

A book on seven artists profiles the evolution of abstract Indian art

Seven Strokes

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WHEN a book about seven Indian artists features four living in Paris, you begin to wonder if that's a coincidence. And then a look at the publisher's name doesn't help matters any. But for all you know, it may be little more than a coincidence that *Seven* (Ravi Kumar Publisher; Rs 4000) is the latest baby of Ravi Kumar, an art publisher and promoter of contemporary Indian art who has lived in the French Capital for the last 40 years.

"We wanted to put together the distinct trend of non-figurative, abstract art," says Hindi poet Ashok Vajpeyi, who has authored the book. S.H. Raza, Velu Vishwanadhan, Rajendra Dhawan, Sujata Bajaj, Akhilesh, Seema Ghurayya and Manish Pushkale are the artists who represent this trend in the book.

"The seven artists are different in their style, ideology and aesthetics," continues Vajpeyi, who has also authored the last Ravi Kumar publication *Raza*, which commemorated Raza's 80th birthday. "And yet, the common thread is that they all question the tyranny of representation." (On an aside, here's a common thread you can't help but notice. Four of the artists—Sujata Bajaj, Akhilesh, Seema Ghurayya and

Manish Pushkale—are known to be proteges of Raza, and are all being recipients of the Raza Foundation Award.)

The launch of the book coincided with the inauguration of an art exhibition at Indian Habitat

York and Tokyo.

The book was formally launched by the Foreign Secretary of India Kanwal Sibal. The Ambassador of France Dominique Girard was also present on the occasion. Hindi writer Nirmal Verma, curator Renu Modi, artists Vivan Sundaram and Veer Munshi and photographer Ram Rahman were also seen at the launch.

The experienced publisher has ensured the exclusivity of the book in three ways. One:

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(From left) Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal, author Ashok Vajpeyi with publisher Ravi Kumar, releasing the book *Seven*

Centre. The exhibition has been curated by Ravi Kumar and consists of art works done especially for the launch of the book and the exhibition. "I agreed to the concept of the book on the condition that I be able to curate an exhibition around it," says the publisher. The exhibition has already been displayed at Mumbai and Chennai, and after Delhi, it will move to Paris, London, New

only 600 copies have been printed; two is priced at Rs 4000; and three, the book is available only in the cities where the exhibition moves. And considering about 185 copies have sold already, the strategy seems to have worked.

(The show will be on till March 31 at India Habitat Centre. For details contact 2468-2002)