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Animal planet

Jagannath Panda's new works explore issues of migration, habitation and coexistence, says Janice Pariat.



Fans of Jagannath Panda's older work will not be disappointed with his new show, The Action of Nowhere. The seven paintings and six sculptures are still full of animal motifs and they continue to explore the clash (and coexistence) of the natural with a built urban environment.

for everyone," he said. From his artworks, "everyone" would seem to include hyenas, parrots, deer and falcons.

He clearly feels an affinity for the creatures he depicts. The life-size one-horned rhinoceros sculpture cast in fibreglass, for example, was inspired by visits to Kaziranga. Even though he started out with drawings of animals, he grew to feel that only sculpture truly did justice to them.

Lifelike as it may seem, the rhino's "skin" is made of biscuit-coloured silky material embossed with a floral pattern. Panda has employed this technique in the past and it highlights his fascination with making unnatural things look natural. "Homegrown" demonstrates this more clearly - a tall bare plant standing in a plastic container is wrapped in earth-coloured material embossed with leaves and flowers.

Panda uses juxtaposition to good effect, both to make a thematic point about the commingling of natural and urban spaces, and to further his stylistic ends. An untitled tin trunk with a painting of a bee on the lid opens to reveal a fibreglass honeycomb.



"The Splash of the Uncanny" shows a half-constructed room with scaffolding, which contains a bare potted plant and a company of parrots in beautiful jewel shades that are highlighted by the pale blue walls of the room. Cans of paint spill everywhere, while a colour bar sheet hangs on a bamboo pole that is itself stained with paint.

Clearly, nature and urban living can't always coexist. His most recent paintings explore this. The title painting of this exhibition shows an explosion of what looks like forest debris - twigs, wilted flowers and leaves - with a black buck entering and another exiting the explosion. He captures the moment of explosion, an effect he re-uses in "Fatal Sublime" and "The Lost Site", both of which capture cars crashed into trees.