

The Best of Worlds

Turkish artist Guler Ates' latest exhibition bears a strong mix of her Asian and European influences



SANKHAYAN GHOSH

AT the centre of Guler Ates' photographs are mysteriously veiled female figures covered from head to toe, appearing against backdrops that are reminiscent of medieval European castles. Ates confirms this when she says that they have been photographed inside London's Victoria and Albert Museum. The museum, known to house the best of East Asian and Islamic artefacts, was the perfect setting for her Middle Eastern exoticism-meets-Victo-

Artist Guler Ates at the ongoing exhibition in Mumbai

rian aesthetic endeavour. The confluence doesn't just end here, for she has infused Mumbai and Ahmedabad influences, too, in the series. Titled "A Trace of the Traceless", the exhibition opened at The Loft, Lower Parel, on December 7 and will go on till February 1.

Ates, a Turkish artist based in London, first visited India in 2009 when she came for a month-long residency at the same gallery. "Before coming to In-

dia, I would use a lot more colours in my works, but then in Ahmedabad, I saw women wearing clothes swathed in just one colour. This struck me as a wonderful way for minimalism and I included it here," she says, referring to the single-colour clothing that her female figures are draped in.

The exhibition gets its title from the artist's fascination with the idea of displacement. The women in pictures are made to look like illusionary abstract figures who may disappear anytime. "The figure in these works inhabits the places in a ghostly manner. The allusion is to both invisibility and visibility. Her actions hint at a traceless tale, and dark spaces," she says. Darkness and daylight are essential elements of her art, which boasts of both minimalism and influences from 17th and 18th century Dutch paintings.

"Daylight brings out the best in colours," she says, adding, "and darkness makes me want to find out what is inside it that complements the desire to know the figure beneath the veil." The photographs are devoid of any effects and this is evident in their moody and comforting appeal. And though she is particular about each element in the photographs — colours, postures and backdrop — they are mostly results of instinctive decisions; even the costumes are chosen on the sets.

"We carry clothes of all colours, study the background and decide which one would suit the best. For example, in one work, I used green since I felt it would go well with the red colour of the carpet," she says.