

Conversations at the edge of a desert

The Art and Ideas of Hassan Sharif

By Vivek Vilasini

Simple, still and silent; Hassan Sharif's art is defiant in its dialectic and diversity. So simple you can't avoid it and so complicated you can't figure it out. His philosophy of images is a rigorous and disciplined path that leads thought in a direction where-in the viewer experiences a "re-awakened awareness" and a unique mode of access to hitherto unexplored dimensions of history and of Being. The "understanding" of art takes place within a wide realm and history of images and materials. It is a continuum of the visual sensibility opened up by the first cave painters.

Hassan Sharif began by systematically re-exploring the roots of aesthetic dimensions of man's relation to the desert, his deserts, which he longs to both escape and embrace.

His search for self-expression led him to a powerful aesthetic alternative method that seeks the relations of the object and its latent relations to society. He preferred crude, cheap and easily available, materials not usually found in art stores. The methods used in making his works were also simple. "Making" for him is a matter of knowing the language of the materials and exploiting its syntax and creating a rare esthetic coherence so that the object comes alive with its own story.

"I am satisfied when the forms push through or appear like a rare bloom in a desert". What results is an art in which modernist cerebration and tribal atavism, the traditions of western high art and those of pre-industrial craft, painterly illusionism and sculptural abstraction counterbalance one another in a dialectical take off.

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