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Ragas create interactive artworks

Henna Rakheja, New Delhi, Dec 5, 2013, DHNS:

This doesn't require you to invest years of practice in learning a musical instrument, the regimen has been made easy by Ranjit Makkuni who creates artworks out of musical instruments which start playing with just a touch!

Ranjit's exhibition - 'Musical Landscapes & The Goddesses of Music: Recent Advances in Interactive Art', is an unusual platform which displays the artist's skills in designing installations that are interactive to the core.

The gallery at National Museum is replete with electronic installations, digital images and recordings of performances by maestros which start playing at the touch of the sensor. For the stringed instruments - veena, sitar, sarod and sarangi, all one needs to do is exert pressure on the strings and the pre-recorded music starts playing, making you feel like an accomplished artist.

In the adjacent halls, there are also installations inspired by wind instruments which start playing when one blows into them. The percussion instruments such as Tabla, Xylophone, Ghatam and others start playing at a mere touch.

But do not get overwhelmed by the excitement at the sight of these fantastic interactive installations, even though the feeling is akin to that of a child walking and touching every installation, imagining what music it will create, but often ending up with the realisation that the object was only for display.

Ranjit draws his inspiration from not just Indian classical music but also melds it with music from other Asian countries. A nuance of this is 'The Pain of the Glissando Guzheng' - considered the ancestor of several Asian instruments. There is also Korean Kayagum and the Gamelan Orchestra in which one can create different compositions.

A section is dedicated to temples, especially Pagodas, which are presented as a 'House of Music'. One can run a stick through the roof of a pagoda to create music or tinker with the minarets of a temple-installation to hear the recorded Buddhist chants.

It is not just the creation or presentation of these interactive installations but also the detailed accessorising that catches the viewer's attention. "It is my way of ornamenting which gives meaning to things in a globalised world," says Ranjit referring to the vibrant use of colours in ribbons, cloth, pins, etc.

A few installations exhibited in the Ashoka hall are inspired by a woman's form which is related to Goddess Saraswati. Every aspect of her, including the ornaments and clothes, create music. Even celestial angels are shown as a source of harmonious sound.

The exhibition is on display at National Museum's Special Exhibition Gallery till January 16.

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