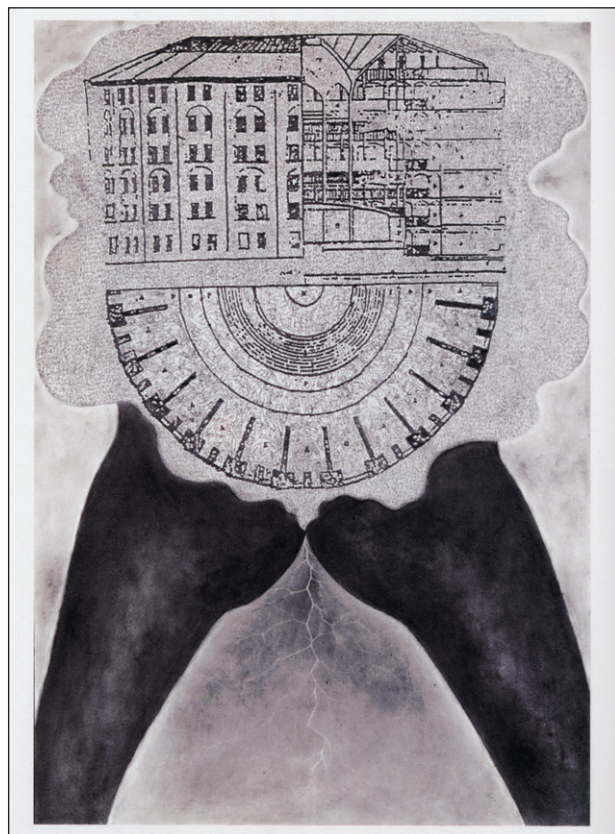


Fusion



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Daily News



Monochromatic works a contrast to Indian art scene

Basu's shades of gray explore darkness, light

By Bernadette Harris
Daily News Staff Writer

Last weekend as local Hindus celebrated Diwali, one of the largest festivals in the Indian faith, the Bay Area's premier Indian art gallery featured the works of artist Debnath Basu.

Basu was on hand for the Aicon Gallery's opening reception last Friday, which marked his first solo show in the United States, a feat he called very exciting. Basu had previously participated in group shows at the Palo Alto gallery, and is known as an up-and-comer in the Indian art scene.

Basu, 46, was born in West Bengal, India, and completed his master's degree in visual arts from Rabindra Bhart University in Kolkata, formerly known as Calcutta. Basu is from the Bengal school of thought when it comes to art, stressing artist individuality as opposed to imitation of global trends.

Basu's work is noticeably different from much of the work previously featured at the Aicon Gallery. Indian art, like Indian culture, is known for its vibrant colors and rich jewel tones, as seen in fashion and in art. Basu, however, eschews this style in favor of exploring his print-

making background.

"What I am doing is unique," Basu said. His medium, largely etchings and graphite on mixed media, is striking in its depth of tonalities.

His work has drawn a number of interested parties into the gallery over the last week, according to gallery director Ketki Dandekar-Sawant, who said patrons were interested in the obviously laborious efforts seen in Basu's work.

"They see so much detail in the black and white," Dandekar-Sawant said. "A photograph or the Web site does not do any justice to the intricacies that are layered on each piece."

Basu's show, featuring works created mostly over the last year, is an intense examination of his innermost struggles. According to the gallery, at the center of Basu's work is the idea that the more that is hidden and suppressed, the more art must work to reveal and dismantle these notions.

Basu has his demons. A decade ago he found himself struggling with the judicial system in India, a process that can mean years of fighting to a person with little financial means.

"It's kind of a nightmare," Basu said. "I still have a, what is it? A hang-up."

He reflects on that period in his life with the incorporation of architectural diagrams of prisons, as seen in "Reclining Figure of 9 (Power of a Strange Digit)" and "Irritable Bowel Syndrome 1." His work lends beauty to even the most seemingly mundane of bodily functions, as well as a wry sense of humor, as seen in "Wind."

Living in a densely populated small town, Basu is often inspired by the people around him. Many of his current works appear crammed with figures drawn in a style reminiscent of ancient Greek art. Basu says he is also influenced by the drawings of Pablo Picasso.

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At a glance

What: Debnath Basu solo exhibition

When: Through Dec. 20

Where: Aicon Gallery, 535 Bryant St., Palo Alto

Visit: www.aicongallery.com