

Seven artists, one art...

TIME: FEBRUARY 2002, venue, a well-known art gallery in New Delhi, situation: a young artist working on abstract, is asked by the gallery owner to wrap up his works for they won't sell. Climax: world famous artist Raza Haider and art publisher Ravi Kumar visit the place. The end: Both are amazed at the artists' creations. Raza buys four of his works and Ravi Kumar, two. They guy's day is made. Now, he cares not for those who don't understand art. The boy Manish Pushkale, 29, is now featured in the first-ever book in India solely on contemporary abstract works, "Sev Contemporary Indian Artists, Saptak" Ravi Kumar's labour of love. The boy is placed comfortably among the giants in India's abstract art like Raza Haider, Rajendra Dhawan and Velu Vishwanathan!

And New Delhi witnessed the launch of the book this week at Visual Art Gallery in a big way. The book comes from an Indian Ravi Kumar, living in Paris for 40 years promoting contemporary Indian art in Europe, USA and Japan. He is the one who brought 'Monologue', a book on Raza Haider last year to celebrate Raza's 80th



Ravi Kumar....giving the deserving their due. Photo: Anu Pushkarna.

birthday. His 'Saptak' of 210 glossy pages and 4000 rupees feature Sujata Bajaj, Akhilesh, and Seema Ghuraya apart from above mentioned.

"Barring Raza Haider, others are lesser-known in India," admits Kumar.

Why did he choose these artists only? "I have been closely following Indian

abstract art and found that very talented artists are not given the right exposure. Moreover, when Tyeb Mehta and Hussain's works were sold for crores abroad, it made news worldwide. I thought it was just the right time to tell art lovers that there are many others who are talented and should be

known to the world."

Hence, he spent one-and-a-half years in shaping the book that found its Bookwise Private Limited as its co-publisher in India and Varley Books as its distributors.

Why seven artists only? "The number seven has a primordial touch to it. We have seven seas, seven days

of the week, seven sages, seven pheras and even seven sins. I found it a coherent number," Ravi justifies. The book interestingly, considers only those artists whose works primarily deal with India as its roots and go up to primordial levels. Ashok Vajpayi has written the text for the book. Ask Ravi Kumar about art publishers in India, he asks, "Can you name any?" Barring Mapin that once a year comes out with some good publication on art, there is virtually none in India, he adds. And he mimes no words saying that in India there are only three to four genuine art lovers and curators for whom art is just not buying and selling. "If one art gallery sells only Hussains and Tyebes, they can't be labelled as genuine. We have no dearth of extremes in talent, why not discover them and hold their shows too?"

After "tremendous response from Chennai and Mumbai" where Kumar already has held shows, he is taking it to Paris, London, New York and Tokyo where the apart from the book, the show will have collections of the artist.

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