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Publication : Times of India
Date : 13.03.2009
Edition : Mumbai
Page No. : 05

Harmony gets a miniature makeover

Anubha Sawhney Joshi | TNN

Mumbai: It's easy to keep oneself occupied in the library of Reliance Centre at Ballard Estate while waiting for Tina Anil Ambani. Works by Husain and Gaitonde occupy two walls, while a painting of patriarch Dhirubhai looks straight at you from a third. There's a bookcase that stocks something on everybody from Margaret Thatcher to L K Advani. There's also an assortment of stationery (writing pads, pointy pencils) for journalists who've forgotten to get their own. And there's chai-coffee if you feel like a cuppa.

The Ambani bahu breezes in a little after the appointed time. Putting the Harmony Art Show together has been keeping her very busy. This year Harmony has moved from the

Nehru Centre to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya's Coomaraswamy Hall. Rajya Sabha MP Jaya Bachchan will inaugurate the show. "There are also a few changes in the format this year," she says. "We do not have an Artist in Focus like we usually do. This time we're showcasing traditional miniatures instead of contemporary art. Last year was a sobering year for all Indians. 26/11 has made us contemplate and look within, which is why we decided to take strength from our rich heritage and focus on traditional art."

Like most Mumbaiikars, her response to the terror attacks has been one of shock and anger. "We put this year's show together in record time. So much has been lost, first due to the meltdown, then in the terror attacks. The only safe



Tina Anil Ambani with a Shrinathji miniature

haven now is the glorious history of our country," she says.

Time was when the price of Indian contemporary art was going through the roof and staggering art deals made headlines every month. The

economic meltdown has put the brakes on such deals. "Art is not recession proof," Tina says candidly. "What I'm looking at is to create awareness about traditional art. These works actually laid the foun-

ation for all contemporary art. And that's what makes them different and special. The artists being showcased are between 25 and 76 years old. And they come from diverse backgrounds."

Priced between Rs 8,000 and Rs 2.5 lakh, this year's show has 300 miniatures painted by artists from different parts of the country such as Bikaner, Nathdwara, Udaipur, Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka. "There are some who have inherited the skill and others who have taken it up out of sheer fascination for the work," says the 50-year-old Tina. "On my part, I've always been drawn to creativity. With this show, I hope to revisit and revive people's interest in India's traditional art."

(The Harmony Art Show will be on from March 14 to 22)