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ARTIST OF THE MONTH - OCTOBER 2006

ANIKET KHUPSE

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Avatars of the Object: Sculptural Projections

Guild Gallery is showcasing works of several talented artists and sculptors as part of a group show. Among the participating artists are Jehangir Jani, Shilpa Gupta, Anita Dube, Kaushik Mukhopadhyay, Mithu Sen, M M S Umesh, Navjot Altaf, and Pooja Iranna.

This exhibition begins with the premise that the classical sculptural object is no longer tenable, and that the most interesting sculpture being produced today emerges from a science of dematerialized objects.

Thus, the physical experience of this exhibition will not be programmed for the conventional 'viewer looks at objects held in place' situation. Instead, the objects that form my display comprise video footage of self-destruct sculpture; sculpture as the performance of moving parts; sculpture in a condition of meltdown and remaking; or sculpture that takes the viewer for a walk along a conceptual map studded with text.

In every period, practitioners of sculpture renew their ways of making in accord with the tendencies of their age. Today, therefore, sculptors interrogate solidity, monumentality and stasis – instead, they imbue their sculpture with various other qualities, including provisionality, fluidity, intimacy and remote presence.

Among the artist who feature as part of the show, Navjot Altaf's work has re-tracked the familiar terrain of questioning various frameworks of social injustice and violence, transmuting my concerns to the intimate, often hidden private lives of women.

Her sculptures address the burning questions of the inequalities that exist in society, especially with relation to the female of the species. She brings to her work a sense of social commitment and a need to expose the social injustice. On other hand, Shilpa Gupta employs technology to engage the viewer through the provocative and interrogative dimensions of conceptual art. While asking the audience to participate in her works, she often questions the whole theoretical framework of an art object.

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She creates artwork using interactive websites, video, gallery environments and public performances to probe and examine subversively such themes as consumer culture. Among the artists on view, Jehangir Jani works with different medium like sculptures, ceramics, fiberglass and sheet metal.

A self-taught artist, his style is not governed or restricted by any school of thought, other than his own inspiration, and arrived at by a process of elimination. The New Delhi based Mithu Sen's manipulation of found materials combined with her morbidly playful paintings generate unusual and provocative associations around the subjects of gender, domesticity, sexuality, kitsch – recurrent themes in her earlier work. The artist "absorbs the reality of every day events as they are seen and not as they are taught."

This show concentrates on the 'performative' aspects of sculpture, as objects of art emplace and simultaneously displace contexts of spectatorship and vice versa. As the curator of the show, Nancy Adajania, puts it: "The displacement of object and meaning in the extended-sculpture realm challenges, even mocks received ideas about sculpture. This opens the door for two alternatives.

"On the one hand, we can re-objectify the object along different norms. On the other hand, we can move to a post-object sculpture: we can address the after-life of the object, looking for the lost sculptural qualities and finding them transformed/morphed, made anew."

In keeping with the theme, artist Anita Dube investigates a very human concern with both personal and societal loss and regeneration. This use of the sculptural fragment to subtly invoke a humanist critical agenda is an expression of her artistic agenda to tangentially address the social through metaphorical means. She often employs a variety of found objects drawn from the realms of the industrial (foam, plastic, wire), craft (thread, beads, velvet), the body (dentures, bone), etc.

The show titled 'Avatars of the Object: Sculptural Projections' organized by the Guild Gallery continues at Jehangir Nicholson Art Gallery, NCPA, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400 021 till August 12, 2006.

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