

**Frenetic Gestures**  
ART – Kamala Kapoor  
The Sunday Observer 1986

THIS SHOW of Tara Sabharwal's small sized works in multimedia, (at the Cymroza Art Gallery till 17th January), invites one into a somewhat fantastic universe that demands close scrutiny and ^defies normal analysis and conclusions.

Sabharwal,- who now lives in Delhi, studied art at Baroda and then spent several years studying and painting in England and the U S. Both Western and Eastern traditions are apparent in her work. They coalesce and separate, only to meet again and form a distinctive sensibility, that is difficult to label.

Strongly reminiscent of some of the German Expressionistic figurative painting of the early part of this century (which Hitler, who favoured academic art, used to call Degenerate art), the figures in Sabharwal's paintings are wooden and puppet like, with little or no resemblance to the natural grace and movement of the human body. This, in some obvious ways, links it to. the figural treatment seen in Indian Miniature painting. The link becomes particularly strong, when one perceives her treatment of the picture plane or the field, and her placement of figures upon it. A perceptible Post-

Impressionistic influence can be seen in some of her landscapes — “English Landscape II”, for instance has strong shades of Van Gogh’s colouring and technique.

At times, outlined with broad, thick strokes and at others, softly diffused into the background, her figures remain poised between dream and reality. Though they seem to be playing out private fantasies, they have not lost touch with the world. Within the apparent framework of dream fantasy, they run the whole gamut of emotional experiences — primal desires, fear, suppressed feelings and so on.

The artist mixes materials: water colour/mixed media, water colour/crayon, and water colour/acrylic with striking chromatic resonances and built-up effects, that suggest both mood and experience and that achieve a sensuous quality of depth and intimacy.

Using sweeping strokes and frenetic, choppy gestures to fill in the picture plane, she draws simple forms which are almost childlike in their scratchy, hesitant and somewhat apologetic construction. This purposeful underplaying results in strengthening the incongruities of the situations depicted and also imparts a sense of innocence and openness to her work.

The paintings, which seem somewhat loosely structured, are held together by the taut web of their

frankly imaginative impulse and intimate emotion.

In the end, one admits to not being able to pin down the artist and her work. She has attempted something important but it remains elusive. What counts is, that her work is candid, original, refreshingly devoid of formulae and didacticism, unpretentious and full of inquiry. The elusive element in fact just adds to its piquancy.