

Dhruva Mistry

Cross-Sections 1988

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“Creation is not making something out of nothing or of one thing out of another, but a self-projection of Brahman into the conditions of Space and Time. Creation is not a making, but a becoming in terms and forms of conscious existence.” Sri Aurobindo, 1872-1950 (Isah Upanishad)

It was curiosity, desire and a British Council Scholarship which brought me to Britain in 1981. From Britain I was to perceive Europe and the West through my travels and experiences. I set out to test myself 'against my notions of the world around me; at times finding myself at odds with it. It was an opportunity to see myself and India from afar. At the Royal College of Art, my time was short. To find any importance in my work and its standing within contemporary British art was clearly beyond my expectations. My life and education in India were rather intense and exhausting, yet it was where practical creation lay. At the RCA I did not see much reason to work more than necessary. This allowed me enough time to look around and to examine my own ideas and preconceptions. What is "contemporary" in Art remains an ongoing debate in India. The traditional artists and craftsmen continue to work in various media, finding alternative ways of looking, often outwitting the minority of trained artists. They offer skill in the handling of materials and their sense of purpose in creating reflects their respective values in their lives, rather different from that of the image of the artist like a lone crusader. My studies in India consisted of rigorous studio practise, theory and the history of Art. I gained experience in modelling with clay, moulding, casting in plaster, metal and fibre glass, as well as carving in wood and stone. Studio practise also included working with scrap- iron, welding, soldering and employing repousee. Study from nature and life, together with the necessity to express oneself through training in composition, sharpened one's insight and means of expression. From my training I developed specific interests in image, form, structure, material and surface, giving certain qualities to my work which seem to have aroused an interest in contemporary British art. All my works produced in India during my student life illustrate a progression through a myriad of interests. This is reflected by a variety of approaches in working methods and materials, which up till now have remained almost intact. The human, the animal and the struggle for harmony seem to spur my imagination. My concept of Sculpture relies on my ability to transform my ideas into visible and tactile forms. This verification with forms provides me with a sense of purpose, consequently transforming the verisimilitude of my own image. Therefore, these objects witness my passage through time and space - enlivening desire to reach towards my object of creation. While reaching nearer to this, I inevitably shed my awareness of aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual achievements intrinsic in human evolution. Eventually, through my quest to find forms with their own being, it often results in objects that possess an evocative presence of their own. Soon after completing my studies at the RCA in 1983, I embarked upon testing my appetite for being an artist. Encouragement existed largely due to the interest shown in my work, offering me opportunities for exhibitions, commissions and occasional teaching; all of which increased my learning. My residency at Cambridge has been one of the most important times in terms of my work. My stay in Britain has been crucial in forging my independence, establishing my ability. Consequently I have been able to find myself and the world around me. Much of the critical response to my work in Britain seems to reflect a rather sensory reaction and mystical misreading, while assessment and understanding of the art and culture of India remain removed.