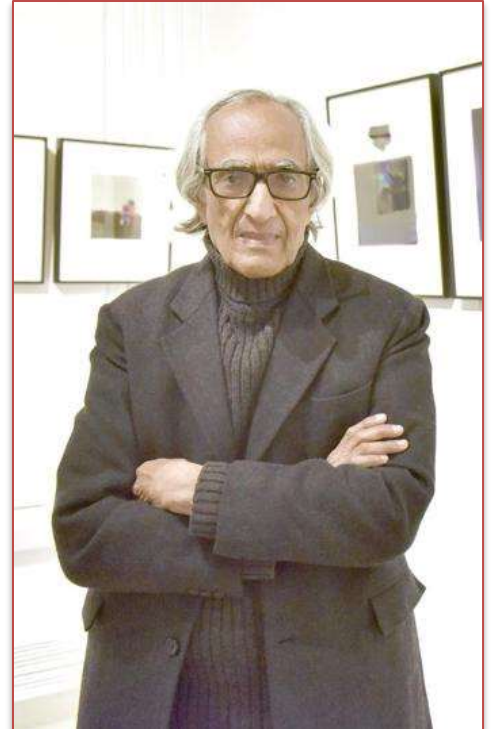


alumnus Gopi Gajwani's solo show : A love affair with abstracts

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Artist Gopi Gajwani is back with a solo exhibition, his first in a decade, which carries forward his life-long romance with abstracts.



A Close Up View, 2009: Watercolour on paper. Gajwani's work creates an effect that evokes memories and emotions, unique to each onlooker

Artist Gopi Gajwani

BA 1959

Delhi School of Art

(Saumya Khandelwal/HT PHOTO)

The love affair started young. As a child, Gajwani could be found, at any hour of the day, copying images from newspapers and magazines while school assignments sat neglected. When he discovered **Dharmyug**, a popular Hindi political and literary weekly magazine, which carried paintings, poems, stories (**Mohan Rakesh's Aadhe Adhure** was **first serialised** in it), it opened up a new world for the 11-year-old.

Originally from Sindh, his family had **migrated to Delhi in 1947** and like most well-meaning Indian

► **When my heart is heavy or I'm unwell, I don't paint. I paint when I am absolutely happy**

parents, his too wanted him to study medicine or engineering. "I used to get beatings for it," remembers Gajwani, now 78. "At that time a career in art was unheard of, at the most you could end up being a drawing teacher in school or a billboard painter. My parents very reluctantly let me join an art school." **He graduated from the Delhi School of Art in 1959.**

Gajwani held his **first show in 1966** and since then, he **diversified into film-making (he has made nine**

short films since 1973), photography, illustration and design. He has returned to painting with a solo show of **57 abstracts** titled **Meditative Silence**. His last show was in 2006. Meditative Silence, Gajwani says, has been curated from nearly 100 works of art by him since 2007.

In these 10 years, he added, he experimented with different media and sizes: watercolours, charcoal works, a mix of charcoal and watercolours and a mix of acrylic, charcoal and watercolours. Colours — bright and sombre — and shapes — squares, rectangular patches, lines, sometimes just splotches — interact differently on each canvas.

The strokes, the hues, even the silence has the effect of evoking memories and emotions, unique to each onlooker. “I don’t pick any colour in particular, but have a vision in mind when I start working,” says Gajwani, who has held 23 one-man shows of his work in a career spanning five decades. His two sons are also designers while his daughter is a writer and a designer. His passion for art helped him support his first love while he worked as a **designer** with the **American Center for 29 years**.

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A self-taught cartoonist and caricaturist, he also illustrated for SPAN, the US embassy’s bi-monthly magazine. He used the money from his job to buy material and then he painted at home. “You have to survive when you’re not able to sell anything,” he says. “Painting is not cheap. It is very expensive.” Though he is adept at drawing figures, sketches and caricatures, Gajwani says he has chosen the abstract form for his paintings to stay true to an inner inspiration. He also has a set of dos and don’ts in place when it comes to his art.

“When my heart is heavy or I’m unwell, I don’t paint,” Gajwani says. “I paint when I am absolutely happy. I know a lot of artists who say a particular work is a reflection of a difficult personal or financial period. I don’t do that,” he adds, the effervescence in his gentle demeanour belying his age.

“We are all ageing with every breath, but work should never age. It should stay vibrant and young.”