

Home » Conversation, Features, People » Sumakshi Singh's Art of Illusion

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By Maria John

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(Inputs from Rekha Soman)

"I don't define art. If you define it you kill it. If I had to say it then I wouldn't be making it."

A vantage point is not just a physical entity. Sumakshi Singh's explorations into perspective have made her an internationally recognized contemporary artist. Born and brought up in Delhi, Sumakshi was trained in painting at M S University, Baroda. Since then she has travelled all over the world working and exhibiting.

She creates site specific installations which prod the existence of time, understanding, first interpretations and self-reflection. Drawing from her own experiences, the artist uses mix media to draw you into the artwork and leave you with transcending thoughts.



Photos: Jinson Abraham

What does the Biennale mean to you?

What you see here is a lot of goodwill coming together. Often in the art world and at art fairs what you sense is a kind of competitiveness and galleries favoring their artists. Here art is not for sale and is not a commodity.

Artists and curators are all stepping in to offer their own private funds and energy. A community is coming together to make this happen which is a really positive thing for the art fraternity. What I'm enjoying about the Biennale is that it is all about ideas and pushing your practice, along with pushing the context of everybody's practice.

What has been your experience so far?

It is very inspiring to be here. A large part of it is due to the fact that the curator Jitish Kallat has

individually worked with the artists on their concepts and ideas. He has asked us to work on our ideas and not take short cuts. We are inspired to go all out. You don't really see that in many places in the art world. This is not market driven and it is really about ideas and having a dialogue. This is an incredible platform for people to come and really expand their practice and tap into inspiration.

How do people interpret your work?

I make art for self-discovery. I ask the artwork what it wants to become and then onwards it's a strange little dance. I feel uncomfortable when I work. I am a person who wants to be in control. I don't know what it is going to become, but learning to trust is very soothing. Very often people understand exactly what I am hoping for and beyond. When somebody comes back and tells me what they saw, suddenly there is a bubble of joy inside due to a realization that what they saw is what I unconsciously meant it to be. Obviously, something is coming through the work that is not from your brain or your conscious intent, but it is like 'you' are just seeping through your work.

For some people, my art is very much like a mark of our generation where we are in multiple places at the same time. Where are you really? How do you locate yourself? Our generation deals with this all the time with Skype, Facebook and SMS. Is it where your physical body is placed, where your attention is or a meeting online? There is this multiplicity now and space is collapsing in a way. If two hundred years ago. You tell someone that you could talk to another without being in the same room, they would not believe you. Other thing that people tell me is that it is like a space-time hiccup.



Your vision gets stuck at one point in space and somehow you are allowed to walk away from it and enter it from another angle. In a way, you are in an abstract map of your own vision. My yogi and monk friends often see my work from the angle of 'Maya.' It is an illusory world that we inhabit and it is only through the mediated do we try to make sense of our world. What is real and how do you recognize it? There are many questions that I have in my mind and that comes out through the work.

Tell us about your current work

I am doing an installation at Pepper House where I work now from nine in the morning to nine at night. You enter this seventy foot long room with scrolls of paper hanging floor to ceiling at twelve feet height. You see a swirling group of planets, an astronomy diagram that are actually based on the 'Suryasiddhanta,' an ancient text. It talked about gravity and calculus way before Newton. A lot of the drawings and mythologies are projected on large sheets of paper. Then you come across a table where there is an open manuscript where birds are fling, a tree is growing and people are moving.

It is a conglomeration of the history of Kerala. Afterwards, you enter a maze of hanging scrolls and as you walk around you see semi abstract drawings. You walk further and you see yourself as a live projection where you are now in the book. You have become a character in the manuscript and the latest addition to Kerala's history.