

Meditation in Slow Motion

Kiyomi Talaulicar in conversation with Gopal Mirchandani



Kiyomi Talaulicar, *Waiting*. Acrylic with Collage on Paper, 10" x 10", 1993

Kiyomi Talaulicar studied painting at the Sir JJ School of Arts in Mumbai where she was awarded the prestigious Gold Medal in 1986. She relocated to the USA and continued her studies at Indiana University, earned an MFA in Painting (1993) at East Carolina University and was awarded the Gravely Foundation Scholarship as well as the Liquitex Excellence in Art Award. In 2001-02 she won the Jerome Foundation/ Women's Art Registry of Minnesota Scholarship sponsoring collaboration with artists in other creative media. Her work has been widely exhibited through various juried and invitational shows in the United States, India and England. Kiyomi now lives and works in Mumbai after she returned to India in 2003.

Excerpts from an interview:

GM: Soon after your JJ days you moved to the US for 15 years where you silently practiced your art. Tell us about this period?

KT: Relocating to the US after getting married to my husband Anant, was a turning point - I had no idea as to how life was about to change, and in such a major way. There was an initial sense of isolation. Thereafter, settling into a new culture where I juggled several roles simultaneously as a painter, a wife, a homemaker and a student, followed by motherhood, really helped my growth as an artist.

While in the US I studied for my MFA, painted, taught and participated in several juried/national and group shows. I was occasionally present in the Indian art scene as I had two solo shows here, the first at Gallery 7 (1997) followed by Gallery Chemould (2000). I was also invited to participate in the Indian Eclectics show in Delhi - at the Lalit Kala Academy, organized by the French Embassy and the Sanskriti Pratishthan in 1989, amongst other group shows.

GM: You have worked with so many mediums - why is painting so close to you?

KT: I enjoy working with several media as each has its own characteristics which



Kiyomi Talaulicar, *A Thought in Scarlet*. Acrylic on Paper, 13.5" x 13.5", 2000

enable me to evoke a variety of feelings. Acrylics are my steady and most favorite medium which I often combine with charcoal, print making, collage, ink and pencil. I also immensely enjoy the opportunity for experimentation that paper gives due to its malleable surface quality as compared to canvas, the texture that comes about in this process speaks to me about the richness of life.

Why painting? ... because it allows me to channelise and translate my feelings visually through color as well as give it tactile quality through a slow additive and subtractive process. Working in several media through the process of layering and mixing colors, simultaneously reflects my own vulnerability, and the kind of continual self regeneration that one experiences throughout ones lifetime.

GM: I was introduced to your works by architect Samira Rathod and later saw your solo show in 1997 at Gallery 7. There was a raw quality about your earlier works. Elaborate.

KT: During the early 1990s my works saw the emergence of a spontaneous raw strength. This probably reflected my excitement of exploring an open, challenging, fulfilling environment at Graduate School in the US. At that time, I was portraying various aspects of humanity impulsively through depicting circumstances that we as humans create, participate in or feel victimized by. The human presence had always been a sort of passionate unquestioned subject matter for me for the past several years which I expressed mostly in a figurative manner. The mid 1990s saw a slight shift with my works mellowing. This was possibly my coming to terms with various issues of life, through the search for simplicity, calmness, stability and universal beauty amidst turbulence. This also may have coincided during a period of family crises.

GM: Your Chemould solos in 2000 and 2005 respectively had a meditative quality—there is a huge progression from the early days. I see the sensitivity of both bliss and pathos in your work. Please comment.

KT: Yes, the works have become more meditative – and yes I do feel there is a duality which continues in my work – the bliss and the pathos, which I choose to portray with a sense of elegance. The elegance or beauty that I seek to express is or just that which pleases the eye, but a trusted feeling that exists behind the curtain, despite all life's complexities. My vulnerability is expressed at times through the deliberate absence of the figure. I am also drawn towards depicting the lyrical essence of any given situation.

GM: One can't help but notice the recurrent use of bowls and leaves in your works. Please comment?

KT: Chairs, walls, figures, shells, patterns, leaves, doors, shadows, guitars and other forms - flow in to my works as emblems of humankind. A guitar for example, has the shape that not only reflects the human form, but also shows the human



Kiyomi Talaulicar, *I Shall Not Want*, Acrylic on Paper, 40" x 12", 2005.



Kiyomi Talaulicar, *The Truth That Lies Within*, Acrylic with Collage & Pencil on Paper, 8.25" x 8", 1999.

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capacity to make beautiful instruments and the human need to create beautiful music. I am intrigued by the simple idea of containers having the ability to receive, to hold and to give, which are very essential human needs.

GM: Your works seem to me as deeply personal- or do you see them as ideological (e.g. feminism) or conceptual – where the idea is the art?

KT: Yes, my work is definitely personal, but my concerns about reflecting the balance between both sides of life are universal. Ideological or feminist? Not really. Yes I am an artist who happens to be a woman. My art is in some ways an expression of my personal journey, and yet involves feelings which are universally experienced by all of us.

GM: Which kind of art and who are the artists that have been a source of inspiration for your art practice?

KT: A number of things interest me..... Buddhist Art, Indian Miniature paintings, Christian iconic art and folk art are some. The subtle works of artists like Nilima Sheikh and Nasreen Mohamedi, the artistic concerns of Richard Diebenkorn and Nathan Oliveira, the gentle touch of Morandi, the textured works of Brota and Antoni Tapies, at one point the daring of Bacon and the pathos of Frida Kahlo. Their strength and vision has always been an inspiration. I'd like to add too that the writings of Rumi and music literally from all over the world are a huge inspiration in my life.

GM: What's next?

KT: Well as always, I feel the need to explore. This is also the time for experimentation. Different media like encaustic (wax), photography as well as music may enter my visual art in a unique way combined with acrylics. I'm eager to see where my explorations take me in time for my next solo scheduled at Chemould, towards the end of 2008.