

HYDERABAD, June 20, 2013

## A plateful of art

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Vinod Daroz with the 'Silent Shloka' series. Photo: Nagara Gopal



The Hindu  
From the Silent Shloka series



The Hindu  
From the Silent Shloka series



The Hindu  
From the Silent Shloka series



The Hindu  
From the Silent Shloka series



The Hindu  
From the Gopuram series



The Hindu  
Glazing process

*The kiln is Vinod Daroz's place of worship and the pieces that emerge from it are outstanding pieces of art*

The ceramic surface is his canvas. Vinod Daroz uses simple glaze with a gradation of colours for floral motifs inspired by a lotus on a granite stone at Padmavathi temple, Srisailam. "This stone was so beautiful. We weren't allowed to take photographs but the patterns stuck to my memory. When I got back to my studio in Baroda and began work on a new series, I drew inspiration from what I had seen at the temple," says the artist. Vinod grew up in Kalvakurthi near Srisailam, watching his father and elder brothers spend hours designing jewellery at their workshop. He would have followed in the same line had he not witnessed his uncle, a ceramic artist, working on a mural for the then Holiday Inn (today's Taj Krishna). "I wanted to learn art. My uncle told me to study in Baroda, since art was still in a nascent stage in Hyderabad back then," says Vinod.

Vinod now has his own studio in Baroda and his pieces of art get picked up by the Ambani, Goenka and Jindal families, he mentions.

Talking to us at Kalakriti Art Gallery, for which he facilitated the ongoing 'Fired up' exhibition of ceramics, featuring some of the best known artists from the country, Vinod says, "With ceramics, there's no end to the learning process. I discover something new at the kiln each day."

Ceramic art is still largely unfamiliar with art patrons in Hyderabad. "People have to think beyond crockery and cutlery when they hear about ceramics," laughs Vinod.

A few years ago, when Vinod exhibited his works in the city, well wishers and art connoisseurs egged him to set up a kiln and a studio in Hyderabad. Vinod mulled over it, had almost made up his mind to setting up a kiln at Gandipet, before giving it up: "I felt Hyderabad still wasn't ready for ceramic art," he says.

Vinod was pursuing his graduation in fine arts in Baroda when he realised his interest was in ceramics. "Ceramics was not even part of our course. We had an option of doing a 15-day workshop. I took the permission of my teacher Jyotsna Bhatt and trained in the studio for a fortnight. I knew this is what I wanted to do. While doing my masters, I specialised in ceramics," he says.

He uses a kiln fired by gas and with experience, has learnt to make the perfect clay and glaze from scratch. "In many other countries, artists

can choose from a range of readily available clays and colours; we don't have a good supply chain. So each artist here has his/her own recipe. Readymade colours available in India will give you a flat canvas with no gradation in colours," explains Vinod.

Once the clay is mixed and he designs a piece, he pre-heats it to 1000 degrees, after which he allows it to dry. "It takes a week in summer and longer during other seasons to dry. Monsoons are challenging. Once the piece is dry, I apply the glaze and fire it to 1300 degrees. A few artistes like repeated firing. I prefer a single firing with glaze. Sometimes it takes a month to make one platys," he says.

The end results varies according to the fuel used at the kiln — wood, oil, gas and electricity. "In electricity-fuelled kilns, you have 100 per cent control over the end product. Electricity is expensive in Gujarat so I opted for gas, which gives me 80 per cent control over the result," explains Vinod.

To arrive at the turquoise blue glaze that he used for the Silent Shloka series, Vinod had to work for two years: "I am adamant about the colours I want to use. I tried mixing glazes of different hues and firing them, until I finally arrived at this colour," he says.

The platyses displayed as part of the Mandala series and the Silent Shloka series are an extension of the artist's early work, the Temple series. "Silent Shloka is a prayer without words. I want people to relate to my work without words being required to describe them," he says. The conical male and female forms in the series are inspired by the Shiv ling.

Soon after his masters, Vinod worked with Ray Meeker and Deborah Smith at Golden Bridge Pottery, Pondicherry. In 2004, he spent a few months in England on scholarship, apprenticing with British potters Peter Ilsley in Daventry and Sandy Brown in Bideford: "I saw them work on crystals. There was so much to learn."

One of Vinod's early series was a tribute to victims of tsunami in 2005, with images of Buddha. Months later, Vinod visited temples in Kancheepuram with his family and was taken in by the colourful gopurams, garba griha and the murals. Inspired by what he saw, he worked on the Temple series.

Vinod uses stoneware apart from porcelain, bone china and terracotta. "For a new series, I am using porcelain with clay from china. The clay we get here doesn't match up to it," he rues.

Later this year, Vinod will be travelling to Turkey to give a lecture on ceramics and later to China and Korea for an artist-in-residency workshop. He is also in the process of setting up a new studio. "I want this studio to be a learning hub where arts students can come and train," he says.

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