

## Delhi Art Gallery Presents P. Khemraj's 'Wings of Desire'

*In A Retrospective Resonating with Melody*

New Delhi, Delhi, IND, 2008-07-16 10:37:45 (IndiaPRwire.com)

**Delhi Art Gallery** presents '**P. Khemraj - Wings of Desire**'; a retrospective show of artworks spanning four decades by veteran artist **P. Khemraj** from **August 11, 2008 to September 5, 2008** at **Delhi Art Gallery, 11, Hauz Khas Village, New Delhi**. This exhibition will showcase **more than fifty works** in acrylic, pen and ink on paper, oil, pen and ink on canvas, ink, watercolour, acrylic and gold paint on ivory board and mixed media on mount board. The exhibition will be accompanied by a 164-page comprehensive book on the artist.

**Says Ashish Anand, Director, Delhi Art Gallery:** 'Widely known as the 'renaissance man' of the Indian art, P. Khemraj focused on creating 'lasting art'. He had given a new dimension to modern art with his colourful and often mind-boggling depiction of the female form that reflected sensuality and extravagant view of life at large in his artworks.'

**Art critic Keshav Malik says:** 'He would invite cognition of creative interplay of different forms of artistic activity, brought about by his usual re-reading of his poems, avid strumming of musical instruments and formulate a visual cosmos in his canvas. His creativity represented a play.'

**Says curator Roobina Karode:** 'The exhibition showcases his mural sized works on combined boards and early canvases as well as his delicate linear drawings swiftly moving on the surface with fluid grace. His series fluttering with hearts is full of youthful exuberance and confesses his love for life.'

Born in 1934 to a big Gujarati family settled in Bombay, Khemraj grew up in an environment where art and music were an integral part. As a child he would day-dream of becoming a painter if not a musician, and someday travel to Paris - the Mecca of Modern Art. In 1952, he joined the J.J. School of Art in Bombay under the tutelage of Professor K.S. Kulkarni. His love for music was so strong that he was motivated to leave Bombay in 1958 after graduating and settle in Delhi, to learn playing sitar from Pandit Ravi Shankar. The tight schedule of the icon eventually forced him to seek a job as an artist in a commercial studio but, it never deterred him from pursuing the *sargams* on *sarod* and violin. Years after he had made his life as an artist of eminence, he would diligently do his *riyaaz* and any joyous occasion was to be marked with music.

The artist's childhood dream of traveling to Paris came true when he was awarded the French Government scholarship in 1962, which enabled him to study at the *Ecole Nationale des Superior des Beaux Arts* and then at *Atelier 17*. His art was shaped by teachers like Stanley William Hayter who is regarded as the father of contemporary printmaking and Krishna Reddy who is the first person to devise the process of obtaining multi- coloured prints. His art was further influenced by many a Cubist, Impressionist, and Expressionist and Surrealist masters.

Delhi, with several galleries such as the National Gallery of Modern Art, the Lalit Kala Akademi, the Garhi studios, the Triveni Kala Sangam, the Crafts Museum, nurtured the native talent of the sensitive artist in Khemraj. Therefore, when he returned from Paris in 1966, he gravitated to Delhi which became his home although every two or three years he would visit Bombay which attracted

artists from everywhere - Calcutta, Madras, Delhi - as the capital market for art.

For any Indian artist living in Europe for any length of time during his or her youth, it is impossible to ignore the rich possibilities of artistic expression in stained glass. Khemraj was no exception. Especially noteworthy is his use of luminous colours ranging through ultra - marine, indigo, orange colours that are not commonly found in nature. While talking about his powerful lines cutting across the paper or canvas, on close view, one can find the lines to be delicate with minute fluid shadows found as if in droplets of water under a microscope.

In an essay *A Toast to Bliss*, **Kolkata art critic Ratnottama Sengupta** has emphasized on Khem's artistic journey and influences which brought about the various changes in his art practices, giving birth to series like *Charpai*, *Hatheli*, *Prithvi*, *Heart* and a series of powerful drawings entitled *Singing Lines*. She says, 'Khemraj represents the harmonious fusion of 'virginity and virility' through a sensuous simplicity and passion.' In her essay, she has zoomed on another aspect of the artist which is - 'Khem seemed to depict deep empathy for the damaged environment which gave birth to *Asha Hans*, where he paints the vision of a paradise that could be our earth. Dreamy landscapes, painted in subtle colours evoke a paradise that exists in our mind's eye. The intricately interspread flowers and leaves position nature in a timeless role of a silent observer. The hues of these works are in turquoise along with gold, giving a feel of lyricism and richness which could be associated with the works of Gustav Klimt."

In 1992, concerned about the increasing domination of commercial forces and disillusioned by the mono-cultural, west-oriented trend of the nineties, Khemraj along with three other Asian artists - Lee Kye Song, Hideo Sakata and Yoko Kamijyo initiated an art movement - **Lantern of the East**. The Lantern group believed that Eastern art, with a different sensibility derived from the distinctive religious and cultural traditions of the Asian region, needed to become a more active force in the contemporary visual art scene and that in doing so, would be a driving force in reshaping the world of contemporary visual art in the 21st century. In that spirit, the founders began, in 1996, an annual international art festival to communicate the spirit of Eastern art to the world.

Says Keshav Malik: 'Artists like Khem drop out of the straitjacket of the contemporary society that suffocates them, that denies freedom, wonder and sheer joy. Painting peacocks and flowers in superfluous abandon, Khem indicates his conviction that life is not a trust but a gift to revel in.'

An artist who painted delicate dreams of an idyllic world of lovers, birds and mystical creatures, P. Khemraj passed away in September 2000, but his exhibition will remind us of that delicacy our lives have lost&hellip;

**- END -**

**For more information, Please contact:**

**Poonam Goel**  
CEO - PERSONA  
011-41552945-48  
011-41552946