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## "Art is only about aesthetics" - Kanchi Mehta

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BY ARTI DAS | NT NETWORK

Kanchi Mehta, a Mumbai-based expert in modern and contemporary art, curator, historian, and communications director believes that Goa holds great potential in the art market, but, unfortunately, it is not being explored to its capacity.

She was at the Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts, Altinho to give a lecture on 'Understanding the Art Market' for art collectors and connoisseurs and art lovers.

"The Goan market is obviously different from that of Mumbai or Delhi. But, here I find not much exposure among artists. They need to move around, travel and study the scenario. Also most art galleries are not serious," says Mehta.

Art being an extension of one's imagination has now become a commercial entity. But, still Mehta feels it is not a commercial product at the end of the day.

"Art is only about aesthetics. It has become commercial because it is being bought and sold. Sometimes a work is well appreciated by some people and thus become very popular. Like in the case of artist, Subodh Gupta whose installations became a hit in Europe and he tapped into that market. Also there are some who know the market and thus paint some pretty faces or portrays India or religious paintings," explains Mehta.

Art has now also become a way of investment and is being sometimes being sold for crores of rupees. According to Ms Mehta the price of the art work depends on various factors like the artist, who had bought that painting before

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depends on various factors like the artist, who had bought that painting before, and so on. "The paintings of celebrated artist M F Hussain are being sold for crores of rupees. This is because he has been painting right from the 1940s and has worked with renowned artists like Picasso. Some of his best works are from the 1960s, which are limited number. Also if any painting is bought by any well known personality like Tina Ambani that also affects the price," confirms Ms Mehta.

Elaborating further about M F Hussain she maintained that his leaving the country (because some of his paintings hurt the religious sentiments) is actually a loss to India. "Now he is painting probably his last paintings at Qatar that will be taken by the museums there. It is a loss to us; letting go of such an artist because of some few individuals and their political interests," she rues.

When asked about drawing a line between creativity and responsibility she remarked, "Can you draw a line to your thought process? An artist's paintings are the presentation of his thought process and a freedom of expression." However in the same breath she stated that one should be responsible when showing such works to the world. "The art gallery should be responsible enough and see works do not hurt any particular group. But, this does not mean that the artist should restrict his imagination," concluded Ms Mehta.

Kanchi Mehta is now planning to set up of an Artist Advisory Service for Goa-based artists and aims at conducting workshops for Goan residents who wish to become collectors/investors/dealers in art.



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