

Curious imprints

VISUAL ARTS

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The multiplicity of textures, forms and surfaces that bear the imprint of the objects that they have come in direct contact with is the most striking feature of Dattatreya Apte's exhibition of paper pulp casts titled *The Soft Stone*. Organised by Aakriti Art Gallery, curated by Nanak Ganguly and held at the Lalit Kala Akademi's new building in Calcutta, the title of the exhibition was apt.

Apte exploited the malleability of paper pulp to create sculptural

reliefs that echoed the forms of real objects and, yet, stirred the imaginations of viewers as some were visual conundrums whose complexity was challenging. Apte tinted some of the surfaces to enhance the diversity of his creations, occasionally reflecting reality, while others stretched far away from it, delighting viewers with the studies in contrast. Trying to figure out the real objects that his paper pulp creations bore the impressions of was one of the delights that this exhibition afforded. Apte successfully used his skills as a printmaker.

Born in Sangli, Maharashtra, in 1953, Apte trained initially at Pune's Abhinav Kala Mahavidyalaya and at

Baroda's M.S. University thereafter. He later studied papermaking at the Glasgow School of Art in 1999 after he received a Charles Wallace India Trust grant.

Bricks, mats, leaves, palm fronds and household implements — Apte used a variety of objects, both man-made and organic, to create his works. While in most of these reliefs the objects used are obvious because of their similarity, in his best works, he makes no attempt at simulacrum. The interplay of surfaces, textures, forms and tones is quite fascinating. In these non-figurative works, he used paper pulp both as a sculptor and as a painter in his fluid forms.

