

A new twist to modernism

German artist Michael Kunze depicts the inner recesses of the human mind through diverse architectural landscapes

Rinky Kumar

Aclaimed German artist Michael Kunze is known for giving a new twist to the concept of modernism in his art works. They have architectural and metaphysical reflections on the surface but actually symbolise the working of the human mind. The painter is showcasing his creations for the second time at Mumbai's Galerie Isa. Titled *The Last Tango in Thule*, the exhibition comprises a series of paintings that show monumental landscapes and breathtaking scenes in which viewers can lose themselves, because nothing seems real or predictable. They boast of dark colours and architectural compositions under a cloudy sky, steeped in dramatic Mediterranean light. Actually, they represent the inner world of the human being, a dark, complex labyrinth with explosions of blinding light in which illusion is part of reality.

In a tête-à-tête with *After Hrs*, Michael reveals the idea and inspiration behind his oil on canvas creations. Excerpts...

● **What prompted you to name the exhibition *The Last Tango in Thule*?**

The title refers to the 1972 Italian-French erotic drama directed by Bernardo Bertolucci. The typically '70s-like existentialistic atmosphere and the story about two lonely



A painting by the artist



Michael Kunze

and 'lost' individuals in Paris tells us a story that is strongly connected to a cultural context, which I always call a 'shadow-line' of modernism. Here, there is no strong idea of progress, but a mythologically-based surrealist and metaphysical narration that brings different and difficult historical sources together. I have interchanged Paris with Thule to strengthen this aspect of a cultural historic twist. Since ancient times, Thules

relation between shadow and light as well as between modern and non-modern attitudes.

● **When did you decide to become an artist?**

I come from a family of archaeologists. The first step was when as a child, I went for excavations with my parents in Greece, where I still didn't know enough to understand the diverse structures of architecture and landscape elements. So, I had to create my own logic to bring these disparate things together. Here, I could start a big metaphysical machine of changing meanings and relations, first quite simple, but after a while more complex.

● **Are you greatly influenced by the Euro continental school of thought?**

The historical line I refer to has Euro continental roots. Philosophers and writers like Nietzsche and Albert Camus have been inspired by it. One can also see this when you look at the works of the '60s and '70s filmmakers. Directors like Ingrid Bergman and Lars von Trier show us a strong difference to the easier and popular aesthetics of the Anglo Saxon origin. In Euro continental context, the mythological and metaphysical meshes are finer and show more combinations. Also, the spiritual and religious thinking of India is close to the shadow line. I see a combination of fantastic and overwhelming effects with the gloomy and metaphysical tradition.

The Last Tango in Thule is on at Galerie Isa till August 28 from 11 am-6 pm.

is a name for an unspecified country in northern Europe. Later, it got a mythic meaning, like the platonic Atlantis, and others. The change from an original and simple location to a mythological nowhere is exactly the sort of shift I try to follow with painting, text and other media, referring to a strange