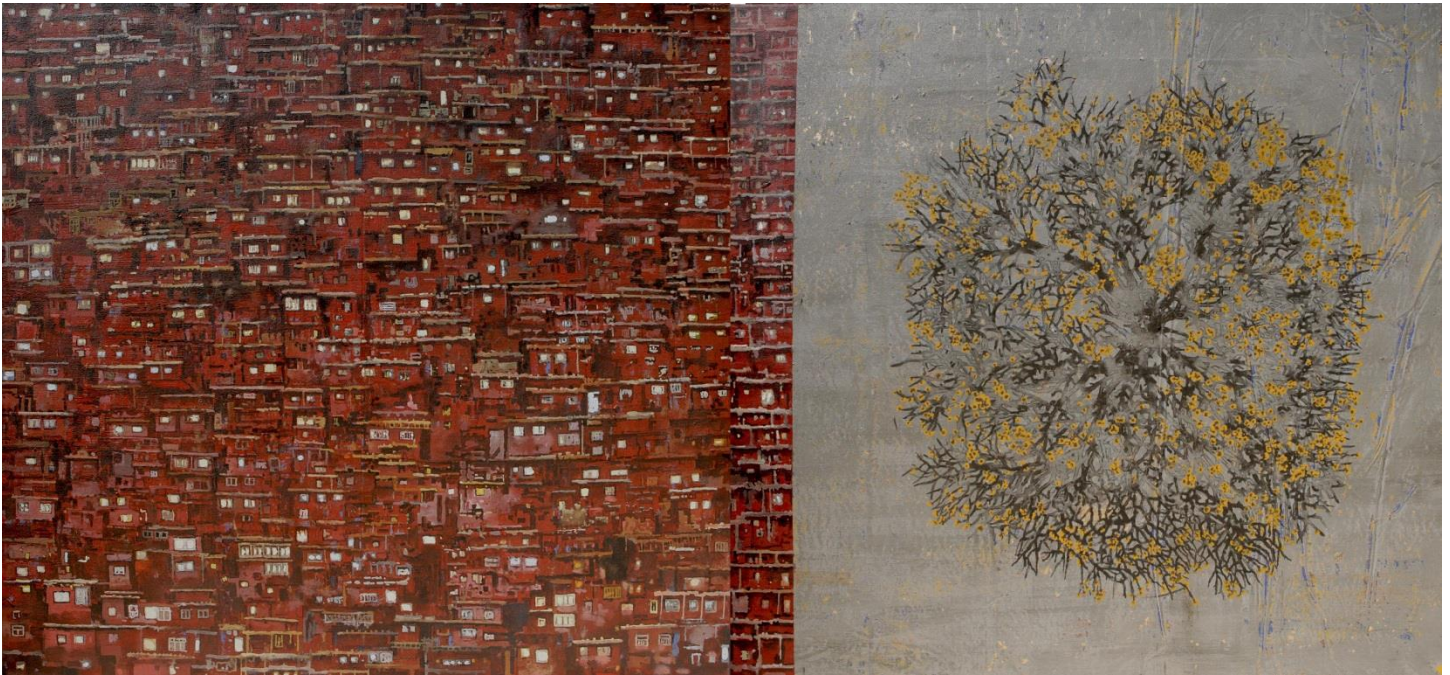


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## G. R. Iranna: Searching for Life within Art

By Mukul Rai Bahadur



I first met GR Iranna at an Art Camp in Scandinavia. At first I found him a bit dour, and distant. Pronouncedly aloof, socially inert. But as he opened up bit-by-bit, he came through as a warm, emotive and sunny individual. Full of humor. Full of knowledge. Full of ideas.

***Limning Heterotopias... the intersection between the virtual and the real ... is that where Iranna lives and thrives?***

My perception is that we don't think once; thinking is an uninterrupted process. I think ideas 24x7. I need inspiration to connect the real world with the reel world. Ideas come to me from the culture, society, history and what I read, I dream, I see, I listen... Art always witnesses time. It preserves the moment impeccably.

***There is huge amount of symbolism in your work ... protruding nipples to veins and arteries ... is your art too complex to relate to?***

It is complex, I admit. But it is also full of ideas. If you dissect my works you will see layers of ideas and thoughts hidden there ... spirituality and peace, yes, but also violence, greed and anger. All my works carry a message for society. If you give a flower to a girl it carries a message of love or friendship. The same flower you give to your mother, the message changes. In the same way flowers presented to god or kept on a grave carry different emotions and communication. The object is the same but meaning keeps changing.

**Your King of Clay in 2006 received rave reviews in the US. Has Iranna cooled down in the past 10 years?**

Not at all, that was a prudent start to testing myself across different mediums. Earlier I worked on mud and other bases just to test myself. Presently, I am working on ash and clay. They are two different materials but they eventually reach the same stage: once a human dies, his ashes are dust ... clay. It's similar with King of Clay. When the great emperor dies his ashes mix with those of ordinary folks, eventually becoming a slurry of clay.

**You spent a lot of time at the Kochi Biennale this year. Share the highlights with us.**

Kochi Biennale is a great stage for showcasing to the world what lies within an artist. This year it was curated by artist Sudarshan Shetty and focused on diversity in art of all forms. I did a giant egg-like installation called *Garbh* made of vibhuti, or holy ash. I made the structure in an egg shape as egg signifies birth of a life, birth of a beginning.

This ash project was kept in a small room and the entrance to it was smaller than normal human height so that you needed to bend to enter the place, similar to a religious shrine or as when you go to meet the great Lord you pay respect by bowing.



**You have a famous father-in-law, Rameshwar Broota. A well-known Pooja as wife. Is there a lot of competitive pressure at home?**

Not at all, we don't talk much about art. We crack jokes, help each other, advise on things ... like any other family. We don't compete with each other. Mr. Broota and Pooja come to my shows and give honest feedback.

**What would GR Iranna like to be remembered for/as?**

Life is a journey; I keep questioning who I am? What am I doing all this for? It's like a mystery for you as well as for me. I don't know what is coming next! Destiny is yet to unveil new horizons; so I just want to keep testing myself. I am an artist and I am really enjoying what I do. It is up to people how they want Iranna to be remembered.

**What makes you happy? Tell us about the Iranna the world does not know.**

I am a family person. I spend time with my wife and children and take care of my parents as it is my duty and this keeps me happy. I am like an open book and people know everything about me ... so I don't have anything new which the world wouldn't know.

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*Pictures courtesy: Mukul Rai Bahadur*