



**Chennai canvas**

**The sun in a platter**

**SUJATHA SHANKAR KUMAR**

At the new gallery of InKo Centre, the inaugural exhibition Ceramic Connect showcases the works of 28 artists from Korea and India. There is a basket made of porcelain modules and delicately woven with wire by Kim JinKyoung from Korea, who has also co-ordinated the exhibition. There is also a tall, wood-fired vase with eager vertical stripes around the flared mouth by senior ceramic artist Deborah Smith from Auroville. A pleasing array of crafted lamps in animal shapes tempt like sugar candy while an incense burner in the shape of a teapot with many spouts titled *Cosmos2*, draws on a variety of rituals. While the Korean work is entrenched in craft, derived as definitive forms, often nostalgic about the world of animals, everyday objects and childhood reminiscences, the Indian artists explore textures and conceptual ideations, evident, for instance in P.R.Daroz's *Sea Bed* - crusty and fossilised in blues, greens and whites. I am drawn to a shimmering disc set in ultramarine blue as if torn out of some volcanic explosion to become a jagged sun on the wall. On close examination - and you have to get really close - you see that there are nails embedded and zillions of gold threads criss-crossing. Priya Sundaravalli from Auroville says, "There are 108 brass nails. I am really caught up with 108 as a sacred number."

Sundaravalli was in Korea for a residency at the Clayarch Gimhae Museum, a leader in the field of architectural ceramics. "I was the only foreigner there," she tells me. She could not speak the language and one may call it poetic justice that her work grew out of this silence. Smatterings of verse broke through



*The morning will surely come*  
by Priya Sundaravalli

her imposed *vipassana* when Sundaravalli discovered Tagore's *Gitanjali* translated into Korean. Title 19, *If Thou Speakest Not* sparked the title for her piece - "*The morning will surely come...*" and it continues - "the darkness will vanish/and thy voice pour down/in golden streams/breaking through the sky."

Despite the language barrier, Priya says, "The Koreans are warm people of the earth." I am curious about the Indian connect. Dr Kim Yang-Shik is the Chairperson of the Indian Art Museum in Seoul and Priya tells me there are older ties from the past. "The people of Gimhae believe an Ayodhya princess travelled with an entire contingent in a sea fleet to marry a Korean prince, over 2000 years ago. They celebrate this connection every year in Busan, South Korea." According to legend, the Princess who married King Kim Su-ro of the Kingdom of Garak came to be known as Queen Heo Hwang-ok. Clay is a pliant medium, yet it requires skill and process to yield it in the many shapes that populate the gallery. Gouged, cut out, shaped, sliced or made in bits, the marvel of clay is that it somehow makes us relate to the soil, reminding us of our closeness to the earth and the human touch. The allure of ceramic objects is how they convey these deep impressions made on them by hands. Sundaravalli studied ceramic art in New Mexico with Felipe Ortega, a Jicarilla Apache who is also a medicine man. Like her findings of Tagore in Korea, Sundaravalli felt a

tug at her heartstrings in New Mexico. "I discovered Auroville in America," she says. Talking about her Indian upbringing, she recollects playing with coconut shells with their round eyes and mouths. "We pretended they are gods." The same kind of reverence for clay guides her today, shapes arising from acts of devotion. Sundaravalli's delight at having "limitless freedom" to make expressions is surely true for all those who play with and nurture clay, evident in the diverse and unbounded forms at this show, each a surprise in its own way. (Chennai Canvas links art to design and culture through an inside look at the city.)



*The writer has degrees from NID and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is passionate about unravelling art through dialogue and writing.*



TOWN



SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2015

ADYAR

THE HINDU

# DOWNTOWN

YOUR LOCAL WEEKLY TABLOID BESANT NAGAR·THIRUVANMIYUR·KOTTIVAKKAM·VELACHERRY·NEELANKARAI·THORAIPAKKAM

## DOWNTOWN 3

### For ceramic art lovers

At Lalit Kala Akademi till March 5

InKo Centre, in association with Arts Council Korea (ARKO), Lalit Kala Akademi and Kalakshetra Foundation presents 'EarthMatters2: Contemporary Indian and Korean Ceramic Art'.

Twelve artists, six each from India and Korea, are showcasing their works at Lalit Kala Akademi till March 5.

The exhibition is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. For further details, call 2829 0804.



after dark

**T**HE Grand Opening of the Masters of Food and Wine series at Park Hyatt, was a great start to the anticipated culinary festival, setting the stage for the week to follow. As usual, guests were spoilt for choice, opting for bite-sized portions at various stations in an attempt to try everything. We started with a baked brio and beef bourguignon at the French counter, moving on to crispy tacos and guacamole for some Latin American flavour, and then the star attraction, the Korean station manned by visiting chefs Eunseok Yand and Kyunchon Lee. While most of us played it safe with the tried and tested bimbob, both chefs encouraged us to give the other dishes a shot. Korean pancakes, flavourous broths and a cinnamon patch to cool you down, should the fiery after-taste be too much.

The fashion brigade had leads to do this Saturday, stepping off first at Collage for an exclusive preview of Shivan & Narresh's Cruise Resort '13 collection. Inspired by the canvases of abstract expressionist painter Mark Rothko, the designers presented a line that was sophisticated, edgy and, I must say, bringing some serious heat. Maillots, dresses and saris, in shades of ruby, cerulean and topaz, were presented in an interactive format, where besides the professionals, guests were encouraged to try on and model the pieces. They were also given a quick demo on how to style the various separates according to body types and vacation needs. Getting a lot of attention was the 'bikini sari', made popular by Sushmita Sen, who walked the ramp recently for the



Janice Wong, Fritz Storm



Shivan & Narresh with models

# Korean connections

duo. The designers also offered this type of look as a 'sexy solution' to women who want to look great but aren't comfortable baring all.

Later in the week, Magnam ice cream launched their fourth variant, Choco-Cappuccino. The stars of the event were Asia's best pastry chef, Janice Wong, and World Fierista Champion Fritz Storm, who put up a fun, sandae-making session that the guests, who varied from socialites to entrepreneurs and fashion designers, thoroughly enjoyed.

Elsewhere, an evening of Korean tea and Tsook (rice cakes) marked the inauguration of the new InKis Centre at Alysia. After the centre was inaugurated by Korean Consul General Kyungsoo Kim, Venus Srinivasan (TVS Motor Company MD) and B. S. Seo (Hyundai Motor India MD), a Korean percussion and string band E-Du, entertained the gathering.

—paloma@wherewasiindianexpress.com

Heo Sook, Dr. Rathi & Jyoti Kishore/Kim



Guests at Collage

Guests at The Flying Elephant

where's the party?



## Let's dance

Ben Gies, a tribute band to the pop group Ben Gies, will perform at The Courtyard of Phoenix Market City tomorrow. Engaging the crowd in classic hits by the original, the band has previously performed with world renowned artists like The Village People, Leo Sayer, The Temptations, and Marcia Hines. From 7 pm. Details: 30683098



## Go Nuclea

Known for his bass-heavy electronic act, Ahmedabad-based musician Nuclea is a household name among home-grown artists. He is heading to Puzha tonight, where he will play some of his famous hits, including one from his last album Kooch Monsoon, which is a fusion of South Indian street and folk music, with his signature style. From 9 pm at The Park. Tickets at 1200 on insider.in





## Earth 'Matters' for these Artists

Imagine a pot having hands. The very thought might make you laugh. And at the Lalit Kala Akademi, Greams Road, you might either give away a smile or end up guffawing by having a look at pot that has one hand that's plump and fluffy and the other one that's amusingly wavy. This piece of art titled 'Babu Moshal' by artist Phalguni Samanta from Odisha is one among a few others that have an element of humour. "It is inspired from the Babu culture in Odisha," Samanta told *City Express*.

Not just that, a total of 12 artists — six from India and six from Korea — have come together for the second edition of EarthMatters, an Indo-Korean ceramic exhibition, having their art works displayed, providing a feast to the eyes. The exhibition was inaugurated by N Gopalaswami, chairman, Kalakshetra Foundation, on Tuesday.

True to its name, the exhibition gives its way to nature and all things that earth has to offer — sand and mud forming an integral part of a couple of pieces. Showing us one of his art works that has a human body merged with a chair, with mud spilled on the top of the chair and mustard trees planted therein, Samanta said, "This one is made of ceramic just as many of my works are... I have essentially juxtaposed a chair with the upper half of a man." He added, "Through the mud and the mustard trees, I want to convey to the onlooker that we are disturbing nature. I have also scattered pieces of glass all around that look the way the top part of a hut appears." He said that his art works are first manifested as a human form. "But when you look closely, you can see different shapes," he said. And did he have any interaction with Korean artists? "I learnt a lot from Yoo Eunjeong's art works. He too employs ceramic and his works are highly inspirational," he responded.

Showing us his sculptures that have the body of a human and the head of a bull, South Korean artist Kim Seungtaek, who also curated the event said, "I have combined objects from India and South Korea. Armour forms an integral part of my art work." He added, "I have given a contemporary touch to ancient traditional sculptures, and hence have named this collection 'Past & Present 1'."

The exhibition at the Lalit Kala Akademi, Greams Road, is on till March 5.

— Express Features

## p2 METROPLUS

CHENNAI

THE HINDU • Friday, November 28, 2014

### Taekwondo tournament

InKo Centre, in association with Kukkiwon World Taekwondo Headquarters, and with support from the Consulate-General of the Republic of Korea in Chennai, presents the 2nd TaeHon Festival — a Taekwondo Fellowship Tournament in South India. The festival will have a total number of 500 participants from across South India.

**Venue:** Gymnasium Hall, The American International School

**Address:** 100 Feet Road, Taramani

**Date and Time:** November 29, 8:30 a.m.

**Tel:** 2436 1224





▲ Gukan Raj working on a kiln in Seoul.  
PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

has studios in China and the U.S.)

There, the firing is done using a method that lasts six days and where only wood is used. It is known as a climbing kiln and has three chambers. It takes a week for loading and a week for firing. In this process, no glazing is done, but the colour tones are decided by the position in which the product is placed in the kiln. Five different types of clay are utilised which determine the final colours and textures of

## On a CERAMIC tour

Chennai-based ceramic artist Gukan Raj shares his experiences of his recent Korean trip with **LAKSHMI VENKATRAMAN.**

the product.

Gukan was given a free hand to work with the kiln. "Even in South India, we get different types of clay and I am trying to work with them. I am confident that with better facilities, we can also get equally good results here," says Gukan, who takes care of the ceramic studio at Kalakshetra, Chennai.

Along with two other artists, Gukan also visited the studio of Pyon Kye Ri, a PhD in glazing technique. In Korea, there are a variety of chemicals which artists use for glazing, with some being imported from Europe.

"We could work and test with some glazing chemicals. Also, the loading trays are

made of lighter material, so it is easier to handle. The week-long stay and discussions were interesting and informative. It was a rewarding experience."

Going into more detail, Gukan says, "Artist Lee Jae Joon's large works naturally need a big kiln. The sculptures are made in two



▲ Work of Kee Hee Sook.

or three segments and then placed together. Even the loading is done mechanically."

Learning new methods and using materials was a novel experience for the visiting Indian artists. Lee Jae Joon's father used to have a traditional studio, where one can find a superb collection from different

dynasties of the past. The senior ceramist used to have international students interning with him as early



▲ Pyon Ri's creation.

as in the 1950s. The Korean ceramic tradition is ancient and it was from there that ceramic techniques went to Japan. Gukan Raj visited a few other artists' studios too. Yoon Young Su makes murals on slabs. Some are quite flat and some have forms in low relief. "Once colours are added, these slabs look like paintings from a distance; it's only on closer inspection that one realises they are ceramic sculptures."

Another artist, Ko Hee Sook, works with translucent porcelain utility ware. The four hours spent with her, feeling the clay and watching the casting process, were quite exciting. She is an internationally known award-winning artist and has participated in several biennales. Lee Chang Hwa is a specialist in porcelain throwing and he uses red glaze and reduction firing process.

"We also visited the ceramic studio of Sihyeong

Woo, where only brown glazing is done. The firing takes three weeks in the climbing kiln which is around 40 to 50 ft long; ceramic items made during four months would be loaded at a time; firing is done only twice a year."

How is Gukan's Korean experience helping his work here?

"I've started teaching some of the techniques to students here, such as the casting process and different types of throwing methods for pottery. Lee Inchin is an expert and I learnt it from him. I am also designing a gas kiln and hope to get it made here."

The Indian ceramists visited and presented lectures at four universities - the Hongik University, the Seoul Women's University, the Sookmyung Women's University and the Seoul National University of Science and Technology. Gukan spoke on traditional and contemporary Indian crafts such as hand-made terracotta figures, history of metal crafts and history of stone craft.

# Sculpting contrast as India meets Korea

Arpita.Bose@timesgroup.com

**Chennai:** Kneading, moulding and carving, 12 artists—six each from India and Korea—have embarked on a journey of discovery of art, culture and ceramics in a month-long Indo-Korean residency. After five weeks, their labour of love will be on show at Lalit Kala Akademi from February 25.

As they pore over their work, share ideas and a laugh over tea in a large room in the leafy surroundings of Kalakshetra, their sculptures come to life, each with a story to tell. Giant sheep, animal gods and delicate temple motifs make up part of the Korean works, while the Indians have abstract patterns of flowers, houses and an over-sized head representing the conflict and contradictions of man, nature and society.

The works juxtapose the precision of the East Asians, known for their mastery in the



**ART-6-FACT:** Korean artist at Earth Matters I, an Indo-Korean Ceramic residency project which begins from February 25 at Lalit Kala Akademi

art, with the fluidity of the Indian style. "The Koreans are technically strong, they are precise, they use advanced tools and use computers to measure every bit of their work. While we are more spontaneous and build with our hands," says Bengal-based artist Nidhi Chandra.

The residency, which is second in a series called 'Earth Matters', an initiative by Info-Centre, Lalit Kala Akademi

and Kalakshetra, is more than just an art exchange. The Korean artists strive to soak in the sights and sounds of Chennai. Jung Hyeoseok has bought an earthen water pot for inspiration and a plastic toy elephant to be used as a mould. "I am fascinated by Lord Ganesha and the temple elephants and plan to make something using elephant forms and as the clay here is stronger than what we get back home,

we can play around with ideas," she says.

For another artist, Kim Younghan, who is working on a chandelier-like structure with motifs from Korean temples, colours are what define his perception of all things Indian. "My work is a blend of European and Korean styles and the Indian touch will be colours like green and violet, a break from the Korean obsession with red and yellow."

Working on traditional Korean animal gods, senior artist and museum director of Clayarch Gimhae Museum in South Korea, Kim Seung Taek says though he will only use coloured beads as adornments for his sculptures, he wants to bring in more Indian elements in his work.

True to the idea of the exchange programme, Seung Taek plans to collaborate with young Delhi-based artist Sneha Chowdhury. They will be working on two sides of a sculpture. "Korean ceramic art comes across as pristine, precise and pretty while Indian artists have a lot of layers, textures and colours," says Chowdhury. The global market is opening up, and advanced tools, ready glazes replacing manual methods but it is still the patient wait for the transformation of the fragile forms in the furnace that fires these artists from across boundaries.