



Vision in Art



"Art has adorned our interiors in caves, homes and palaces and enriched our lives since the stone age," says Ashna Singhal, who recently presented VIART (vision in art) at the Visual Arts Gallery of the India Habitat Centre, to bring together the works of eminent painters such as G.Ravinder Reddy, Amitav Das, Paresh Maity and others, with furniture designed by the well known interior designer, Rano Singh. The exhibition was intended to highlight the *"strong relationship between Art and interiors"* and to help the average person understand how a painting could add to the ambience of their home/interior spaces.

Would Rembrandt and Van Gogh turn in their graves or would the new vision and interpretations that young Ashna presents reassure them.



Ashna has grown up in an environment where design has held prominence. She is a gifted singer. She also has a vision. She feels art can be a part of everyday life and she wants that the average person should have the means to enrich their interior spaces with contemporary Art. Is she selling Art? Is this a new

in response to a demand: that kind of idealism which would glorify the artist who pursues a personal ideal of beauty and strives to express himself, and suffers or perishes for lack of patronage, would appear to Indian thought far more ridiculous or pitiable than heroic." Contemporary Indian Art has deviated from this, and the student of art today, is educated more in tune with the western precepts of Art than traditional practices of the subcontinent. This has been an essential element in the evolution of contemporary Indian Art.

At this point it may seem irrelevant to identify the ideas presented by this exhibition with a return to traditional practices, but the fact is that it is difficult to sell Art. Galleries and Artists are becoming increasingly inventive in the way they present their work, as the intention is, eventually to be able to sell what they do, unless they have some other means of income or livelihood.

This aspect only affirms that the thoughts on ancient art practices in India were not misplaced in their thinking or ideology. Can we in India today, really take the plunge to make this a part of our contemporary art practice? Will we be able to break free from the western system which has moulded our thinking in Art for centuries?



marketing gimmick? Could be, but to my mind she has also taken a bold step in making a statement that seeks to blur the boundaries between Art and Design.

If 'Art' is presented in a format that is designed to fit in with interior spaces and furniture, then is there a difference between them in such a context? If the eventual criterion of a painting is that it becomes a piece of adornment/ decoration in someone's living space, then what is the difference between Art and Design?

The essential embellishment of a human being is the feelings that he adorns his or her life with. The human mind has found myriad ways to do this, from music to poetry to pottery and painting. Whether intended to or not, these manifestations of our feelings do serve a purpose. Those of us who are trained to design, are trained to present ideas that we have, that have been felt by us, to appeal to people at large. The essential components of creativity remain the same. It is our presentation that communicates the utilitarian aspects and Ashna, through VIART seems to be doing the same thing.

Thoughts on traditional art practices in ancient India as interpreted by Ananda K Coomaraswamy are illuminating. He says, "Indian art has always been produced

Delightful as the idea that Ashna attempts to present through VIART is, it needs to be defined, debated and structured to provide the necessary guidelines for formulating perspectives in Art and Design in the context of 21st century India. Can we learn from tradition, to augment what we have assimilated from the Western notions of Art? What kind of a world would creative individuals thrive in, where there is no real distinction between Art & Design, where everything is produced in response to a demand, whether articulated or perceived? Considering the world we live in today, is such an idea far fetched or an envisioned reality?

VIART has indeed raised a lot of questions. In this

Ashna has made a good beginning.

What one would like to see is the vision develop with conviction, as also the grit and determination to take it further in a meaningful way.

GOPIKA NATH

