

"I am happy when my thought becomes form. This gives, no, is incomparable joy."

Nilesh Kinkale's recent works were seen in an exhibition **Homage to Matter** presented by **Tao Art Gallery**, Mumbai. **Swapna Vohra** talks to the artist about the source of his inspiration and feelings.



"A can, a jerry can that we see everywhere. I saw them all through my childhood. I noticed them at petrol pumps and at ration shops where people lined up for kerosene. The memory of those omnipresent cans led to these artworks."

One beautiful picture looks like a soft butterfly or a stretched out furry animal skin but it is actually the shape of an opened up, spread out can. It looks soft and furry with its spots of water and splotches of gray. The leopard spots and the watery, spread out colors look tactile and soft, perhaps like the spots on a cow, and images of heads and tails or soft skin covers arise. To make this image, he said, "I was looking to see if from two forms, I could make something else." A jerry can opened out shows metal, and here it may look like an insect or fur. "People can then see another vision."

"From one form, easing into another, (as visions form in your mind) can lead ordinary matter, and with due pressure, to diamonds. A continued process of transformation. Everything in life is a source as I come and go through life. The vegetables in the market, events, perhaps the ration shops."

"A can could become very familiar, recognizable like a can for oil, water, maybe other liquid. Now I am coming more towards petrol. As I grew up, petrol grew in importance and its price increased, creating strikes, stopping and starting many things. Those who possessed petrol could do as they pleased and shape the world. This was on my mind." As he reminisces about the dark gold of our time, petroleum, one sees

the proverbial seven shades of black in his work.

What brings unhappiness?

"Unhappiness or discomfort arise, when I am thwarted in making something, while processing work. My work could be in many mediums, maybe ink, maybe paint. Once I have seen the image and produced it in a particular way, made a certain thought visible, I am happy. The rest is like a collage: the frame, the border and the presentation changed and created to show it."

Another painting shows a glittering can that looks like a perfume bottle. Rich shades of purple and gilt: a luxury, an expensive, impressive delight. "So one day petrol could become a luxury like perfume, expensive like diamonds", he says looking at this delicate glass vial with jewel-like amethyst facets and sunset gold lights. "My skill lies in watercolors because I like the instant effect. No mixing, no waiting, no oil, just a direct unforgiving medium with no space for errors. I may have to start again and do a fresh painting. Things may fall on it, water may drip by mistake. If mistakes happen, it is still a part of my life, my effort, not necessarily discarded. It is ok. I do not negate it."

"Today, petroleum is like Kamadhenu, (the wish fulfilling cow), offering everything. If petroleum is in your hand, everything is in your hand." I spoke then of the petroleum we devour in the form of fertilizers and wear in our clothes.

Kinkale's next sculpture is an enormous can covered with dark gray paper butterflies. Here lie the dreams of liberation, with the flight (or perhaps the plight) of butterflies. He spoke "of the fumes of petrol and how it controls the environment. For example, you cannot have an open flame near it, smoking is prohibited, and you have to behave a certain way. It has an aura which is inflammable, and perhaps controlling. So I try to get the aura of a thing. Will one be attracted to this smell, to this aura like butterflies to a flower?"

What makes you happy?

"I am happy when my thought becomes form. This gives, no, is incomparable joy."

Kinkale's work reminds us of the multiple aspects of all things, of humanity's adventures with matter. Like Prabhakar Barwe, he says he looks at feelings, not necessarily obvious, conscious connections. He refers to what lies under the skin: unicellular life. His work refers to experiences and emotions rather than the optical illusions we so decisively term 'matter'. We all seek a common thread in whatever we observe, something as a reference and say, yes, I can see that or maybe even understand that. Artists are those who play with their associations, bringing new ones, sometimes infuriating us, often leaving us vertiginous and tottering as they pull the rug from under our feet. Most of all, they are the storytellers of our tumultuous times.

Nilesh Kinkale's work is at the Tao Gallery, Mumbai, in 'Homage to Matter', a tribute to the dreamlike icons and floating figures of the acclaimed artist, Prabhakar Barwe.

