



High Commission of India, Pretoria

premieres

## “Unsung Hymns of Clay”

the third edition of "Rainforests and the Circle of Life", a traveling trilogy

by

**m a n a v   g u p t a**

Manav Gupta, a leading contemporary artist, is one of the most versatile creative practitioners from India, whose art, facing both forwards and inwards, is a contemplation of spiritual and the natural communion. Working in a wide range from the conceptual to multimedia, installations to ambient spaces, the canvas to sculptures, he puts the medium to fresh creative tasks. Technically, as far as color and light goes, he is highly professional. Moreover he has a precise understanding of color as the language with which nature tries to communicate meanings and values. For him color is a function of sight-implying a sun-like quality in the eye. Here then is a silent discourse on the music of colors.

One can follow Manav's development from color harmonies of great refinement even in his earlier work-on to a progressive liberation of light from the object, or perhaps the resolution of the object into light in some of his latest installations and conceptual work. The physical interface of global warming, Man's interference with earth's natural ecosystems and disregard to environment consciousness has all impacted the artist deeply over the years. Much before climate change became drawing room conversation and awareness gathered momentum, Manav has been inculcating his concern and respect for environment and his own spiritual strength that he draws from Nature in his work right since the very beginning of his art journey.

Just as his artist's statement highlights "As I scrape the bottom of the soul for some ingredients the only way I can explain to myself, about what it all is, is to believe that in some past life (if there is one), I belonged to the rainforests. The mantra there, for survival, is to submit to the natural forces, bow before it, respect its ways, learn and grow. You cannot defy it or go against it. In the rainforests there are labyrinthine darkneses weaving around you but there is always light in streaks, in a glow, in a stream, sunlight...all of which brings hope. You don't bathe in it all the time but it seeks you out. Man is but a speck. The human race, still a speck, in this mighty universe rich with millions of secrets. The rainforests teach you this," "When I paint, what transcend on the canvas are the hope and the power of the eternal truths of nature's emblematic symbols," he says. Adding, "Light, for me is — Hope and Colour — the Universe in which it exists." This is when, for him, this world loses its meanings. "The larger one takes over and I paint", he states.

Listed by Financial Times among ten contemporary Indian artists whose works would fetch good returns, his works have been auctioned and sold at Christie's, Bonham's, Philip de Pury, etc. and are in several private and public collections including the Royal Household, Oman, the Indian Parliament, Rashtrapati Bhawan, (President of India's Collection) New Delhi, BIFA Museum, Bhutan, Brahmos Museum, New Delhi, Chitrakala Parishad, Bangalore, the Birla Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, Facet Books, New York and his mega mural fetching Museum site status for Airtel Campus by the Limca Book of Records 2012.

Awarded the inaugural Sanatan Puraskar for Fine Arts by the French Ambassador to India, he is one of the youngest members on the Expert Committee of India's National Republic Day celebrations, the formative process of the Museum of Natural History, New Delhi and others. He was commissioned by former President of India Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam for interpreting his poems in paintings that shaped over a four year project published by Penguin in 'The Life Tree' and has been delivering talks across the globe at varied institutions including the San Jose State University, San Francisco, Institute of Cultural Diplomacy, Berlin, WADI Bhutan, Omani Fine Arts Society and Bank Muscat, Oman, to name a few.

He has conceptualized and created a first of its kind six floor high 11000 sq ft 3-D to 2-D monumental staircase mural at the Airtel Centre, H.Q. campus commissioned by India's corporate giant Bharti Airtel Ltd. where he simultaneously deployed four multiple processes of conceptual, site specific, performance and collaborative art in his methodology of creation, painting LIVE for three months in a solo performance art marathon.

His delineation of Bhutan-India relations on a public mural commissioned by the Government of India and mounted in Bhutan is a suite of eighteen feet and twelve feet high canvases as an archival documentation of friendship between two nations mapping the political, sociocultural, spiritual and natural history of the two countries.

He has co-opted his art practices in deploying his paintings, poetry, music, sound, text, direction and voice over to create one minute films on climate change, [11] sustainable development, [12] ecosystems and alternate energy for public service messages commissioned by the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India.

He is the pioneer of performance art in concert -drawing from the Indian idiom of "jugalbandi" between performing artists and transforming the collaborative dialogue on stage into a language of performance that translates and contextualizes a performing artist's oeuvre Live on canvas on stage. He has so far engaged with a galaxy of stalwarts like Dr. L. Subramaniam, Shubha Mudgal, Anup Jalota, Rahul Sharma, Egyptian folk dancers and U.S. Ballet troupes.

Currently in the sixteenth year of sharing his art, having widely exhibited around the globe, he has had two very successful editions of Travelling Trilogies in recent years to Middle East and to U.S. and Europe with solo exhibitions at Amherst, M.A., New York, Des Moines, Iowa, San Francisco, C.A. Berlin, Germany and London, U.K., Muscat, Oman, besides major cities in India.

References/source: Work & style :extracts "an inward attunement " Essay, Keshav Malik and "exploring earth's elements" critique, Asian Age, Uma Nair ; Profile: Wikipidea and printed material