

# Anecdote

## Galerie Romain Rolland

When asked why a show of abstract paintings is titled *Anecdote*, young artist Mekhala Bahl is ready with an answer. "My work is actually more representational for me than abstract, as I paint my dreams, recollections and short stories from memory." While the large paintings and collages and the small etchings definitely fall within the realm of abstraction, one can appreciate what Bahl is trying to get at. Her works are an abstract expression of memories and moments rather than of a spiritual search and other such topics that abstract artists tend to favour.

Trained at the Rhode Island School of Design, Bahl returned to India to pursue painting full time. This is her second solo show in Delhi and her first show with such large paintings. Her previous work consisted mostly of small and often quite beautiful prints. Her etchings tend to play with the potential of the printmaking process and are titled according to context. For

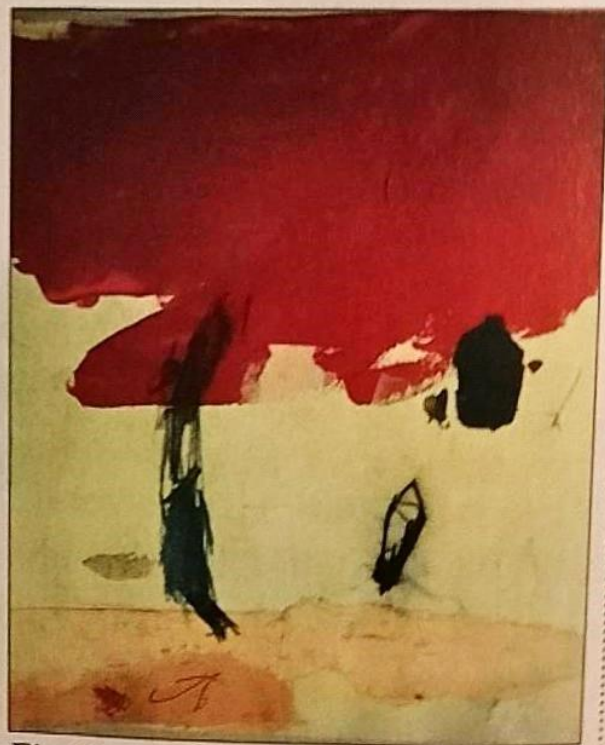
example, "Pink Under This" is a black and off-white print done over pink paper with the edges experimentally bitten away by the wash process. "Japan Rock" and "Japan Block" use the Japanese technique of chine-collé and the red colour of the Japanese flag.

There are little pictures and doodles that appear within the horizontal lines and coloured backgrounds of the canvases of her paintings, which Bahl executes intuitively without a conscious effort of representation. "People find things in them," she says. "Cow Ahead" is a painting in which someone pointed out the shadowy head of a cow, for example.

For Bahl, painting is something like keeping a journal, in which ideas and realisations may arise through the mundane process of recording the day's activities. The horizontal lines of several of her works, such as "Pale Ale", echo notebook lines on which forms have been placed. These prompt a departure from reading left-to-right and top-to-bottom, making

the doodles or realisations themselves paramount.

One wishes that those etched lines and vague symbols would speak a little more clearly though. Visual language is by definition a more universal form of communication than written words. We might get more insight into the point of Bahl's anecdote if her works were just a little more accessible. SS



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