

Bhavna Kakar

presents

EMBER

Solo works by Alok Bal

Latitude 28

F/208 Lado Sarai, New Delhi

April 10 - May 20, 2013

11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Including nearly 45 works - canvases, paper works, work in wood, glass and found human waste like used cloth, plastic, medicine wrappers, pipes etc - the show according to the 43-year-old artist has been called Ember because it is about "the subject of the human suffering, which is caused by the corrupt socio-political system. Also the system which we create within ourselves gives more suffering. The result is an imbalance in our inner and outer selves which leads us finally towards destruction."

Says Bhavna Kakar, Director, Latitude 28: "We have had a long association with Bal spanning almost a decade now but this current body of work is so dynamic in its diversity, that we wanted to show a solo. This show comes after a gap of six years since he last showed a solo in Delhi and his oeuvre has become even more fascinating since then. While his paintings are serene and metaphorical, his works in found human waste, wooden box and glass show his versatility in handling various mediums."

Born in Rourkela, Orissa in 1969, Bal's childhood was spent in the midst of nature, surrounded by lovely hills, dense forests, vast cultivated lands and beautiful riverbeds quite in contrast to the present realities. After securing a formal degree in Commerce, he decided to study art. The artist completed his B.F.A. (1998), followed by a Post-Diploma in Painting from M.S. University, Baroda (2001). At the very onset of his career, one could see the influence of British and American Pop-Art, but since then he has found an idiom that is very much his own. Bal's works represent man's innate instinct to dominate nature and he uses both irony and skill to express his fascination and disillusionment with life in a metropolis.

The metaphorical usage of serene colours, the flying dainty figures, the scratches, the burden a man carries, the shrubs growing carelessly inside houses, animal trapped inside thorn like growth, are all motifs stitched together with excellent skill. Bal's work are replete with barren landscapes and endless vistas of grey-blacks except a solitary structure or two.

"The main inspiration is my surroundings, people, life, nature and, of course, my inner self," says Bal, "and like my previous body of work, this show too is about cityscapes, but with a difference. Previously I would focus on the exterior, but this time, I have tried to get into the interior, the more psychological aspects of life of urban human beings."

Ever since his Post Diploma in Painting (2001), Bal has shown an acute sensitivity to the changing urban landscape in his paintings. The contrast in topography from his native Orissa to the fast developing city of Baroda cannot be ignored in his work. From his studio on the 10th floor in Baroda, he has been witness to the changing Baroda skyline; the view of an endless sea of tenements with cement grey terraces blending with the smoky, polluted sky and this is a recurring source of inspiration in his works. These images also surfaced in his last solo show in Delhi in 2007 which was titled Black Landscape.

Even though each of his work tells a distressing tale of rampant urbanisation, he prefers to keep his works untitled. "I sometimes don't want to give any name to my work. I want the works to be interpreted as they look and not by the titles they have," says Bal, who is also an avid trekker and football player. As a nature lover who loves trekking in the forests of Gujarat, it's no wonder that he paints an unsettling picture of natural habitats being replaced by concrete jungles and the human tendency to tame nature in all its forms. He extends the environment versus development debate to reveal his concerns for the changing behaviour and lifestyle of the human race as well as the effects on birds and animals. In an earlier series in graphite on paper, he had paid an ode to common birds like sparrows that are becoming extinct from our immediate environment because of disappearing foliage and pollution. "I feel lucky if I see a bird outside my window these days," he says.

He was keen to become a football player but could not pursue his dream because of injuries. Instead he chose to show his skills on canvas. But his love for the game remained intact. In fact, he opted to capture the beautiful game and its two feet poetry on canvas, treating it as just another playing field in a 2006 series titled Football Fever. Bal also started a local football academy in 2007 in Baroda which is called XYZ Football Club, a vibrant group of young football enthusiasts.

“I have been playing football since my childhood. Football is a beautiful game. It’s a way of life. It’s not just a sport for me, it’s a philosophy and every sportsman is a philosopher,” he signs off.

Please feel free to get in touch with us at +91-11-46791111 / +91-9310830690 or latitude28@gmail.com if you require any further information.

Latitude 28
F 208 GF
Lado Sarai - 110 030