



DEBUT

AN ARTISTIC pathway

For ANJ SMITH, being an artist was never a debate. A childhood obsession that is now a career path, ART is her whole life. The Londoner, who dedicates 12 hours in a day to her work, took a break from her hectic schedule for her MAIDEN EXHIBITION in INDIA. L'Officiel India caught up with her on a rainy afternoon and loved what we saw.

BY Praachi RANIWALA.

Galerie Isa is abuzz with activity as the team is gearing up for the launch of Anj Smith's art exhibition, 'Woods Without Pathways'. As the crew adds finishing touches to the display, a visibly excited Smith, dressed in a leopard print dress and nude wedges, chats animatedly about her first showing in the country. The 34-year-old Britisher's work slips between the traditional categories of still life, portraiture and landscape making heavy use of the impasto technique and fine brushstrokes. "This particular show deals with navigation and finding one's identity. A close friend underwent a difficult gender change and his struggle to identify with either of the sexes left an impression on me," she says of the experience that has manifested itself in her work.



TOP LEFT TO RIGHT PAINTINGS FROM 'WOODS WITHOUT PATHWAYS'. ANJ SMITH'S WORKSPACE.

What strikes you immediately is the size of each painting, largely only slightly bigger than postcards. "I like the intimacy of small scale. Instant gratification is a big deal these days and I love the idea of making something that is really slow burning and counter cultural in that sense," she quips. Her work is layered and boasts of multiple facets, with a penchant for creating "a painting within a painting—an abstract painting behind the representational painting which draws in the viewer." Fashion has been a constant source of inspiration for Smith and the influence of Burberry and Alexander McQueen stands out in 'Woods Without Pathways'. She reveals, "There is a bit of a snobbery in higher art

circles where fashion is considered frivolous, but I don't subscribe to that view." When quizzed on her favourite artists she points towards Willem Kalf, Lucas Cranach, William Blake and Nigel Cooke without skipping a beat. Intrigued by the works of internationally renowned Indian artists Bharti Kher and Subodh Gupta, she is also in awe of Chitra Ganesh's talent. Above all, what really shines through is not just Smith's skill but also her passion for her craft. She peers at you inquiringly, respects your insights and remains open to your point of view—forever keen to discover a fresh interpretation of her own work.

PURCHASING ART 101 WITH ANJ SMITH

- Find an advisor whom you can trust. I'd suggest looking at everything from museum shows to upcoming grass-root galleries.
- I rate Hauser & Wirth very highly. They support a wide mix of established and emerging artists and have galleries in Zurich, London and New York.
- There are a plethora of choices that you can and should explore. I have friends who have sometimes started collecting with works of art on paper. It's all a matter of personal taste.
- I don't believe in looking at art just as an investment. I realise that there is a commercial context for art but my only concern is that the work should be conceptually interesting and the painting languages employed should be in tandem with these concerns.
- Trust your instincts, buy what you genuinely relate to and admire. Basically, buy for love of art and nothing else.