

Life & Style

The many faces of Dolls

DEEPIKA ARWIND



Princess Pea's exhibit at the display 'Dolls' at Gallery Sumukha, Bangalore. Photo: Special arrangement

An exhibition named “Dolls” brings to mind several possibilities. From the ingrained image of a doll as a plaything to the larger manifestations dolls can represent, the connotations are many.

The exhibition at Gallery Sumukha seeks to explore the myriad, complex phenomena that curator Maria Jakimowicz speaks about in her note. “There is an ambiguous permeability amid dolls and toys, traditional and modern puppets, film stars, celebrities and figures of glamour advertising, popular media characters, models and mannequins that reflects both simple aspirations and societal cul de sacs,” she writes. “Thus, a hazy, precarious balance links the natural and the denatured, the spontaneously playful and the objectified, the naive and the seductive, the vivacious and the morbid, the intrinsic and the distorted, the free and the subjugated.”

The twelve artists who have created Dolls have at once tried to play with the different faces of the phenomenon. The objective seems to be playful — to overtly distort and relish the image and meaning of the doll, while some of them choose to critique its representations, both its perceived and intended ones.

The photograph in “The Doll” by Ayisha Abraham, is from an ancestral album. She looks at the phenomenon of the doll through “an intimate family perspective” as well as someone with an objective distance. A small girl in a frock sits holding a doll (presumably European), with her brother, who is not fully in the frame, and only portions of her parents' lower bodies are seen: a part of the mother's sari and the father's suit. As Ms. Jakimowicz writes, the artist crops a significant portion of the photograph to reveal only the core of the situation.

Another interesting series is by the artist Abir Karmakar. Even in the seemingly innocuous painting of a girl's bedroom with teddy bears on her bunk and a pink laptop, there is the sense of forgetting and loss inhabiting the present, a sense of erotic and playful, not to mention a certain eeriness often discarded from the experience of childhood.

One of the most fascinating exhibits is that of “Princess Pea”, the one that Ms. Jakimowicz describes as being “a creature of composite identity.” Trying to cope with “dissonant aspirations”, Princess Pea allows the viewer a visually wholesome experience as well an intricate journey that unfolds oddness, eroticism and heightened humour.

Dolls will show till April 9 at Gallery Sumukha, 24/10 BTS Depot Road, Wilson Garden.

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