



poojabedi

Intelligent art

HERE are two elements of success: Aspiration and perspiration. Any doubts about that adage are put to rest at Jaideep Mehrotra's latest art exhibition titled "Retracked". Using the great Indian train experience as its subject, Jaideep aspires to bring back to you enduring images of an encounter that remains forever etched in the hearts and minds of those whom have experienced it. His work is poetry in motion. (What a clever remark!!) Nostalgia strikes with visions of "coolies" in red, sitting huddled in groups, the one rupee weighing machines which would also tell you your fortune, soft drink vendors (I remember how they used to make a racket and wake us up by running the opener repeatedly over the bottles and yelling "Cold drrrink, cold drrrink!!) A few tubs of acrylics and oil colours even transform themselves into a history lesson as you see Gandhiji alighting from a train. The shading on this canvas tells a tale. Split down the centre, the colours on the left half of this painting are toned down dramatically. Almost like it has a diaphanous veneer over it. According to Jaideep, it's a conscious effort to show a divide, as some do believe that Gandhiji was responsible for the partition. As I looked at this painting closely, I noticed the map of Gujarat cleverly shaded into it. But then that has always been his forte.

Jaideep is a master of illusion. A couple of years ago I saw a large painting of a woman in a white sari at an art gallery. A long golden ray of light fell on her, and she seemed enveloped in hues of dark and deep blue. I would have thought her to a mermaid floating at the bed of an ocean if my friend hadn't pointed her feet out. It was stunning. I couldn't seem to get it out of my mind and even dreamt of the painting that night.

To my utter surprise and joy, I met its creator, Jaideep, at a party the next day, and demanded to know what that mesmerising work of art symbolised.

It was titled 2 minutes of minutes of fame. She's a model on a catwalk and the golden ray, a strobe light. If you peered into the dark blue hued background tinged with black, faces of people at the show emerged almost magically. These are her two minutes of fame. At this moment she is the focus of all attention. She is looked upto, admired, lusted for and even envied. On stage she is a "somebody". She pirouettes, exits amidst applause but once she takes off the designer clothes and make up she's just another person in that room. It's the story of every human being. We are all looking for our two minutes of fame. To be recognised for our hard work and be appreciated for it, publicly!! And it's not limited to models and movie stars or corporate big wigs making it to covers of magazines. It could even be the housewife that wants recognition for a home well kept, a cook for a meal well prepared or a worker who wishes to be awarded employee of the month.

And so we are back to aspiration and perspiration. He aspired to tell a story and perspired to make tangible the intangible. And the painting was successfully sold. It hangs with great significance in my living room, inspiring all who care to hear the story behind it.

Jaideep has a cerebral approach to art and the skill of storytelling through visuals. The huge turnout he had for his opening ranging from corporate, art, social and diplomatic circles were all abuzz with their own anecdotes and stories inspired by his art. The passion, with which he wields his paintbrush and his mastery over the medium, will earn him much more than just a two minute brush with fame.