



SANJU JAIN



For Ashwini Bahadur
at 100th birthday -

Raza, 20. Nov. '12

Artspeaks India
presents

PULP FICTION

recent paintings by
SANJU JAIN

Guest of Honor
SHRI S.H. RAZA

December 2013

artspeaks
india

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PAINTERLY PERFORMANCES OF FEMININITY

Locating Sanju Jain's Paintings in Contemporary Art History

In the core of modernist art there lies a perennial need of the artist for creating something unique in terms of formal style and experience. Referential points must be there to lead the artist to reach personalized styles and internalized experiences, however there is something which is inexplicable through words functions as the undercurrent of such arrivals as well as departures. A search for the unique and the unparalleled, certain creative expressions that open up an absolutely new world for the viewers, goads the artists who adopt modernist painterly techniques and work it out towards realizing the experiential singularities. It is a sort of externalizing the internal world that does not follow the existing linguistic systems but as there exists no other medium for vivification it tends to adopt an established mode of language, often investing it with new meanings, taking it to a different experiential realm and enabling it to carry forward the effects intended by the artists. For Sanju Jain, a young artist based in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, modernist art lingua is not an essential given but an unavoidable necessity without which her creative expressions would perhaps never find their absolute manifestations.

What is pertinent about the notion of unavoidable necessity of an art language, which is unique as far as the artist is concerned but seen employed by several other artists with varying tonalities and expressive vigor, is that it posits the artist in question within a zone of creative choices with regard to the mediums and styles. Choices presuppose the aforementioned 'essential givens' out of which the artist could choose from. Provided the artist chooses to eschew such 'givens' completely, either the artist would move away from a particular mode of creating works, here it is painting, or he or she would surrender to the predominant amongst the essential givens. Such surrendering is an easy choice for any artist who looks out for commercial success in the market place because the language is easily identifiable as it has been effectively employed by established masters of the modern period. But making a choice out of such large number of givens from

within the large platter of modern art in general need not necessarily be driven by notions of identification and the possible success that would ensue. There could be some sparsely attended visual linguistic forms within these given languages. A choice from amongst the less attended would be challenging and inspiring at the same time for the artists. The personal touch enhanced by the transference of personal experiences and emotional states by the artists infused to one of these less attended language would make it unique in its own way, fresh in approach and soothing in enjoyment.

Hailing from Madhya Pradesh, which is said to be the seat of Indian abstract art with the continued presence and influence of artists like late J.Swaminathan and S.H.Raza, and also considering the immediate history of contemporary artists from this region who have devoted themselves in practicing and promoting the abstract art language/s, Sanju Jain too has all the reasons to adopt a language which is apparently modernist and abstract. The choice of abstract language could have been an easy way out as well as a problematic for this artist when she started off as a full time artist almost two decades before. The easiness of that choice is determined by the existing artistic climate of the region where she belongs to and the problematic could be subjected to the usual understanding about the artists who come up from the same region. In Indian art scene, like any other art scene where provincial artistic expressions are acknowledged as a part of the general art history, the modern art of and from Madhya Pradesh is often taken for granted by saying that it must be invariably abstract. Such generalizations are not without a reason to substantiate it. But what goes wrong in such generic analysis is seen in the repudiation of the individual artistic genius and expressions. I do not intend to call Sanju Jain as a phenomenally gifted genius who could surpass the legends of Madhya Pradesh with her art done so far but excluding her from the generalization vis-à-vis the modern art language I could at least do a minimum justice to her by

acknowledging her individual experiments in formulating a unique language unto her, which is rooted in abstraction and at the same time capable of encapsulating her personalized aesthetic feelings and approach in and towards art.

While discussing contemporary Indian artists, most of the art critics and historians, going by the established art historical methodologies that follow chronological division of experienced time as a prime factor in locating an artist within or without a certain milieu of aesthetics tend to force modernism, post modernism and contemporary art into watertight compartments. This compartmentalization is so mechanical that a contemporary artist using a modernist language is even demarcated as an artist who is 'old' and out of fashion or belonging to a time that has already gone into the veritable history. Critics, in their enthusiasm to allocate 'time frames' for artists and stylistically stable them into categories, overlook how one period flows into the other leaving traces even while giving birth to a new movements, styles or even languages. Sundering of continuities, though mechanical methodologies approve of it, causes forced severance of artists from their own milieus and sends them to forced exiles into the periods that they organically do not belong to. Besides, thanks to reasons known to all by now, abstraction has become a byword for modernism or vice versa. Hence, if an artist works in an abstract language or employs abstract formalism to create his/her works, it is almost natural for many critics to locate them automatically into a time which is qualified as modernist period (pre-1990s), without even once giving a second thought about their lives within the contemporary times.

Here my effort is to locate Sanju Jain within in the modernist art practice, which is still alive and kicking and has a steadily maintained continuity till date. Sanju Jain uses a specialized abstract art language which she has perfected over a period of time through continuous and rigorous practice. After having her education in fine arts and also after a few years of apprenticeship with an established art teacher, she found out that her way of expressing her innate feelings and closely guarded emotions depended largely on her affinity towards abstract. Here abstraction should

be seen as a mode which could hold the essence of objects and subjects. Hence, for her the objects that she sees around her are not defined by their external contours but by their internal object-hood or object-ness. Her subjectivity for her is not defined as what she as a person feels or experiences but as a collective experience to which she is a part. Similarly, to this artist, the events are the occurrences that are manifested in their eventful-ness; in other terms their capacity to move the subjects and objects. So what we understand from her aesthetics is her perennial belief in the dynamics of life that keeps renewing itself through unexplained understandings. In spiritual it could be called 'awareness', an absolute state of being that makes a subject the very part and parcel of the universal consciousness. But the moment we try to position any abstract artist using this terminology, there are all the chances of misconceiving the identity of the artist as a 'spiritual' person. Spirituality, which is philosophical and experiential in a larger sense, is often loosely used to qualify artists who do abstract works. I would not make any effort to locate Sanju Jain within those lofty ideas and ideals.

My reluctance to use spiritual terms to qualify Sanju Jain as a spiritual artist stems from a clear understanding about the artist as a social individual who lives a contended life both in the marital and creative realms. According to her, the art she creates comes from her femininity, which is completely in harmony with the social roles that she plays as an individual. She does not create 'issue based' art though she is completely aware of the social issues. Her feminine gender does not come to take a political role in her works as she confirms with no doubt that she is an artist, not a 'feminist' artist. Whatever she creates comes out of her feminine engagement with her own feelings as a subject. At times Sanju Jain says that she could not have created her art with any other medium or style and if she is forced to create art which is deliberately 'political' she would be even leaving the very idea of creating such art. In my opinion her total negation to feminist politics and complete adherence to femininity have a lot to do with techniques with which she creates her works.

Born to a middle class family and four sisters to grow up with, Sanju Jain never felt the need to be fiercely independent because she had always been independent during her formative years. She was born in village and it was almost a sylvan milieu to grow up in, according to her. She climbed trees, went to neighbors' kitchens and ate, played with girls and boys without thinking much about gender disparities and studied in a residential school where she learnt religion and social morals. As she is from a Jain family certain religious rituals and culinary exclusivities were to be practiced in the daily life, which according to her she does even today with complete devotion. As a young girl Sanju Jain never painted a scene nor drew a picture. It was in college for the first time she was introduced to fine arts. Doodling suddenly became a passion and materials an obsession. Abstract art was there in the air at Indore where she did her graduation but she was not particularly interested to do abstraction. Scribbling and doodling took her to qualities of various pictorial surfaces and finally she found out her favorite medium; paper pulp, oil and acrylic paints.

Sanju Jain calls paper pulp 'atta'; the dough for making the Indian bread, roti. Once she learned the technique of making paper pulp, instead of making independent works out of it, she felt like using them directly on the canvas. The very pasting of pulp on canvas was a thrilling experience for her as the movements of hands facilitated the evolution of different forms and textures. Started off as a play and felt as a sheer enjoyment derived out of it, the textural feel of the manifested images initiated Sanju Jain into a different world of aesthetic feel. It was performative, interactive and meditative at the same time. The unexpected images revealed out of the play of pulp on canvases made the artist to perfect the medium as she went along. According to her the very play has been giving a sort of satisfaction that could come from fondling certain lovable objects. The 'palpability' of this painterly technique became an obsession in due course of time and today Sanju Jain is known for the works created out of pulp and paints. They are abstract in nature and contain the innate feelings of the artist.

There are all chances of reading Sanju Jain's works in a 'feminist' mode. Some of the images in her works have gendered connotations, which the artist consciously wants to play down. An interview with the artist makes it clear that she is at pains when she explains such images. If the gender of the artist becomes extremely imperative in understanding her works, then it is for the viewer to make decisions on such images. But for the artist, they are clearly subconscious revelations which do not have anything to do with sexuality or her deliberate political or social stances on issues pertaining to the gender. Sanju Jain takes pleasure in layering the works with pulp and then over-layering them with colors, which in her words exactly shows the dynamics of life. Events follow events, emotions follow emotions and human beings get shaped by these events and emotions unknowingly. Sanju Jain upholds the same philosophy in her works. They are contemplative in rendering and interactive in interpretation.

Art historically speaking, it is not necessary that the visual texts constituted by special languages that are very dear to the artists be interpreted in the same way the artists intend them to be. Once they achieve the textual value and absolutely free from the artists' hands, they are prone to be interpreted the ways in which general texts are interpreted where the biography and gender of the artists become very important. In that sense, the subconscious interplays between femininity and feminism could be discerned in her Sanju Jain's works though they need not be the starting and culmination points to understand her works.

JohnyML

New Delhi, March 2013

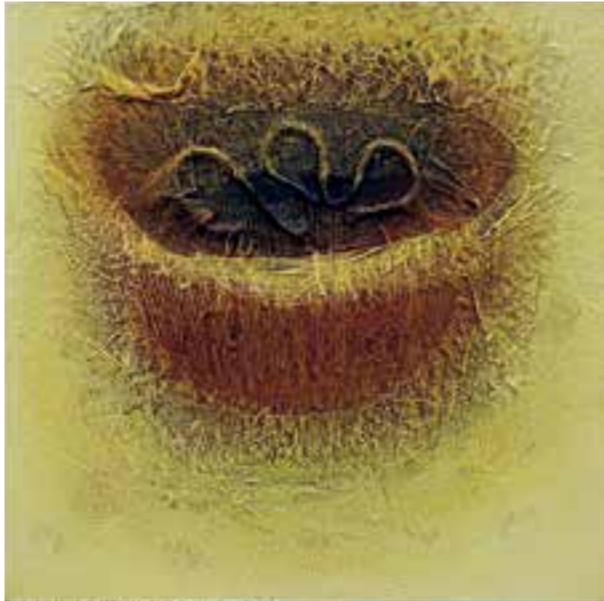
Born in, Kerala, Johny ML has three post graduate degrees - Creative Curating, Art History & Criticism and English Language & Literature. He has curated numerous shows and is the founder editor of two online magazines on Indian contemporary art. He also directs documentaries on art, translates international literature into Malayalam and writes a blog. Currently, he lives and works in Faridabad, Haryana.



Aabhaas-2, Mix Media on Canvas, 59"x36", 2013



Mahatama-1, Mix Media on Canvas, 36''x59'', 2013



Kesar-3, Mix Media on Canvas, 18" x18", 2013



Kesar-1, Mix Media on Canvas, 18" x18", 2013



Kesar-2, Mix Media on Canvas, 18" x18", 2013



Ambar-1, Mix Media on Canvas, 18'' x18'', 2013



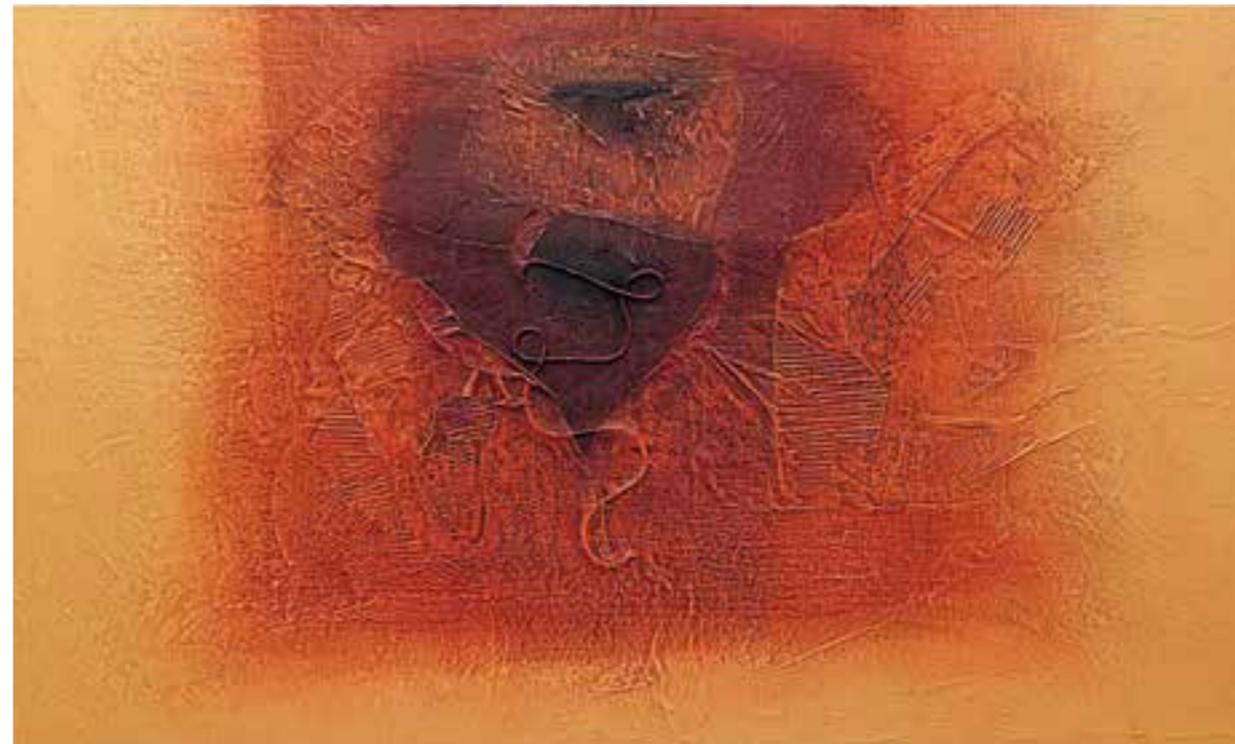
Ambar-2, Mix Media on Canvas, 18'' x18'', 2013



Ambar-3, Mix Media on Canvas, 18''x18'', 2013



Aabhaas-1, Mix Media on Canvas, 59''x36'', 2013



Untitled, Mix media on canvas, 59''x30''



Untitled - 13, Mix Media on Canvas, 84''x60'', 2013



SANJU JAIN

Solo Shows

- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| 2011 | Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur
Amdabadni Gufa, Ahemdabad | Artspeaks India Gallery, New Delhi
'The Abstraction of Myth and Memory',
Gallery Engendered Space curated by
Myna Mukherjee, India Habitat Center,
New Delhi |
| 2010 | Jahangir Art Gallery, Mumbai | |
| 2009 | Prakrit Art, Chennai
Icon Art Gallery, Hyderabad | |
| 2008 | Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal
Art Heritage, New Delhi
SaraI Art Gallery, Bhopal | 2012 |
| 2004 | Heart and Soul, Delhi | Khodynka State Exhibition Gallery,
Ulitsa Irini Levchenko, Moscow
2 Person Show, Artspeaks India Gallery,
New Delhi |
| 2000 | Jahangir Art Gallery, Mumbai | Raza Foundation & Vadehra Art
Gallery, New Delhi |
| 1999 | Ahmedabad Contemporary Art Gallery | Indian Habitat Centre, New Delhi
Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal
KunstKammer Art Room
(by Shakshi Mahajan, New Delhi) |
| Group Shows | | |
| 2013 | 'Deconstructions', Gallery Art Heritage,
Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi | |

2011	Gallery Artspeaks India, New Delhi 'Blue Butterflies', Gallery Studio 16, Texas, U.S. 'Samay', The Nehru Art Centre, London (by Prakrit Art Chennai)	2004 2002	Bharat Bhavan Artists, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal 'Tao of Shiva', Tao, Mumbai 'Fankar' Exhibition, Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi & Nehru Centre, Mumbai Banquet Hall Parliament, New Delhi AIFACS State Exhibition, Bhopal 3rd All India Lokmanya Tilak Exhibition, Pune 5th All India Camlin Exhibition, Mumbai All India Drawing Competition, Chandigarh Six Women Show, Bhopal, Ujjain 2nd All India Art Binnial of Rajasthan All India South Central Zone Cultural Centre, Nagpur 'Swaraj Ko Sambodhan', Swaraj Bhavan, Bhopal Jehan Numa Art Gallery, Bhopal 'Samvet', Swaraj Bhavan, Bhopal - by Republic of Cuba and Govt. of M.P. SCZCC, Nagpur Sun Art Gallery, Bhopal SCZCC, Nagpur 69th All India AIFAS, New Delhi 106th All India Exhibition Bombay Art Society, Mumbai Folk & Tribal Art - Hotel Palash, Bhopal Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi State Exhibition, Bhopal Sanskar Bharti, Bhopal
2010	Artspeaks India Gallery, New Delhi 'Art Spotting-II', Art Positive, New Delhi		
2009	Artspeaks India Gallery, New Delhi Gallery Alternatives, New Delhi		
2008	'Homage to J. Swaminathan', Dhomimal Gallery, New Delhi Crimson, Bangalore Woman Show, Weavers Studio, Kolkata 'Art for Art'S Sake', Epicentre Gurgaon by Artspeaks India Gallery, New Delhi	2000	
2007	Art Heritage, Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi 'Swasti Roop', Art Alive, New Delhi Artspeaks India Gallery, New Delhi Habitat Center, Lodhi Road, New Delhi 'Post Card from Tranquility', Deepika Govind, New Delhi Art Alive, Habitat Center, New Delhi 'Rang De India', Habiart Foundation - AIFACS, New Delhi Curtain Raiser, Jahangir Art Gallery, Mumbai, Galleries Ganesha, New Delhi	1999 1999 1998-99 1998 1997-98 1997	
2006	Kanishka Art Gallery, Kolkata Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal Jahangir Art Gallery, Mumbai	1996	
2005	'Shiva', Tao, Hotel Ashoka, Delhi		

1994	M. S. Bhand Exhibition of Art, Bhopal M.P. Kala Academy, Gwalior State Award Exhibition, Bhilai		
1989-99	All India Kalidas Exhibition, Ujjain		
Workshops & Camps			
2012	Indira Gandhi Manav Sangharalaye, Drashya Art gallery, New Delhi		
2011	National Lalit Kala Artist Camp, Kochi Jim Corbit National Park, Uttrakhand.		
2008	Mukti, Pondichery		
2003	Rashtriya Lalitkala Academy, Artist Camp, Bhuvaneshwar		
2002	'Sphoti', Habiart Foundation, New Delhi (Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal) A.I.F.A.C.S. Young Artist Camp, New Delhi		
2001	'Viplav-Gatha', Indo Cuba-Friendship, Swaraj Bhavan, Bhopal.		
2000	North Culture Centre, Allahabad & Dept. of Forest, Kanha Kisli (Sponsered by Govt. of M.P.)		
1995	All India Print Makers Camp, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal		
Awards			
2006	All India Raza Foundation Award, New Delhi		
2003	6th All India Camlin Award, Mumbai.		
2002	A.I.F.A.C.S. State Award. 3rd All India Lokmanya Tilak Award, Pune. All India Kala Academy Award, Shimla (H.P.) 68th Indian Academy of Fine Art Award, Amritsar (Punjab)		
2001	State Award, M.P. M.P. State Award Exhibition, Gwalior		

2000	State Award, M.P. (Certificate) M.P. State Award Exhibition, Indore		
1999	South Central Zone Cultural Centre, Nagpur.		
1998	Raza Award (Govt. of M.P.)		
1997	State Award, Madhya Pradesh Hastashilpa Vikas Nigam, Bhopal. South Central Zone Cultural Centre, Nagpur. (Certificate)		
1996-98	Raza Award Exhibition, Bhopal		
1996	Sanskar Bharti Award, Bhopal.		
1989	All India Kalidas Award, Ujjain (Govt. of M.P.)		
Collections			
	• Madhya Pradesh Vidhan Sabha, Bhopal • N.C.Z.C.C., Allahabad • A.I.F.A.C.S., New Delhi • Officers Mess Attract, Shimla • E. Alkazi, Art Heritage, New Delhi • Javed Akhtar, Lyricist, Mumbai • Madhyam-Mural, Govt. of M.P. • Reserve Bank of India, Bhopal • Lupin Laboratories, Mandideep (M.P.) • Rangshree Theatre, Bhopal. • M.P. Hastashilpa Vikas Nagar, Bhopal • Archaeology Department (M.P.) • Income Tax Department, Bhopal • Jain Neuro Centre, New Delhi • Habiart Foundation, New Delhi • Rashtriya Lalit Kala Academy, Bhuvaneshwar • S. H. Raza • Included in several prestigious collections in India and overseas.		
	Sanju Jain had done Masters Degree in Painting, Indore. She lives and works in Bhopal (M. P.)		



Ashwini Pai Bahadur

Artspeaks India founded by art collector and entrepreneur Ashwini Pai Bahadur, has been closely associated with the fine arts for more than 15 years. It strives to create interfaces between Indian contemporary art and the rich historical folk craft traditions of India.

With a focused vision of promoting visual art forms in India, Artspeaks India functions under two separate conceptual identities - Artspeaks India Contemporary and Artspeaks India Heritage. While the former focuses on exhibition & collection of modern & contemporary art, the latter aims at organizing varied traditional crafts activities and creating windows for their exposure.

Over the last five years, Artspeaks India has consistently and successfully supported and established talented and under-noticed artists of various genres by creating new markets for their art.

The recently established Artspeaks India Foundation is committed to art education for children and the disadvantaged. By collaborating with NGOs, funds are raised to ensure deserving artists and craftsmen pursue their skills.

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