

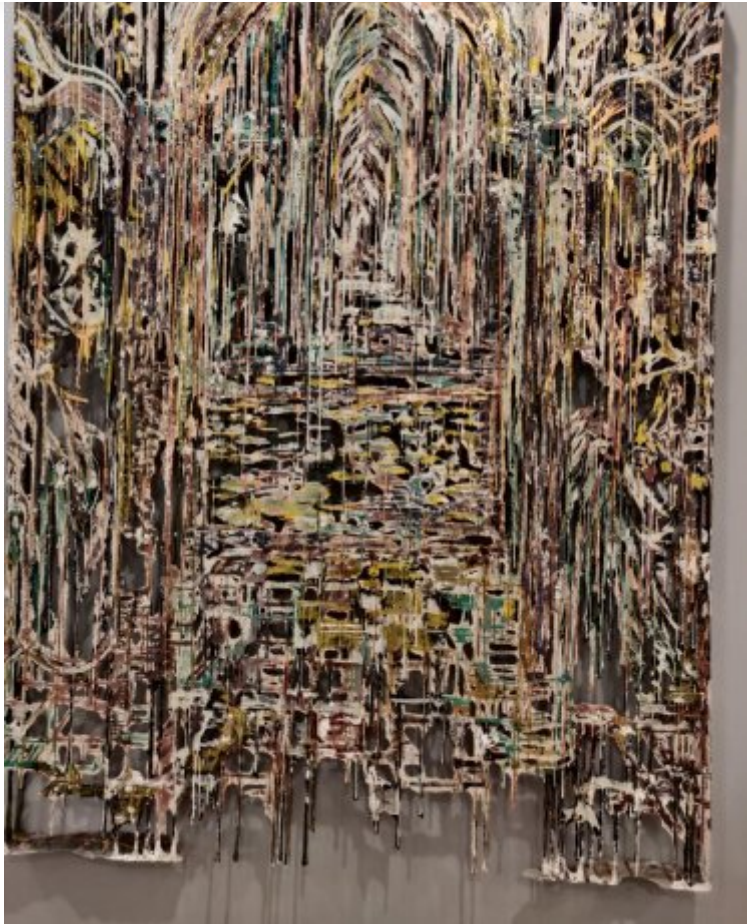
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The fine art of hope

The urgent topicality of the works displayed at the recently-concluded India Art Fair held a mirror to all the current apprehensions in our minds



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'Green Electric Sounds' by Diana Al-Hadid

The recently concluded India Art Fair in New Delhi offered a diverse and interesting selection of modern and contemporary art, primarily from South Asia. The post-event press release indicated 'reports of strong sales and continued growing confidence in the South Asian art market', which sounds promising for the art scene, in these turbulent times. The diversity of art covered the entire gamut of contemporary issues, ranging from personal concerns related to gender and identity to wider issues rooted in socio-politics, religion, climate change and urbanisation, reflecting current apprehensions regarding these.

While Ai Weiwei and Olafur Eliasson's large installations at the neugerriemschneider gallery dominated for obvious reasons, there were several other smaller works tucked away in corners that stood out.

Tactile and textural

As there was such a profusion of art, and many favourites, it has been difficult to narrow it down and mention a few select works. For instance, T V Santhosh's watercolour work 'The Protagonist and His Empty Rat Trap' at 'The Guild' was a powerful comment on the influence of media and propaganda on mass perceptions and its impact on history. In stark contrast, the delicately rendered works by the Nepal-born artist Youdhithir Maharjan at 'Blueprint 12' were formed by deconstructing and reconstructing text into painstakingly created visuals. 'Before Women Had Wings' employed crocheted pages derived from the book by the same name.

Suchitra Gahlot at 'Shrine Empire' presented 'Fun Sun', a digital work engaging with the idea of slowing time. The 12 interactive screens encouraged touch and play to manipulate sunsets, and it was a huge hit with children and adults.

Gallery Isa displayed exceptionally tactile and textural works — 'paintings' that were at the cusp of sculpture and installation, and played with material, media and texture. Antonio Santin's hyperrealistic 'carpet' from last year acquired abstract tones to form a landscape titled 'Coral Greed'. Diana Al-Hadid's 'Green Electric Sounds', a mixed media sculptural work, references cross cultures, playing with notions of perspective, time and space, while introducing elements from multiple sources such as literature, architecture, mythology and science. Closer home, Murali Chinnasamy, a printmaker from Chennai, displayed several pen and ink works at Art Houz. Using dots and lines, overlaid on printed text, his works are intricately detailed and delicately layered, exploring notions of time and space, often involving physical layering in the form of an assemblage, for instance in 'Infinite Thoughts'. Vijay Pichumani's works were another draw at this gallery.

More digital works?

Ghiora Aharoni's 'Hindru' series that combines Hindi and Urdu, juxtaposed religious iconography with social and personal connotations. 'Make Me A Temple Within' employs portable vintage shrines carried by Buddhist monks and pilgrims, and explores interconnectedness, consciousness, spirituality and coexistence.

In parallel, the exhibitions at Nature Morte, Gallery Espace, Bikaner House, The Gujral Foundation and the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art held in conjunction with the Art Fair were outstanding and deserve a separate write-up.

augmented reality to enhance the viewing experience. Incidentally, next year the fair will shift back from Okhla to Pragati Maidan (where it started), a central and convenient location for many.

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