

Between past and present

Romanian artist Radu Oreain uses scriptures and medieval legends to make a comment on current social issues

Rinky Kumar

Sacred scriptures, medieval legends and contemporary narratives have played a crucial role in pop culture. Romanian artist Radu Oreain seeks inspiration from these same avenues in his first solo exhibition in India. Titled *Farewell To The Thinker Of Thoughts*, it comprises a series of small, medium-sized and large drawings as well as oil paintings that draw its inferences from the Upanishads and the works of American poet-essayist Walter Whitman and Bohemian Jewish novelist Karl Max.

Radu, an alumnus of the University of Romania who has been practising art since 13 years, describes his style that marries the body and spirit. He says, "It is detailed and organic. There are these two different sides of the same thing which I put in an image. While the body is carnal and visceral, the

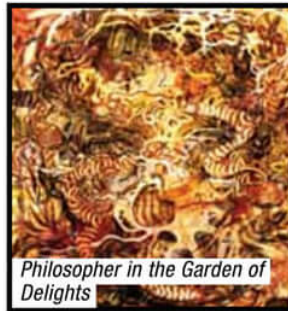
soul is spiritual."

One of the abstract works that he has created is called *After A Portrait of Walt Whitman*, which showcases the poet-essayist's faces in the midst of foliage. Radu, who stays in Marseilles, France, states, "I heard Whitman's audio book, *Leaves Of Grass*, in which he explored his relationship with nature. It was poetic and meditative. Charged with this feeling, I recreated his portrait with the ideas that I had about it. It's a work that is in between reality and another world."

The 34-year-old's creations boast of colours such as yellow, ochre, red and brown symbolising the shades of the body. "This is something that all of us have in common. So, I create a collective portrait with a spectrum of colours of the matter that we are all made of," he elaborates.

His another portrait, *The Snake Charmer*, pays an ode to India. Radu mentions, "It symbolises

my long-time fascination with the Indian culture. The fact that I will have this exhibition here encouraged me to explore this subject. The snakes are missing but the trees are symbolic of the



snakes."

One of the other creations seeks inspiration from Kafka's path-breaking novella *Metamorphosis*, which tells the story of a salesman who wakes one morning to find himself transformed into a huge insect.

Radu also makes a comment on the contemporary

scenario by juxtaposing scenes from a legend. For instance in one of his works, he uses the story of Saint George and the Dragon (in which the saint tamed and slayed a dragon that demanded human sacrifices). He explains, "I find it comforting to talk about reality using medieval sculptures and legends. I use it as a metaphor to comment on social media that is all pervasive."

One of the most interesting works in the exhibition features a grid-like structure that is based on the concept of infinity. Radu says, "I made it while listening to the Upanishads, which explore the concept of infinity and how it's made of points. I created this grid of points and in between the spaces, there were 10,000 spots. It was a meditative process for me."

Farewell To The Thinker Of Thoughts is on till November 10 at Galerie Isa, Lion Gate, Fort from 11 am-6 pm.



Radu Oreain with one of his paintings, *The Snake Charmer*

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