

TABLE MANNERS – 2 hopes to draw you into the nexus of good food and delicious ceramic ware.... and hope you come out a believer!

A decade ago, I co-curated Table Manners-1 with Rakhee Kane at Gallery Square Circle in Auroville featuring artists from Pondicherry, Bangalore and Auroville. Everyone was given a cement slab tabletop on Siporex blocks, one naked bulb hanging off a dangly wire, all set in a dark cement-walled room. Images of the tables shot by Ireno Guerci somehow reached Tarana Khubchandani of Gallery Art & Soul, who for the last decade has been requesting a Part 2 at her space in Bombay. My only stipulation, “I want dark walls” took some doing!

Now, dark walls at all, we introduce you to Table Manners – 2, this time my co-curator being the indefatigable Shayonti Salvi. We opened up the show to make it an all-India presence, inviting over 60 artists to send in proposals for table settings and wall murals. Our outline was simple; we wanted clean functional ceramics; no hairy-fairy concepts and absolutely no metaphors! For the walls we invited artists to submit proposals for murals dealing with food as the theme.

We were happily flooded with incredibly varied and skilled ideas for filling up the tables and walls; all of which will jostle each other, happily so, to form a collage of some of the best cutting-edge ceramic work one may get to see in India today. We will be tying up the exhibition with pop-up events hosted by chefs and celebs in the hospitality industry, who will bounce off their ideas of food presentation, plating, etc., inspired by the tableware around them at the show.

Today in India, there is a growing awareness for the let’s use-in-India the made-in-India.... a healthy sign in a country so rich and young in its ceramic history! I urge you to touch some of the work, pick it up, feel the balance, feel the textures, flip it over and see the bottoms, notice the various clay bodies used by artists for their sets. It is a humdinger that functional tableware has moved away from being the humble bumpkin of sculptural ceramics and is now basking in newfound possibilities. Enjoy the handmade ...and the variety of clay processes, firing techniques and signature aesthetics.

The pandemic was in its initial stages of uncertainty last year when we decided to postpone TM-2 ...just three days prior to opening night in March 2020. However, it finally opens on the 8th of April 2021. Virtual? Actual? Does it matter?just mind your table manners and socially distance yourself as you swoon over the works on show!!!

ADIL WRITER, Auroville, March 2021