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Double entendres

June 5, 2011 By [Dr Seema Bawa](#)

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The search by a group of artists, for happiness and sense of joy in colours and lines is reflected in the



show Carpe Diem at Gallery Nvya. Carpe Diem, meaning “seize the day”, brings to the fore emotions, thoughts, feelings, longings of the artist. The artists are united by a commitment to vibrancy, energy and colour.

Vegetative patterns in bright colours — black, vermillion and black or green and cobalt blue — that replicate textile designs, work as the backdrop in the works of Ritu Kamath. Female figures emerge from this, sometimes in the form of a peahen, preening her feathers, or as the base of a tree, or just a joy-filled woman laughing with her face upraised. The artist has tried to hide codes in her paintings that deal with social issues in a sensitive, humorous or serious manner that seeks to confound the viewer while appearing straightforward.

Pradipta Chakraborty tries to decode the mythological structures and traditions of Indian art, but takes a more familiar route. Characters from Indian mythico-religious tradition, such as Ravana, Rama and Sita, along with subsidiary characters such as the Gandharvas have been presented as caricatured forms, riding a scooter, a toy horse or a skateboard. He reinterprets the notion of the hero, as a swashbuckling cowboy who is nothing but a street performer in costume. Deriving inspiration from the Indian miniature painting format and children’s illustrations, his canvases teem with images that are double-edged and tongue-in-cheek. The compositions seem a trifle crowded, but with experience the young artist could create a finessed style.

In contrast, Siddharth Choudhary’s paintings are uncluttered and direct and visually very effective. He uses visages from Indian folk and traditional art against a textured single-coloured backdrop. The eyes of these mask-faces are zippered shut but they smile broadly and engagingly, reflecting their inner peace and happiness. The absence of “eye’dealisation” or of the reification inherent in the visual discourse is perhaps hinted as a sine-qua-non for being centered and happy.

Dr Seema Bawa is an art historian, curator and critic

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