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Art

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Platefuls of tradition.



Achraf Touloub

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THIS IS my second visit to India. The first time I was here, it was for my first solo show in the country, at the ISA Gallery, Mumbai. It was a great experience. I knew India was important for me, and I was proud to make some drawings of the places I visited.

More than that, for me as an artist, it's important that my work can touch people in a place so far from France or Morocco. I see India as an important place for its spiritual legacy and its continuous update of the traditional mindset. When I came back to Paris, I met (KMB curator) Sudarshan Shetty, and I knew my Indian adventure was not over.

For the Biennale, I wanted to create an installation with a lot of symbolic meaning, based on a pattern of figures, which is recurrent in my practice. I wanted to develop a work that goes "out of the frame". In Kochi, I was struck by the beauty of Kerala and the kindness of its people. All the people of Kochi were involved in some way or the other with the festival. My other shock was to see how ambitious the different other projects under construction were.

My project was supported by Galeria Plan B from Cluj (Romania) and the French Institute. A friend of mine, Flaviu, from the Plan B team, arrived in Kochi to help me with my installation. It took us 12 days to install the work. When the project was complete, it seemed crazy and funny to me that I had come so far across the globe essentially to make a drawing. Yet, I was very impressed to see the celebrations for the opening and the diversity of people who came to attend the festival. That was rewarding for me.

Traditions of change

I built my work around the notion of tradition. I understand tradition as the way in which essential meanings and values circulate in space and time. When I think of tradition, I also think of art, the way forms and their various meanings emerge, evolve and circulate.

I like to make a parallel between tradition as a principle to develop art—and civilisation—apart from traditions of art itself. I also try to find new meanings to the idea of tradition in a highly connected reality. I think we live a time of deep restructuring. I wanted to link this feeling about our reality and India.

My trip to Hindu temples, looking at the architecture, motivated me to continue my way of developing superimposed figurative patterns in my drawings, in a way to link dimensions and build realities. I had a desire to create this work as an intuitive representation, a kind of feeling.

I also try to find a universal figure that expresses the flux of our global context, with all of its contradictions and dimensions superimposed.

More than a feeling

My work, *Untitled (extended feelings)*, is a large drawing that wraps around the corners of its exhibition space and includes attached chains with functional utensils that fall from it to the ground. Its abstracted figures mesh with each other, replicating a continuous motif of recurring shapes. The drawing becomes a kind of screen that repeats the fractal reality of our contemporary connected world.

Repetition as a principle is essential to 'tradition'. I used a formal understanding of 'repetition'—the repeated motif—to develop an analogy between tradition as an act and tradition, as it is understood in art. The second part of my drawing-installation is the extensions of chains and plates on the ground.

Over the last few years, my explorations of tradition as a concept made me look for a way to express links between our modern societies and a return to a primordial or archaic dimension.

I decide to work around the idea of functional representation, and I used the chains to give the drawing a kind of autonomy. It is also a way to continue the drawing forever, as the lines drawn by the chains will always be different and evolve during the exposition.

Achraf Touloub's Untitled (extended feelings) is on display at Aspinwall House until March 29.

[Source](#)