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ARTIST INTERVIEW: VANDANA KOTHARI ON LEARNING ART THROUGH SKETCHING DEAD BODIES

by Art Zolo (/users/art-zolo) on Wed, 2013-06-12 12:08, updated on Tue, 2017-09-12 02:08



Vandana Kothari is an art professional who wears many hats. With a background in both Fine Arts and Art History, Vandana has taught art-history and art appreciation at various reputed institutes, while continuing to paint the world the way she experiences it.

With her deftness in multiple mediums of expressions which covers a range from water-color, acrylic, collage and sculpture she addresses our fragmented lives and smaller yet significant experiences that one picks up in the course of our life. Here is our interview with an upcoming artist.

Getting started with Art:

As a high school student, Vandana had no clue about art as a carrier, but she was good with sketching. By the time she reached her 10th grade, she knew one thing

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good with sketching. By the time she reached her 10th grade, she knew one thing, she wanted something practical to pursue where she could earn her living. On her friend's recommendation, she enrolled into a diploma course at Girls Polytechnic doing a commercial art program in Surat (a city in Gujarat, India).

While her father was keen on her getting into accounting, it was not going to be numbers for Vandana, rather she wanted to live her life with paints and brushes. But, before she could finish the diploma, her family moved to Jaipur. In order to get into a degree program in art in Jaipur, she needed her 12th grade score. Determined to make it happen, she took exams for her 11th and 12th courses by studying for it all in just three months' time. Eventually she got into a BFA program in Jaipur (Rajasthan, India), followed by a Master's degree in History of Art at Santiniketan (West Bengal, India)

Medium No Barrier:

A teacher in Surat, who returned from England, helped liberate her thought process. He instilled an urge to get the best result, taught her to look for quality and 'achieve the best'. He would ask the students to go home and use a medium other than paper and paint to create something. These exercises helped liberate her from being conscious of using one particular medium and trying new thing.

Learning from the dead bodies:

"As an under graduate student I would do hundreds of sketches, from the world around us. I was obsessed with the need to understand the human structure, the anatomy of every part. So I landed up at the Jaipur Medical College to study the cadavers. The whole summer I would go there early morning before the classes and sketch the dead bodies, thereby learning to draw human anatomy first hand." These studies left a great impact on her mind and eventually turned out to be an important source of her works later.

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Be part of a long tradition:

As an artist she is always aware of the changes that are happening inside her and the society around her. But what makes art fascinating for her is that it makes her a part of a long tradition that has been on for centuries.

"I feel like I am living every bit of my life, trying to create a language to express myself. It feels like a long research where everything I do becomes part of my

study"

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"An exposure to diverse cultural and social milieu is special to my upbringing as an individual. Born in Rajasthan, brought up in Gujarat, studied in Bengal, worked in different places and now based in Delhi my interactions with multiple cultures continues. I try to formulate this experience into a visual language that grows out of a complex multi-cultural society."

Vandana does not believe in the idea of a single signature style. She uses multiple styles and a variety of mediums to express her ideas. To her it's more important to be able to get the message across.

Inspired by the Urban Landscape:

"My biggest source of inspiration is the urban landscape, which is made up of people who are aspiring to become someone, who are trying to be confident and free in expressing themselves."

Best Advice Received:

"As an artist you need to keep working. Don't be too judgmental about your work and allow yourself to grow."

What to Expect:

Currently Vandana is working on gender and sexuality. Through her work she hopes to show gender and sexuality, not as a single thought, but as layers of idea and phenomenon that shapes our society.

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