

AN ART EXHIBITION WITH A DIFFERENCE

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DECCAN CHRONICLE

Printmaking is a form that involves the creation of artworks, usually multiples of a same piece, by printing on paper. This medium is well-suited to the expression of one's desires and feelings. Printmaking uses incredible attention to detail to accurately depict an artist's inner thoughts.

Artist Soghra Khurasani, one of the few artists in India to create woodcut prints on paper, feels that this medium gives her more freedom of expression, as well as ideas of beauty and nature. The artist, who has done her MS in printmaking from the University of Baroda, says that unlike other media, woodcut prints take about a month to complete. "It's a big challenge for me to carve the woodblock and transfer the image onto paper. Most of my woodcut works are in a large format, as this medium helps me in producing the size as per my requirements when compared to other printmaking mediums," says Soghra.

The themes that Soghra adopts in her works are varied, and have a strong root in her personal experiences. The theme of her works predominantly revolves around gender, aesthetics, and the role of woman.

Artist Soghra Khurasani credits the time spent at the University of Baroda for igniting her artistic sensibilities



One of her works using woodcut print on paper

"Landscapes are a major part of my work, as those are the places where we get inspired, and are free to walk around in," she says. "I imagine the female body as the sky, mountains, valley, soil and earth. I try to represent land as the skin beneath our body. The flesh, scars, and blood are the

marks created on nature that depict the bodily phenomena as mother Earth. All other associated entities are to be assumed, paradoxically, as the feminine body and its gestures in representation," informs Soghra.

Talking about her ongoing exhibition in Chennai — *Cratered Fiction*, she says, "Craters in this context focuses on the ones that appear after a volcanic eruption. The designs that I have adopted for this theme resemble not just a crater but also a blood pond. This signifies the peaceful protest of silence. Some of the other meanings depicted in this series of artwork are more about the stillness of presence, the aftermath of expressions, as well as the beauty of life, death, and healing reformation."

Soghra says that her days in Baroda triggered her interest in printmaking. "Working and practicing this art along with veterans helped create an impact on me, as I have always been passionate about working on a huge canvas. The tools I use make me



Soghra Khurasani

free to express on a big surface," she says.

Explaining about the nature of her work Soghra explains, "Woodcut printmaking is a relief printmaking process made on the plank side of the wood with the grain running lengthwise. After an image is prepared on the wood, the excess or unwanted areas are cut away by hand with carving tools. Ink is applied to the wood with a rubber roller and a sheet of paper is then placed on top of the inked wood, and the back is rubbed by hand or run through a press to make the impression. For multiple

colours the wood block is further cut. The printing process is same. As most of my works are large in scale, I take the impression manually."

According to Soghra, the reason for the lack of printmaking artists is that many shift to other mediums either because they can't afford print studios, or the process involved is very lengthy. "It is also not very easy to work in large format prints, and is tedious process to do it for long hours," she says. This young artist, driven by passion, wants to continue with this medium despite all the difficulties and wishes to continue expressing herself through this medium for a long time.

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— SOGHRA KHURASANI