



A window to another world

Artist N. Ramachandran's works use 'everyday' objects to explore the meeting of the familiar and the not-so-familiar



OPEN NOW, CLOSE NOW A peek at life



At / Cropped / No U-turn, an exhibition featuring N. Ramachandran's works, it is evident that the artist "derives inspiration from the hurried lives we lead that leaves us oblivious to the world around us". Ramachandran's work here is of two kinds, one where he explores "the urbanisation of our environment" through "slots of organised square with symbols that relate directly to the experience". Secondly, he uses the canvas as a medium to juxtapose various imagery from the past and the present to create a kitschy melange of sorts.

Delightfully colourful works of art, crafted in wood with doors that open and close, have in their fold objects that intrigue. What about these 'everyday' objects interest the artist? "I will give you an example," he says and opens one door on a corner of one of his artworks. "This," he says, pointing to a red-coloured object that represents the male reproductive organ, "Hangs in front of every home in Bhutan. It means different things to different people. Likewise, when I was abroad, my friends found fish and chips to be comfort food. For me, idli is comfort food. And I wanted to explore these themes. Where the familiar and the not-so-familiar meet." A note at the exhibition, explains further. The artist "uses icons, objects and symbols all at once to bring the viewer into a relationship with him and his journey. Using a language derived from the immediate world of sensory experiences to dwell on the notion of immediacy, he uses a postmodernist vocabulary of collage, kitsch and found

object assemblage to evoke the multi-layered reality of India where tradition and modernity exist in a happy mix. In order to communicate with the viewers he has discarded the clichéd abstract visual language and instead come up with a unique idiom. This grid structure while carrying minimalist and conceptual overtones is also an important formal element as it allows him to create a sense of rhythm. This distinct visual idiom has an unusually rich ability to comprehend space as an undifferentiated whole. There is an elemental sense of effortless play in the manner in which he is able to dive into space at any point and pick out elements that assert the invariable nature of the space continuum. Space is treated as fragmented in segments, slices and planes, shards, slivers and other geometric abstractions which foreground differentiation".

An inspiration

Ramachandran worked on this series for over two years and was inspired by artist Perumal to create the canvases that are also a part of the exhibit. "I wanted to do more within the two-mm canvas and these artworks are a result of that yearning," says the artist. The note adds: "In this, his most recent body of work, he has gone back to the prescribed traditional aesthetic, the Shilpashastra, to create a meeting point and hook in his conversation with the viewer."

Apart from these installations and canvases, the exhibition also features a collection of stainless steel vessels and *kuthuvillakus* that have printed symbols stuck on them (a bowl with a CCTV camera image in it, a ladle with a 'click' icon as seen on a computer, etc), smaller three-dimensional planks with more everyday objects in their fold.

@ / Cropped / No U-Turn is on till April 30 at Apparao Galleries.

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