

Looking for meaning in myriad

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A square mirror table with a cross drawn across the surface, a circle in the centre, four earthen bowls containing sea sand, a rock and ashes, a shell and water. Behind the table, an acrylic screen with a bamboo frame. Painted on the screen a large purple shell that seems to move and speak in the translucence of its material. The installation is called *Resonance*. Rummana, a Bombay artist who recently had an exhibition at the LTG gallery in Delhi, speaks of rebelling against the compelling insistence of art to focus on aesthetics rather than on inner fulfillment in exploring an idea or concept, the complex layers of multiple meanings in life.

Resonance is a masterpiece of form and a plateau for meandering into meaning. The shell weaves into seductive wholeness, moves in a gentle flexibility of form in the clarity of its texture. Reflecting on the mirror table it divides and coheres in the circle the elements that constitutes the earth. The black-red earth pigment of the bowls on the mirror itself is a symbol on the mirror itself is a symbol of something enduring and passionate. There is in this work an understanding of the construction of sensual harmony, a clarity of perceiving the underlying strength of the rock, the inevitability of death and ash, the minute resilience of sand, nurturing water and the immense vastness and the mysterious depth of the sea in the presence of a tiny shell. The mirror surface gives the installation a cool, clear poise that zones with languid ease the multiplicity of meaning. Building a philosophy of wholeness with delicate deliberateness.

Rummana Hussain speaking of this work said, "the shell represents the woman's body and procreation, in this work it is split and seen in all its aspects. To be separated and analysed."

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Rummana Hussain making one of her meaningful pieces.

In another series of paintings she has worked on the vagina and female sexuality. She feels very strongly, that it is important to represent images of the women's body with honesty and freedom, though not figuratively. Rummana feels very bitter that a whole world of creative activity that women do in creating the sustenance of life itself is devalued and dismissed. She feels that art alienates people by the very materials it uses. To make a point she has used many materials that would be found at home like Robin "blue." There is an interesting display of a clothesline with blue rags, crushed hand made paper dyed with indigo and robin "blue." While the work, which is quite startling and unusual is inspired by the struggle of the indigo plantation workers against the British, it is also a statement of bringing the domestic into the gallery. Her latest series of work is plastic

pockets, xeroxed with poems on being at home, crossword, cartoon, postcard from a friend and a recipe for Humayn roti. It is poignant and evocative, almost like old-time still life photographs. It goes back to old novels where heroines lived for their mementos and recorded "uneventful" days with diligence and nostalgia for their own interiority.

Rummana, daughter of an army father and politician mother is sensitive to the changing political and economic climate and tries to represent this in intermixing technological material with natural elements to voice a concern, to ask questions about the future of many people dependent on older systems of production and the reality of a new period of technological organisation and its values. She says, "through the window I see a high-technology landscape. I stand at this cross-

fertilized, hybrid juncture."

Conflux is an enigmatic and powerful work. There is an elongated rubber sheet with a large round earthen pot with brick-earth filled in it, it is covered with a glass circle with a black storm painted on the glass. Red earth in fistfuls pours out of the pot and forms a pattern of a path on the rubber sheet. The storm of the glass lid and the spilling of red earth on the black is dramatic. It makes you think of protest, rage and anger that you squander when you spread out. Within the ambit of Rummana's concern it is reminiscent of many of the untold stories of environmental disasters in the country, including displacement from forest and agriculture for industries.

It is a haunting piece of work, a miniature volcano erupting and creating new paths and configurations.