

art

CREATING THE CREATOR'S FORM

God created colours. Man returns the favour

He looks almost like any other artist, and has a name that can belong to anyone - Arun Kalwankar. And yet, something makes me address him by his more loved name - Aruneshwarji, on the second fortuitous meeting. The subtle difference between him and other artists comes to the fore - almost subtly. It's not just his idiosyncrasy for the colours blue and white, or his volatile moods (he will ignore you if he thinks you are not internally clean). He is an intensely spiritual person. There's no hovering halo around his persona, but he strictly dedicates himself to the Gods and Goddesses he creates on canvas.

Arun believes in creating the creator's form. He says, "Lord Ganesha is my favourite for the canvas. He is versatile. Anyone can make him. And the idea that I am creating the creator itself - the very notion - it gives me bliss."

Most of his paintings are on canvas, a total of five hundred for now. He intends to slowly increase it to a 1000 strong image collection. He also mixes multimedia creations with his drawings, computer paintings and canvases - emphasizing the fact that one can use any medium from pen to pixel to express one's spiritual journey. His quest for the divine is not just dedicated to art form, but to a study of spiritual books to further enhance his knowledge of the divinities that he paints.

What makes interesting conversation with Arun is the fact that he is a multi-faceted personality - a poet, painter and a filmmaker with a sense of space and spirituality. Added to it all, he is an exponent of so many esoteric arts - astrology, Vaastu Shasta and spiritual healing. However, if he has to paint his favourite subject, it inevitably ends up being Ganesha, the elephant headed God.

Explaining his choice, he says, "God is formless - Nirakar Vishal. Of all his forms, I fell in love with Ganesha - the God with the elephant head and human body. Whenever I look into his soulful eyes, I know in my heart, that he is my reason to create. This God of wisdom and creation guides my hand and emerges on the canvas. Ganesha himself allows His creation in conventional and unconventional forms. His is the only form one can create in a single line, or in multiple complex structures. He can be lyrical, classical, romantic, dynamic or surrealistic."

He is the recipient of many awards, notably the JJ Souvenir Award, The Art Society of India, the Indo - Arab Society Prize and the 'Bruno International.' He has held many exhibitions, at the Max Mueller Bhavan Society Bombay, Jehangir Art Gallery (paintings and ceramics), Artist Centre and Nehru Centre, in Mumbai, and in addition, has been part of a Computer Ganesha show in Sydney, Australia and Los Angeles in the year 1997. He also participated in an exhibition on calligraphy expression called Aksharannubhuti and is involved in making a series of ten films on artists for the Bombay Art Society.



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Always on the job with passion, Aruneshwar had his first brush with God in the muse of Ganesha during his childhood. The first Ganesh festival he celebrated caught his eye and his imagination. Smiling fondly and knowing now that it was all God's subtle toss of the dice in his path to growth, Aruneshwar says, "It was an interesting interlude. I was all of seven when I watched this painter paint an entirely different cosmos on a huge blank canvas overnight. This was when I decided that I would be an artist, and create the creators."

From that moment of realization, to today, Aruneshwar has accomplished a massive amount. He graduated from J J School of Arts as a first class graduate in the year 1978. After his graduation, he worked as a director with an advertising company and as a film director for television and computer media. At present, he is producer and director for Educational Television at Educational Technology, IIT, Powai, Mumbai.

In the idyllic surroundings of Powai, he has his permanent base now. An invitation to his home is an esoteric trip – the walls are all either painted, or boast his prized canvasses. Here again, it's the colours blue and white, which greet one's eye, soothing and exciting at the same time... it's a cosmos designed in intent, to pander to his moods, which he claims, rule his personality.

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As a youth, he professes to have believed more in himself than the idea of a God, but now he sings a different tune – it's Om Namah Shivaya all the time. Interestingly, he is more a worshipper of Shiva than Ganesha, though he paints mostly the latter. He confesses that he feels more like Shiva's son, and so believes that every creative flow is Ganesha lending a hand to him. It is amazing how Aruneshwar can in a jiffy; bring life to an empty canvas, or for that matter, any medium.

The man is more a spiritualist now, and has his throng of devotees. His heart like his home is a mandir, and he states that art is another mandir that can be bought, if anyone should like it for himself. Aruneshwar believes appreciation to his art is achieved by the simple act of its gracing the home of an art lover or a Ganesha devotee. Each painting has a special spiritual meaning, intended to impart grace to the person who owns one of his paintings.

Coming back to earth and other forms of creative art, Aruneshwar has a grouse he vocalizes - the last one for the road, so to say. "Why does anyone make films on Devdas? He is a drunkard, a loser. Why should he be eulogized on screen and in art? Why not spend money on something better, more optimistic visuals?"

Does he need to say more?

