

★
A BESPECTACLED child with a flicker of a smile on his fair face was a familiar figure at the Chetana Art Gallery. He sat with his thin shoulders hunched on a low stool, slapping his unruly hair.

His sharp eyes followed the movements of the visitors to the gallery but his expression betrayed nothing. Only when an inquisitive visitor wanted to know who was the artist whose works were hung on the walls would he stand up reluctantly and stretch out his hand in the style of a stalwart. He was the artist. A mere child. A child in years but not a child in his work.

His paintings and collages are the products of a mature mind housed in the brain of a school-going youngster. The painter in Jaideep Mehrotra would not wait for the years to give him maturity. Not for the art schools to mould his technique either.

I wondered how many boys of his age could think of representing a farmer and his cow in Jaideep's style. He reduces the scene to a basic structure and conveys the scene with a simplicity only given to minds capable of abstraction.

A proud mother, Mrs. Vishni Mehrotra, told me in a gasping tone the wonders that her boy was performing. Herself a gazal and thumri singer, Mrs. Mehrotra once upon a time took training in art at Shantiniketan. She knew her son had a tempestuous talent for painting. But till recently she did not know he was prolific. This vacation when he came home from

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FASCINATING ADULT ART BY A CHILD

By Our Art Critic

Thirteen-year-old Jaideep Mehrotra, whose paintings are now on display at Chetana Art Gallery, is a remarkable mixture of a child and an adult. Generally, most juvenile painters at that age are neither.

Several of his paintings on display bear a distinct stamp of maturity.

"The Catch" (14) is one of those

fascinating in colour and design, the composition is handled with remarkable restraint.

"The Lady" (1) and "The Palm-mystery" (2) are two other charming exhibits of a

adult exhibition standard. Jaideep's talent is manifest in these in different directions; the former a black and white executed with gay abandon and the latter a carefully planned bold design derived from the shape of a human palm in a delightful colour scheme.

Jaideep has experimented in collages too. The "Bull Fight" (14) is an interesting piece. In a strikingly child-like fashion the "L.S.D." (17) is another pleasing experiment in this medium. The third collage "Abstract Combination" (15), however, does justice to the painter neither as an adult nor as a child.

Jaideep the child is at his charming best in the "Meeting" (6), a colourful composition with a poetic feeling.

Undoubtedly gifted is Jaideep the artist. To make the most of the material the young painter has to be watched with care.

This show will remain open till Thursday.



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Jaideep explains it to Mummy.

Ajmer (where he is schooling) he asked for money to buy oil paints and a small room in their Worli house to paint without being watched. Mrs. Mehrotra respected the wishes of the child. She left him alone. In a month's time the boy had painted enough canvases to fill a gallery!