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Features

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Picasso paintings fetch over \$6m

An artist who uses mixed media on canvas

TWO Pablo Picasso paintings belonging to his granddaughter Marina's personal collection sold for more than 5 million euros (\$6.6 million) at an auction. Sotheby's, which included the works as part of a batch of impressionist and modern art, said "Palette et tête de taureau" (Palette and Bull Head), (pictured) painted in December 1938, fetched 1.4 million euros (\$1.8 million), in line with the estimated price.



The second work, "Femme assise en robe grise" (Sitting Woman in a Gray Dress), painted in 1943, sold for more than 3.8 million euros (\$5.03 million), or above the estimated price range.

The auction marked the first time Marina Picasso had put works from her personal collection up for sale and, according to Parisian daily *Le Figaro*, the proceeds will be donated to organisations that assist disadvantaged youth.

"I plan to sell more in the future to fully devote myself to humanitarian endeavours," she told the newspaper. "Being Picasso's granddaughter is not a profession. Besides, I no longer have any interest in being seen as his granddaughter. No interest at all." Marina, who was 22 when the artist died in 1973, said she spent many years freeing herself from what she calls the Picasso "curse". — IANS



Focus on contemporary style of painting



By Liju Cherian
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HERE is an artist who loves working on the medium of oil on canvas and acrylic and to dabble with bright contrasting colours. Having made Oman her home for now, she mixes traditional with the contemporary and recognisable forms with abstract themes.

Harini Kumar is a promising artist who is out to explore different techniques and innovative mediums. Relying more on 'ideas and concepts' rather than realistic, she is presently moving towards the abstract and towards expressing her own ideas.



"I do not believe in minute and intricate rendition of detail. It makes the work monotonous and without soul. A hint or a suggestion of something with a different interpretation makes the canvas more interesting," she explains.

Harini's favourite medium is oil on canvas and acrylics. Working with oil, a very rich medium, one can experiment in many different ways to bring out whatever effect one has in mind but oil on canvas can surprise with its intensity and depth," she adds. Harini also loves to experiment with textures and relief painting. She finds acrylic, another favourite, as being a versatile and ideal medium that can be used to quickly express



ideas. She finds acrylic easy to work with but oil is still her favourite due to its richness which she says cannot be compared with any other medium. She has a hand in every pie, having worked as a painter, illustrator, calligrapher, graphic designer and as teacher at various summer camps.

Some of Harini's canvases are inspired by her love for Oman, its culture and people which shows in her work. One of her works with water colour on paper shows an Omani man from the interior playing the bagpipe, showing her keen interest towards local flavours.

Speaking optimistically about the art scene, Harini confesses that it has developed tremendously and the amount of talent hidden among the artists was indeed incredible.

Harini is involved in exploring the contemporary style of painting, which she strongly feels can express oneself better with the theme being either abstract or semi-abstract. "The combination of certain colours and images woven together makes a deeply meaningful idea. This fascinates me and I intend to further delve into this. I am grateful for the support of my family and friends who constantly provide the encouragement and motivation."

In her canvas titled 'Rhythm of the Sands', she has given a hint of the human forms engaged in a traditional dance in a desert setting. Even the desert is differently depicted with wide criss-cross streaks of colour which convey the rhythmic motion of both the shifting sands as well as of the people who are dancing, combined with the music from the instrument.

For the last few years, Harini has become increasingly involved in the local art scene here. She has participated in workshops and painting exhibitions. The workshops at the Omani Society of Fine Arts (OSFA) on the use of linoleum printing provided her with an opportunity to work with a less explored medium.

Her participation at the Dar al Atta'a exhibition for charity at Bait al Zubair Museum, the 'Art 100x100' exhibition for cancer awareness held by Ibrahim Gailani, has also been noteworthy.



The 'Art 100x100' exhibition for cancer awareness was a fun project, she says, where artists from Oman painted the wall at the Ghalya's Museum of Modern Art and gave her an opportunity to work among her favourite artist friends.

Her work at the exhibition titled 'Emergence' was an acrylic on canvas. The canvas depicts the soul emerging from the depths of cancer. Despite undergoing tough times, the soul emerges stronger and much powerful. The painting, which radiates hope and resilience of the soul was donated to the local Cancer Institute. She has also participated in the wall painting project at Ghalya's Museum of Modern Art where 80 artists took part in making a mosaic based on the theme of Oman.

She confesses that of late Oman has seen a wealth of extremely talented artists. "I am honoured to be a part of this big family. A number of artists are now in contact with each other and we belong to a few clubs where workshops are organised and we get to work on exhibiting works, which are then sold for charity."

Harini recently participated in a linoleum-printing workshop held by a famous African artist and also had the honour of taking part in the 40th National Day Sultan Qaboos Portrait Paint-



ing Competition in 2009 organised by OSFA. Harini's works have both abstract and semi-abstract and are generally the opposite of realistic paintings. They do not show any similarity to everyday objects or people but depict unrecognisable forms or colours and shapes. The unique quality of this type of art is that it is flexible unlike in some of her works.

Another interesting medium she uses is plaster of paris, which she used in her painting of the cosmic letter 'Aum', using a three dimensional surface for the letter with varied backgrounds. This made the letter stand out.

In another collage painting, she used Thai silk along with acrylics to create a background collage of Thai motifs and paintings.

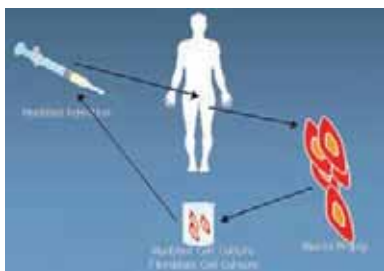
She has now stepped on to the traditional with contemporary forms. In the canvas titled 'Tribal Faces', Harini depicts a recognisable form but without complete features and realistic background. The second face looks like a reflection but can also be construed as something sort of a Janus man — a face to the world and a face turned away from the world that is different. The rendering of the face and bust is traditional but the whole picture is contemporary. In 'Rhythm of the Sands', she has again hinted at figures that are recognisable as depicting a traditional art form, but the lines and colours used are contemporary. Harini never thought she would never major in Fine Arts. After graduating with a top rank from Stella Maris College, Chennai, India with flying colours, she started working as an illustrator. Her mentor, Lalitha Thyagarajan, a successful illustrator based in Chennai, helped her with countless assignments from popular publishers which eventually established her.

However, after her marriage she moved to Muscat and did not get many chances to pursue illustration but has been in constant touch in the field of graphic design. She has designed a number of invitations and brochures for concerts and programmes in Muscat. She has also been commissioned for her illustrations, especially for calendars and books by a number of advertising agencies. She currently is working on paintings with Oman as the central theme, having some variation of texture to give it a more interesting look than just plain acrylic painting.

Cell therapy may regenerate cells

RESearchers have shown that cell therapy may be used in liver disease to regenerate liver cells, says a study.

Investigators discovered that a human embryonic stem cell can be differentiated into a previously unknown liver progenitor cell, an



early offspring of a stem cell, and produce mature and functional liver cells, reports *Science Daily*.

"The discovery of the novel progenitor represents a fundamental advance in this field and potentially to the liver regeneration field using cell therapy," said the study's senior author, Valerie Gouon-Evans, PharmD, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Developmental and Regenerative Biology, Black Family Stem Cell Institute, at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai.

"Until now, liver transplantation has been the most successful treatment for people with liver failure, but we have a drastic shortage of organs. This discovery may help circumvent that problem."

The study has been published in the journal *Cell Stem Cell*. — IANS

