

“Aquarelle”

A play with water n hues

16, August to 31, August 2011

Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Shailoj Mukherji, Benod Bihari Mukherjee, Jamini Roy, Manindra Bhushan Gupta, Kalighat Painting, Paritosh Sen, Shymal Dutta Roy, K.C.Pyne, Badri Narayan, Amit Ambalal, K.G.Subramanyan, Sadhan Chackravarty, Bhabani Charan Lahi, Krisna Chedam, Lalita Lajmi, Lokesh Khodse, Prakash Kormarkar, Ambadas, T.M.Aziz, Pragati Kumar, Nikhil Biswas, Siby Natesan, Ranjit Singh Gaikwad, Akbar Padamsee, Rini Dhumal, Meenakshi Doshi, Manjiri Kapadia, Alok Bal, Jagannath Mohapatra, Hrushikesh Biswal, B.V.Suresh.

The journey of water color began from documentation in expeditions to that of being a mode of artistic expression. Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) painted several fine botanical, wildlife and landscape using watercolors. The Society of Painters in Water Colors (1804, now known as the Royal Water color Society) gained momentum in the 19th century as to aristocratic and elite art collectors. The Chinese techniques of ink and brush are the earliest artistic forms of water colors practiced from the 3rd and 4th century which . These oriental techniques spilled over to the early 20th century Bengal school which saw the great masters Abanindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose to name a few. The importance of water color is obvious in academic curriculums in art schools even today, though for an artist it has evolved from a mere medium to free idiom in mix media. The Bengal school of Art and the Royal School of London practice this structured technique very seriously even today and has a large number of collectors following them.

In the exhibition titled “ Aquarelle” the viewers will witness watercolors from the Early Bengal school like Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose to more recent artists like Paritosh Sen Shyamal Dutta Ray and to other Masters like Akbar Padamee who practices this medium in its purest form and works by Ranjit Singh Gayekwad from the Royal college of arts, to some of the recent contemporary artist like Siby Nattesan, T.M Aziz, Jagganath Mohapatra and Hruishikesh Biswal

The history of water colors dates back to the history of painting itself, from cave paintings to the Egyptian manuscript illumination. Although popular in European Middle Ages, its history as an art medium begins in the Renaissance with Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) who painted fine botanical, wildlife landscapes in water color.

Beginning as a medium of documentation in the 18th century, water colors have transformed to a free mode of artistic expression. The Society of Painters in Water Colors (1804, now known as the Royal Water color Society) was formed as the aristocratic taste and middle class art collecting took momentum in early 19th century. The Chinese have been the masters of brush and ink technique since 3rd century which took a flare with European color in the 17th century, as did the Japanese water colors. As the wave of oriental spilled into early 20th century Bengal, it led to emergence of aqua medium and brought forth the great masters like Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose et al. For a contemporary artist, the water medium has turned into an idiom of free expression in mix media. The Bengal School and the Royal Art School of London still exploit this medium in the purest of form.

Despite the early start, watercolors were generally used by Baroque easel painters only for sketches, copies or cartoons. These colors come from natural pigments mixed with water, sometimes honey or gum and are also economical. Easily available pigments like brick red, turmeric, indigo were used with water to paint. Along with these other factors contributed to the spread of watercolor painting during the 18th century, particularly in England. Water coloring was also valued by fieldsmen for its usefulness in depicting the fields, and the convenience in traveling and availability. Watercolor artists were commonly brought with the geological or archaeological expeditions funded by the Society of Dilettanti (founded in 1733) to document discoveries in the Mediterranean, Asia. The confluence of amateur markets, art collecting and 19th century painting technique led to the formation of English watercolor painting societies. Turner, the greatest of Romantics, exploited the medium to its utmost as an artistic Endeavour. Also many fine examples were produced by French painters, including Eugène Delacroix, François Marius Granet, Henri-Joseph Harpignies and the satirist Honoré Daumier

With the upcoming of camera, the impressionist's colors came in and so ceased use of water colors as medium to documentation. Gorgeous landscape and maritime watercolors were produced by Paul Signac, and Paul Cézanne developed a watercolor painting style consisting entirely of overlapping small glazes of pure color. With the modern art movements, one sees the transition of water color from medium to paint history to that of creating history, where they are not used for convenience but for the fluidity and characteristics of aqua. Among the 20th century artists working in water color are Wassily Kandinsky, Emil Nolde, Paul Klee, Egon Schiele and Raoul Dufy; in America the major exponents included Charles Burchfield, Edward Hopper, Georgia O'Keeffe, Charles Demuth, and John Marin.

In the East, much of the watercolor seems to have been inspired by the western style; many Japanese artists are known to have been educated in the western style. The Chinese only adopted this medium of artistic expression around a century ago, being quite familiar with the use of the brush and ink as they were expert calligraphers. Although Chinese watercolor art makes use of the same tools as traditional brush art there are obvious differences in the techniques and concepts featured.

The Indians have always used water color for artistic endeavor. The major coming in of water color technique in India apart from miniature is from the Company school of the British(in the late 19th, early 20th century). This style is the reminiscent of the Royal British water color school. The water colors came to India in the through the strong wave of oriental which up surged the Bengal revivalist movement (early 20th century). The water colors found in modern Indian art are a combination of company or academic western school and the oriental from Bengal school. The water color from this period is blend of the revival of the Indian miniatures, the Arabian wash technique(Abanindranath Tagore), the use of local *patta citras* and the Japanese water colors(brought by Okakura). The great water colorists from Bengal school are Nandalal. Bose, Abanindranath, Gaganendranath, Rabindranath Tagore, et al.

With the dawn of modern art, the medium becomes one of the mix media though its significance in academics is retained yet. Some masters like Shyamal Dutta Roy, Akbar Padamsee work in purest of this medium. In the works of K.C.S.Pannikar, J.Swaminathan, K.G.Subramanyan, Sibum Natesan, T.M. Aziz one sees use this medium. The Bombay school of art even today witnesses some amazing, technically sound artists in the naturalistic style. One of the living masters, Akbar Padamsee finds the medium exciting for the non-usage of white and the space left on the paper. The single stroke becomes the final, this medium thus challenges an artist even today. Artists like Riyas Komu, T.V.Santosh, Mithu Sen, Atul Dodiya exploit this medium to get finest of their expressions.

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