

Excavations in Hymns of Clay

By Saurabh Tankha

If you haven't been to DLF Mall of India in Noida's Sector 18 off late, it's time you visited it now. Why? Because celebrated artist Manav Gupta has set up a one-of-its-kind travelling museum at this mall with his art installations made up of clay lamps, kulhads and chillums. Mind you, it is not every day that the interiors of a mall turn into an art museum. Excavations in Hymns of Clay consists of five mega art installations created by Manav, located at different vantage points in the mall, but these will remain there only till Feb 18. So, you don't have much time on you.

The five installations are titled The River Waterfront, Noah's Ark, The Time Machine, The Beehive Garden Project and Meet Me By The Riverside, and believe me each one of these installations is increasingly beautiful than the others. It's really difficult pinpointing whether The River Waterfront is breathtaking or it is the Noah's Ark that steals the show; whether it is The Time Machine that enthral you or The Beehive Garden that astounds you with its intricacy; or is it the Meet Me By The Riverside that takes the cake!

"The idea behind a travelling museum is to make art accessible to as many common people as is possible." — Manav Gupta

Manav is truly one of the best among his ilk. I have been following his works for over a decade now, and every time he has surprised me with his vision and thought.

Last year, Manav set up the Ganga Waterfront at the India Habitat Centre in Delhi, again with clay lamps, chillums and kulhads. He then took it to Mississippi and the Hudson in USA as part of the Global Public Art Project on sustainability, connecting rivers of the world.

"Water and all the five elements of nature are our source of sustenance. Ancient civilizations all over the world respected and understood this sanctity. We have always drawn nourishment from rivers and we are made of clay. So, I feel it's time we excavate the ancient philosophy of sustainable living. My art seeks to submit to this paradigm." — Manav Gupta

Manav Gupta at his musing best. Forever challenging his comfort zone even in the physical world, Gupta has created another work of art to marvel at.