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Breath Gets a Form through Poems and Pics

By Aparna Desikan

CHENNAI: How does one express ‘breath’? Theatre artiste **Akhila Ramarayan**, visual artist Saloni Sinha and photographer Swarat Ghosh have done it through poems, illustrations and photographs. On Tuesday, they displayed five pieces each of their work, at Spaces.

Swarat’s work was centered on goats in a slaughterhouse. He perhaps thought about what would express the value of breath more than a place where animals stopped breathing, and presented black and white photos of their different emotions. Titled Bond, there was a photo of a boy carrying a goat on his shoulders and smiling at the camera – almost like posing for a selfie with it! A goat that could be butchered any moment is caught on camera.



The photo exhibition at Spaces explored the ways to express ‘Breath’ | P RAVIKUMAR That moment, along with the train of thoughts that followed while Akhila Ramnarayan observed the

photograph, were put together in a poem (on a chart paper with tiny doodles in them) Beyond Breath. The verses teach a certain baby Rumi about how the world destroys resources and escapes to newer spaces to deplete resources there as well.

On seeing these two pieces of work, one would have thought that the poems are written to explain the pictures. But on exploring their work more, the connection between the pieces of work did not seem as concrete and the creative could have found several interpretations and links among the works displayed. “That is how we intended it to be — just place the poems, photographs and illustrations randomly and allow the spectator’s mind to run riot and make their own interpretations and connections,” said Akhila, whose poems explained various situations, ideas and imaginations.

One of her poems was an endearing description of the visual artist Saloni and the way she went about working for the exhibition. The poem mentioned the artist’s illustrations on bears, which seemed to be the main focus of Saloni’s sketches in black.

The effect of environmental degradation was effectively depicted in the illustrations. One of them had a forest inside the outline of a bear— a powerful depiction on how the forests make them survive and hence, breathe. Why bears, though? “I have always been making illustrations of bears, guess I am drawn to them. But it’s not just bears, it’s the environment that I have focused on, because that’s an aspect which has evolved with us. The way it has changed can be depicted well,” she said.

With so many interpretations on breath, the works were just a beginning of their collaboration and there would be more such ideas, perhaps on breath itself, in future, they said.

On being asked when it would happen, Akhila said, “It would be organic and we would let our ideas germinate at their own speed.” So, we need to watch for more of the interplays between the ideas of three artistes in the city.