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A Mystical World of Shades and Emotions

By Sujata Dutta Sachdeva

His work is a punctuation of life, like dew drops that appear in the mind's inner space. His paintings make a statement of their own, for he gives words to his work of art through poetry.

His latest series India Awaiting: Timeless Metaphors of Dreams is an exhibition of paintings by Manav Gupta, from May 27. Manav's works are a reflection of various images and impressions of his life.

A 29-year-old artist from Calcutta, Manav creates a colourful world of impressions and images of life, made up of throbbing lines and changing colours. 'I have captured fleeting moments of life from my childhood and added colour to them,' he says. His paintings have a very strong Indian ethos and each of them has an underlying message of hope.

The concept of timeless metaphor is happening at a juncture when the millennium is changing. He has tried to capture this change brilliantly and with great sensitivity in one of his paintings. He has conceived a book of this series, and the walls are the canvas of the pages of the book. Though independent, the story binds them.

The book starts with a prologue, it then evolves into a journey of his life from childhood to school days, where he paints temples of learning to his youth. The series also has paintings of people and music, which has a strong impression on his mind, reflected in his paintings on musicians and musical instruments.

Interestingly, Manav also dabbles in poetry, such that each artifact bears a poetic form. This self-taught artist was initiated into painting by Vasant Pandit when he was only a year old. 'Vasant Pandit gave me a box of crayons for my first birthday, so in a way he is my guru,' says Manav. His other great influence was artist Paritosh Sen.

Water-colours have been this young artist's forte. Manav has experimented with watercolour in all kinds of medium that include newsprint and canvas. Besides painting, he also dabbles in other mediums of art like sculpture and designing

furniture. He gives beautiful form to drift wood, recycled wood and waste material. 'I was always fond of barks of trees and saw poetry in them. They are like frozen poetry to me. The intertwined roots are like a lot of sculptures which cannot be replicated,' he says. He makes sleek and functional furniture out of recycled wood, which have a lot of corporate and private takers.

His much-acclaimed sculpture series called the 'Totem Terrain' is a tribal ensemble. Manav was inspired to do this series after a chanced visit to the tribal areas of Bastar that left a strong impression on his mind. His sculpture collection includes such images like the antelope, mother and child, swan, besides others.

Nature has been one of the biggest inspirations for this young artist and Manav has done a complete series based on nature called the 'Earth series'. 'Nature has inspired me right from my childhood and I have translated it into paintings. They are like transcripts of my mind.'

Manav has held solo shows at the Birla Academy of Art & Culture in Calcutta, and at the Calcutta Taj Bengal. Both the exhibitions were highly acclaimed.

His works have been exhibited in private and public collections which include the permanent gallery at Birla Academy, Calcutta, and corporate houses and hotels.