

ART EXHIBITION

Mystique frames

Sohan Kadri Solo

Artist: Sohan Kadri

Venue: Till November 3

Rating: ★★★

SOHAN KADRI, 76, — the only tantrik painter alive in the country — is a practising *yogi* whose art is influenced by his way of life. But take away *tantra* from his work, Kadri comes across as a master of shapes and colours.

His paintings on display at the Kumar's Gallery are new and a departure from the techni-coloured canvases he created 30 years ago. They are in single shades, muted and open to interpretations. His genre is connected to years of practising the physical and mental discipline of Sufis and tantriks, whom he met in his village, Chachoki near Phagwara in Punjab.

His years in the USA have added its own richness to his work. Most of his frames are a meticulous play of depths and light, and knife incisions on hand-made paper that resemble woven fabric. The colours spread out like cloth on the rough surface, broken by *mandala*-like incisions, to show waves of concentric energy, central to the tantra philosophy. The core is a lotus, the seat of *shakti*, looped by the snake-like *kundalini*. The



colours, a riot of reds, purple, blues, sunshine and greens, stun. But age and disease have doused the fire; the hit-in-the-face passion is missing. The water-colours permeate with a strange calm that only reflections and mysticism can bring. They are mostly untitled. A white *mandala* with a seat of incisions stands out for its measured strokes and virginal look.

Says Sunit Kumar Jain of Kumar Gallery: "Among Indian abstractionists, Qadri has an important place. He uses signs reminiscent of *tantrik* and ritual symbolism." The frames are a collector's delight.

Madhusree Chatterjee