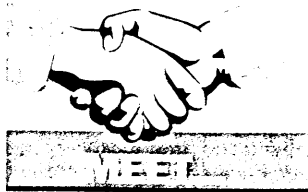


GAP's Exhibition
Tibetan Pavilion Auroville
28.01.03 — 05.02.2003
6 Tapestries.

GION / LIFE

Call her by her name 'Ghislaine Aarsse-Prins' and this painter, etcher and designer of tapestry and jewellery from France will not respond. For, she got so used to being called GAP, her 'brush name' as she calls it. "GAP is also the name of a city in France but what is in a name?" she asks. This international artist, who has worked in places including Zaire, Washington, Amsterdam, Malaysia and New Delhi, is in town exhibiting her tapestry works at the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture in Auroville. Deepa H. Ramakrishnan spoke to this realistic painter on her meditation that is her work.



GHISLAINE

MUSEUMS AND the clastra, a sort of a concrete brick, which is about 30 x 30 cm and 6 to 15 cm thick, used to construct fretted walls, are the two things that GAP often uses in her paintings, etchings and now even tapestry.

As the daughter of an architect and the great grand daughter of an artist, GAP grew up in an atmosphere of paintings, drawings and construction. She bought her first set of oils and brush when she was just 15 and she had taken to drawing long before that. As she grew up she worked a lot with architecture. "It is in my mind. Maybe the geometric figures that are needed to make an architectural drawing attracted me. In my composition of paintings, generally I use a lot of construction," she explains.

The artist as yogi



Photo: T. Singaravelou

Showing an oil painting from the 'My artist is a Yogi series', she says that it took some ten years for it to become a tapestry.

It was in Kinshasa in Zaire in 1980 that she saw the first clastra. "Those things were lying all around my garden. I am a painter, who does not have exotic ideas and when I saw these things lying around I began to draw them one by one with this clastra around me. They were all not perfect or whole, some were broken, some had cracks. Then when I worked with pencil on paper one by one after some time when I did a painting with this, this piece seemed like an architectural piece. And I liked it. For me, that depicted and still depicts Zaire. Though the clastra forms a real separation, it has open spaces. It is like a wall through which you can see," she explains.

One of the tapestries at the exhibition shows a blue 'museum bag'. "Many museums all over the world have such bags. The bag that I have used in this

piece is the one from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. I changed a few letters and made it look like 'the politic of art'. There can be any number of interpretations to that line," she says.

The museums and clastra are sort of continuity objects in her paintings. "Though I have worked all over the world and the context is different, the museum and the clastra are always there. They are like a continuity in my paintings." GAP says that she reacts to the place where she evolves. It influences me. We cannot ignore or be indifferent to our environment. I work on several levels. I try to work directly on consciousness.

A person, who paints in series, GAP's series titled Mon artiste est un Yogi (My artist is a Yogi) in 1993 was a sort of a reaction to a colleague's painting called 'My artist is a butch-

er', which itself was inspired by the slogan of a French advertisement campaign to sell more meat — 'My butcher is an artist!'

"All the works, etchings, drawings around Mon artiste est un Yogi exist because I wanted to turn the tables on a painting of one of my colleagues. Currently we live in a period of transformation in which consciousness is becoming more and more tangible, ever more present. Mankind aspires this. It becomes from all sides, starts everywhere. Sects slaughter each other and themselves. Entire countries are ravaged but undoubtedly, all this part of a consciousness permeating matter. The essence of my work, and I become more and more aware of it, is a consciousness in matter," she says trying slowly to make me understand her French accent.

Showing an oil painting from the 'My artist is a Yogi series', she says that it took some ten years for it to become a tapestry. "The processing is quite long; that is the way I work," she adds. GAP has been working with tapestry and jewellery for the past two and half years, ever since she met an artist by name Rajan. I had been to Gujarat in 1999. That was the first time that I went to Baroda and I travelled to lots of places and also had an exhibition in the Alliance Francaise there. It was there that I met Rajan, the artist who weaves my tapestries. I met this artist. I liked his work and he can understand what I want. There is good communication between the two of us. I draw or paint the designs and he makes the tapestries." She says that like the yogi in the painting, for her, her work is yoga. Many of the tapestries and paintings that she has exhibited at the Tibetan Pavilion are quite large. When you work with tapestries you don't work with words but with colour and line.