

# BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

**Moving away from the boring canvas, artists experiment and come up with refreshing exhibitions**

■ by Nidhi Taparia RATHI

**I**T GIVES ME A STRANGE thrill to watch my work grace a woman's body. I feel like I am hugging her," says 81-year-old painter Syed Haider Raza. The France-based artist bursts into a romantic couplet as he watches women try on his scarves at Satya Paul, Mumbai.

After hours on trans-Atlantic calls, meetings and experimentation, the team at the designer store printed 1,200 scarves depicting four of Raza's works. Says Sanjay Kapoor of Satya Paul: "Unlike Raza's art which is available for Rs 40 lakh and upwards, these scarves are available for between Rs 8,000 and Rs 12,000. It's a steal, especially as they come numbered and with an authentication certificate."

Moving away from angst, anger and pain—all staples on the boring white canvas for contemporary artists—Indian art is going through a transformation. Like Raza's venture into a different medium, much of Delhi-based painter Satish Gujral's work is in graphics, murals and sculpture, and is a favourite of corporate buyers and collectors.

Artist Anjolie Ela Menon began her exploration into different mediums a decade ago when she painted a broken chair just for a lark. The painter, 62 now, went on to breathe life into the trend of arty kitsch in vogue today, exhibiting 53 objects retrieved from dumps—broken suitcases, chairs and altars—and later experimenting with film posters and computer art. But what have been a big commercial success recently are her sculptures in Murano glass, created in collaboration with Professor Antonio Da Roas at the ancient glassworks in Venice over the past two years. Menon has already sold 30 pieces of 78 from this year's col-

lection in London and Mumbai.

Other contemporary painters are waking up to mediums like glass, steel, fabric, soft metal, clay and more. Painter Anita Dube worked with Anupam Poddar, product designer and hotelier, using painted fabric in unusual sculptural ensembles, while Subodh Gupta collaborated with Poddar on a series of objects related to life and anatomy. "Anything can sell, if the signature is well known," says Mumbai collector Ashish Balram Nagpal, who has seen the experimental works of artists like Bindu Mehra, Nikhil Chaganlal and Raisa Hussain selling like



FAWZAN HUSAIN



**"I never dreamed my paintings could be made into scarves."**

**SYED HAIDER RAZA**, artist  
Raza's works in silk are more affordable than his originals but look just as good

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