

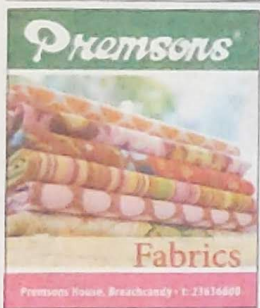


'I'm a channel-hopper'

...but a gripping show keeps him hooked, says Akshay Kumar, who's set to judge aspiring cooks on a reality show starting tonight

Roshni K Olivera | TNN

Akshay Kumar, whose culinary skills were honed alongside his martial arts prowess in Bangkok, is returning to the



BATTLE TO BUY THE CHEAPEST MOBILES BEFORE STOCKS RUN OUT

futurebazaar.com
LOG ON NOW OR CALL 1800 200 9495

small screen in a different avatar with *MasterChef India* on Star Plus, 9 pm tonight. The channel, in keeping with its new brand promise of '*Rishta wahi, soch nayi*', intends to attract Indian cooking talent from home kitchens and lead them to stardom. The show, that is based on an international format, tests the culinary skills of 12 creative and passionate cooks under immense time pressure. Joining Akshay are Chefs Kunal Kapoor and Ajay Chopra as co-judges, together they will choose the *MasterChef* from among the participants of the show. "Great cooking not only leads to great food but also great drama... and that's what is in store for viewers," says Akshay. Excerpts from the interview...

How tough are you going to be with contestants?

I am only as tough as I need to be. I'm not a bully, but neither am I here to paint rainbows with them. I encourage and inspire these *MasterChef* aspirants like you wouldn't believe! To me they are like my children, I nurture and guide them through the tasks set with love and firmness.

How would you rate yourself as a cook?

Hmmm... I hope by cook you don't mean a chef because I don't consider myself a chef. Being a chef is a big deal and an even bigger honour. Cooking is an art in itself, and it is not easy to master. We may love to paint, but that doesn't mean anyone would want to buy it. I consider myself a decent cook, but I am a great

Personally I would give myself 6 out of 10.

Big B, Salman Khan and you are hosting shows... how do you react to comparisons?

In this field comparisons are inevitable. However, all three of us are doing shows of different genres. Amitabhji and Salman are great people, brilliant actors and fantastic hosts. We all have something very different to give, but really we just want to entertain our audiences. It's the channels that have the extra pressure and points to prove. We as actors only have good wishes for each other and I know all of us will be giving our best. Let's just let people enjoy their evening TV time and be happy at how great entertainment is these days.

How anxious are you about public reaction? As much as you would have been before a film release?

It's different. In my films I always seem to have much more pressure on my shoulders. There's a difference between someone flicking the channel over and someone walking out of your movie. Both hurt, but it's not the same. In fact I myself am a complete channel-hopper, but if something grips me then I am hooked for sure, and I know how gripping *MasterChef* is. You feel for these guys so much, you learn so much, there are emotions flying. There's something extra special about this show, so right now I'm



READY, STEADY, COOK: AKSHAY

Ranjit Kumar



BEST FOOT FORWARD: BT caught up with MS Dhoni and Yuvraj Singh when they were at the Reebok store to promote the newly launched ZigTech shoe, which has an



something contemplative. They're like alphabets, perhaps more like hieroglyphs and have a repetitive mode like chanting. This current show is different from Neel's earlier works in that although he's been at it since 1962 till date (mainly on cigarette packets and match boxes), the difference is that even after all these years, it is still contemporary and has individual attachment. The drawing on each cigarette packet and match box are so different that they have a feeling of being hieroglyphs."

And why did Gohain decide to work with Neel Pawan? "Neel da is an excep-



tunity see and understand his works. Hieroglyphs attempts to get people to appreciate a different kind of art. Personally the artist here is more with the dedication of a yogi — an ascetic who does not bear high ambitions to get a big name, but ambitious enough to carry on a life time for a creative pursuit. In these terms his works are more contemporary for me," says Ganesh.

Neel Pawan Baruah's works can be viewed at the Strand Art Room, Ama House, Near Strand Cinema, Colaba from October 17-28.

On a creative pursuit

Ganesh Gohain tell us why Neel Pawan Baruah's works are so special. Zeenia F Baria reports



A renowned name in the world of art, Neel Pawan Baruah is out with his latest collection, Hieroglyphs, which promises to be a treat for art lovers. The Assam-based, 74-year-old artist has devoted his life to art — especially promoting modern art in Assam. His current show, curated by Ganesh Gohain, showcases his immense talent and command over his subject.

According to Gohain, "Hieroglyphs are Egyptian pictorial text. Whenever I see Neel da's drawings on matchboxes and cigarette packs, it reminds me of something to do with meditation —

tional, inspiring and a big mentor to the artists of the North East. I've known him since a long time and I wanted people in this part of India to know how Neel da lead his life as a practicing artist in Assam, which has made him what he is today — a legendary figure in world of art. One of the main reasons why it is important for me to bring out his works for western Indian viewership is because being one of his earlier associates who now works and lives in Baroda, where a large part of the art fraternity resides, I felt everyone should have the oppor-

SWEET 16
BT ANNIVERSARY

When I was 16...
Jitish Kallat

At 16, I had just managed to realise half my dream — that of entering art school. I was then very drawn to the whole idea of mass media, bill boards and advertising. At 15, I was somewhat undecided if I should pursue applied arts but by 16 I had found my calling. I knew it was indeed 'fine art'. This decision was, of course, a bit of a setback for my extended family who felt I was betraying the sacred mark sheet I got from school as well as slamming the doors on a potentially secure future. I always had a good academic track record and while every uncle and aunt objected — some overtly or more subtly — to this unlikely decision of becoming an artist, my parents never doubted my decision. That level of trust helped me focus totally on what I was doing. I was always a happy workaholic and at 16 I was making art every night, way past midnight like there wasn't a tomorrow! I feel lucky to have found my calling early in life and had the good fortune of channelising a lot of my teenage energy into something that is in fact a life-dream.

As told to RBK

The beautiful man

Niki Hingad's works are a must see

Niki Hingad's latest show, *La Belle Homme*. The Beautiful Man explores the various aspects of relationships that exist between a male and a female and to explore the presence of a female factor in a male. It promotes the thought of a loving, caring, beautiful man, who would prefer wife over beer. According to Niki, "My art is a natural adjunct of a need and a desire to express myself. My paintings are my rat-

son d'etre. I create without any restrictions and fear. I feel like Jonathan Livingston Seagull. All my paintings have a source of origin and dwell in their own space. In this evolutionary process of exploring human relationships, the most important one that emerged, compelled me to dig deeper into my psyche. Something, undeniably, is the presence of female factor in male. This is where my thoughts have been and I feel my paintings are my rat-



Niki Hingad



son d'etre. I create without any restrictions and fear. I feel like Jonathan Livingston Seagull. All my paintings have a source of origin and dwell in their own space. In this evolutionary process of exploring human relationships, the most important one that emerged, compelled me to dig deeper into my psyche. Something, undeniably, is the presence of female factor in male. This is where my thoughts have been and I feel my paintings are my rat-

Connecting with India through art

Daniela Florsheim speaks about her latest show

Switzerland based artist Daniela Florsheim had no obvious need to travel all the way to India in search of creative inspiration — living as she does in one of the most picturesque places of the world! However when it comes to something as strongly strong a connection as her son Benjamin addressing his father Gerhart as 'Ganga' the first time he speaks (1), one realises that coming to India and showcasing her works here was much more than a mundane exercise for Daniela. Her show, *Beauty of India: A Selection of Indian motifs in silk*, Daniela takes inspiration from the Indian scenery with local children as metaphor for the future and also mirrors the breathtaking fauna and flora of India. Daniela says, "Browsing through my photographs, which I look during my travels in India, I noticed vibrant colours wherever I looked. India's strength and strong influence on our culture is hugely underestimated. I travelled three times through



Daniela Florsheim

started making music with Ravi Shankar and travelled to Rishikesh. Yehudi Menuhin played with Ravi Shankar showing that a violin does, indeed, work with a sitar. Not too long ago I listened to Anoushka Shankar combining east and west in her music. These are just some of my impressions and aspirations that brought me to see India in a new light," says Daniela. "It was an exhilarating experience to visit Ganga — the source of River Ganges — and the summit of Bhadrathi. I feel such a strong pull towards the Ganges that I wish that after my death, my ashes are dispersed in this holy river!" explored Periyar, Nargahole, Dandell, Munnar, Goly and Mysore, where I enjoyed the wild-life and aroma of spices. I visited Khana, Bandhavgarh and Ranthambore

where I managed to see tigers, leopard and bears." Daniela admits to be equally consumed by Bollywood actor Shahrukh Khan, whose visage also finds a place on her canvas. What makes Daniela's work particularly interesting is the way she has integrated European styles of art with predominantly Indian subjects. All the paintings are deeply inspired by the Golden Age of Dutch painting in the 17th century. Most of those paintings are serene, light filled interiors, comprising just one or two figures going about their daily routine in settings infused with dramatic light in both cool and warm colours. Daniela Florsheim's works can be viewed at the *Shahrukh Art Gallery, Kalaghoda till October 17.*

—Rishma S Kulkarni

'I promise variety to my viewers'

says Maheshwari Raja as she gives Tanjore paintings a new edge, says Zeenia F Baria

For Chennai-based artist Maheshwari Raja, painting traditional works is something that she has always aspired to do. A self-taught artist, this is her first show in the city and she's naturally elated with the great response her works are getting. Tanjore paintings are an amazingly and intricately done and usually comprise images of Lord Krishna. However, I've also included portraits of Lord Shiva, Goddess Parvati and Lord Ganesha in different forms, there are non-religious works — of a Bharatanatyam dancer, a south Indian bride and a rajasthani girl. I've used unusual colours and there is a lot of variety for viewers because apart from these works, there are also a lot of antique Tanjore paintings on display, some of which are over 60 and 70 years old," says Maheshwari. The paintings are filled with gold leaves and stones that endow the colours and come in various sizes. Trained by her husband, RajaMaheshwari, a renowned Tanjore artist himself, Maheshwari says that her visit to Mumbai has given her several ideas for her next batch of works. "I don't know if I will stick to Tanjore or try out other mediums of art in the future. But the response I've received in Mumbai has great-



ly inspired me," she ends with a smile. Maheshwari Raja's works can be viewed at the *Kamalnayak Bajaj Art Gallery, Nariman Point till October 19.*

Time for Tagore

Sunil Shanbag's *Walking To The Sun*, opened last week and was applauded by audiences looking for an intense theatre experience. The play defies Tagore's poignant *Dak Ghar* about a dying child, with the story of a Polish doctor and his orphaned wards in pre-Holocaust Germany, proving in one year of the follow up to great writer's 150 anniversary, that his work reached corners of the globe in unexpected ways. A bit long, and a demanding watch, *Walking To The Sun* has the best music and sound

design, heard in a play in a while, plus simple, evocative set and lights. While Tagore is the flavour of the season, the British Council and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) bring to India, in *The Further Soil*, an arts project "weaving together dance, music and spoken word. The collaborative arts project, produced by Birmingham-based South Asian arts organisation Sampaad in partnership with Teamwork Productions in India, tells stories of love, separation and other urban themes." Based on the work of Rabindranath

'I create a language that connects the spiritual and the material'

Artist Shezad Dawood talks about his current show

Basuhas, there was much more of an interdisciplinary approach," says Shezad. About his show titled *Cities of The Future*, Shezad says "For a long time, I've been interested in this interconnection everyone from Lyubens to Corbusier and others, and how despite (or perhaps because of) the rational construct of modernism in the West, you had European architects designing dormitories at Panchsheel and the whole complex at Chandigarh. After partition, Nehru invited Le Corbusier to design the Chandigarh Parliament. While one can look at this as the interconnection of European Modernism in India; looking closely one can see an

obvious thread of mystic geometry originating in the Indian subcontinent that could be said to pervade and inform European modernism." The show is a mixture of works on vintage textiles and neon lights that use geometric forms to suggest a recycling of images and the West over hundreds of years. "But more than just East and West, I'm interested in mapping

out a language that connects the spiritual and the material." Looking at Shezad's works, one finds it interesting to note how hermetic Indian symbols such as the spiral and atomic structures, which have been developed in tantra, have played a major part in the evolution and thinking of early Modernists influenced as they were by theosophy and Rosicrucianism. Interestingly, these systems of thought were heavily influenced by early Indian philosophy. Shezad elaborates, "I've always been fascinated by an odd link I saw between Corbusier's drawings and those by anonymous tantric painters from Rajasthan of the 18th century. Both seemed to be

utilising a similar mystical set of forms and contained a meditative depth." Shezad's show not just becomes interesting for the subject matter therein but also for the unique medium that he has used to convey his thoughts — viz, fabric and neon lights. "I love the interplay of depth and surface between the two. The radiation of light from the neon and the absorption of colour into the fabric seem together, and separately to do something with the same meditative quality as Corbusier's and the tantric drawings that I was looking at," he ends. Shezad Dawood's works can be viewed at *Chennai's Prescott Road till October 20.*

—RBK

Tributes to Tagore and lots of other theatre buzz happening this month, reports Deepa Gahlot

end of the year for their first Youth Theatre Week in the city. Atelier gives the opportunity to campus theatre groups to perform alongside professional groups at their festival in Delhi. After Mumbai, they plan to go pan-Indian next year. Meanwhile, in Kolkata, a youth theatre award scheme has been instituted in the memory of Shyamprasad Jalan, who passed away earlier this year. The annual award for original, unpublished scripts by Indian playwrights between 18 to 25 years of age, will be presented every year in February. The way

youth theatre is being encouraged in Mumbai and other cities, a lot of exciting new work can be looked forward to in the near future.

A sneak peek at a new production that will have theatre-goers thronging — after his hugely successful stand up comedy act *Walking on Broken Das*, Vir Das returns with *History of India*, which is not what it sounds like. It is his take on the country from the times of Mohenjodaro to the present. And it is, according to producer Ashwin Gidvani a full on comedy.



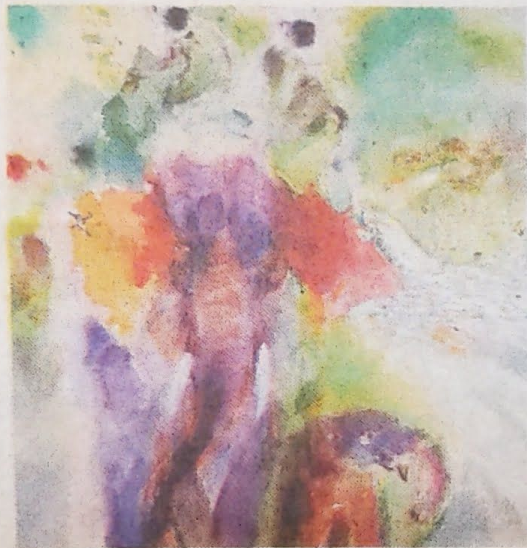
PLAY MATES

A still from *The Further Soil*

Connecting with India through art

Daniela Florsheim speaks about her latest show

Switzerland-based artist Daniela Florsheim had no obvious need to travel all the way to India in search of creative inspiration — living as she does in one of the most picturesque places of the world! However, when it is something as surreally strong a connection as her son Benjamin addressing his father Gerhard as 'Ganga' the first time he spoke (!), one realises that coming to India and showcasing her works here was much more than a mundane exercise for Daniela. Her show, *Daniela Florsheim: A Selection of Works* is a series of oils comprising Indian motifs where, Daniela takes inspiration from the Indian scenery with local children as metaphor for the future and also mirrors the breathtaking fauna and flora of India. Daniela says, "Browsing through my photographs, which I took during my travels in India, I noticed vibrant colours wherever I looked. India's strength and strong influence on our culture is hugely underestimated. I travelled three times through



this lovely country and tried to connect with various levels of culture and populace. Therefore I've chosen to depict children from three different social backgrounds, representing them in the style of the European old masters, which in the end means that you won't recognise the child's background, being equally depicted and thus freed from their labels."

Daniela's interest in India began from the time that "the Beatles



started making music with Ravi Shankar and travelled to Rishikesh. Yehudi Menuhin playing with Ravi Shankar showed that a violin does, indeed, work with a sitar. Not too long ago I listened to Anoushka Shankar combining east and west in her music. These are just some of my impressions and inspirations that brought me to see India in a new light" says Daniela. "It was an exhilarating experience to visit Gaumukh — the source of River Ganges — and the summit of Bhagirathi. I feel such a strong pull towards the Ganges that I wish that after my death, my ashes are dispersed in this holy river! I explored Periyar, Nargahole, Dandeli, Munnar, Ooty and Mysore; where I enjoyed the wild-life and aroma of spices. I visited Khana, Bandhavgarh and Ranthambore

where I managed to see tigers, leopard and bears." Daniela admits to be equally consumed by Bollywood actor Shahrukh Khan, whose visage also finds a place on her canvases!

What makes Daniela's work further interesting is the way she has integrated European styles of art with predominantly Indian subjects. All the paintings are deeply inspired by the Golden Age of Dutch painting in the 17th century. Most of those paintings are serene, light-filled interiors comprising just one or two figures going about their daily routine in settings infused with dramatic light in both cool and warm colours. Daniela Florsheim's works can be viewed at the Jehangir Art Gallery, Kalaghoda till October 17.

—Reshma S Kulkarni