

In touch with earth

Aarti Vir's ceramics on show at the Minaaz Art Gallery till October 12 reflects her dexterity over the medium.



AESTHETIC & FUNCTIONAL: A vase to behold.

DWELLING BETWEEN the fine lines of sculptural and functional art, the semblance of ceramics has forever captivated the eye and gladdened the heart. Porcelain - smooth or textured, in arresting glazes and unprecedented forms, is the most appealing sort of the casting variety. Aarti Vir's exhibition of 'Salt Glazed' ceramics on at the Minaaz Art Gallery, Banjara Hills, is one instance to examine and enjoy the extensive possibilities of studio pottery. Although terracotta is an age-old medium of the sub-continent, it took centuries for studio pottery to be introduced in the country. It gained prominence in the artist community when Gurcharan Singh established the Delhi Blue Pottery in the capital, thanks to his association with Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada, the progenitor potters of England and Japan respectively.

Eventually, we had artists shifting from the fine arts to pottery. Aarti Vir's background is almost similar. Basically a painter, she completed her BFA (1990-'94) from the MS University of Baroda, and her MFA (1994-'96) from the Central University of Hyderabad.

And soon after she opted for pottery which led her to the celebrated Golden Bridge in Pondicherry. She spent a year with the acclaimed potter couple, Ray Meeker and Deborah Smith, making special contact with the earth. A conducive environment naturally fired her imagination. Introduced to infinite possibilities of studio pottery, her experience as Ray Meeker's assistant not only provided her the skills and kindled her creativity but put her on to singular experiences such as developing pyrometric cones. Then the most enviable project with the master was the fabrication of mural and decoratives for the Fired Temple Project in Nrityagram, Bangalore.



STUDIO POTTERY: Age-old medium, self glaze technique.

When she returned home in 1999, it was inevitable for her to set up her own studio heralding a beginning of studio pottery in Hyderabad. The lack of ceramic practise may have been an operative hurdle for Aarti, but at the same time it has been an advantage. She is the only practising studio potter who has gained special status. The range - salt glazed works on display - platters, mugs, candle holders and vases - definitely presents a very professional perspective of functional art that once again cuts across the concept of art for art's sake . Although, an array of basic serviceable forms delight the growing art enthusiasts in Hyderabad, Aarti Vir is capable of amazing pottery. Her extensive research on clays and glaze media is demonstrated in the form of bean bag forms. The salt glazed ceramic show indeed acquaints lay appreciatory with some technical insight. Which again provides a fresh perspective that should promote the undulate ceramic art in Hyderabad. Hopefully with further gallery concentration on ceramics, the medium may find a sure audience as art awareness deepens.

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