12 ceramic artists from Korea and India showcase the results of a residency programme at Lalit Kala Akademi

IKE a human finger, not two works by a ceramic artist are identical. We are therefore in for a treat, courtesy the seven-day exhibition at Lalit Kala Akademi, where the results of a month-long residency programme by 12 artists are on display. Last month, InJo Centre, a cultural and information centre, partnered with Arts Council Korea, Kalakshetra Foundation and Lalit Kala Akademi to make this sharing of ideas, technique and culture between six Indian and six Korean artists possible.

A common language
The art goes back to almost 8,000 years in Korea, and Pyon Kyu Ri, one of the visiting artists, admits that the process demands extreme levels of patience, a creative head and the right technique. “Most of my art forms are vases, vessels and incense burners. The vase I have made has a carving that resembles what you see at temples here. The idea is that there should be some metaphor of self portrait in whatever I do,” explains Pyon, who has been a ceramic artist for 15 years. The Korean artists point out that while the clay and kiln (typically used to glaze ceramics) are different from what they are used to, the technique is the same. “The Korean clay is easy to work with. Here we use stone clay, which is different before and after you glaze. We mostly use electric kilns in Korea. I have tried depicting a kushida-kuru (lamp),” says Jun Young Jung, who is on his first visit to the country.

Cultural exchange
Thanks to the varied backgrounds of the artists, each has gained a lot from the experience. “I have learnt new things from Pyon Kyu Ri, who has a lot of cut work in her art. Also, I am very disorganised about my stuff, and she has taught me to slow down and focus,” says Rashi Jain, a participant from Mumbai.

Social themes
The themes range from corruption to women empowerment and most of the pieces convey a message. Shishan J G Maurya, from Lucknow, who is in his late twenties, celebrates working with abstract ideas. “I believe abstract forms adopt things that society discards. I want to explore the idea of ‘hollow’ as it is hard to define,” says Maurya, who won a National award last year for his work that explored social evils.

Kang Kyoung Youn from Seoul also uses her art to convey a message. “Most of my art is about women,” says Kang, who is also in the country for the first time. “It is about their status in society and how it has transformed. One of my best works is of a girl with blue hair; in a secret garden and is about how she dies.”

Varying in shape and size, the ceramic art forms and installations can often be found in public spaces in Korea and Jae Joon Lee, also part of the project, has his work displayed in Korea. “I like the combination of nature and animals. The largest piece I have done is 1,000x5,000 feet,” says Jae Joon Lee.

Coming up
Each artist will showcase three or more works of art. While this is InJo’s first such project, Rath Jaffer, director, InJo Centre, has several other plans in the pipeline. “A theatre fest in collaboration with Adishakti in Pondicherry and Tulisa in Korea will be organised by us. We have had such programmes in the past too. We would like to explore different disciplines in visual arts,” she says.

The Indo-Korean Ceramic Exhibition opens on Thursday. Priced from ₹2,000 onwards. Details: 28471322

— Mrinalini Sunder