

exhibition

A Peripheral Life in Colours

Solo painting exhibition by Kanak Chanpa Chakma



Morning, Acrylic on Canvas, 2000

By Cultural Correspondent

EVERY now and then a person comes along who gets a creative urge to express him or herself in a way that is not ordinary. These creative urges are expressed in various forms, such as writing, acting, singing, or drawing. These are the people who fuel the imagination of a civilisation. These are the people who make us realise what it is to be human and to have the power to imagine and to dream. Kanak Chanpa Chakma is one such person. She is an artist, a painter, and her painting exhibition started on March 24 at the Shilpangan Contemporary Art Gallery. The exhibition was inaugurated by the Governor of Bangladesh Bank Dr Mohammad Farashuddin and was presided over by Professor Mahmudul Haq, eminent artist

and Director of the Institute of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka.

This exhibition is her 15th solo exhibition. Aside from solo exhibitions, she has also participated in over 75 group exhibitions, and 7 of her solo exhibitions have been outside Bangladesh. This solo exhibition is her largest effort to date and consists of a hundred paintings. Most of the paintings are painted with acrylic on canvas, but there are also paintings drawn with ink on paper and also with watercolour. However, it will soon become evident to a viewer that the artist loves to paint with acrylic and most of her ambitious efforts are in this medium. What truly sets Kanak apart from other eminent painters is her subject matter, or the theme. Almost all the paintings reflect life of the natives in the Chittagong Hilltruct area. This is no coincidence as

the artist was born in Rangamati, and now she has taken to translating all her memories of the Hilltruct area, its culture and people, into vivid and colourful paintings.

The paintings themselves vary in style from absolute abstract to a fine balance between abstract and realism. What the artist has tried to do is portray the life and culture of the Chittagong natives in a colourful and interesting way. Instead of trying to paint straight out pictures of people doing things, Kanak has managed to create paintings which are clear enough that a person can understand what Kanak is trying to say, but is abstract enough that the viewer can use the splurge of colours in the paintings as a backdrop for exercising his own imagination. 'New Year' is one such painting. It shows three tribal women dressed in fineries and preparing for the New Year festivities.

In the background the shapes of some tribal musical instruments can be made out, along with one of the women actually playing an instrument. Then there is the painting 'Personal World'. It depicts a woman carrying a basket, probably on her way to work, with a self-absorbed look on her face. The figure of the woman only takes up one third of the painting, the other portion being a tangle of colours. Through these colours the artist has tried to give shape to the personal world of moods, emotions and memories of the woman. The painting 'A Moment' shows a young man standing while carrying a jar type thing on a stick over his shoulder. The backdrop is once again very colourful. This is one of the more abstract paintings of Kanak and the meaning is not immediately clear. However, this is a rare picture of Kanak because almost all of her pictures have women as the central figures. Most pictures don't

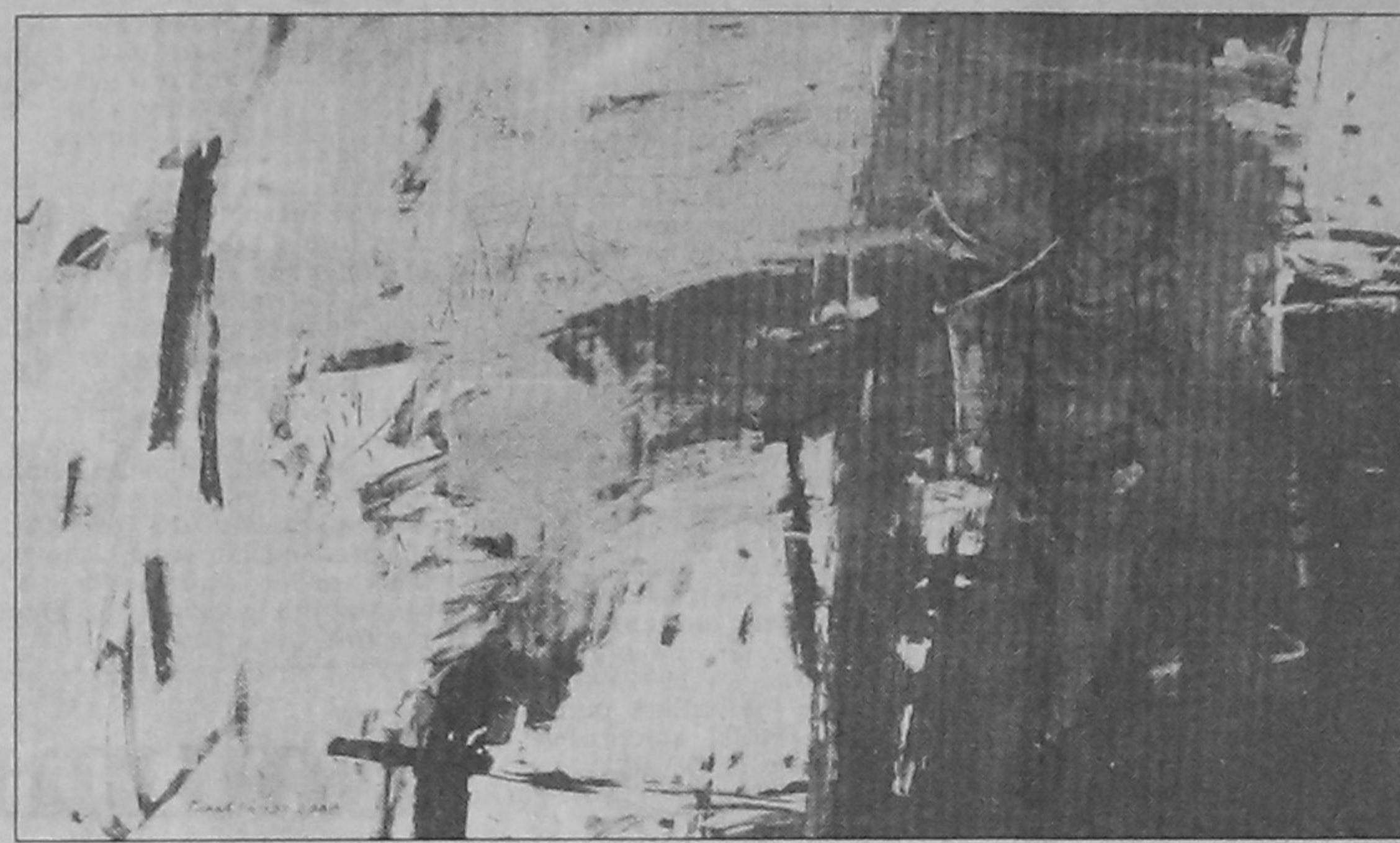
have men, and when men are present it is in a supporting role to women. Kanak says that this is quite intentional, as she wants to portray life in the Hilltruct specifically from the perspective of the woman.

Kanak's painting style has changed a bit from what it was 5-6 years ago. Previously she used to draw paintings based on realism. But in the last 5-6 years, she has managed to incorporate an element of ab-

stract art into her paintings and she believes that this has greatly increased her abilities and now she can be more fluent and expressive in her paintings.

Kanak is already being hailed by her peers and other senior

artists of the country as a first rate painter, and one can understand why after seeing her paintings. The exhibition will remain open daily from 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. till March 31.



Personal World, Acrylic on Paper, 2000

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