



breathless

DHRUVI ACHARYA'S ART IS CLAD IN DRY HUMOUR

Air bags fuelled by flowers, extended limbs by way of plants, biomorphic forms, hybrid beings and a world where you have to fight to breath; *One Life on Earth* is Dhruvi Acharya's latest collection of work. The exhibition, created over the past couple of years, was on display at Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai. The collection focuses on the current world environment without making angry, political statements. Instead, it is a depiction of a dystopia and tells a fantastic story of how the artist visualises and experiences, a futuristic world that is a result of the pollution, violence, war and greed that rules the day. Dhruvi maintains a drawing book, which is a collection of memories and events from her daily journeys. This includes her family life, personal experiences and observations; her paintings are based on this collection of drawings. "All my works start from my drawing book," she explains.

Fringing on pop art, her canvases show cartoon-like characters which are not only satirical in nature but

also sport a distinct flavour of dark and dry humour. The suppression of women finds a special place in her works and women are both, protagonists and antagonists in her stories. Their bold and wry eyes give them a haunting look, as if possessed, or perhaps slightly drugged, by the air supply they so covet. Her muted palette, refreshing use of acrylic paint and contrastingly light or deep backgrounds make the sombre images of the mutated, hybrid women distinct and eerily memorable. The larger women, she chuckles, were a fragment of her memory or imagination from when she herself had gained some weight. "Though no one believes me," she confesses.

Influenced by contemporary street art, comic book visuals and advertising, Dhruvi's work is a combination of her multiple interests and the faculties she was exposed to. An ardent reader of *Amar Chitra Katha* in her younger days, Dhruvi includes the humour and eclectic style of dialogue of the comics in her art. A number of her canvases are divided into cartoon strips and each box has a dialogue or thought blurb, sometimes void of any other character, leaving the viewer to make up the tale. She has even used a few comics from her *Amar Chitra Katha* collection as one of the layers in some of her paintings. A hands-on person, Dhruvi meticulously cuts, pastes and paints a larger story around the original pasting. Her highly-valued and very popular paintings take over a month to complete, depending on what the canvas demands. Guided by simple logic and common sense, Dhruvi, who loved oils, switched to acrylic when she conceived her first son. Her art has changed dramatically since she started painting, and promises to continue to evolve, since the candid artist is guided by her life and its events. ■

One life on Earth will be on display at Nature Morte, New Delhi, from 4th October to 1st November.

— Written by Tasneem Mohamedbhai.

