

Forecast : The day is likely to remain hot and sunny. The sky will be clear in the city. Night is expected to be cool and calm.



The Ahmedabad art scene appears to be thriving with several young artists making an impact

Art alert: Watch out for new kids on block

Harmony Siganporia

Much has been written about the dozens of the Ahmedabad art scene; and rightly so, given that they are the temperate forebears who, through their endurance and persistence, paved the way for the youth to regard art as a viable profession.

Some of the young artists are now doing extremely well for themselves, finding their way into the collections of buyers world over. Harshil Patel, Shefali Nayan, Nipa Modi, Bansi Khatri and Manish Modi are the five stand-out ones among the upcoming artists, believe the gallerists in Ahmedabad.

"Shefali is a graduate from MSU. Lemongrasshopper exhibited her a couple of years ago, and she sells real-

ly well. What is unique about her is the 'naturalness' of her work - there is no artifice in it. She retails anywhere between Rs 20,000 and a lakh, which is quite reasonable. Collectors from the US and Switzerland as well as the local buyers have all shown interest in her work," says Khanjan Dalal, co-partner, Lemongrasshopper Art Gallery.

"Another artist of promise is Manish Modi (32), who seems to have the patience of a tortoise - the beauty of his art lies in his meticulous attention to detail and the intricacy of his work. He has even won the Lalit Kala nation-award a couple of years ago. Both these artists are upcoming and, therefore, affordable at the moment, but the worth of their work is sure to appreciate manifold as they reach their zenith



■ A painting by Harshil Patel

over the next few years," he adds.

Of the current lot of artists, Chaitya Shah, director, Marvel Art Gallery, picks Harshil Patel (26), for greatness.

"Harshil is a class apart. His trajectory, after he turned professional a few years ago, is startling for someone so young. What is wonderful about him is his penchant for experimenta-

tion - he works on an idea or style for months on end, and having exploited all it can offer, moves on. He doesn't stick with a motif or style merely because it sells well. His work has appreciated by around 50% in the last three years. His smaller canvases go for anywhere above Rs 20,000 and the larger pieces can go into lakhs," he says.

"Nipa Modi and Bansi Khatri are also talents to

Coming up fast

Some of the young artists are now doing extremely well for themselves, finding their way into the collections of buyers world over

watch out for. Nipa's style is figurative and pleasing to the young and old alike, while Khatri's motifs and themes revolve around 'tantra' and 'shakti'. Several corporate houses and offices have picked him up because they feel his work generates 'positive vibrations'.

A small 2x2 canvas by these artists might start from around Rs 15-20,000. Even their work is seeing appreciation in present times," he adds.



■ Creations of Shefali Nayan

Prices in accordance with 24 x 24 inch canvas size

Sr no.	Artist	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Age	Appreciation %
1	Harshil Patel	2800	7200	16000	30,000	36,000	26	260%
2	Bansi Khatri	4000	6000	8000	16000	20000	40	100%
3	Vipa Modi	2000	4000	8000	10,000	14,000	28	140%

Dependants sans support



■ Seventy-one-year-old Jasuben Dabghar sits on fast in front of the family court in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. Jasuben's son, Subhas Dabghar, was sentenced to 16-month imprisonment for not paying maintenance allowance to his divorced wife. Now, Jasuben is demanding maintenance for her own survival, saying her jailed son was her only support - Kalpit Bhachch.DNA

A'bad village honours 1857 heroes every yr

On July 9, 1857, Ratnaji Thakor and six others had died fighting the British

Kintu Pushpa Gadhi

Hardly any of the countless books written on the Indian Mutiny of 1857 mention the martyrdom of Ratnaji Thakor who died fighting British forces in Tajpur village on July 9, 1857. Tajpur is situated on the outskirts of Ahmedabad city.

Local people at the time did recognise Ratnaji's ultimate sacrifice for the motherland and set up a 'paliya' (a memorial for a martyr) to honour his martyrdom and also had his story engraved on it. With the passage of time, however, Ratnaji and his sacrifice faded from public memory. The



—Dhaval Bharwad.DNA

paliya, too, was lost and no one seemed to know what had happened to it. Ratnaji's martyrdom remained forgotten until 1999 when members of the Khadiya Itihaas Samiti who were studying the gazetteer came across what had happened in Tajpur village on July 9, 1857.

The gazetteer says the Mutiny began in Meerut (Uttar Pradesh) on May 10, 1857.

Inspiring sacrifice

Residents of Tajpur had set up a 'paliya' (memorial) to honour the sacrifice of Ratnaji and companions. Their story was later forgotten and the paliya, too, was lost.

In 1999, members of the Khadiya Itihaas Samiti came across Ratnaji's story in the pages of the gazetteer.

They later searched for the paliya in Tajpur, recovered it from a lake and re-installed in the village.

At the time, Ratnaji Thakor was a soldier in the Maratha regiment stationed in Ahmedabad. On learning of the great mutiny in the north, he and six of his companions collected a large number of weapons in preparation for a revolt in Ahmedabad, too.

The British, however, got wind of his plans and sent one Captain Taylor and several soldiers to arrest him. Ratnaji

and six of his companions fled to Tajpur village and hid there with the weapons they had collected. Captain Taylor was assisted by another British officer, Captain Pym, and together they isolated Ratnaji and his companions at Dholka.

Ratnaji and his companions fought the British valiantly but were soon overwhelmed and killed in battle. The gazetteer mentions that resi-

dents of Tajpur village later established a 'paliya' in honour of the martyrs.

Under the leadership of its member and convener, Ashutosh Bhatt, the Khadiya Itihaas Samiti did an extensive search of the area to find the missing 'paliya' and found it at the bottom of the lake in Tajpur village.

The memorial that was brought out of the lake had something engraved on it but no one had any knowledge of the script. It was when the Itihaas Samiti translated the engraving with the help of Dr Bhartiaben Shelat and Dr Ushaben Bhatt (both scholars from BJ Vidhya Bhavan) that people realised it was actually the paliya they were looking for. The monument was re-established in Tajpur where people pay their tributes every year on July 9 to Ratnaji Thakor who died fighting for his country.

Revenue official's police remand extended

DNA Correspondent

The Sessions court on Wednesday sent assistant commissioner in the revenue department Nathalal Nayak and three intermediaries — Arun Patel, Vipul Patel and land-dealer Purshottam Chimmanni — to one more day of police remand. Additional principal sessions judge PB Desai had earlier sent them to 36 hours of police remand. Anti-Corruption Bureau had arrested Nayak for trying to take a bribe of Rs5 lakh to al-

lot ownership of land to a farm restaurant owner.

Additional public prosecutor NN Prajapati sought from the court further remand of the accused as the investigation officer had contacted the station director of All India Radio, Ahmedabad for conducting voice analysis of the accused. However, the station director stated that he is required to get a sanction from security of AIR, New Delhi and that as soon as the sanction is granted, the decision in the matter will be taken.

Painter Sajid Sheikh depicts Mahatma in various phases of his life - from birth to his last days

Gandhi's life at length in 300-ft painting

Tuli Banerjee

Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own pictures, so goes the saying. The paintings of Sajid Azgar Sheikh lend credence to those words. The 300-foot-long painting is jaw-dropping for its sheer size. And every inch of the canvas is captivating, for Sheikh depicts Mahatma Gandhi in his various phases of life - from birth to his last days.

London's Sotheby's auction house has agreed to pay Rs22 lakh for the entire length of Gandhi paintings. "But I have declined the offer," says painter Sheikh. "Though I am willing to sell these paintings, I am sure I will a much larger amount for them," he adds.

"I have been painting since childhood," says 43-year-old Sajid Sheikh, who hails from Kapadvanj. He shifted to Ahmedabad a month ago for better education prospects for his three children. "My father was a painter by profession and I got the passion as a legacy from him," he says.

Sheikh had a store at Kapadvanj where he used to earn his livelihood



■ A lady who saw my work has promised to give me all the khadi I want for the paintings." —Sajid Azgar Sheikh

—Piyush Patel. DNA

by selling his works. Apart from his love for making portraits of politicians, he paints on various different themes, including religion, saints and landscapes. "I make anything from Rs1,500 to Rs7,000 for each painting," he says with satisfaction.

Despite dropping out of school after class XIII, Sheikh can surf the Net with ease. In fact, it is he himself who

found applied for the Sotheby's auction online.

Talking about his love for Gandhi, he says, "Right since my childhood, I was inspired by the Mahatma, reading about his Satyagraha and principles of Ahimsa. Since then, I have kept cuttings of write-ups and photographs of Gandhiji from textbooks and newspapers." Sheikh took almost

two-and-a-half years to make the 300-foot painting. "I used to sit for two-three hours a day to paint," he says. Water colours have been used on poplin cotton for the paintings, which cost more than Rs1 lakh.

He credits Narhari Bhatt, trustee of Adarsh Madhyamik School at Kapadvanj, for the help he extended to make the painting. Sheikh says, "It is only with the financial help of Narhari Bhatt that I could buy and use cloth and colours for the task."

There is a sense of affection in each of the frames on the Mahatma. Most of them reflect his inner thoughts. "For example, the picture that shows the Mahatma lying on the ground outside Parliament shows him happy and contented at the country gaining freedom. He does not want more. He does not want to enter Parliament, he is happier outside," says Sheikh.

In near future, he plans to paint Indira Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. But most importantly, he wishes to make portraits of various aspects of chief minister Narendra Modi.

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