

The shiny chariot that is drawing crowds to Whitefield Art Collective

The “Whitefield Art Collective” at VR Bengaluru in Whitefield is not just a collective of 100 artists to showcase a multitude of art works and installations during the weekend, but has some intensely creative pieces grabbing attention to detail.

The magnetic pull is, of course, the late Yusuf Arakkal’s “arto-mobile” where the Bengaluru-based artist had transformed his 1956-model Fiat Millecento car into a copper sculpture.

While the curious were seen prying into the minutiae of this golden funky brown car-makeover at the Art Collective, R.H. Kulkarni, art historian, who has penned a special essay on Arakkal, said, “Arakkal’s passion was not restricted to his brush ... his love for automobiles have interesting incidents and stories behind them.”

“There was a fascinating phase in Arakkal’s life in the 1980s where his deft hands itched to do something different all the time. That was when he came across this car. As he was a talented muralist, he turned it around into a *pièce de résistance*, and brought in his friend to do the welding of copper reliefs,” says Mr. Kulkarni. This is his signature contribution that falls under the concept of mobile art, a decorated chariot being the bygone version of the conceptualisation.

“Arakkal bridged the traditional and modern with his arto-mobile creations on his car,” says Mr. Kulkarni.

Arakkal, in the 1960s, purposely crashed his Enfield motorbike, so that he could artistically modify it to make it look flashy. This was the starting point for his four-wheeler craze in an aesthetic sense, according to Gallerist, Sara Arakkal, Arakkal’s wife. “Fiat Millecento was our first car in the family that came to us in 1986. The car was given away by Arakkal’s friend and art collector Harish Padmanabha who swapped the car with two of Arakkal’s paintings and a sculpture,” recalls Mrs. Arakkal.

The Fiat gradually turned out to be a favourite in the family as Ms. Sara and their

son Shibu learnt driving on it and didn't want to sell it. "After a lot of thought, Arakkal started the work on it, leaving behind one of the rarest works for the family to inherit the artistic legacy, " said Ms. Sara.

It took him nearly four years to see his car transformed, while his friend, who worked in the medium, helped the welding of copper strips even as the relief paints and imagery were all Arakkal's imaginative additions for a fashionable twist.

The Whitefield Art Collective has independent participants such as George Martin P.J., Murali Cheeroth, Rajesh P.S, Mayadhara Sahu, and Ria Rajan. There are installations, sculptures, paintings from artists from Shantiniketan, MSU-Baroda, Srishti Institute of Art, Cholamandal Artist's Village, Tamil Nadu, and Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, Mumbai.

This edition of Whitefield Art Collective is a tribute to Yusuf Arakkal that will have art works on display for a month at VR Bengaluru in Whitefield.