

The Memory Keeper

Apparao Galleries mounts a two-part exhibition that focuses on the relationship between an object and the artist



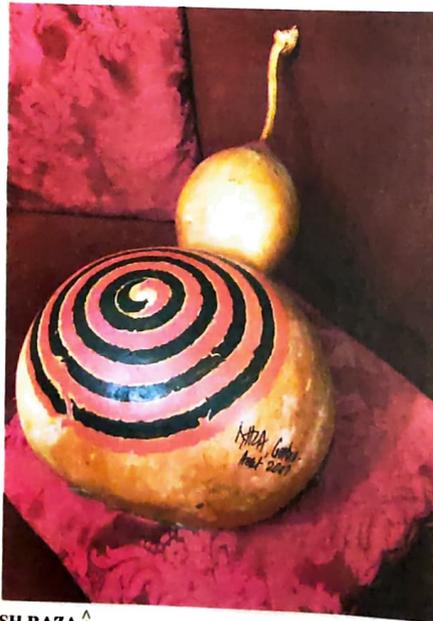
By BINDU GOPAL RAO

I love art and I pick works that speak to me," says Sharan Apparao, founder, Apparao Galleries. Unlocking the Object, a two-part exhibition that follows the narrative of an entity and its relationship with the memory of an artist, is a feat of an art appreciator's eclectic curiosity. There is Thota Vaikuntam's art on a wooden box, made sometime in the 90s. The vivid richness of Vaikuntam's raw village canvas is depicted here. Bheeshma Sharma's Aftermath of an Earthquake installation made with welded iron and steel brings to mind a broken Howrah Bridge against a dark and turbulent landscape. N Ramachandran's mixed media work on wood is like compartmentalising your memory. Each neat little box is filled with a certain memory. It's a cabinet of curiosities all of us carry deep within. Apparao says, "This show was difficult to curate because there was so much good work to choose from. It was difficult to draw a line and stop. So, we decided to divide it in two parts, with the second showing smaller format works and younger artists." Natch, the exhibition is an immensely rewarding experience. To better understand the narrative, Apparao takes us through the works of five artists that she believes are a must-see.



<< BHUPEN KHAKHAR

Class and sexuality play a central role in Khakhar's unique figurative oeuvre. A provocative painter and a chronicler of the ordinary, his canvas—though brightly lit—was often tinged with melancholy. Auction house Sotheby's set a world record for Khakhar when it sold his iconic 'coming out' painting, the monumental Two Men in Benares (1982) for over \$3 million in 2019. At this exhibition, his artwork is a fired and printed 15"x15" Ceramic Plate. This was born during his time in Holland at a ceramic atelier, where he had an opportunity to experiment with the ceramic technique, combining it with water colours.



SH RAZA ^

Rising from the figurative and finally settling on the yogic with the famed 'Bindu' series—maybe it was the legend's love for art and literature that brought him to it. In Sanskrit and Hindi—Raza had a deep bond with both—'bindu' can be interpreted as 'shoonya'. His love for many layers could be spotted in his studio space. One of the pieces in this collection—Painted Gourd—is created with his signature 'kundalini' and to him, the seed represented the being of life. Then there is the Painted Pitcher (1990)—a ceramic object made in Italy that uses three dimensionalities making each facet absorb aspects of his visual language.



RAVINDER DUTT ^

The history student who never had any formal training in art is a multi-disciplinary artist. Little wonder that his printed canvas with 23-carat gold and oil, aptly titled Table of Gold, shows a rare sight of Mughal emperors across eras dining together. There is a hint of teleportation here, as also a subtle hierarchy, given the seating and thrones that each emperor has. A self-taught digital artist who believes change is the only constant, his other artwork—Blue, Gold—is an archival print on canvas representing the cycle of life.

SUDHIR PANDEY v

Titled Inferiority Complex, this part-time astrologer weaves astrological charts into his artwork, thus unlocking its journey with his own calculations and actions. The Mumbai-based artist's basic contention is that all objects irrespective of



shape or size, utility or luxury, have their respective destinies that are influential to the collective whole, and this is what he tries to bring forth with his work.

GEORGE K ^

This self-taught artist is known to use social activism as his base. However, his exhibit here—Conflict of Fragrances—is a mixed media artwork that is far from social activism. Instead it centres on the olfactory senses. It bears similarity to a Japanese piece created in 1965 by artist Takako Sai. "In this work (a chessboard with pieces), the players must smell the pieces, each with a distinct fragrance to identify the piece. The strategy involves the sensory perceptions of sight and smell in interface with the mind," says George, also a chartered accountant.