



Lasting impressions

Spotlight on three artists who stood out for their uniqueness in 2010. By **Kapil Chopra**



The Incompetence Of Being Complete by Deepiyoti Kalita

As another year draws to a close, I sit back and reflect on the artists who impressed me the most in the last 12 months.

They all come from different backgrounds and different cities but they have one thing in common; the intensity and drive to do something different. They're all unique and distinctive in their approach.

The first time I saw the works of Deepiyoti Kalita was at Latitude 28 run by Bhavna Kakar, who still holds the record for showing at least one artist every year who impresses me with his work and style. Kalita obtained his Bachelor's in 2008 from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda, and followed it with a Master's in Sculpture from the institution two years later and won several awards when in college.

Kalita, who was part of First Look 2010, does what I call wall mounted installations — the works hang on a wall like a normal painting but have moving images. And he works with an

electronic engineer to complete them.

I was most impressed with the image of a man on a bench moving between a gas mask and a man with a typewriter in a glass jar. At the click of a button, the man moves as does the light behind him. The work is stunning in its visual appeal and yet its message of being caught in a situation and unable to decide is haunting. I also like his other works, the key being his use of technology to convey a message and at the same time working with traditional watercolours and outlines. I was most impressed by the amalgamation. Large scale works from him, sized at a minimum of 3ft by 5ft with all the circuitry, were priced between Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 1.8 lakh.

Another artist who caught my eye was Paribartana Mohanty. I was told about his works by Peter Nagy from Nature Morte who was curating a show for *Bestcollegeart.com* and scouting for some great fresh talent. He ended up with seven top picks and they all made it to his record-selling

show *The Present is Now* on *Bestcollegeart.com*, an online initiative for great art at reasonable prices.

When I first saw the works I was impressed by the fact that they were all very intense and oil on canvas which is rare nowadays as you've to paint layer by layer and wait for the paint to dry. All six works in the show sold before the show opened, taking me back to the 2007 days when works would sell before the exhibition formally opened. The difference here was it was happening for someone who was virtually unknown and only due to the brilliance of his work which was spotted by a top curator.

Mohanty was then featured as an artist to watch out for by art critic Johnny ML in his Sandarbh residency. While he was there, he was declared the artist of the year by FICA and won India's top art prize. That award gave him a three-month residency to hone up his skills in Switzerland and a solo show at Vadehra Art gallery. Watch out for him — he's one of the most impressive artists that I have seen in recent times.

Another artist to look out for is Saad Qureshi, based in London. He finished from The Slade School of Fine Art with a Master's in painting. Qureshi shot to fame as he was among the six



finalists for the reality TV show by Charles Saatchi, chosen from thousands of applicants. London's Aicon Art Gallery, managed by the very experienced Jag Mehta, spotted Qureshi's talent before he became well known and he had a solo again with Aicon post his reality TV success in London called *Disappearing in Yesterday*.

Saad is exceptional in his treatment but the painting which impressed me the most from his solo show was *Via Dolorosa* which shows railway tracks set in a barren landscape that disappear into the distance. They fade away and the imagery used with Urdu inscriptions between the railway tracks gives quite a contrasting feel — soft dialect in a hard landscape. He also uses texture to great effect and the subtlety of his work is breathtaking. Again a body of work which

makes you ponder as there are no answers — but you see what you perceive.

So these are the three artists to keep in mind all working in different mediums — from wall mounted kinetics to deep oil on canvas — all ending with subtle touches and taking you on a journey which promises more but can't be seen!

Kapil Chopra is a senior hospitality professional and an art collector. He writes a blog on collecting and investing in Indian Contemporary art at www.indianartinvest.blogspot.com

Via Dolorosa by artist Saad Qureshi; (above) Paribartana Mohanty's work *Bandwala, Then And Disco*

