

Thursday, January 26,
2012, Chandigarh, India



Search

Go

NATION

INDIA ART FAIR PREVIEW

Delhi extravaganza set to enthral art lovers

Nonika Singh/TNS

New Delhi, January 25

The India Art Fair, earlier known as India Art Summit, is all set to wow art lovers as it opens to the public on Republic Day at the NSIC exhibition grounds. Contrary to the pre-fair buzz, Damien Hirst, one of the richest living artists known for his unconventional visual idiom, is not going to be here. But if it is any compensation, his works are there at the gallery White Cube.

The one that catches the eyes among his works on display is 'White lies' made out of machine diamonds priced at a staggering 5,25,000 Pound Sterling. The signature works of the power couple of Indian Art, Subodh Gupta and Bharti Kher, do not come cheap either. Priced upwards of 125,000 Euros and going up to 375,000 Euros, their works occupy a pride of place at the prestigious gallery Hauser and Wirth, UK/Switzerland.

Increased international participation is evident this time. The summit has been attracting record footfalls even in the past and this time, the footfalls are expected to be higher. 20 countries are represented in the fair, including first timers like a gallery from Spain and the Lisson Gallery, UK.

Hoping to evoke better response among Indian viewers and buyers for international artists, Sundaram and Tagore Gallery has works by all foreign artists. Not that any known Indian names are missing. The faces of contemporary art Sudarshan Shetty and Paresh Maity's works are represented by more than one gallery.

The alumnus of the Government College of Art, Chandigarh, Vibha Galhotra's 'Beehive', made out of ghungroos expressing environmental concern, also attracts attention. So does Reema Saini Kalkat's creation with a long winding title that talks of the artificial divide between India and Pakistan. Pakistan's well known artist Rashid Rana's works depict multiple realities and paradoxes. Rana has exhibited his works in India earlier.

While unconventional mediums rule, there is a work by 30-year-old Shine Sivan, who has used deer feces to dwell on male masculinity! The masters are not missing either, Picasso and Chaggaal among others. In the Indian galaxy, from Raza to Hussain to Gulam Mohammad Sheikh to Bikas Bhattacharjee to Laxmi Gaud, all figure prominently in Delhi Art Gallery's exhibits.

Would Hussain's works incite trouble like last time? Kishore Singh, Head, Exhibitions, Delhi Art Gallery doubts it. But yes, post-Hussain, he did expect a larger representation of his works at other galleries if for nothing else but certainly as a homage.

But then an art fair is not just about art. As a sceptic pointed out "It's a busy show, not a patch on the one I saw in Singapore. It's less about art and more about commerce."

But call it a visual treat or overload, the energy is infectious. Not surprisingly, even at the 'VIP Preview', open to only a select few, a traffic snarl formed outside the gate. The change in the venue-last year the location was at the more central Pragati Maidan---hardly seemed to have dampened the spirit of art enthusiasts.

In fact, many like the internationally acclaimed artist Sudarshan Shetty think the 12,000 square metre, custom-built space designed by Indian set designer Sumant Jayakrishnan is "great and on par with international venues".