

Excavated Museum at the Mall — Millennium Post explores why this solo public art project by any artist is a solo biennale in itself

Manav Gupta does it again! A list of many firsts. He is truly a maverick genius — no wonder the thinker and the visionary is hailed by critics as one of the most erudite and versatile contemporary artists today. After a hundred thousand footfalls at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi at his Ganga waterfront; and taking it across the Mississippi and the Hudson in USA last year as part of his Global Public Art Project on sustainability connecting rivers of the world, he has created an entire 'excavated museum' at the DLF Mall of India at Sector 18, Noida till February 18 with a suite of five mega environmental art installations that punctuate different spaces in the Mall.

Former Expert Committee Member of Republic Day celebrations, first artist-in-residence at the Rashtrapati Bhawan invited personally by Dr Abdul Kalam, only artist to be invited by Environment Ministry to create one-minute films on climate change, Manav is listed by Financial Times among ten contemporary Indian artists whose works would fetch good returns.

The unique concept of environmental art in the Museum gets deeper with his underlying philosophy: "Water and all five elements of nature are our source of sustenance. Ancient civilizations from India to the world over respected and understood this sanctity. While they drew nourishment from the great rivers — be it our sacred Ganga or the Mississippi — as we grow, it's time we excavate the ancient philosophy of sustainable living. And we are all clay. Dust to dust. My art seeks to submit to this paradigm. Hence excavations in hymns of clay."

The River Waterfront:

A site-specific installation deploying earthen lamps and chilams to form the lyrical formlessness of Time along the flow of the river. Given today's world of current complex issues of treatment and perception of women as well as earth (referred to as mother earth in many quarters of Indian spirituality) the artist draws a cross-spectrum reference of eroding human values using Ganga as the idiom.

The Beehive Garden Project:

This global beehive garden project is an environmental statement about biodiversity and its crucial linkages to sustainable development. Its innovative deploying of 'chilams' (earthen rural cigars) and 'kullars' (earthen cups) to create beehives that can occupy every garden and home act as a gentle creative reminder to stop a while and add a drop in the ocean in the preservation of bees and biodiversity.

Meet me by the riverside — The Bed:

Love is what makes the world go around. With the river bed of earthen lamps and earthen cups, a stream seems to emerge from somewhere deep within and flow seamlessly. The bed is symbolic of history, of love and of a certain hope.

Called the 'excavations in hymns of clay', this is the premiere of his 2017 edition that also happens to celebrate the twentieth year since his first solo at the Birla Academy of Fine Arts.

