

Exploring the abstract with Tara Sabharwal

By Dhriti Gandhi Ranjan | September 15, 20, THE WIRE, NEW DELHI



With a legacy of painting non-abstract works, New York-based artist, Tara Sabharwal has been experimenting a different style in the last four years. She blames personal changes in her life as the major reason behind this transformation that made her shift her base to abstract pictures. Her works are being showcased at the ongoing exhibition, titled *The Open Window* at New Delhi at Art Alive Gallery.

Highlighting about her works, the 60-year-old artist clarifies they are all non-figurative and non-representational. The best thing about them, she says, is that they can be showcased by placing them either horizontally or vertically since they have been created like that.



“There are 23 pieces and none of them have any figures. However, there's a little nuance of something that could look like a figure; maybe that of a tree, an animal's claw or a person. Some of them are completely abstract. I don't want to tell stories but show the moment. It's an open window of awareness,” she says.

“I love to leave the works open ended so as to allow people's participation and derive various meanings from it. I don't want to spell it out for them,” she adds.

The artist, with nearly 40 years of experience, discovered her love for abstract only recently. Earlier, she used to paint figurative images. When asked about change of interest, she says, “The shift from figurative pieces to abstract ones happened on its own. I didn't decide to do abstract. As a person, since the last four years, I had undergone some personal changes in life. Due to these changes, I started developing a sense of being at one place. I wanted to step out and explore something in an open ended way and to show more in the immediate moment.”



Born in Delhi, Sabharwal discovered her passion for art at a very young age. At an age of 13 years, she found art very interesting, so much so that she wasn't keen to complete her high school. She instead wanted to be an artist. However, due to her parent's pressure, she had to complete schooling before taking up art as a profession.

“I just wanted to sketch and become an apprentice to some artist and join an art college later. But I couldn't convince my father. I completed school and later took up a graduate course in art from MS University in Baroda in 1975.”

It was in Baroda that she was introduced to colours. “I was mesmerised by a colourful performance of Garbha and that's when I started using hints of red and yellow in my paintings,” she says.

After completing her graduation, she started off working on canvas using oil-based colours. However, from 1990, for 20 years, she used water colours. Then, she started using the technique using rabbit-skin glue. She also did etching and cuts for a while as different techniques.

Today, Sabharwal is one of the few artists who has done 40 solo shows in USA, the UK, France, Germany and India. She has also been widely acclaimed in the west and her works are in the collection of the British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum and DLI Museum in UK; Peabody Essex Museum, New York Public Library and the Library of Congress in USA among others. Her current exhibition will continue till October 10.