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## Impacts of individuality blurred

Visual arts

Rita Datta



Riveting image: A sculpture by Narayan Sinha (Picture by Shambhu Hazra)

When over 375 works of art are viewed at one go, it's like telescoping several shows into one. Spread over four floors and with artists from different parts of the country, the massive offering, with its competitive and participatory sections, is the annual show of the Birla Academy of Art and Culture. Like such shows in previous years, this time too the collection is expansively catholic, so that standards vary. But though there is much to interest the viewer, the scale of the show tends to blur the impact of individual pieces.

To start with categories usually neglected: graphics and sculptures. In fact, with more than 30 graphics on view, there is something for every taste. You may notice, for example, Nabanita Chakraborty's *Venus Imprisoned* which spoofs Botticelli. Another, by Chandra Sailajangee, exploits bold, sculpturesque forms. But those who prefer abstraction may find Dilip Sasmal's woodcut tumultuously energetic.

Coming to sculptures, you may notice the award-winning *Head* by Suwendu Biswas for its statement 'somewhat facile though it may seem' on the mechanized age. Sukumar Dutta's playful *Cat*, in cloth, has a droll charm, while Chandan Bhandari's *Bongan Local* is engaging in its simplicity. The lean, lithe bronze figures by Sunanda Das and Tapan Kumar Das seem infused with brio, but Dhruva Ghosh debunks the concept of the goddess coming to shower bounty on people.

Asit Das Gupta's sport with geometry, balancing blocks with precarious precision, calls for a pause, but the possible philosophical concept behind the work appears too neat. And Narayan Sinha's detailed, if slightly sentimental, depiction of a frail, old key-maker with sunken cheeks and deadened eyes using scrap is, at 69 cm x 44 cm, a riveting image. And Niranjana Pradhan's 178 cm x 65 cm bronze figure is remarkable for its sensuous, agile grace.

Among paintings there are quite a few works which strut a youthful irreverence. Farcical distortion and improbably loud colours give an edgy badinage to Farhad Hussain's *We too Have a Pedigree*. Seshadri Roy's *Paanshala*, with its squint at low-life in the form of coarse drinkers, may bring to mind Hogarth's *The Rake's Progress*, while Anjan Patra does indeed impart an oppressive dreariness to his *Need Some Space*, showing a couple confined in a small room.

Ranjit Mondal's *Interior* harks back in its stylistic reference to Pop Art while narrating an ordinary tale of the urban everyday in a mix of domestic images. Satyajit Roy, however, chooses a chatty colloquialism in assembling a series of small, spry, doodled motifs to strike a hearty, informal rapport with the viewer. Muralidharan's quaint, child-art *Krishna* may please viewers, while Jaya Ganguly's Baconesque vision endures in her large work.

That brevity could also be the soul of art is seen in the calligraphic strokes of Sanjay Sen Gupta. But the best example to cite is the small, visual haiku of Ramanando Bandopadhyay.

At the opposite end fall some abstract works to note. There's Subhabrata Nandi's acrylic cityscape, a straggly scaffolding of weathered black, pierced with points of white. P. Srinivasan, on the other hand, is disciplined yet subtly capricious in playing around with a variation of lines. And K.C. Murugesan's ironic timbre comes through in saying *Happy New Year* with a dark, sooty palette.



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