

## Marilyn Monroe and more: What's not to like!

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By Malati Shah

I was invited by Dolly Narang of The Village Gallery to participate in a group show at the India International Centre in New Delhi that she was hanging with Siddhartha Tagore of Art Konsult. I agreed readily, and she even more readily to whatever I wanted to show and how I wanted to do it.

The new gallery at the IIC's Kamladevi Complex is up two floors and one gets a feeling of being taken away from a humdrum world. Which is the feeling one gets as one enters the large and airy space of this gallery.

The first picture that one is instantly drawn to is a mixed media on canvas by Vinita Dasgupta. Being a portrait of the iconic Marilyn Monroe is only half the pull. The artist has used small rolls of canvas with different designs so placed as to form the image.

Across from it is an excruciatingly poetic and lyrical abstract by Subroto Kundu. In low earth tones with a small burst of ochre in the centre, this balanced composition speaks plainly that you are in the presence of an assured master. I was taken aback to hear of his tragic and too early demise.

One can obviously not mention every work in a show, but a few stood out for craftsmanship and content - both or either. The water lilies by Shuvendu Sarkar, in three panels is a photo real composition, drawing one deep into the infinite waters of a lily pond.

Similarly, the Benares series of Joydeep Mukherjee are terrific depictions of stairs, temples and the vertical movement of a city situated by a horizontal river. Although the city and its buildings are the main subject of these compositions, one gets the feeling of the water world it belongs to.

There is a charming pastel by Awani Kant titled Summer where a woman is celebrating her fresh coconut drink, all curves and circles with a twisty yellow and pink straw, giving it the final sense of invitation.

The light and small pen and inks by Uday Shankar Hazara are full of quiet charm, as is the wooden sculpture by Atul Sinha. This tactile feel for wood carries over to the other works in bronze by Arun Pandit of couples with the multiple heads, hands and feet harking to the later works of the master, Satish Gujral.

The two woodcuts by Gurmeet Singh Marwah are not merely technically astounding, but full of gentle humour, placing Mahatma Gandhi in subaltern roles within the current political climate, selling heart shaped balloons, and peddling a cycle with his three, somewhat terrified monkeys.

I had some twenty three tiny canvas' of fall leaves done over a long period in my raking days in the USA. These I laid out on a long grass mat with a path struck through, and some poems and quotes gathered like these leaves, over a period of more than ten years.

It was a delightful experience to see, what is usually treated as a two dimensional medium, become an interactive installation. A friend came by, sat midst the leaves and drank a cup of tea. A child walked through, picked one up, hugged it to herself and ran to her grandmother, laughing.

This brightly lit gallery is a beautiful space to be in and the show doesn't disappoint. On the contrary.

( Malati Shah is a Delhi based artist who has had several group and solo shows. Her most recent exhibition of water-color collages was titled: 'A very long sunset with magnolias.' )