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From K'taka to Kochi

Two curators from the city give us a glimpse of their selection processes for the Students' Biennale of Kochi-Muziris Biennale

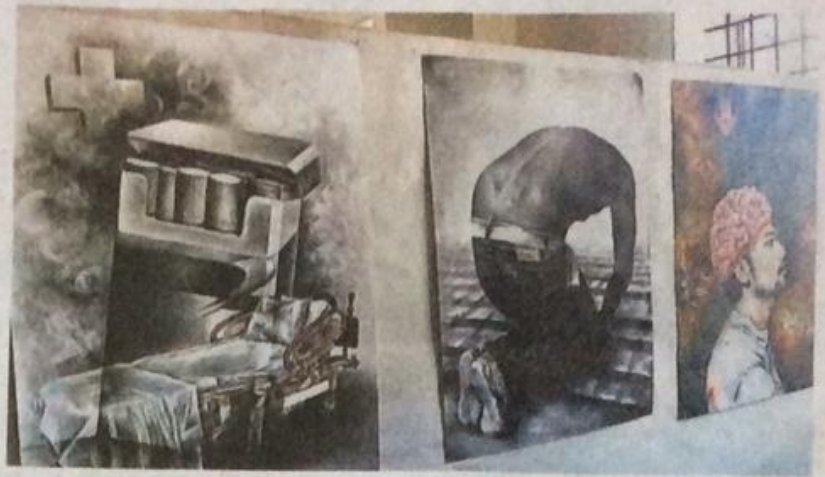
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Preparations are underway for the Kochi-Muziris Biennale (KMB) 2016. One of them is particularly interesting as it has 15 student curators across India scouring for talent in Government-run art colleges and schools. In the last edition of KMB, works guided by devastating floods of Jammu & Kashmir by 14 students from the Institute of Music and Fine Arts, Srinagar, became the talking point of the Biennale. The Students' Biennale was a new element introduced at the second edition of Kochi-Muziris Biennale in 2014 called 'Whorled Explorations'.

This year's edition, helmed by Sudarshan Shetty, the Kochi Biennale Foundation (KBF), in collaboration with The Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art (FICA) and Foundation for Indian Art and Education (FIAE), are developing Students' Biennale to run parallel to the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in December.

Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath (Bengaluru) & Chamarajendra Academy of Visual Arts (Mysuru)

In Karnataka curators such as Sumithra Sunder and Naveen Mahantesh are at work. While Sumithra is looking at Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath (CKP), Department of Visual Arts, Bangalore University and Chamarajendra Academy of Visual Arts (CAVA) in Mysuru, Naveen is taking care of Mahalasa College of Visual Art, Mangalore and fine arts department of Tumkur University, which are both first timers at Students' Biennale. The process has just begun and it is early to say what will emerge. "Right now I am speaking to students trying to



CHURNING CREATIVITY Some of the works by the students

understand if they think of themselves as artists, what they are learning and what is being taught. I have a few workshops planned with them after their exams," says Sumithra, an alumni of CKP and Ph.D. Scholar at the National Institute of Advanced Studies.

The curator says though she can't spot a trend there are distinct flavours of art being produced in different colleges. "CAVA is modernist whereas CKP is leaning towards contemporary and a lot of it has to do with exposure and syllabi," she adds. Right now the aim is to stir their imagination through a series of activities. "I am planning to have readings from John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* and have a dialogue around that. I am not aiming for any number of works from these many art colleges. It is a process and I don't see any institute like KMB putting in this kind of effort. And all this will make it to my research."

Citing some interesting works of students she has seen so far, Sumithra talks about Jayasimha Chandrashekhar, who is in the first year of MVA printmaking; and another student from CAA-

VA who every time drinks tea in a disposable glass cleans it and draws something on it. "He wants to do an installation but doesn't exactly know how and what it will be and then there is someone who uses compass and machinery to make social commentary."

Tumkur University (Tumkur) and Mahalasa College of Visual Art (Mangalore)

Naveen has also planned some workshops for students in Mangalore and identifying possible public spaces in the port city where students could exhibit their works for an exercise in public art. "My intention is to find out if these art institutions have a voice, an if the students have a voice after they come out the college. They have a high degree of skill but the question I want them to respond to is that where does their art come from." An architect himself, he also wants to build bridges between art and architecture and allow for exchanges to happen. "We will start looking at cities, the layered history of Tumkur and Mangalore and turn it into a vocabulary for these cities," says Naveen.