

## Redefining the Meaning of Art with 'Arth'

*By Team MP*

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Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts raised the curtain for ARTH — Art for the Earth on July 5 at the IGNC, CV Mess, Janpath, New Delhi. The chief guest for the inauguration ceremony was the State Minister of Culture, Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr Mahesh Sharma. The exhibition which is up for display until October 22 is the first of its kind public art project on the environment by one of India's leading contemporary artists — Manav Gupta.

Comprising of 'Excavations in Hymns of Clay' — a suite of environmental art installations by the artist, weaving all of them with a storyline and poetry — 'Arth' is an evolving, site-specific and dynamic engagement.

As a public art project, the artist has tried to deploy the quintessentially Indian potter's produce of clay objects such as the earthen lamps (diyas), local cigar (chilam), earthen cups (kullar), with the idea to transform their individual identity into metaphors and idioms of sustainability, context, perception and treatment.

The clay objects and other items displayed in the exhibition stun the viewer with the artist's originality of thought as he produces a cutting-edge contemporary language whose global vocabulary is derived from the 'local'. Manav's statement is dipped gently into the essence of the Indian Vedic practices to subtly bring to light the repository of solutions that the ancient way of life could offer in today's context of sustainable development and current issues around rivers like the Ganga.

Whether it be the latest 'Rain' or the 'River waterfront', 'Time Machine', 'Bee-hive Garden', 'River Bed of Love', or the 'Noah's Ark', the fragility of clay juxtaposed with the limitlessness of the 'cup of life' questions the paradigm of time and human engagement with it in today's rapidly mechanized and constructed consumerist engagement with earth's resources.

The works, conceptualised, created and constructed by the artist while taking into consideration the venue, is a sensitive natural interface with the ambience, seeking to engage fresh and locally relevant dialogues and questions that audiences can have with the art and within themselves.

Emotive content like that of an epic story, Manav's statement is dipped gently into the essence of the Indian Vedic practices to subtly bring to light the repository of solutions that the ancient way of life could offer in today's context of sustainable development and current issues around rivers like the Ganga. In his 'excavations' of the spiritual philosophy of sustainable living as espoused in Indian scriptures, he executes an organic engagement of art with architecture and space to explore it in its universal context.