

On an artistic quest

AS A kid Ms. Karen Trask wanted to be a tree. Even when she made a name for herself as a sculptor, this Canadian remained obsessed with this invisible link to Nature. And that remained the theme of her works. The one at Viswa Kalasanghamom 2001-02 at Changampuzha Park being the latest in the series.

"The basic idea of my works is a clash between logic and emotion. A sort of contradiction as when converting words to paper and then writings to sculpture." As in her work titled 'Paper words', where texts made of paper cast shadows on the floor and the wall.

Ms. Karen remembers growing up in a farm, where "each tree seemed to have its special place and reason for being. Some gave fruit, others shade, some were snow and wind blinds and others just seemed to grow in out-of-the-way places only to be beautiful".

Her probe into the relations between words and Nature led to the conclusion that in the beginning was the latter and word emerged from it. She then started an investigation into the visible signs of this link. As an attempt to understand word and writing better. Than just abstract signs.

"For example, the word 'book' is derived from an ancient English word that meant birch." Etymological proof is there, for sure. Especially with Indian languages. "All the curves and lines of Indian scripts take them closer to Nature. English and French are more geometric." Does it mean that these languages are more developed? "I would not use the word developed. Because it creates a sense of classes."



MEET...

Ms. Karen Trask

For this Canadian artist, the recently concluded international workshop on sculpture at Viswa Kalasanghamom 2001-02 was an extension of her experiments on the connection between word and Nature. A winner of several international awards, Ms. Karen talks to Anand Haridas.



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For some one who had been playing with the form of language, Ms. Karen found it interesting to participate in this workshop. It had featured along with Ms. Karen and Mr. Paul Litherland from Canada, a couple of artists from Korea, Japan and others from different parts of India.

"Here, I am always in a state of unknowing. Where there are huge gaps in communication." As she creates from her personal experiences in time and space, the scope of communication goes beyond the constraint of language. Ms. Karen realises that even in a "monumental sculptural event like this" her work would not be understood fully. "My work exists in different layers." Her work at the Viswa Kalasanghamom is a book and its connection to Nature and local culture. There are three parts to it.

First comes the book, carved out of a log. "It is the creative part. I am creating something new." Then there is the bench on which Ms. Karen planned to inscribe a couple of lines from Changampuzha Krishna Pillai's poetry.

"That exists in the middle way. I am using an already existing structure to create a new interpretation." And finally, there are these words, cut from paper, hanging from trees around. "Like me, they will be around for sometime before disappearing. People may take them or they will vanish just like that."

Ms. Karen has so far won many awards, starting from Jury's prize, Artforms '79 at Kitchener-Art Gallery, Waterloo in 1979 to the Canada Council Award in 2000. And she is going on with her probe into the origin of words and language, through her medium of expression.