

Golden age of print art in Japan highlighted at exhibition

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KARACHI: Attending the seven-day exhibition titled ‘Photographic Images and Matter – Japanese Prints of 1970s’, which opened at the Japan Information and Culture Centre on Tuesday, allowed one to explore the evolution of photography in Japan during the decade.

The traveling exhibition focuses on print expressions from 1970s as seen in the work of 14 artists who helped develop a print movement in the world of Japanese contemporary art.

The exhibition is divided into two sections. ‘The age of photographic images’ focuses on the use of photographic images in the print medium while ‘Images of autonomous matter’ focuses on works that are shaped by the intentions of matter.

The artists, Tetsuya Noda, Kosuke Kimura, Akira Matsumoto, Satoshi Saito, Hideki Kimura and Sakumi Hagiwara, have their works showcased in ‘The age of photographic images’ and the artists, Jiro Takamatsu, Katsuro Yoshida, Koji Enokura, Shoichi Ida, Tatsuo Kawaguchi, Lee Ufan, Mitsuo Kano and Arinori Ichihara, are a part of the ‘Images of autonomous matter’.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Consul General of Japan, Odagiri Toshio, commented that art has the power to transcend borders. “We hope that the viewer will gain a deep understanding of contemporary art trends of the 1970s triggered by the print medium,” he said.

Speaking about the art of the East and the West, President of the Pakistan Japan Cultural Association (PJCA), Sindh, Sadia Rashid, said that Japan is famous for art. She also spoke about the significance of the exhibition as she reminded how art changed dramatically in the 1970s.

The guest speaker, young visual artist Rabia Farooqui, spoke about print as a medium and technique. “Print as a medium, as many mediums of art, has also evolved over time. It has endless possibilities,” she said.

She also spoke about Tetsuya Noda, whose work is included in the exhibition, as one of the few artists whose work brought a significant shift in the print medium by transforming photographic portraits of his family into prints. “His process was very multilayered and I can relate to it as my own process has many layers,” she said.

“His work beautifully captures the impermanence of time which to date remains a relevant topic of discussion in the field of art. It is up to us and our imagination how we choose to make it relevant and relatable to our social environment,” she added.

Keynote speaker Noor Jehan Bilgrami said that she was fortunate to have been awarded the Japan Foundation Fellowship in 2001. “Japan for me is a country where the aesthetics are sublime. I experienced for the first time the sensibilities of the entire country dramatically change overnight with the changing seasons, the colours of their clothing, the shop interiors, umbrellas and the food all magically alter with the change in landscape colours,” she said.

While sharing with the audience her experience of Japan where she also witnessed the humility and the deep connection with nature of her teachers, she was touched by the reverence the Japanese have for the master craft persons whom they valued as national treasures.

The exhibition concludes on January 31.

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