

ACAW 2008, Saturday, March 15 - Monday, March 24, 2008

Artists in Conversation Online Interview

Mithu Sen



1.How did you come about to making art?

.....Ran beside a train.... swam for a while...took a cattle ride...few steps walking...ended up flying and am still on cloud
9.....10.....11....12.....and above.

I THINK THERE ARE ALWAYS TWO WAYS OF LOOKING ...ONE IS SARCASTIC AND OTHER IS EMOTIONAL....I SHOULD MAKE A BALANCE INBETWEEN BUT NEVER WORKS...I BECOME VERY BIAS ABOUT EVERYTHING.....

.... I actually don't believe or feel that 'art' is something so separate from life.... my answers may seems cynical or morbid even surreal..... they r actually not....they r very basic old recipes with some Indian curry spices...to makes it tasty !

2.Briefly describe your art from the perspective of what it could tell us about you?



It saysam a sensual (mithu 'sen'sual!!)
charming tanned 'Indian' artist (woman artist!!) who has arrived from an exotic land and
ruling over.... for those who want to be ruledout....

I wish I was one of feminist artists from the 70s.....when becoming a feminist was such a
glam and contemporary....but I only born at that period holding that gene in me....but
still been stamped as a feminist artist...why don't we cultivate some new labels?

I feel, People put up labels for their own comfort.... if they don't find a pocket to put you
somewhere. They are insecure. So according to my known surroundings, am an
'artist' ...with more definite categorization, am a feminist/feminine/woman artist??.....

actually am a very good cook, who loves planting and watering cactuses.... Am a good
driver of a field tractor and a surrogated mother of all my unborn kids...

please Give me a name and place me in a pocket(before I make things more confusing
and complicated)...we all need to live in a secured mutual comfort...

3.What experiences have most influenced your choice of subject matter, medium and style?

Twisting a cactus spine...and watching the oozing blood from its wound...don't know if
that experience influenced me afterwards...I only can say that am soaked on that occult

blood and vomiting them up onto my world...there is no separation in making art or cooking rice...choosing spices or putting ballerina on my feet in style.

4.Is your formal or informal training as an artist useful? How?

.... Believe in each and every moment in life.... don't even like sleeping and missing the night birds chanting!!! So the training I am still getting from life.... are ...yes.... full.... useful...

though I cant forget the academic, traditional, narrative, drawing ratio of a human body in my art school....which I still try to apply on each human being and failed scaling them perfectly....nothing is so constant....i see the human body crawling like a panthor..... so i draw that soon.

5.Does your work reflect issues in yourself, in society or community? What would you say is the purpose for making art?

May be...

I read art mags...blogs...my own catalogues.... sometime I google my name.... find am in various pockets.... where my works are relating and reflecting various issues.... no doubt, they are relatively correct.... but relatively! For sure....And those reflected issues make some affects on me too....as long as we are running our post-colonial blood in our veins. International experience contributed to my stature as an artist back in India.....and as an exotic creature outside of it.

Purpose of making art?.....I don't understand this neither I want to.....in my belief, there is no separation of making art, dressing my caged parrot, cleaning the loo or smelling the first rain water from the paddy field....I do what I love....I live...and I believe, that's the only purpose

6.Do you appreciate culturally specific works of art? If so how does your personal and cultural background show up in your work?

My Indian-ness represents the reflections and reactions towards my work and me from the people and their immediate surroundings. I don't carry any Indian-ness with me (airlines are too strict about limited weight!). Wherever I travel, it is the perspective, attitude, interests, curiosity and need of the people there who look for an Indian-ness' or any 'ness'. And, they find this out in their own way. For me, this 'ness' is an exotic word.

In 2004, I was invited to a residency in New York as part of a group of 32 artists from all over the world. I began my residency by writing on the wall with artificial hair. It was exotic and spectacular All my fellow artists were curious about what I was writing. During that one month of staying with all of them, I was quite involved with everybody, personally, emotionally, rationally, logically, illogically, sportingly, artistically, funnily,

naively, un-smartly, fightingly, romantically, parentally, sisterly, brotherly, and in every other way you can think of.

After a month, on our opening day, I distributed a paper among my artist friends, requesting them to translate and explain the meaning of all that I had written during this period. This was because even I did not know what I had written...they were not words from any Indian language, instead were different forms of imagination. Surprisingly, I received such a wonderful response from each and everybody, a clear reflection of how they looked at me as an Indian woman, an artist. So, I wonder if there is anything specific about the Indian-ness that I carry or people carry. It is so momentary, temporary, and relative by all means.

7. Is there anything you would like to say about your local art scene or the international art market, art education, and or system for art exhibition?

I want to say a lot.....

I can see a change every 3 minutes. I enjoy the global game; I like India getting the Commonwealth offer, the Miss Universes and Oscars. I like getting McDonalds and Kerala massage in one course. If you see change, what can be the possible reasons? Obviously, it is not that all artists started doing great art all of a sudden! But the truth is we are getting lots of exposures...which as a debating quote, 'we deserve'..... and we are benefiting in lots of ways...which is helping to grow more....or less...whatever, I love changes...any changes...so I am enjoying this big dramatic scenario of todays....art....burgers.....curries.....snake charmers....dollars....barbies and tandoors....Come on, we must take advantage and get the best out of it. The genuine thing will remain over time. So no worries.

Before this current art market start investing in coffee or basmati rice and artists start farming.....we should get the best of this time, experience the best and try to live a LIFE IN STYLE, IN ART..... I strongly believe that when all this booming drama will go away...major will start trying in different fieldeven then, some of us will still live in life/ ART in STYLE , like always....and for ever.

Thank YOU

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