

# In a gender-defined world, who are you?

**E**xtrême close ups, and long shots of his bespectacled eyes beckon you into joining him in his reflections. Saddled up on a white stool, the image of a reclusive boy lost in reverie is what the 18-year-old Hwanseo Leo's answer is to the question 'Who are you? - in a gender defined world'.

In his own subtle way, the 18-year old international student, studying in Bangalore, expressed his feelings and described his work saying, "I have experienced two different cultures with different perspectives towards gender. I have felt that I am growing by experiencing and accepting a different culture. 'My Cast Off Skin' is my trace of growth and maturity of my thought."

In a motley mix of 22 different perspectives around the same question, Hwanseo's work was which stood out for its originality and a not-in-the-face imagery. As a part of the two-hour long exhibition 'The Gender Defined World' by UK-based Arts University Bournemouth at India Habitat Centre, paintings of Class 11 and 12 school students from across the country reflected upon their individual outlook on life, experiences, beliefs and environments centred around the theme.

The top five winners of the art competition are Muzammil Hussain, Richa Jain and Upam Lakhar from Dehradun along with Akshita Wadhvana from New Delhi and Kuheli Raha from West Bengal. The top two winners received international publicity by having their work recently featured on huge hoardings across UK, besides a full scholarship was granted



**EXPRESSIVE** Painting on display at the 'The Gender Defined World' exhibition.

to Muzammil for the first year of a BA or foundation course at AUB. The four runners-up have been awarded a scholarship of £1000 each to study at the university. Viewed from an Indian perspective, the imagery in a few of these works seemed to be winning over the message that these entailed, for instance, tearing apart the brick walls, she emerged out to break free. With a peaceful expression on her face, and an anklet adorning her feet, the imagery in Richa Jain's painting appeared more appealing in contrast to its message.

The artworks showcased at the exhibition were selected out of the 100 best entries evaluated by a panel of judges comprising eminent personalities from the creative field in India and abroad. The exhibition was an upshot of an international art competition titled "Who are you? - In a gender defined world" that was organised by Arts University Bournemouth (AUB) in the last quarter of 2013.

**Isha Arora**

