

DHRUVA MISTRY

An interview by Radhika De, *Religion of Art*, M.V.A. Dissertation, M.S. University of Baroda, July, 2005

What got you interested in art making?

As a child, I enjoyed making things using twigs, thorns, leaves, reed, paper, carton, clay and wire. I saw my mother making diagrammatical figures on the floor. In the absence of attractions of print and audio visual media like TV and computers, I looked at the world and people around me. Apart from joys of vernacular schooling in an urbanizing setup, my street was busy with carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, cobblers, repairers of utensils and variety of peddlers. There was a large factory under construction in the vicinity. It was an unending drama against ever evolving skyline of an agrarian economy. Watching people doing their work was fascinating which encouraged me to play with materials. Images of gods and heroes, offered range of figurative styles and traditions. Seeing Shiva in the form of a pebble shaped Lingam to a handsome sky colored man is part of manifestations and unity of spirit. Popular images offer immediacy of appeal with a touch of drama, chiaroscuro, modernism and realism of the Indian cinema. At the art school, my focus upon a personal Renaissance made me learn and see things. It was a journey of discovery of sights, sounds, tastes, smells and feelings of individuation of myself and my work.

Do you believe in the presence of higher powers that move you to inspiration?

Waking up in the morning and going to bed at night is part of my acceptance of higher powers. I feel elated while following rhythm of nature. My perception of subtle nuances compels me to express myself. It is relationship with my invisible and higher self that helps me to decipher voice of my intuition. It is a dispassionate search for the self, made real through learning and making. Like traveling on the road, I negotiate my way in the traffic of vehicles, people, bumps, habits, customs, potholes and wandering creatures of sorts on my way. I begin with studies in pencil, pen and ink or use clay and plaster to understand my concern. The work is reflection of my consciousness revealing complexity of nature and perception. It is an ever evolving process of curiosity, desire and reason to discover the shadow of my light.

As an artist what is your relationship with God?

Regardless private and religious devotion to my work, I haven't met God claiming to have created the world like those seeking attention and respect. Human life is dependent upon forces of Nature that defy knowledge and intelligence. Natural disasters are reminders of that power. I believe that I am part of an undiminished energy of the Sun and can feel like the first man on earth to communicate and express feelings of beauty, love, awe as well as fear of the unknown. In the image of man, God seems to have forged civilizations. Inevitably, belief and adoration reveal ideals of believers. I work to learn from nature which nurtures me. Having understood spirit of forms, -human and animal, I feel free to make things as my own object in life.

In what way does your belief affect the pattern of your life?

I know that I am a tiny part the phenomena of life and nature. By learning to work with forces and movement of nature in my environment, I infuse certain consciousness and rhythm in my work.

What does discipline mean to you? Do you see it as a necessity or hindrance to creativity?

Discipline, is an inseparable part of intention and commitment of one's goals in life. Like light and shadow, discipline is the rhythm in harmony with the feeling of wellbeing. Discipline is an ascending slope which requires light, reason, toil and stealth to reach upwards.

In what way does your sculptural practice affect other spheres of your life?

My work reflects my interest in forms. Despite aims, I happily meet accidents and also tread upon little known paths for my enrichment. Creative instinct is free for all. Purposeful exploration of it is a difficult

task. My pursuit leads me to discover myself with dimly lit areas of the inner self. It is a pleasure to bring those findings under the sun.

The practice of art can prove meditative yet performance as an artist can entail a large amount of stress, how do you strike a balance between the two?

My pursuit of yoga is work. It is my karma to discover, find and reveal forms in real and pictorial space. Honest experience, observation and desire to learn contribute to a feeling of equilibrium. Once found, form of the work is part of public imagination whose performance can only be judged by time itself.

Can you describe the role sculpture plays in developing the self and society at large?

Sculptural artifacts prove to be the most common as evidence of civilizations. In India it plays a major and significant role. It reflects unique awareness of forms that reveal life in the third dimension. A glimpse of phenomena can be revealed by the fourth dimension of time through sculptural form, movement, shape, color, texture and tone to create atmosphere. Feeling for space can offer experience of life. Like audible abstraction of sound of music and its power to invoke and affect feelings, sculpture commands particular attention through its form, offering sight, touch, smell and taste of its scope as well as space. It is an aptitude for the form that enlivens illusion of the third dimension as tangible, palpable, actual and real in the given space. The stories of civilizations are result of maturity of man and his relationship with his environment. Social and individual and necessities shape societies as a tireless search for beauty of life and forms. Nursery, primary and higher education can play a pivotal role to train the young for innovations through art and design to improve and inspire rural as well as rapid urbanization of life and our people.

What is your opinion regarding artists workshops? Are they really conducive to creativity and learning?

Artists' Workshops are uniquely evolving phenomena of contemporary Indian art to promote artists as well as acquire their works. Central and regional Lalit Kala Akademies have held art camps for over 50 years. From early 90's camps, seem rechristened as 'workshops' became fashionable among business people. Recently, growing corporate culture, private galleries and individual speculators seem involved in the camps. Camps are known to provide many things to many people. However, most artists seem to be aware of value of their work. Selection of artists and quality of their work depends upon patron's taste, their middlemen. Today, camps are becoming part of artists' networking for popularity and success. Artists gain in terms of honorarium, free holidays, social contacts, fun, frolic and cash from sales beefing up artist's income with 'free' picnics and fancy culture tours. Limitations of time affecting production and quality of art are accommodated through contribution of work by the artist at his convenience.

Camps seem to be part of routine performance by artists to satisfy taste and popular acquisition of works. For many, art camps are an exciting part of their calendar for expanding business and investment interests as well as opportunity of page-3 coverage.