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/art/arts\_review\_details.asp, line 151

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Fair and square  
Delna Dastur's paintings view things from a unique angle, reports Jane Mikkelson.

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This fortnight, Gallery Art Motif features an exhibition of recent works by Delna Dastur, a Mumbai-born artist who now lives both in the US and India. Working primarily with charcoal (but with the occasional admixture of ink and pastel), Dastur makes canvases that are busy without being cluttered, complicated without being over-thought and muted without appearing blanched.

All of the works in this exhibition have a linear geometry imposed on them – thick, straight, purposeful charcoal lines demarcate the canvases, perhaps trying to inscribe order within chaos, and only marginally succeeding.

“Before the Bubble Burst” (see Pic) is a farrago of spokes, wheels and toothed sprockets floating in a gravity-free space whose only order is in the geometric slabs of solid colours that divide the canvas. And even those rectangles and circles don't quite manage to contain the chaos. The colours are soft and understated, running the short gamut from beige to pumpkin-orange.

The dozen or so rectangular panes in “City Under Seige” are similarly all shaded with muted charcoal tones, creating the effect of shards of stained glass panes stacked haphazardly or unsorted, not-yet-fanned-out cards in a poker player's hand. Each pane offers a view of what look like building facades with intricate friezes, jalis and archways, but the charcoal shading is such that it's impossible to get a clear picture of each pane. A few stray vines travel here and there across all the rectangles, and other half-abstract forms cross the geometric boundaries as well, suggesting to the viewer that the rectangles could also be a jumble of photographs on a flat surface. Backing away a few feet from the painting, two translucent hands become visible at the top of the canvas, palms upward either in sign of supplication or entreaty – it's impossible to tell which.

Dastur's exhibition is both visually challenging and rewarding. Viewers are forced to examine her canvases from a variety of angles, notice hidden details and read between the outlines. The real delight is in drawing out concrete images from Dastur's abstractions, and the possibilities for that are almost limitless.

Source : Time Out Delhi

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