected more from the artists. Show after 'curated' show one visits expecting a difference, only to return from a jungle of miscellany hoarded together for a sale.

Who is this attributed to? Not just the organisers, I tend to believe. It has probably a lot to do with the myth of ideas being 'forced' on the artist, hence a perceived curtailment of the artists' creative freedom, his having to make artworks away from his own calling. As the artist is free to make art works after his own choice, so is the organiser just as free not to include an artwork that is not compatible with the idea behind the show.



Mehta, Surinder Kaur and potters Ira Chaudhari, Christine Michael and Jyotsna Bhatt.

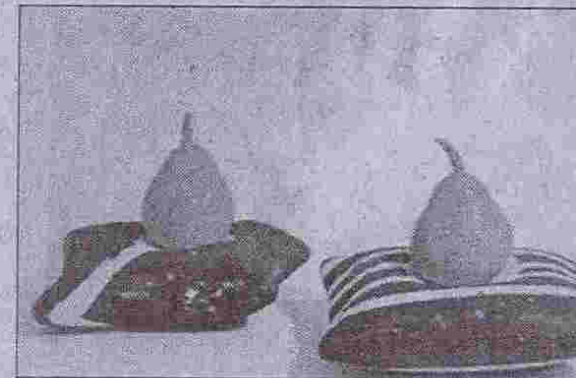
One thing that does not make itself clear, however, is why with anything to do with woman, it is the discussion of the body that must be central to her discussion.

Some of them, and particularly noticeable among them, Lalitha Lajmi and Shipra Bhattacharya, as also Kavita Deuskar seem to have done works closely inspired by the theme of woman power. Deuskar rejects the notions of *nayika* and *gopika* as limited in their perceptions of woman, and challenges it through the image of Empress, by implying mental and emotional strength that must necessarily lead to empowerment. Firm lines and strong texturisation, set lips and fixed gaze add authority to her image, relating her to 'the new blue'.

Then for the organiser it is a question of what to sell, and for the artist, where to sell. That it seems, is the crux of the matter, leaving nothing further to analyse.

Art

A little away from this is found in Suruchi Gallery's ongoing endeavour, The Pink is New Blue, extolling the strength that is woman. Featuring in the show are Shipra Bhattacharya, Rini Dhumal, Anupam Sud, Gogi Saroj Pal, Kanchan Chander, Kavita Nayyar, Anjana Mehra, Madhvi Parekh, Lalitha Lajmi, Shriti Gupta Chandra, Meena Deora, Kavita Deuskar, Neena Luthra, Papri Bose



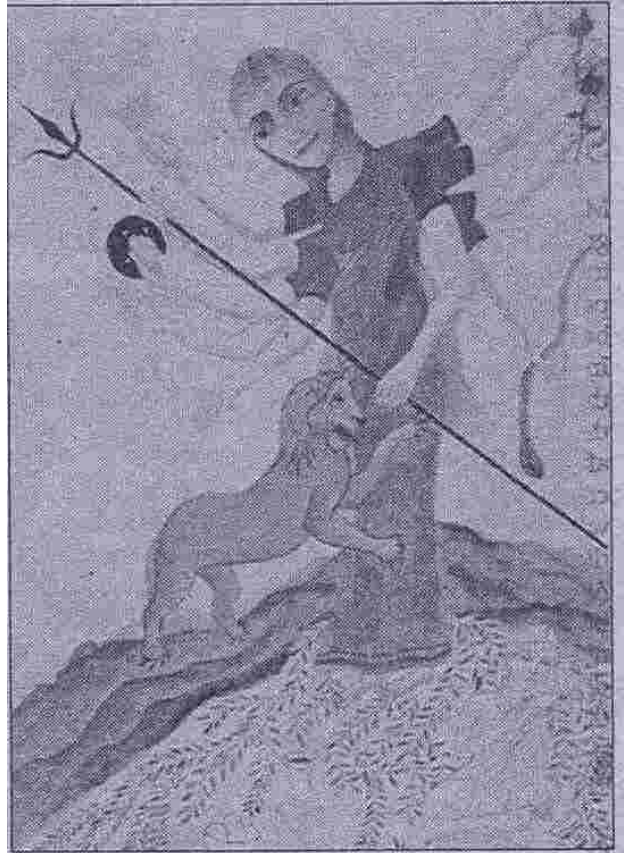
It is very rare that in a show with a given heading or theme the works of each of the participating artists show any marked originality or difference from their usual line of working, either thematically or otherwise. This tends to reduce these so-called thematic 'curated' shows into mundane exercises of collect and sell, without adding any new dimension to the artist's response to a given subject. If a folk artist did this it would be readily showered with terms like 'repetitive', 'mechanical', 'unoriginal', and as such 'craft'

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Clip: 2 of 2



Lalitha Lajmi's Durga, clad in a pink *sari* has blue limbs, in a suggestion of power, in keeping with the theme. Yet, a delicate face and the virtual transparency of the limbs suggests the gentle demeanour ever characteristic of Lajmi's style.

To Shipra Bhattacharya, her paintings are an attempt to "reveal woman's instinctual taste for the decorative and the ornamental in things of daily use or in the setting of everyday existence since the aesthetic and the sacred are closely related" in her perception. The transition from the pink to the blue is clearly brought out in her works, so vital in a