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New Delhi, November 28, 2013

The National Museum here will host an exhibition titled "Musical Landscapes & The Goddess of Music: Recent Advances in Interactive Art" mounted by multimedia artist and designer Ranjit Makkuni from today until January 16.

Bridging technology and culture, the multimedia interactive exhibition seeks to unravel the mystique of music by exploring its scientific, artistic and spiritual dimensions and its reflections in the goddess images across Asian cultures.

The exhibition will be inaugurated by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) President Karan Singh.

"The exhibition presents advances in interactive art through an exploration of the science, art and spirituality of music, and its reflections in the goddess images across Asian cultures. It provides viewers an opportunity to enter into the world of Asian music through electronic installations, digital images and recordings of performances by maestros," Mr. Makkuni, who describes himself as a 'tactile, interactive and computing designer', said.

"Music is essential to the ritual of temples, whether the altar bell, chants or prayers of spiritual seekers or as a sacred precinct for performance. In South and Southeast Asia, the temple may be seen as a buzzing musical instrument," the artist, an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur and University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), said.

A press release from the museum said the exhibition would present both traditional and new instruments based on Indian Sitar, Burmese Saung Harp, Thai Xylophone, Korean Kayagum, Chinese Guzheng and Pipa, Vietnamese Dan Tranh, and Javanese & Balinese Gamelan, among others.

"New instruments with embedded computation demonstrate interactions through gesture, touch, pull, movement and gaze. In addition, through responsive computing, people by their position, gesture and movements control musical events in the exhibition environment. For instance, there is a sculpture, Abstract Woman. Embedded in the waist of the sculpture is a representation of Sri Yantra, which, upon touch, plays back the 1000 names of Goddess Lalita," it said.

"People spend so much time interacting with the dull computer, but we are trying to create a richer experience so that modern society still has culture in its life. By putting culture back onto your desktop, you get to interact with beautiful objects, and that helps you remember your inner God," said Mr Makkuni, whose works have been displayed at leading museums and won top international awards for promoting culture, peace and environmental protection.

"The project demonstrates a perfect synthesis of technology and culture, of modern and traditional, of celestial and mundane, of physical and virtual. Itshows that it is possible to develop culture-friendly technologies and how technology can become a vehicle for preserving cultural identity, not replacing it.," the release said.

"The exhibition is exquisite and enthralling. It shows a convergence of culture and computing in a very innovative manner," said Dr Venu V, Director General, National Museum. "It is a fabulous show of art and culture as well as a research exploration into Asian musical traditions and ancient instruments through modern computing methods."

The exhibition comprises several sections, showing Goddesses of Music and their Iconic Transformations; forms and sculptures suggestive of the scientific and mythological imagery of sound; and the compassionate Goddesses who listen to people's prayers. There are sections on Goddess Sarasvati, the goddess of wisdom and music; Kinayi, the Angels of Music, from Burma; and The Compassionate figure of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara from Japan. There is also a section on Breath, Voice and Healing, which explores the healing properties of singing and its relationship to breath.

As the director of New Delhi-based e design think tank, the Sacred World Research Laboratory, Mr. Makkuni is engaged in pioneering new applications in culturally rooted computing design.

"I try to explore innovative ways of building bridges between techno and traditional cultures. I believe engagement with culture is a valuable process to spark off technological innovation. My works show that the wisdom of traditional communities can positively negate the homogenizing aesthetics of modern media technology and help inspire new forms of indigenous information access devices," he said.

"Overall, the project presents a compelling vision for indigenous design, the redesign of new economies centred on Innovation, Well Being and Compassion," he added.

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