

Suchitra Gahlot



Be prepared for some unusual installations at this show. Gurgaon-based Suchitra Gahlot is inspired by random, even mundane things – upturned ice creams, for example, or the feel of a nice cold shower. She tells **Janice Pariat** why even a box of tissues can be a work of art.

What was the inspiration for “one thousand tears”? Was it meant to be a cathartic piece?

“One thousand tears” was born from a migraine. I have tried everything over the years to brave the pain and yet the cope-mechanism is always the same. Medicine, shower, seclusion, silence, darkness, blanket, fan on, fan off. Tears. Being in pain seems to be the loneliest feeling in the world and yet we all cry,

don't we?

For the installation, a thousand people from all over the world were asked to respond to the question “why did you cry last?” Their anonymous one-word replies were labelled onto a thousand small vials. The vials were filled with a saline solution that matched the exact composition of human tears. As a viewer, you are able to observe the “reasons for crying” dispassionately and yet there is a discomfort in knowing that someone was moved to tears because of that one word.

Is that why boxes of tissues are part of the installation?

“One Thousand Tears” is also rendered as a limited edition “use and throw book”. A compilation of a thousand reasons that made people cry is contained in four tissue boxes that make a set. You can read the one-word answers on each tissue as you pull it out. But once the tissue is used, the answer is lost forever.

For an installation created from silk, metal, wood, ceramic and tile, “all I have ever wanted is a nice cold shower” looks life-like and refreshing...

We live in a time that makes a virtue out of consumption. We don't even need occasions anymore to validate buying a present or something special. Tuesday works just fine for me. The thing is, every new thing you buy just gets old really quickly. So you feel the need to buy more stuff to feel happy about something. I am always using eclectic taste as a poor excuse to chase after something silly that I don't need. I feel like a pig for being this person. “All I have ever wanted is a nice cold shower” is possibly the closest to being cathartic, in that sense. While everything else becomes habit, the routine act of a shower has always made me feel better.



God and ice cream? Interesting equation. Do all those upturned cones in “some days I wake up thinking is there really a god” represent everything that's terrible with the world?

You could say that. What greater disappointment is there than fallen ice cream? I have often prayed to a god that at other times I have believed does not exist. The prayers that aren't answered affirm the presence of a god as much as the prayers that do. I suppose, in a strange way, faith is also about having that someone to blame.

To participate in the “one thousand tears” project, check www.onethousandtears.com, and submit your reason for crying.

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