

INDIAN SUMMER

Here is a work that does not serve solely as a means of expressing the painter's personal admiration for nature naïve. Instead, she feels strongly that painting has a task of its own to accomplish in the service of imaginative life. I say this since, even till this late date on the Indian Urban scene, some few still pursue art craft as if there had been no changes in sensibility. Sangeeta has developed a style which is in keeping with the thrust of mankind's own restless mind. Here, then, is a greater and starker simplicity, though without any risk of reification, expressive of inner form. In this way the work becomes closely associated with genuine, and refined, rarely viewed architecture-natural seeming and free of impediments of any kind. In this way the socio-cultural function of painting is extended. Instead of relying on the temporary, the fortuitous, and the individual, the painting is given content by artistic values belonging to all time (you may as well call it geologic time!), and of a significance surpassing the personal. It is in this way all good artists work. The traditional realistic manner, based on the observation of the changing appearances of nature, is felt to be inadequate. Means are thus sought so to enhance the interpretation of the inspirational idea. Distracting and superfluous accretions are eliminated. The main theme, having thus been isolated and set free from all accidental circumstances, give a new environment in which ideal spatial dimensions replace those of nature apparent to the unaided, naïve eye. It is how a fresh pictorial convention develops whose chief characteristics are a twin-dimensional scheme of composition, a firm and yet spontaneous seeming stylization of the forms of nature in depth and a symbolic content.

Already, her early experiments were meaningful use of line and colour. Here the drawing hand turned objects organic or inorganic into visual images and which in turn took over the artist's argument and sustained it. But soon the painter dropped the narrative content if any and so the close-knit

compositions and the rhythmical groupings of forms proved themselves to be pictorial elements of sufficient importance for further development. In some of her earlier showings the painter applied the new justification by a literary content. In these paintings she broke once and for all with the descriptive, the anecdotal, and the atmospheric. Pure forms in their elementary capacity, completely visible in their stiff, vertical or horizontal seams or layers are the materials with which the compositions are rhythmically constructed.

In breaking down the phenomenon of reality into clear, simple, elements and then joining these together independently of the original stuff, the painter is working on a problem of form very similar to those explored by some veterans in the chronicle of contemporary art. All were ways and means to liberate painting from overly emotional and subjective tendencies and impart to it a more unhemmed or universal significance. In nature they discovered the laws applicable to basic geologic or geometrical forms. Analysing and simplifying their motifs according to these fresh perceptions, they transferred them from nature to the flat surface of painting. The difference aspects of a still life were synchronized and joined together into a compact but freely arrived unity of a parallel and interesting lines confined within the flat surface. Sangeeta quite independently is searching in the same direction. She, too, has developed a system of elegantly simplified subtle forms by means of which visual reality is given a new expression determined by the limitations and possibilities of the flat surface. The relation is to nature at the primordial level alone.

The purity of form is thus the burden of this careful exercise, as if designed to awaken us to the beauty deep within the heart of a silent reality—a spatial harmony without the least trace of obvious and banal representation. The impartial openness of the work is thereby palpable and which attains to a stateliness by the use of spontaneous spatial planes. The painting of this

order is the representative of the human eye's deeper clairvoyant moments, of its musings. The unity of form in these works is classic though in an entirely new meaning of that term. Over here nothing is imposed, everything appearing self born not designed. The development that has taken place between the earlier exhibitions and the present one boils down to a consistent extension of the concise and schematic manner of expression but which was already implicit in the foregoing work.

But from there the artist goes farther and retains only a few main points of the contours and internal lines. Such pictures consist of a number of discrete though allied shapes and forms, all entirely understated, representing the residue of what was originally at moments at least a close knit pattern of flat planes. The method of the painter's latest work is thus not of combining and aligning, but rather a careful subtracting of elements in order as if to convey the feel of essence. Her present pictures are not the outcome of ingenious compiling and building, but show the result of the method by which background has become an indissoluble part of the pictures and where the main forms have been carved out from within the frequently accompanying colour units. Therefore, the effect of a picture by the artist does not rest on a segmentation of the surface by means of form and lines alone, but on the subtle white, or negative space. This orchestration causes the work be actively charged, more lively, more independently powerful than the usual fare of colours in their floral finery.

It would be wrong to expect these suave shapes to serve as starting and terminal points of a bald surface division. For in these same paintings the image is determined not by an arrangement of forms but by what survives; by what may be termed heroic remnants, from the tensions between white and the other colours. At any rate this is true of at least a number of the works. The painter, who originates this struggle like the conductor who

orders his symphony, knows how to conclude it at the moments of its highest pitch.

This work, of an imaginative ye, meshes well. A work of visual excitement.

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