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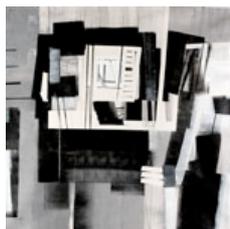
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Interview with Samit Das



The ever changing dynamics of urban spaces, cityscapes and mindscapes prompts artist Samit Das to probe into their intricate interrelationship.

The artist works with architectural structures to create intriguing forms. Explaining his theme of treating urban architecture as a reference point for his creations, he says, “I map the changing landscape in the backdrop of historical references, taking into account the dynamics between time and space and between humans and their habitat.”

“My work builds up space within space and takes the viewer on a timeless journey,” he quips.

Samit Das obtained his bachelors and masters degrees in art from Kalabhavan, Santiniketan, and was the recipient of the Charles Wallace Scholarship in 2002. He then conducted an elaborate study on architectural space in the context of human existence, and also handled some site specific projects. As part of the project, titled Santiniketan Architecture and Rabindranath Tagore, he explored his fascination for architectural spaces through exquisite photo images.

The multi-faceted artist has handled various forms and styles with élan. His oeuvre comprises paintings, drawings, photo images and collages. He says, “I take into account the intrinsic demand of a composition for incorporating specific content and context as well as adding depth of it. Each work calls for its own style and medium. On the other hand, every medium has its inherent possibilities, limitations and challenges, which I take into consideration.” The artist is also known for building interesting textures - tactile or visual – in his works.

Delving into his artistic processes, Samit Das reveals: “The transformation of my core images happens gradually and through different interlinked process. It starts with photography. Then I reprocess the images by painting, drawing or collage making.”

Space or rather lack of it in the burgeoning cities is his primary artistic concern which he expresses through his visuals loaded with metaphors. His works allude to houses and made man structures. He explains, “It’s not a mere representational document. It becomes a symbol of the damage that has been inflicted on the contemporary human condition.”

The artist has been working on different issues related to Indian cities that reflect several socio-political, demographic and economic patterns. “Is there a void in the new network of communication and connection? Is the new media isolating human beings into voids of space and mind? This is a very important question for me. Why do we want to live in the city today? What

is the code for a new genetic body? The whole psychology and gestures of living, non-living elements along with brick structures weave a complete, composite web that has to be viewed in its totality,” he asserts.

Samit Das superimposes his thought process on architectural structures or vice versa for his creations that depict spaces and architectural structures, oscillating between facades of a glorious past and the pressing concerns of the present. These are a byproduct of several distinct aesthetic trajectories and treatments.

Samit Das looks to explore the curious correlation between a cityscape and its inhabitants. The artist employs various artistic devices and processes that together explore the theme of architecture as landscape and the conceptual and the metaphoric ‘homely space’ that encapsulates human transportation from natural to architectural environment, a process that he terms inexorable and irreversible.

He informs: “It is not possible to limit the growth to existing boundaries, however inexorable it gets. As an artist, I try to find out how a new space is created within the stretched limits of an existing habitat, and to map the contours and extent of this growth.”

What the artist means by the context of the growth is the relationship of the city’s present to the times and its history and also the juxtaposition of architecture with modern structures. He views them through an artistic prism for creating a captivating reflection.

“Will the cities of the Third World survive the next few decades? The answer may well depend on whether or not we have the perspicacity to search out and recognize the stones and treesas they gradually coalesce into the new landscape,” he remarks.

Summing up the spirit of his work, Samit Das states, “My creations are a blend of philosophical reflection and aesthetic composition. They are not executed in isolation, contextually speaking. Each one has its own inherent appeal and originality in its presentation.”

The artist recommends a constructive approach for maintaining architectural and historical significance of the cityscape from a contemporary perspective. At a broader level, he believes, an effort should be made to retain a level of sustainability for its inhabitants. He feels that a city’s development should be linked with its history in juxtaposition with its heritage and architecture. According to him, this is attainable by striking “a proper balance between the past and the present.”

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