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Global project explores India's handicrafts, sustainability

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Tags: south indian | open | net worth | markets | kitchenware | jewels | Insurability | garments | Furniture | craft skills | categories

New Delhi: From Hyderabad jewels-inspired kitchenware to a 3D chandelier influenced by the 'pookalam' (a traditional South Indian floral design), a new project prompts designers to use traditional crafts.

The 'Made in...India: Samskara' project, which opened here last evening, is part of a global initiative under the banner "Be Open" conceptualised by Russian philanthropist Yelena Baturina.



(Designers from across the...)

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A total of 23 designers from across the country are presenting over 100 products, spanning furniture, tableware, textiles and garments that they have created focusing on traditional handmade craft skills.

Union Culture Minister Chandresh Kumari Katoch who opened the exhibition said, "I am extremely happy to know that the 'Be Open' project has been launched in India, which is home to such a variety of handicrafts.

"It is a difficult task to keep the ancient traditions of handicraft alive in our country and only way of doing it is by linking it to markets thereby making it self-sustaining," she said.

The project, curated by Sunil Sethi, President, Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI), is set to travel to Japan and culminate in an auction in Italy in 2015.

Union Textiles Minister Kavuru Sambasiva Rao who was present at the launch of the exhibition was seen enquiring about the details and the material used in the various designs on display.

"All the designs are of high-grade. I am witnessing something of this sort for the first time. I congratulate the organisers and the makers of these amazing pieces of art," he said.

Yelena Baturina, who is currently based out of London said, "...we have developed a revolutionary infrastructure that will help young people evolve their practice and give them a first foothold on the professional ladder.

"With our support, creative thinking can thrive, business models can bear fruit and experiments can become realities," she said.

Ayush Kasliwal, one of the participating designers shared his take on "art going the global way".

"For me, art has never had any frontiers. I think the challenge lies in having a global viewpoint about what you are creating and still maintain the intricacies of your roots," Kasliwal said.

The artist said he based his studio "in the small town of Jaipur to work with the local artisans and create simple, everyday objects with them."

A panel discussion by fashion professionals from across the world on global art brought to the fore various problems associated with the Indian art and craft market, the rich craftsmanship of local artists and the collaboration of global artists.

Amy Kazmin, one of the panelists talked about the hesitation of international fashion labels to talk about their association with Indian craftsmen.

"I feel the major fashion labels of the world are yet to overcome their 'Made in India' stigma. They are hesitant to make their clients aware that the exquisite piece that they are holding is actually made by an Indian craftsman.

"Prada was the first international label to come out with an Indian Men's collection in 2011 and state that the clothes were made in India. The exceptionally talented lot of Indian artists needs to get their due. Similarly, artists themselves should realise the value of their creation. They should have this urge to improvise and move ahead," Amy said.

Anupama Kundoo who created the architectural space for the exhibition at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) brought in handmade granite from Puduchery to lay the floors of the exhibition.

"I am honoured to create this landscape where the focus is not on the material. The idea is to transcend the material. Here, the ancient and the modern are in complete harmony, they are not competing against each other," she said.

On the panel, she made a point about how humans should do the intelligent work and leave the rest to the machine and not the other way round.

"I don't profess an idea where the work is done by sophisticated machines and we are mute spectators. The knowledge should not be robotic. Let us think and let the machines help us and not dominate us," she added.

Organisers of the 'Be Open' have created a contest where design students can create designs across five fashion categories on the topic 'Create the ultimate Indian object for the future'. The Prize for each category is \$1500.

The "Made in...India" show is on display at the IGNCA till February 28. The exhibition will travel to Tokyo and will be auctioned at Miami, proceeds of which is set to be put in the 'Young Talent Award fund' for emerging designers.