

# Forms in gay abandon

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## PAINTING

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Seema Bawa

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Babu Xavier

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Rummana Hussain

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**B**abu Xavier, the self-taught artist from Kerala, has applied colours, forms and styles in his paintings with gay abandon. The viewer moves from a touch of cubism to surrealism and naif art in his works, suspending reality and the familiar to travel with the artist in a fantastic world of his creation. The skillful deconstruction of form is the most arresting feature of the show, where faces and bodies take on threatening and enchanting aspects with a great deal of facility.

Babu Xavier has used an interesting treatment in his smaller ink and silk crayon works on paper. One portion of the face and body and the object associated with it say half of a profile and the book on the desk is painted in a manner that light shines on it while the other half is left unpainted with only black drawing. The effect is like a stage light directed and focused at that particular moment on a scene or expression of seminal importance to the scheme of things.

For the larger works Babu has used oil colour on cloth glued to paper that give the painting texture, both internal and external to the painting, specially ones on silk which have a peculiar radiance. These works are rather acro-

There is warmth of colours in his paintings even though most of Babu Xavier's works also have violent overtones seen in distorted forms and symbols of death and darker aspects of life.

The final aspect of the artists



*Less esoterie themes: Rummana Hussain*

physical in their imagery. They take up biblical themes such as temptation of Eve and Expulsion from Paradise. In one of such works, a female figure in pink with blue hair and red lips is set in the centre with an apple tree and a snake in the background. What provides the painting with a definite impact is the stark unpainted representation of a tablet with writing on it to which a finger of the Hand of God points. This juxtaposed to vivid colouring and a fantastic landscape is a study in contrast.

repertoire seen in this show are the *Nightscares*. A palm tree, with a ladder against it, a cot on one side and a flowering tree on the other with an empty bottle dominating the foreground suggest a reaching for the heavens in a drunken dream perhaps. The allusion to heaven is strengthened by sickle moon and profusion of stars in the sky. The painting has clearly demarcated planes set apart by green, prussian blue and brown that lend further balance to the composition.

On the other had the installations of Rummana Hussain use everyday materials to portray less esoteric themes to her exhibition *Fragments/Multiples*. Majority of her works have tried to incorporate natural substances and pigments such as indigo, terracotta, red earth.

The artist has used synthesis and antisynthesis to bring out her ideas as in *Sequence and Change* that uses a bicycle with pedals moving with the aid of an electric motor suspended from the roof with ropes that is reflected in the mirror below. The piece works more as a happening that illustrates inertia in life.

Then there are two strings with indigo pigment and robin blue painted papers strung on them, which are crumpled to give the effect of a dhoti ghat with clean sheets, *Resonance* is a work that shows certain potential in the artist. On an acrylic sheet the artist has painted one shell with all the delicacy it demonstrates and an echoing outline of the same and mounted this on the wall. Under this on a mirror are four terracotta plates with sand, shell, rock and water in them.

What is interesting is that although all her works are titled in English, but for on which has geru, (red earth) pigment on paper that is in *Sanskrit Yoni*. One wonders if this was done to protect the sensibilities of the viewer.