

## Pankaj Nigam: Mirrors of his soul

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**“Sometimes I wonder why I paint. And fail to find the answer....I paint probably because I am not satisfied somewhere...may be I have a lot to say to myself and to the world outside...or may be...because I dream. I am because I paint...it’s my language...my way of expression. When I don’t paint, I do poetry and then I paint my own poems. “**

*-Pankaj (Discussion on his art with the editor, November 25, 2002)*

You’re unlikely to guess that there’s an artist tucked away behind those gentle eyes and quite demeanor. In fact so unassuming is the man that you scarcely believe it when he casually mentions that he will be holding an exhibition of his paintings at a prestigious art gallery in New Delhi.

Pankaj Nigam, all of 34 years, lives and breathes art. He has done so since his days at College of Arts & Crafts, Lucknow, where he experienced his first tryst with the magical palette. He was still at college in 1992 when he held his first exhibition- a unique and innovative experiment combining art and the work of fiery poet, Harivansh Rai Bachchan.

His paintings lent wings to Bachchan’s Madhushala, a poem about the realization of GOD, motivated by Sufism. Over the years, he added to this ‘fusion repertoire’ the works of modern poets such as Sarveshwar Dayal Saxena, Muktibodh, Ashok Vajpayee, Dhoomil, Nirala, Kunwar Narayan, Vinod Das, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Sahir Ludhyanvi among a host of other sultans of rhyme.

His penchant for thinking “out of the box” also spurred him to paint during live musical show organized in U.P. by Sangeet Natak Academy. Once again, he transformed the sensual experience into captivating imagery on canvas, an attempt that earned him accolades from art critics and the media in Lucknow city.

The word revolutionary meanwhile also sits easy on him. Pankaj involvement with the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) of Lucknow, a well known theatre body, not only exposed him to some of the great contemporary thinkers, artists, poets, dramatists, and writers of ‘90s, also brought him closure to the communist movement.

His move to Delhi marked the second key phase of his artistic journey. It was an unusual pilgrimage, medley of encounters with organizations such as the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the college of Fine Arts. It was a series of encounters, which further refined his aesthetic skills, adding strength to his brush strokes.

Pankaj joined NIIT in 1997 as media consultant to KSB. Since then, he has been part of many important projects of NIIT. Work however, has not stood in the way of his artistic ambitions. His home is his studio and you can catch him bent over the aisle on days when the call of the hues becomes irresistible.