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NEWS AND FEATURES

New works by Samit Das, Susanta Mandal, and Jayanta Roy

A show by three talented artists Samit Das, Susanta Mandal, and Jayanta Roy at New Delhi based Nature Morte presents various facets of their works done in a variety of mediums.

The exhibition apparently does not have any central curatorial theme or concept. The juxtaposition of the artists appears outwardly incoherent, but the thread that binds the assembly of installations, photos and paintings is contemporary concerns of the artists.

Samit Das (born 1970) is perhaps the best known of the group. Originally from West Bengal and a graduate of Shantiniketan, he has been exhibiting his works throughout India for the past ten years. He usually combines photography, painting and collage into mixed-media works that start with architectural imagery and expand into urban landscapes.

On display is a succinct body of works (photography, sculpture and collage) that uses as their starting point the New Bengal Hotel of Mumbai. Close to Crawford Market in central Mumbai, this large establishment has organically evolved over time, in many ways resembling the artist's own investigations into assemblage and juxtaposition. He documents and recreates details of the hotel to come up with a playful installation that mimics the haphazard nature of the hotel's architecture and the comings and goings of its clientele.

Analyzing the work, art critic Uma Nair mentions in an essay: "Samit Das creates a kind of petulant poignancy with his alternate patterns of loosely lithe lines and tightly composed montages building each work on the idea of graphic impact. What is intriguing is that the artist moves away from the usual collage signature of magazines, comics, newspapers and illustrated books, which often provide the raw material for increasingly crowded conglomerations of contour and color."

Susanta Mandal (born 1965) studied painting at both the Government College of Arts and Craft in Kolkata (BFA, 1990) and the Benares Hindu University (MFA, 1993). Though trained as a painter, he has always shown a keen sensitivity to forms and materials. This has manifested itself in his mature works that are kinetic sculptural installations, sometimes referencing the flatness of painting but also involving ephemeral materials. His machines are always low-tech and their mechanisms are exposed. His new work involves both bubbles and shadows to create theatrical tableaux.

His piece for the exhibit is a frothing, bubbling shadow play that he calls 'Bite 2'. His body of installations relies on unsettling juxtapositions of high & low technology, shadows and light, soft and sharp materials, movement and stasis. Here, he employs an air pump and blower to churn out bubbles from the absinthe-green liquid in an illuminated glass carboy.

A complex little motor apparatus on the wall above operates two old-fashioned scissors. Halogen lamps catch them from two sides to create monstrous shadows. A video camera and LCD screen capture the moment of evanescent contact - a shadow that shears through a bubble. The artist mentions that he is trying 'to make us see impossibility.'

Jayanta Roy (born 1973) continues to live in his home city of Kolkata, where he graduated from the Government College of Arts & Crafts in 1997. His paintings posit graphic elements and flat colors against a clever wit and sharp sense of design. His subjects are symbols, as they appear in both everyday life and art history, how they trick us into belief or seduce us into complacency.

He uses large canvases and acrylic paints. His works with a pop bent owe it to the artist's sensibility, which largely draws from graphic design. He employs flat, sparse surfaces with a touch of photorealism to pass comments on the art scene, the postmodern visual landscape and even politics.

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