

Her heart beats for art

Lata Kurian Rajeev talks about her new role as curator and her first exhibition of mural works

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***Different strokes Lata Kurian Rajeev with the work ‘Aarama Sita’***

Life has come full circle for Lata Kurian Rajeev. An art historian and artist, Lata had decided to take a break from the world of colours when matrimony and motherhood took a large chunk of her time.

After dabbling in teaching, event management and film production, Lata found it was art and art alone that could motivate her.

“Although I produced two films (‘Jalamarmaram’ and ‘Sesham’), I discovered that it was not what I wanted to do or my area of work. Rajeev (Lata’s husband, T.K. Rajeevkumar,) cannot live without films but for me it is art.

“I do paint. But I am aesthetic and knowledgeable enough to know my limitations as an artist. But my taste in art is impeccable and so I decided to devote my energy to curating art and bring some good works to the notice of art lovers,” says Lata.

## Exhibition on November 21

Out of that passion was born a collection of mural art, SITA – Bhoomiputri and other stories,' the first work of G 360, Lata's gallery, which will be exhibited in the Museum Auditorium from November 21 to 28.

It showcases 27 paintings by nine mural artists who were students of the first batch of the School of Mural Painting, Gurvayur. Ajithan Puthumana, Babu K.R., Basanth Peringode, Gopi Chevayur, Krishnan K.S., Sadanandan, Saju Thuruthil, Suresh K. Nair and Suresh Muthukulam have come up with a scintillating collection that are all centred on Sita.

"It was Suresh K. Nair who introduced me to the other eight artists. I had extensive discussions with them and we decided that the focus would be on Sita," explains Lata unrolling an exquisite painting 'Aarama Sita' by Sadanandan. Why Sita?

"Well, Sita is the daughter of the earth and she has always fascinated me. I am a woman who celebrates my femininity. Moreover, I am passionate about ecological issues and, to me, Sita represents Gaia, the earth. Those were the reasons for rooting for Sita. She is familiar to most of us and her iconography is familiar to artists and viewers. Yet, there is a misconception that she is this weak, helpless, simple character. But actually, Sita is one of the strongest characters in our mythology. She chose to return to her mother instead of meekly submitting herself to more 'tests,'" explains Lata showing off the brochure that has been designed for the exhibition.

The 27 paintings depicted in the brochure is a spectrum of Sitas in different moods and occasions. Each artist has interpreted different scenes from the Ramayana to come up with individualistic works. Although the works experiment with themes, colours, physiognomy and ornamentation, the paintings remain faithful to the stylistics of mural art in Kerala.

The collection speaks volumes of Lata's acumen as a curator. "My tryst with the art world has honed my eye for good art. Moreover, my training as an art historian and the five years I spent in Santiniketan have also helped," says Lata who plans to come up with more such exhibitions – solo and group.

"Artists in Kerala are very talented. However, exposure can do them a world of good. For instance, in this series I have tried to contemporarise the story of Sita and make it relate to our world. More such exhibitions and workshops can raise the awareness of the buyers too. So I plan to curate works and plan shows that will benefit artists and art buyers.

## Baul art

Lata is already making plans for her next shows. Two have been tentatively lined up. "I have planned one with Parvathy Baul, who was my junior in Santiniketan. We plan to hold a show and she might come up with a Baul performances in the evenings. We are still fine-tuning the show. The next will be with Basanth Peringode. That will be a kind of jugalbandhi. But that will remain a secret till we work out all the details," says Lata with a wide smile.

Lata's collection will travel to Bangalore in January (Chitrakala Parishad Art Gallery) and to Kochi (Kashi Art Gallery) in February.

## Circle of art

Lata is still basking in the glow of returning to the charmed circle of colours. Even the logo designed by Rassi shows the traditional motif of a fish and a parrot coiled comfortably in a circle. "It represents the yin and yang of nature. The p arrot stands for wind, the fish for water and the circle denotes the earth. Moreover, 360 stands for the circle and how my life has come full circle to art," she explains.