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# Breaking Barriers: An Artist's Unique Vision of Reality

By Hamsa Ramesha

Surprising the eye, Sanatan Saha's art exposes hidden depths with each glance, feeling more like an intricate display of optical illusion than actual brushstrokes of paint. The pieces, displayed recently in the Aicon Gallery (Palo Alto, Calif.), are a part of Saha's first solo exhibition in the United States.

Saha's inspiration comes from his observations of mankind, which are almost philosophical in nature. Layer by layer, Saha's abstract artwork uncovers itself to the viewer, yet it is never quite possible to understand the picture in its entirety.

"I am trying to describe man's alienation from other creatures inhabiting the earth. There is an apparent unity and interdependence among all the creatures," Saha tells Indian Life & Style. "But man, because of his self-consciousness and higher intelligence, stands apart from them all."

Saha's style is strongly influenced by his time learning from and working with prominent artist Jayashree Chakravarty. But he soon discovered a method of approaching art that was not well accepted by his peers.

"[My teachers] never approved of my drawing and composition which were in sharp contrast with what went before," Saha explains. "But I stuck to my own as I felt that what I wanted to express could not be done in any other way."

Several of Saha's pieces are flooded with images of distinct human profiles that abruptly stand apart from the backdrop, which is often a chaotic mix of animal life and layered patterns of color. Saha bases his style on his interpretation of reality, invoking conceptual images and emotions while portraying them in a visually stimulating and energizing manner.

"I have observed that the universe is occupied by matter and life and their myriad forms in a continuous whole. There is no break," Saha says. "Perhaps this will explain the merging and overlapping of images and colors in my work."

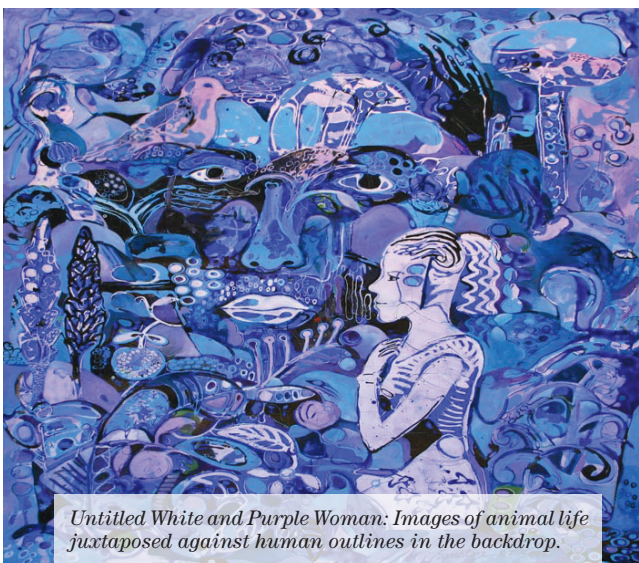
Viewers are free to judge his art for themselves, without any prior assumptions, as most of the paintings in his collection remain untitled. Challenging the expected norms of the art community, Saha's approach to art has made his work and methods a controversial topic of interest.

"When it comes to where he's coming from physically, it's a very traditional school of representational art," says Shona Dutta, general manager at the Aicon Gallery in Palo Alto. "So, he's sort of breaking free and doing something very unique for that area."

Born in 1975, Saha received his MFA in painting from Kala Bhavana in Santiniketan in 2005. He was also honored with several awards for his work, including the 'Nirman' award organized by B.D. Bangur Empowerment in Kolkata in 2003, and an annual Award for Excellence from the Kolkata Art Foundation in 2004.



Untitled 1: Here you can see Sanatan Saha's use of layering and images of human profiles.



Untitled White and Purple Woman: Images of animal life juxtaposed against human outlines in the backdrop.



Untitled Red Man: A chaotic blend of color, images and Saha's signature human profiles.



Untitled Seated figure in teal: An abundance of marine life is interwoven in the painting, with a few profiles.