

Saturday, Nov 20, 2010

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Waves and swirls

RACHANA CHETTRI

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NOV 17 -

A single image composed of a collection of nine photos on canvas, three arranged horizontally and three vertically; Prayer Flags No. 5 is a unique photograph. Not only is the picture taken with a vintage Polaroid sx-70 camera and the now extinct Time Zero film, it has been manipulated by the artist, Sandy Shum, through the use of pens and chopsticks to create a flow of ripples and lines that are reminiscent of impressionist paintings. The image of prayer flags rippling in the wind is a rush of blue and white. With clouds in the background and Shum's chopstick directing the flow of the wind blowing these flags, the photograph is a truly breathtaking sight to behold.



Dreaming of Prayer Flags, Mantra On The Wind is an exhibition of such impressionistic photography. The photographs on display use archival pigment ink on print, on canvas and uniquely on "Himalayan paper"—Nepali paper—which the artist believes integrates the photographic images of the Himalayan region into a more meaningful picture. "I just thought photos on Himalayan paper would look beautiful," says Shum. "Of course, anything can be printed on it but I chose these photographs because I thought they would look especially good."

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Photos of prayer wheels dominate the rough, almost rustic

surface of the Nepali paper and Returning Home, an interesting photograph of monks returning to their monastery whilst

being enveloped in morning mist is especially appealing to the senses. The Nepali paper on which the photograph is printed brings out a unique character in the hues of green and red present on its surface.

Although this is not the first time the artist has exhibited in Kathmandu, it is the first time she has displayed her works in such unique media. There is warmth and life in almost all of her photos; images of calm monastery life, Buddhist symbols and the uncomplicated Nepali religious life, being the major subjects she has captured through her lens and enhanced through her skill. As James A Giambone, the Founder and Director of KCAC-Kathmandu Contemporary Art Centre puts it, Shum's photographs have a quality of "chaos" about them, yet "there is a creativity one finds in chaos." Shum, he says, "gives us a moment in time and translates it into impressionist paintings."

One does not need to be an art connoisseur in photography to understand and appreciate Shum's photographs. They

show, as the artist herself puts it, "the beauty of human life if

only we stop and pause." Everyday inanimate objects like doors and teapots often compose the singular subject of her

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photographs and there is an undiluted sense of harmony in them. Shum captures the little things that go almost unnoticed in real life through her pictures.

The exhibition will continue till Dec. 6 at the Kathmandu Contemporary Arts Centre in Jhamsikhel. Entrance is free to all.

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