

For the first time
Gallery Pundole and Project 88
In a collaborative initiative.
Present the P² project.

“Karle Ki Koshish”

jeevan ka samanya gyan.

The artist Shreyas Karle in conversation with Elrak Sayerhs (art critic and international curator.)

Elrak- Why is your first solo happening in two art galleries, instead of one?

Karle- I am glad you asked this question, as it's the first question which comes to everyone's mind. Well, I don't believe in monopoly. Art is universal, it exists at different spaces at the same time. I realized this and so did both the gallerists. Hence we all decided to collaborate.

Elark- Interesting. Since you mention that art has a universal approach, can you specify what does art exactly mean to you?

Karle- As the title of this show suggests, art for me is common sense. Which (un)fortunately is quite uncommon. However, let me try to explain this. As the earth rotates around itself, and simultaneously revolves around the sun, time is born.

Time, in turn, gives birth to a chain of events.

Which keep on improvising, as time advances. Art plays out in a similar manner.

It revolves around itself as well as around us.

It is improvising every second; it is improvising even as we speak.

One has to understand that art not only happens in the 3-dimensional space around us, but is also something happening in the multi dimensional space of the mind.

We know these happenings as **ideas** in common parlance.

The artist here becomes a mere medium to transform these ideas into existence.

Recently, in one of the scientific discoveries program, I heard a person giving the example of Charles Darwin and how he considered science as provisional- meaning that it does not exist in eternity. Every new discovery gives birth to a new theory, questioning and improvising the already established one. Even Darwin said if science finds another way of explaining the evolution of species, which makes more sense than his own theory, then one can negate his theory too.

Discoveries have a spatial and temporal context.

Now, a similar approach is also what makes the visual language exciting.

The Idea (with a capital 'I') as 'Art', is eternal, but the way we define that idea is provisional.

We, as gatekeepers of the visual world, are always pushing our ideas and theories inside the gate.

Elrak- I read your book, 'Today's Artists -Tomorrow's Gods', what fascinates me is the relation you have tried to establish between God and art. Can you please elaborate?

Karle- According to our Indian mythology, worshipping God or practicing art - both are ways for salvation. Both practices lead to the purification of soul. But the ways in which these practices are followed are equally contaminated. We follow a certain religion or sect to worship God. Similarly, we conform to a particular art discipline to prove our purity. One has to understand that neither God nor art has any defined pattern set for the follower or the practitioner. Both are ever changing as they are ruled by the constantly improvising factor called **Time**.

Anything and everything is God
Anything and everything is art
God is everywhere
Art is everywhere
God can be found in any form, shape and color
Art can be found in any form, shape and color
God exists in different manners for different followers having different purposes
Art exists in different manners for different followers having different purposes
God is abstract and figurative
Art is equally abstract and figurative
Gods are framed and put on walls
Some art is also framed and put on walls
Gods are also used as a medium to earn money
Art is a medium to earn money
True god cannot be seen
True art cannot be seen
(passage from the book Today's Artists-Tomorrow's Gods)

Elrak- Many people feel that you are quite manipulative in your approach?

Karle- Yes I am.

Elrak- How can you explain that?

Karle- Do you want me to explain how I manipulate my work?

Elrak- Not really, but I am interested in knowing why you adopt this approach?

Karle- Everything is manipulation. Even in our sleep, when we dream, we are manipulating.

What is a dream? Or rather why do we dream?

According to the popularly known Freudian theory, dream is a wish fulfilling mental machine. Reality manipulates itself in the form of wish fulfillment sequences to satisfy our unachieved desires. Freud also believed that although our dreams contain important messages, they are encoded and disguised. Visual language also deals with a similar paradigm. It manipulates the given thoughts and ideas, so that they can be accepted by the conditioned conscious mind.

Elrak- What do you mean by the term ‘conditioned conscious mind?’

Karle- Sant Tukaram, the great saint from Western India once told me, its worthless to talk of a philosophy, which one does not follow in his day-to-day life. It’s more important to understand the philosophy of the day-to-day life itself. And our mundane life is the result of our conditioned conscious mind.

Elrak- When did you meet Mr. Tukaram?

Karle- That’s a long story, will tell you some other day.

Elrak- You have a very weird title for this show- Karle ki koshish. What does it mean and why did you choose to write it in Hindi?

Karle- It doesn’t really mean anything specific- it’s just a punch line. Using Hindi adds to its visual aesthetics.

Elrak- What makes you think, how do you generate an idea?

Karle- Here I would answer your question with the help of the simple shit theory. In the act of shitting, you rush to the toilet because your brain, through your body, senses a pressure in the lower abdominal portion, reminding you that the excreta needs to be let out of the anus. But once the brain performs this alarming act, it is the body which has to sustain the act in order to finish it till one reaches the core of satisfaction.

The mind and body have adapted themselves to this act. It happens without any preconceived thoughts. It is spontaneous. And everyday, the same spontaneity continues.

In the same manner, an idea is an act of the mind. It comes to you without a thought. One has to flush it out with a spontaneous pressure and then try to sustain it to reach to its core.

The only difference is that the excreta is the bio-waste of the body but an idea is the outcome of all that the mind has experienced.

Still, I guess we should look at the example of shit theory more as a mental process than a physical one.

Elrak- Well thank God! Your ideas don’t smell.

What do you think is the role of an artist in today’s times?

Karle- We, as gatekeepers of the visual world, are facing a crisis.

It’s called the ‘COCIS’ (Crisis Of Creative Ideas and Subjects). Artists can deal with this situation in two ways-

- 1) Market the same old product with a new packaging, re-conceptualizing it to cater to contemporary needs.
- 2) Reconsider your role as a visual stimulant in contemporary society, and try to improvise the language of art.

The exploitation of visual language has left the contemporary artist high and dry.

Art is a science in itself; every new discovery leads to the improvisation of the grammar of visual language.

But sadly, we (artists, art critics, curators, historians, galleries, museums) are all flogging a dead horse.

The only discovery of the 21st century would be the convergence of all disciplines of art, which I guess, also happened because it was important from the economic perspective of art.

Elrak- Now since we know about your notion of art, we will try to understand the more important aspects of this show; can you talk about some works you have in this show? Like the strange 'WALL' work in Project 88.

Karle- WALLS have always been built with a purpose- whether as fortifications or as make-shift partitions. This structural invention possesses the capacity to contain or divide a given space and time. More often than not, its functions overshadow its forms.

Walls have always carried historical as well as geographical baggages on them.

They have existed in society with a purpose to fulfill.

Right from a fort wall to a compound wall - all of them mark boundaries.

Create barriers.

Also very often, they are built at an unapproachable height which then makes it difficult to see what lies beyond it.

In other words, walls are the outcomes of distrust that exist between humans.

Anything from a huge empire to a small family exists because of the trust it reposes on its walls.

Walls have thus been successful in replacing humans.

But....

The wall in Project 88 defies all its usual characteristics-

It runs across the gallery space diagonally but.... doesn't divide it.

It looks like a strong wall visually but.... is hollow from inside.

It holds nothing,

Contains nothing within itself.

It tapers down from one end to other also failing to hide what lies beyond it.

It does nothing butexist.

Exist in the given time and space.

It is a wall without purpose.

Elrak- And why are things constantly slipping from your pocket?

Karle- One day I put my hands in my pant pocket and was shocked to feel the hair on my thighs, with the revelation that I had almost lost all my personal belongings to the ground because of my torn pockets. I decided to revisit the experience.

Defined as a small private area of our daily clothing, the pocket contains objects required in routine life. The video projection shows the objects slipping down from the pant pockets.

It seems the pockets are fooling the person by not doing the job they are supposed to do. These philosophical pockets remind humans of the transient, impermanent nature of our earthly possessions. Also, consider this. If there were no pockets or if the pockets were torn, we would have no need to carry things around or hoard stuff. We would be rid of the excess weight.

Elrak- Why are the mountains inverted?

Karle- Inverted mountains are the aftermath of the original drawing-
'Inverted mountain and the fallen sun'.

What would I do if I was a crazy kid?

I would draw the mountains upside down, for no rhyme or reason.

Now what would I do if I was a crazy but thoughtful kid?

I would draw the mountains upside down

And the rising sun would have been fallen on the ground.

I.M. (inverted mountains) has no intellectual take to it.

It is just an upside-down view of the world.

Elrak- How can you explain your obsession with Tomato sauce?

Karle- 'SAVE THE SAUCE...KILL MORE TOMATOES'

You can either wear silk or see more butterflies.

What happens to us after we die? One has to experience it.

The tomatoes go to heaven because they have given birth to sauce.

The sauce is made to survive more by adding artificial preservatives to it.

Elrak- Hmmm...that's a very weird comparison but makes sense.

How do explain the trilogy in Pundole about the mirrored God, b^2 hand and the daan-peti?

Karle- Daan-peti: we believe in buying anti-sin blessings from Mr. God.

That's why we donate ourselves in the donation boxes placed in temples.

These donation boxes, popularly known as daan-peti, are the medium to do advance booking for seats in the heavenly abode. Everyone wants a secure life-after-death.

As shown in the diagram, the inside of the daan-peti is the heavenly abode; while the outside is the material world which we are living in; the slit in which the coin is stuck is the gate to enter the heavens. The coin is nothing but the human himself, who is stuck between heaven and earth.

The mirrored god:

Mirrored god

Oh mirrored god in the gallery

I see myself in thee.

Is it really you or it's just me.

From your every side one cannot hide,

And you also revolve to see us all.

Or

Are you a six-faced hexagonal diamond fitted with mirrors?

And a machine inside you, mechanically controls your movement

What you show is just my reflection.

Or

You are the gallery god

The founder of the new religion

Who reflects everyone who sees into it?

Nobody knows if you also shine from inside

The mirror is opaque.

In the coming years, the gallery god will be traveling to different temples (i.e. galleries) across the globe.

B² hand (blessing x begging) are the hands of the Religion Centric Contemporary God who blesses and begs from us.

Elrak- Hey, [I think you are pushing the envelope a little too far.](#)

I saw one of your improvisations. How did that happen?

Karle- If I want to hear, I'll ask my ears to do so
If I want to see, I'll ask my eyes to see
If I want to talk, I'll use my mouth
If I want to smell, I'll suggest my nose does it.
And If I want to touch, I'll use my hands.

We have already been blessed with the five sensory organs, which perform different functions.

What if I ask them to interchange their duties and provide me the same experience after that?

In the same manner, each idea has its own medium.

The improvisation videos are by-products of morning exercises with my webcam.

Elark- Well, I guess it's not possible to explain each work in this short interview, Can you summarize in short the basic fundamentals of your working? And also, do you think your language has the capacity to change the visual grammar and become popular?

Karle- I need to answer this in segments.

- 1) Popularity of the artist and his work is not related to his progress in visual grammar.
- 2) An artist or his work can be popular for various reasons.
- 3) One's visual grammar depends on the aesthetics and the clarity of the thought process the artist follows, also depending on his role as a human being in this society.
- 4) Yes. An artist can be popular because of his popularly established visual grammar.

But as far as the basic fundamentals of my working are concerned, as I had mentioned in my earlier paper, my work uses absurdity as a metaphor to reflect social situations. It creates an ambience of humour but simultaneously mocks the ironies of reality. The visuals try to evoke disturbing emotions in a pleasant situation. They attempt to make one experience the camouflaged reality, often by subtle humour. Apart from the visual pun, there is an anchoring thought that mirrors the mundane life.

Most of the works involve the participation of the audience, completing the experience of the work.

Hence, if I was granted three wishes, I would ask for the following:

- 1) Please give me the strength and creativity to improvise the visual language.
- 2) Please also grant my co-artists with the same amount of creativity.
- 3) Please grant the masses an equal amount of creative mind to understand the visual grammar.

Elrak- I guess there are lot many other works to discuss, but I feel content now with your answers. I hope you have a good show and wish that your three wishes come true.

Karle- Thanks Elark. Was nice talking to you too. I also do hope that those 3 wishes are granted... but for that I need to share my understanding on a wider level with my viewers. Hence I'll be printing this interview and a lot more other details about the other works with their images in the form of an informal booklet.

Some other works

Tan-Tone project- this is the latest anti tanning technology known as W.A.T.T. (Watch Anti-Tanning Therapy). This therapy helps a person in anti-tanning and keeping the pace of time simultaneously. This theory was invented in 1758 by none other than our very own **WATCHMAN**.

WATCHMAN was an average Indian, charged with the duty of guarding the sleeping community at night. He had to wear the watchman suit everyday to make himself and the people he was protecting, aware of the time.

He also used to wear the same suit in the day, as he had to carry out his duties even during daytime. The watchman spent most of his time in protecting humans and helping them with their mundane works because of which, he hardly had any time to bathe or look after himself.

One day when he decided to have a bath, he removed his suit and was amazed to find that all this while, because of his suit, his skin was protected from the ultraviolet rays of the sun, which prevented it from tanning.

Since that day, the watchman gave up his job of guarding people and started propagating the importance of his suit.

This superhero turned businessman explains to us the advantages of W.A.T.T.-

- 1) W.A.T.T. gives whole body protection from the U.V. Rays
- 2) There are no sunscreen lotions or creams involved in it; one just has to wear a watch and clock suit to protect oneself from the sun's ultraviolet rays.
- 3) One can choose different types of watches and clocks and get a custom made suit.
- 4) The suit also shows world time so it can be used in any part of the world at any time.
- 5) It also has the facility to store all the birthdates and anniversary dates of your fellow humans.
- 6) Some watches are fitted with the ultimate radium technology which shine at night, keeping one updated of the time even in the dark.
- 7) It makes you aware of your duties towards the society and ignites the superhero qualities hidden within you.

For more details one can log on to our website: www.watt.com

Use watch suit for a better time to come.

One man's nose is another man's eye.

One man's mouth is another man's nose

One man's eyes are another man's mouth

One man's eyes and nose are another man's mouth and ears.

These men keep on exchanging their sensory organs to get a better perspective of each other's life.

Laat Marna (Kicking Leg)

Karle inventions bring to you for the first time in Indian market a device that will take slow revenge on anything you are not satisfied with.

This is a third degree torture device specially designed for subtle but continuous harassment.

Kicking leg is a mechanical device, which has human emotions.

It is born with only one aim in life - that is to express anger.

And it does that by a continuous movement of kicking anything that is placed in its kicking proximity.

For more details log on to: www.kickmybutt.com

“Jyon til mahin tel hain, jyon chakmak mein aag,

Tera sai tujh mein hain, tu jaag sake toh jaag.”

This yearning for the Truth is the basic search of everyone. We all want to know what God really is. Kabir in this doha reveals the secret. He unfolds the mystery in a very simple way. He takes the example of the anti-seed which contains the oil. However, when we see the seed, we don't see the oil. It is only seen when energy is used to extract the oil from the seed. Same way fire is not visible when we look at the flint stone. However, vigorous rubbing manifests fire which is already hidden in the flint. Same way, Kabir asserts, that our body - the temple - seats the Divine. This divinity is our true self. However, due to our ignorance, we are unaware of this reality. Kabir challenges us in this doha to shed the veils of ignorance and awaken to realize our true self.

I quote from mystic saint-poet Kabir in order to decipher Shreyas' works. Just as Kabir used simple examples from daily life to arrive at a deeper understanding of the self, Shreyas' work also transforms the mundane to communicate a much larger philosophy.

Most transformations can only happen when there is keen observation of the situation. This is possible, as Shreyas himself states in his video works, by positioning oneself at a distance. One is able to see clearly by moving out of the situation, thus allowing one to percolate within and thereby, realize.

The format adopted by him to express his philosophy is a popular and effective one. Often one can draw parallels with the notion of negative publicity helping derive the solution to a simple conundrum. Where he associates with the branding of “*Kharab Chai*” available on long distance trains as an alternative marketing tactic for drawing attention, one can find some resonance of the concept of “*Neti Neti*” or “Not this, Not this” to be able to deduce the truth. He thereby resorts to the use of the absurd and the non-ideal situations from our daily living to create experiences, to be subjected to a deeper enquiry.

His approach has a folk-like simplicity of story telling but with a mission. In most of his works, he is like a *Bahurupia*, assuming various roles and identities – an anthropologist, a scientist, a preacher, a teacher, even God incarnate – and yet always succeeds in keeping them at bay, without ever missing the opportunity to scratch at the right place...by deliberately leaving a loop hole so as to penetrate and expose the mask.

Hemali Bhuta.

(Fellow artist)