

KUMAR GALLERY



Last vestiges of landscape painting

“Many art critics feel that landscape works of prominent Indian artist Gopal Ghose can belong to any place in the world”, says art critic Uma Nair who has curated a retrospective of Ghose who was one of the founder members of the well-known Calcutta Group. But she disagrees. As a meticulous research on the artist’s oeuvre led her to understand the vocabulary employed by the landscape artists around the globe.

“I have always read about landscape paintings. When I went to Singapore and read about Chinese art, I realised there were some artists who created landscape from imagination. It is not always that you see a beautiful place and paint,” Nair tells Metrolife.

So when she started researching on Ghose for the retrospective ‘Rustic Resonance’, she inferred how Ghose had an understanding of Western and European art. His works, like a bridge, would connect sensibilities of two different styles and create an impression of a new place that could be positioned anywhere in the map. “How would you not believe what he wanted was an Indian landscape when you saw a rustic man in the painting? You will know that it is somewhere here... somewhere in India,” she says.

“A man with the dark tonality carrying a basket on his head... this has to be India,” she adds. In a 1953 painting Behrampur, Ghose adds simple details of trees, houses and women at work, the sky beset with clouds, juxtaposed with bold, uninhibited expression of stroke and pen-play. “This landscape is both monumental in impact and rich in varying tones of orange and ochre in his tones of sunrise and sunset. It is a vibrant splashed watercolour painting that stands alone as a symbol of his ability to transmute ancient art into a unique idiom,” she says.

For any landscape artist nature is the muse. So it was Ghose’s only inspiration which he carefully observed, caressed and painted. From flowers to trees and birds and village life — his important paintings from the 1950s to 1960s are displayed in this exhibition.

What, according to Nair, makes Ghose different from his contemporaries was that he was a great teacher and was painting regularly. “What is happening in art schools now is that teachers and was painting regularly. “What is happening in

art schools now is that teachers aren't painting and it is affecting the craft and the quality," she says. "Here is a man (Ghose) who loved doing what he is doing. He brings out the tonality of a flower petal so beautifully that he puts a life into that painting" she adds.

For Nair, Ghose's works are a reminder that today we have forgotten the beauty of nature and ecology. "We are forgetting what nature has given us and how we, through art, can preserve its beauty and composition," she says.

Rustic Resonance can be viewed at Kumar Art Gallery, Sunder Nagar till December 15.

By Shilpa Raina