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Shirley Bhatnagar: JKK

Through her work displayed at JKK's exhibition, Shirley illustrates her ideas about the statements made by leaders the world over, which are nothing but broken promises



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Shirley Bhatnagar has been a ceramic artist for many years. At the JKK (Jaipur Kala Kendra) exhibition 'Breaking Ground' there is a melange of stoneware, porcelain and earthenware, cups and objects like a treasure trove entitled 'The Broken Promised 2018'. Through her work — a table laid out for tea with defunct pot handles, forks and spoons with spikes that are of no use to anyone — she illustrates her ideas about the statements made by leaders the world over which are nothing but broken promises. It is when the politics and mockery hit you that you smile in amusement.

Talking about her work Shirley says: "I use a wide variety of glazes, some are commercial and stain based some are made and ground at the studio. Typically I never make more than 500 GM's of any glaze so most application is by hand in a painterly fashion. I also use stains, finely ground for direct application. When I need an even coat I spray it on."

For the works at Ceramic Triennale, Shirley used glazes at 1100 and 1250 Celsius in combination as she needed a brighter palette rather than subdued and sombre. She also used gold and platinum final firings to add that extra glitter. What entices is the fact that nothing is over, it's like a cabinet of curiosities placed on a table.

Shirley fires everything in a small gas kiln. She says the medium the materials and the message are a complex

corollary of sorts as the 'Broken Promised' was created out of a lot of studies and looking at political lampooning, she did not want to be direct and target a particular politician or a party and wanted to keep it simple, however it took a while to decide which broken promises to illustrate.



"I was not aiming for impact so much but rather decoding statements as a 3-dimensional artwork," explains Shirley. "Therefore the work is not monumental or too pretty, it's more like a graphic novel or a sketch, and as a viewer, you need to engage with the text to make sense of what's going and even

then only those with political interest or some leaning towards the topic will get the message."

On the table she creates a conversation of sheer ingenuity with six quirky place settings, illustrating promises broken but chosen on absurdity; her favourites are making one place like the other: So she takes conversation one-liners spoken by politicians as her catalyst.

We will make Amethi like Singapore/ Delhi like London/Kashi like Kyoto/South of Italy like Florida/ roads of Bihar to be like Hema Malini's cheeks!!!

The wit and the irony both become the handmaidens of the entire commentary. Of course, it is the tall mug like creations that are the best. And why not in the year 2011 Shirley had created a historic show as an ode to two French films of the French New Wave- 400 Blows and Breathless made in 1959-1960 respectively.

The largest work literally a 'hanging color palette' based on A Bout de Souffle composed of over a 100 ceramic pieces on which one side were images printed from the movie and the flip side a myriad of colorful glazes. Many fragments came together to create a story which was for its time applauded for being bold, choppy and fast moving.

Now 7 years hence at the JKK, her work again defines her very being and her sensibility, shorn of decorative artifice but built up in glazes, colours and forms that attract and keep you riveted as they invite responses that flit back and forth like a pendulum.



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TALLUR'S TERRACOTTA: JKK

Tallur's work reaffirms the place of man in the path of progress. The reason he stands apart in conception and ingenuity is his ability to challenge the infinite quantum of materiality and his felicity with the design

UMA NAIR

Tensile terracotta greets your gaze at Jaipur's Jawahar Kala Kendra which houses India's first Ceramic Triennale Breaking Ground. Internationally renowned I.N Tallur's Man Exhibiting Holes has been assembled using hollowed-out terracotta and cement. Tallur marries space and terracotta pieces to create a distinct sculpture placed on a pedestal.

Tallur's work reaffirms the place of man in the path of progress. The reason he stands apart in conception and ingenuity is his ability to challenge the infinite quantum of materiality and his felicity with the design. The head of a man with its evocative expression tells us that as an artist and a sculptor, Tallur reaches deep into dichotomies between what is tangible and what is tactile. He measures and balances the figurative and the abstract, to create new corollaries in the conceptual to bring forth new mean-

ings on contemporary existence.

Tallur often quotes Albert Einstein to illustrate his aesthetics. "Matter and energy are really different forms of the same thing. Matter can be turned into energy and energy into matter. This process involves the complete destruction of matter and occurs only when that matter meets an equal amount of anti-matter, a substance composed of matter with a negative charge." Man Exhibiting Holes is about multiple possibilities - it fuses history, concrete manifestations of the real and ephemeral, and expressions of the human predicament. The terracotta plates neatly arranged and cemented speak to us about the transformation of thought, as well as the inevitable decay of organic substances, and Tallur's ability speak the language of metaphors a Telurian truth. Throughout his production runs the durable threads of well-considered content but also an astonishing discernment in regards to formal attributes.

The ingenuity in Tallur's work is the way he uses materials to bridge the past, present, and future and point toward thematic interconnectedness through time through lucid design elements.

Tallur's art speaks the language of installation like a natural lyric. Over the years he has built his creative instincts on the foundation of an eclectic approach which includes the traditional techniques of modelling, carving, and casting but also the more radical gestures of assemblage and appropriation. Curator Peter Nagy has noted that it is Tallur's polyvalent facility which enables him to explore both ancient and contemporary dilemmas simultaneously, an astonishing feat in actuality.

At the JKK Tallur's work tells us that an artist has to keep reinventing his language so that he maintains his place in the map of contemporary practices. And this reaffirms the importance of thought and imagination in the mind of the artist.

