

KUMAR GALLERY

THE ASIAN AGE

Visual symphony of seasons

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A collection of iconic works by eminent modernist painter Gopal Ghose in an exhibition titled “Rustic Resonance”, curated by scholar-columnist Uma Nair, features 58 paintings representing the artistic approach and journey of this Kolkata-born artist.

The works on display at Kumar Gallery are mostly from the 1950s and 1960s, but there’s also a lone work of 1936 — a study of the Marina Beach, considered one of his masterpiece because of the nuances of colour, tonalities and limpid brushwork. “The show is divided into chronological as well as compositional dictates. The landscapes begin with the earliest 1936 study and flow into the series of deep moody blue toned works of the Himalayas,” shares Uma and adds, “There are also clear forms of still life studies with birds and flowers and a few rustic sienna studies. I wanted to create a flow that was seamless and fluid. Each work reflects an ongoing dialogue about the role and the translation in a work of art, rather than the exact representation of the visual world as seen before the human eye.”

Gopal was one of the prominent art teachers of the country, who loved to travel to different places in India while sketching and capturing the different seasons. “His canvas captured everything from the intensity of the desert sun in Rajasthan, the foliage of the trees in the Chota Nagpur Plateau, the little birds that stay and linger or the migratory birds that fly in formation, landscapes that signify lush planes and rural life was always captured in small sheets of paper,” shares Uma.

The collection represents his fascination with the nuances of the landscape, but also draws the viewer into the idea of creating a signature palette of chromatic intensities in colour and tonalities in the texture of nature’s elements. She says, “These landscapes are important because they have an ecological echo. He was India’s Wordsworth in colour because his works drew us closer to the beauty and spiritual quality of nature.”

The pictorial plane unfolds horizontally, extending and transforming into a canvas as Gopal studies the fauna and flora dearly in his paintings. Talking about the collection, Uma states, “I think this collection with the Kumar Art Gallery is a

princely suite because these works are more than 50 years old and it has a focus of different seasonal patterns and the little nuggets of insight offered is a treasure trove of harmonious experiences. It has a distinct flavour of uniqueness about it.”

Though, Gopal has worked using various mediums, but no artist can recreate the same magic as his pastels and watercolours. “His pastel landscapes takes the viewers on a sojourn of the particular area. He mastered the art of Chinese work and implemented it with the western technique presenting a creation of perspective beyond the three types defined by the earlier Chinese painters, which are high distance, horizontal distance and deep distance,” states Uma.

Colours were his vehicle of thought, his pastels done in brisk and thoughtful strokes reflect absorption and deep concentration in thickly painted moody tones, states Uma. “Whatever the subject be, when he used oils on board or paper Ghose’s shapes were carefully moulded in heavy impasto paint with a palette knife, sometimes you would see a bas-relief in colour that pops off the paper sheets.”

Even in today’s world and time, these artworks hold a lot of significance. Uma points out, “Gopal Ghose was an itinerant traveller who spent his days sketching and translating landscapes onto sheets of paper. In an age when development is destroying farmlands and cell phone towers are punctuating the landscape these works stand apart because they reflect the landscape before development invaded it and changed the skyline and the horizon.”

By GEETHA JAYARAMAN