

INDIAN COLOURS ON KOREAN CANVAS

Looking Out From Within — Landscape and Minhwa! This title itself tells one very much about the concept of Korean folk art by Soon-jin Park. The exhibition, showcasing the artworks of the calligraphist and painter, will take one on a journey of life in her country. The colourful canvas has brought lively elements from art, nature, decoration and everyday life in Korea and also India. She says inspiration comes naturally whenever she spots any beautiful scenery around her. "I am familiar with the things and the landscape around my environment, so people can understand my works easily. Also, I

combine realistic objects with my imagination," says Soon-jin Park.

Minhwa or Korean folk painting is an essential part of the country's culture that the people use to convey their mythology, religion, and views on various topics.

"I studied my ancestors' artworks and researched on their work for a long time. I also have had numerous exhibitions in my country. However, this exhibition is special to me because most of the works displayed here are inspired by the Indian culture, the colourful and rich life here, the beautiful



ART



temples and Indian attire like saris. I hope this exhibition will give many Indians an easy access to traditional Korean

paintings through the familiar Indian colours," she adds.

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Looking Out From Within — Landscape and Minhwa, @The Gallery, InKo Centre, 18, Adyar club Gate Road, from 10am to 6pm, till June 16

Korean folk art form meets colours of India

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Chennai: The traditional Korean folk art form 'minhwa' comes naturally to artist So-on-jin Park. The familiar waterfalls, vivid flowers and delicate animals take her back to her childhood when every home visited had these paintings on the walls. So when she landed in Chennai and picked up her brush, her traditional 'hanji' canvas was coloured with Indian elements. It was her way of bringing together her two worlds the past and present.

Minhwa, an art form which originated during the Joseon dynasty (1392-1897), is mostly about colouring or copying the works of ancient artists. Primarily focused on nature, it essentially depicts early Korean lifestyle. Growing



A Prathap

INSPIRED: The Indian influence is apparent in Soon-jin Park's painting 'In and Out', which depicts Korea on one side and India on the other

out of hanji in the homes of royalty to adorn ceilings, it is now found everywhere from room dividers to foldable fans.

Park, whose paintings 'Landscape & Minhwa', is on display at the InKo centre till June 16, is an eclectic mix of traditional pieces and a few contemporary paintings, which combine elements of

the folk art form with the influences she has picked up in her two-year stay in India. These new elements are what makes Park's first exhibition in India special. Although minhwa is vibrant it makes use of only five colours — red, white, blue, yellow and black. "Our traditional hanbok clothing too sticks to the five colo-

urs. But in India I was taken with the array of colours on saris. These colours inspired my paintings," explains Park, who strayed from the five colours to capture the vibrancy of India.

The Indian influence is apparent in her painting 'In and Out', which depicts Korea on one side and India on the other. "I was so taken with jasmine flowers and the coconut tree that I had to include them in this piece. This was my most challenging piece too as it took quite some time for my ideas to take shape. But it was worth it," says Park, who has been part of several exhibitions back in South Korea.

The traditional folk paintings were used in lieu of talismans to promote positive energy in living spaces and Park maintains that in her pieces. "The painting titled 'Lo-

tusflowers' is meant for the reception area of a home as it symbolises harmony in the family. Likewise certain pieces are earmarked to be displayed in particular living spaces," says the artist who also teaches calligraphy at InkoCentre.

Deceptively simple, the nuances of minhwa lies in its colours and unlike western styles, the Korean art in not just about what's on the canvas, the space in between too is important. "The amount of blank space in a painting is carefully calculated and it necessary for someone to be present at the gallery to understand the piece in its entirety. You need to really take your time with it," she says, adding that it's also the reason why she prefers people visiting the gallery to have a look at her paintings.