

Acquired tastes

Forty artists who have studied their oeuvre in France displayed their work in the capital



In the context of the Western impact on the life and thought of an educated Indian, the French influence direct or indirect is undeniable, especially in the field of art and culture. For the past 50 years or so, contact with France by way of a cultural exchange of art and artists has been a regular and noticeable feature.

The influence has been particularly marked in the area of the plastic arts via painting, sculpture and graphics. Forty eminent personalities, who have lived in France, or gone there to receive training or avail of fellowships through the French Embassy here, in collaboration with the Lalit Kala Akademi, recently offered an interesting presentation, for the benefit of the art lovers in the capital.

Of the 40 participants, the majority of them are working in India, while six of them preferred to stay back and have made Paris their home.

Paintings understandably formed the bulk of the exhibits. S H Raza and A Narayanan's works, both Paris-based, reflect nostalgia for the place of their birth with a strong Indian flavour. Their paintings were more like miniatures, especially in terms of the colour scheme. Many others too used an Indian idiom and seemed to rely on native imagery. Shail Choyal's work showed an inclination towards constructivism in treatment and was close to the Indian *katha* as well as the miniature tradition. P Khemraj

too drew from the traditional motives, but he came close to the known murals. Gold and red dominated his paintings. K V Haridasan preferred to go by his neo-tantric, yet somewhat modified and modernistic expression. In comparison however, a good many apparently felt the spell of a new experimental spirit.

Sophistication marked out many artists' work, often combined with an urban touch. Sunil Das from Calcutta, and Vilas Shinde from Bombay, may be cited as two such instances. Sunil depicted a farmer in the character of a woman, rather her face, against a virtually white backdrop with some fine lines cutting across; the second artist tried to show a placid interior, using a limited palette.

A search for evolving a distinct expression characterised a few paintings. Madhoor Kapoor in a photo-realistic manner, did show sets of people or street views, still others attached more importance to the turmoil around. Prakash Karmakar appeared in an anguished mood. Rini Dhumal, instead of print, put up a painting bearing signs of trouble and turmoil. Kavita Nayar, also a printmaker turned to watercolour.

In sculpture, Valson Kollerli easily caught the eye, with his innovative ideas and presentations. His piece, an animal form with upturned table legs deserves special mention. Brij Sharma too showed a fancy for varied shapes and forms, often noted for a rhythmic grace.

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