

KOCHI

In the spirit of enquiry



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Four artists address aspects of different communities and society in Artist; the Public Intellectual set to open on December 11

'Artist; the Public Intellectual' set to open at Town House, Kashi Art Gallery, on December 11 addresses the widening definition of the artist and his/her changing role in the growing perimeter of art. From the limited definition it once had art has grown to encompass innumerable variations - modern, post modern and contemporary - visual art changing in its wake the part played by the artist. In these post-truth times, when data is relied on less and emotions more, redefining or reassessing stock roles-artist, scientist, political leader- finds fresher meaning. Curated by Tanya Abraham, the deeply researched show puts forth works of four artists that "address complex political and social concepts in an accessible language," as attributed by scholar and commentator Stanley Fish. The artists have worked with local communities and with different aspects of society to collate material for their work.

Artist, academic, curator and art writer, Dr. Paula Sengupta, one of the four participating artists, defines the role of the artist as public intellectual, like other creative individuals, who generates knowledge that is of social, cultural or even political value. She says, "Contemporary practice in particular is steeped in research and most contemporary practitioners produce art in the spirit of enquiry, often in conjunction with the public domain. The very fact that an artist's endeavour is exhibited in public makes the artist both a participant and commentator in public discourse, the work itself being the point from which the discourse emanates." Paula has been working with the exiled Tibetan community since 2013, in the project 'Into Exile'. She adds to her research of the community, who reside in fairly large pockets in Himachal Pradesh and Mysore, the Kochi version, The Library of Exile, with a compilation of first hand conversations with the small (five to six families) community in Fort Kochi. Her insightful findings will be presented in simulated Tibetan manuscript boxes in the three month duration of the show.

Gigi Scaria tackles issues of womanhood using multiple conversations with women across Kerala and of different age groups. His matrix of work is collated from inputs by students, professionals and home makers, friends and friends of friends. The derivatives will be presented as two video works. "I am with the idea of an extended view, not only for women but more like an understanding of contemporary society," he says clearly indicating that the role of the artist is evolving and their highly nuanced works as valuable data.

Meydad Eliyahu, who draws his ancestry from Cochin Jews, is collecting the history of their migration to Israel. With a collection of archival material in form of letters, photographs, his drawings and other evidences, The Box Of documents or Kadalasupetti, will be an open archive of the Jewish presence in Kerala. He worked with two scholars from Kerala and with people from Kochi to derive his narrative. "My installation aims at a more active world for Cochin Jews," he says.

New-York based artist Margaret Lanzetta examines ideas of ethnicity, non-ethnicity, migration, designs and cross culture after engaging with local sari merchants and textile shops in Cherlai Bazaar, sourcing saris and fabrics and re assembling them in aesthetic combinations, Folded Language. Her first work with textiles, the finished paintings, composed of sari material, are 88" high x 60" wide. To her as artists think and see differently, their contributions reveal hitherto unseen aspects.

"Artists often dispense with customary bias and prejudice of ideas and instead, pursue their vision purely. This intellectual approach is offered to the public through the creation of their art, hence stimulating the public at large," says Margaret on the thematic guideline of the show.

The show at Town House, Quiros Street, Fort Kochi will run till March end.



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