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Tuning into beauty and brutality

Featuring 21 artists from the museum's diverse collection, the exhibition was curated by Roobina Karode (Director and Chief Curator, KNMA) along with Avijna Bhattacharya, Debashree Banerjee, Madhurima Chaudhuri and Agastaya Thapa.

Neha Kirpal

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What's Brewing



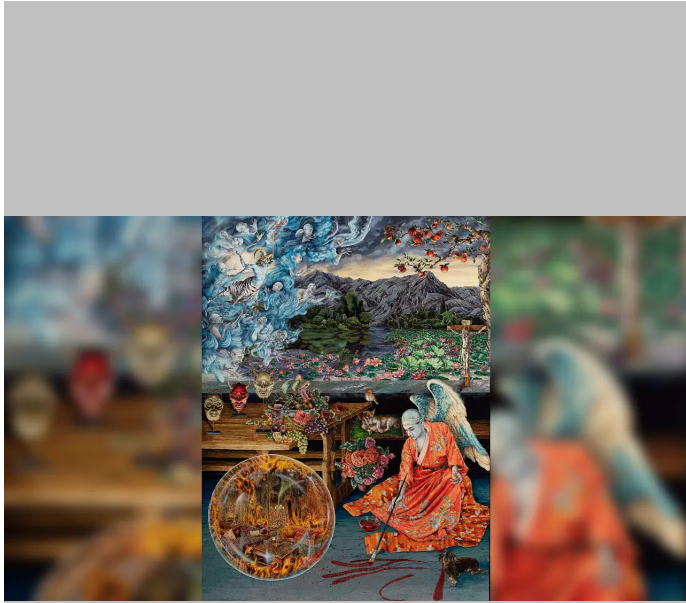
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the museum's diverse collection, the exhibition was curated by Roobina Karode (Director and Chief Curator, KNMA) along with Avijna Bhattacharya, Debashree Banerjee, Madhurima Chaudhuri and Agastaya Thapa. The showcase owed its stimulus to artists and the creations they presented through their distinctive forms of practice, initiating a rethinking about art and its presence in our lives.

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“The nature of this exhibition was experiential; in the form of a space-maze, the viewers moved through long corridors that opened into dark spans and illuminated areas juxtaposing painted images and simulated hyper-realities, beauty and brutality, unregistered presences in photographic images and the poetics of memory and afterlife of performance-based art,” informed Karode.

Rashid Rana’s installation ‘Desperately Seeking Paradise’ created a maze out of a familiar image of a city’s skyline, playing on optical illusion and deception. Gauri Gill’s ‘Re-memory’ was an evocative series consisting of 54 black-and-white photographs that captured unregistered presences, and overlooked details of the mundane and urban spaces, indicating absence and space. “In this dystopian world, human beings are dislocated from familiar contexts and old homes, sometimes even their families, often without any safety net, and rendered invisible in the new environments,” said Gill.

Tradition and modernity

Dhruv Malhotra’s colour pigment print series ‘Sleepers, After Dark Trilogy’ highlighted the underbelly of the city at night, without noise, traffic, people and the chaotic pace of the day. It also drew one’s attention to poignant images of sleeping figures on benches in public spaces such as parks, under the flyover, deserted after-party places and monuments. Sheba Chhachhi’s multi-part installation ‘Winged Pilgrims: A Chronicle from Asia’, which has evolved out of years of research, called upon the viewer to ruminate on migration.

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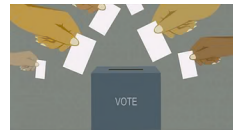
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displacement, the impact of globalisation and the friction between tradition and modernity.

Subodh Gupta repurposed domestic utensils of daily use into an object of contemplation. Jayashree Chakravarty's handmade suspended form 'Nest' was created out of organic materials, such as jute rope, coconut fibre, dried leaves and seeds, stained with coffee and tea. Her sculptures were intermediate forms which started around 2020. During Covid lockdowns, she was feeling trapped, and something as simple as stepping outside was a desire. "This desire has a long life; it is never-ending. This enjoyment of free existence is what I tried to evoke in my works. I wished to see how art takes its forms; sometimes a puddle of water is the inspiration to create," said Chakravarty.

Sound and silence

Bikash Bhattacharya's motif was of a 'doll' as a standing, hanging or abandoned figure in the deserted city of Kolkata in the wake of war and violence. Some of the screens in Harshit Agrawal's work 'Inside Out' had representations of his digital avatar, trying to channel his aspirational side by achieving certain things that he does not do otherwise, such as dancing salsa or performing perfect yoga. "This, for me, was a way to evade certain parts of reality by digitally recreating them. This also confirmed for me that this is how people are now shaping their realities for the world to see, through what they put out on digital platforms," explained Agrawal.

Sonia Khurana's double channel video 'Somnambulist's Song', an awakening to meditative repetitions in music, interspersed the opposing experiences of sound and silence. G R Iranna's work 'How Can One Hold a Cloud?' were drawings that were eventually burnt to give them a specific texture. Beginning with drawings, she used a mix of sandal powder and

some camphor. "This transformation of matter, the way clouds are formed, the way ash is both a residue and a metaphor for the ending of any



matter or body, intrigues me – where matter can be perceived but cannot be held. Something like rain or clouds both have a form, but both hold the character of the formless, that cannot be confined,” explained Iranna. Further, Raqib Shaw’s unique technique of painting, using a porcupine quill with enamel and acrylic on birch wood, focused on alienation, loss and a journey unknown.

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