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THE EXPRESSION OF AN ARTIST...

Every painting has a story behind it and so does the artist who created it. SAUMYA BANDYOPADHYAY is one such artist whose journey has been remarkable as a painter, a sculptor and a designer.



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Saumya Bandyopadhyay, currently a Pune based artist and an Assistant Professor of Design at Symbiosis Institute of Design, is known widely for his sculpting and paintings.

Hailing from Kolkata, the pioneering city of Indian renaissance, where art evolved and is an integral part of the many festivals of the state, Saumya is but a product of this environment. Growing up in Kolkata, Saumya was exposed to the beautiful sculptures and attractive designs, which developed a curiosity within him and led him to take up a career in sculpting.

None of his family members were involved in art professionally, hence it was initially difficult for his family members to accept his decision. Saumya gave the entrance examination for the Govt College of Art and Craft, Calcutta, while pursuing BCom (H). Eventually, Saumya graduated and also got a BFA (Sculpture) from Government College of Art and Craft, Calcutta, on his third try. "I excelled in my college, and my family members became supportive seeing my consistent success in art," said Saumya.

In the city where fine art is part of every festivity, Saumya was constantly amazed at the creation of the local artists. Local artists, who had no special education in designing and sculpting, were able to create beautiful and attractive sculptures. "I used to go over weekends and stay and watch the local artist at work. It was all created under the guidance of an experienced local artist who instructed and guided the inexperienced while in the process creating attractive and gorgeous sculptures. Watching them work tirelessly inspired me immensely!

Alongside, I understood how art could be learnt in different ways," shared Saumya.

After graduating with a Bachelor in Fine Arts, Saumya moved out of Kolkata, with a little push from his father, who advised him to explore more outside the city. Saumya then pursued his Masters (MFA) degree in the College of Art, New Delhi. This was the phase when he had to struggle financially and also had to keep up with studies and continue experimenting.

Consequently, during his education in art, Saumya involved himself in public installations or the interactive art and design done during setting up of pandals during the Durga Puja festival.

Durga Puja is always a huge platform for any artists to display their creations. "Creations have no worth if people do not get to see it and appreciate it," said Saumya, while reminiscing his first public installation during Durga Puja, "Art should have usability and that is it's actual worth."

It was in the year 2000, when Saumya set up his first Durga Puja Pandal, giving his creations a public exposure. This massive exhibit of his art also won him his first award, the Asian Paints' Sharad Shamman award, which is arguably the highest honour given to the pandals during this festival for creative excellence. Every artist experiments and explores new aspects in his art, Saumya,



Saumya Bandyopadhyay

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in his public instalments during Durga Puja, took a bold step of introducing a mixture of international art as a theme. He had set up the pandal on the mix theme of Mexican (Mayan art and sculptures) and African art style. This was an out-of-the-box set-up for a Durga Puja festival, which traditionally is based on Bengali and Hindu art themes.

It was during this time that Saumya realised the importance of art for society and expressed, "A majority of people do not get exposed to art and various art forms, the reason being their time entirely invested in fulfilling the basic necessities of life. Festivals as these are the only way they get to see art and designs and appreciate it. This is also because the disposition of an individual during festivals is such that they are enabled to absorb it all and appreciate it at the same time. It is the artist's



social responsibility to deliver so that the society can learn to appreciate the art," added Saumya meaningfully.

Saumya as an artist has evolved in the art forms. His journey of public installation, dominated mostly by sculpture and design, lasted for 12 to 15 years. This was all along with his job and explorations in paintings. Saumya began painting and sculpting took a back seat. Every two years or so, he changed his painting style. "The biggest dilemma of an artist is that he isn't an artist," Saumya stressed while speaking about his temporary dissatisfaction about his work and transformation in his artwork as a painter. This also prompted



him to try new themes every now and then, which is clearly visible in the collection of his varied series.

Saumya's paintings have gone through three major stages and all the stages have been remarkable. Initially, his paintings were based on religion and mythology. In this stage, Saumya projects religious iconography.

In the second stage, he changed the series to expressing relationship between a man and a woman, and mostly depicting either of the two gender's domination over the other. The second stage mostly revolved around how gender is pursued in Indian society with a touch of Saumya's own imagination of the same. While explaining the concept of this theme, Saumya said, "This series of paintings dealt with presentation of my understanding of how society saw the male and female genders and the symbolic representation of human body in much a more realistic depiction. One can clearly see this in my paintings where the bull with wings represents

Saumya's paintings have gone through three major stages. Initially, his paintings were based on religion and mythology. In the second stage, he changed to expressing relationship between a man and a woman. In the third and current stage, he has attempted to portray his interpretation of life and death in relation with liquid or water.



the dominant male or in another of my other paintings wherein a female with wings represents the dominant gender.”

Saumya admires Gustave Moreau, a French painter’s work, which also dealt with symbolism.

In the third and current stage of his artwork transformation, Saumya has attempted to portray his interpretation of life and death in relation with liquid or water. This transformation came about after his father’s demise. “I express myself and human emotions through my paintings. In the current series, I have interpreted responses to death as lesser darker human emotion, and associated life and death with water. I have attempted to use brighter colours. We, humans, develop in the womb; that is in liquid (amniotic fluid); and after death our ashes end up in water. I have attempted to interpret life and death’s association with water by depicting aquatic life, mostly fish. There is more emphasis on the eyes as well, which also pictures the aquatic life. I have pictured life as beautiful and colourful, exactly the way it is as also the way I see it,” explained Saumya.

Every artist carries different ideas and stories behind their paintings. These are



inspired by the surrounding culture and rural or urban settings. Saumya has his own peculiar artwork, which renders mostly his reaction to his surroundings and society’s perception of various ideas. His artwork is very contemporary compared to other artists today, who do not attempt more experimentation; and people are not used to such art and he believes with time it will gain acceptance.

Saumya passionately explains his artwork with all possible minute details, and mentions that in India, the hard reality is, art still is considered something that is for a certain class of people and is part of leisure for people who can in their spare time indulge in art and its collection. He wants to include the common people, who aren’t really into art, to indulge in his and other artists’ works and appreciate the same. Saumya has had many admirable solo and group exhibitions set up in



past for the same, the most recent solo exhibition was in Pune itself, which let people admire his work and give him a good feedback as well. Saumya also has online exhibitions for people to explore his artwork.

He has a dream to open an art and design college for those who want to learn art, design and its various forms. “Art still is secondary in India, and isn’t much sought after professionally either. I believe this will change when there is inclusion of art at every stage of the learning process in education system,” said Saumya.

Saumya’s artwork speaks for itself and shows how talented and innovative he is. In spite of his busy schedule, he always finds time to paint, without which his day is incomplete. He looks forward to working more in the field of visual arts and design along with his other passions of painting and sculpting. ☺

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