

Auroville art

January offered much for exhibition-going culture-vultures in Auroville. Savitri Bhavan's white expanse and sleek design – arguably the best exhibition space in Auroville – hosted Aurovilians Grazi and Nathalie's exhibition *Colourful Silence*. The exhibition celebrated nature in richly coloured paintings that featured ethereal nymph-like visages peering out from woods or lily ponds. Other paintings evoked Chagall with their delicate abstract motifs and dream-like mood.

Sarasija's *Mandala* exhibition at the Tibetan Pavilion shifts from her former work on mandalas to focus on the butterfly, the symbol of transformation and metamorphosis. The artworks featured butterflies cut from paper and



'Pension Night'. Water colour by Nathalie

decorated variously, set into the frame with subtly-patterned paper shapes reminiscent of delicate Japanese origami designs.

Former Aurovillian Diane Smith presented her *Silk Life* collection of fine silk art at Pitanga. The richly-coloured wall hangings depicted an array of themes, from lotuses and landscapes to female deities and Mother. Her delicately stitched artworks use rich silk fabrics cut across the grain to capture the light in different ways; for example, to depict the petals of a lotus flower in afternoon light. Her well-attended opening saw many who appreciated the works.

Celestine's *I Am Art* exhibition/installation at the gallery Square Circle at Kala Kendra was a contrast to the ethereal quality of the previous three exhibitions with its more earthy approach. The circular space featured photo self-portraits that celebrated and arguably fetishised her head of multiple long braids as a powerful agent captured in movement and dance. The downstairs space was given over to an installation that featured rustic objects, hanging braids and candles – a work that gave a sense of grounding to the upstairs photographic offerings.

The exhibition *The Wild Flowers in Matrimandir* at the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture showed the fine work of Padha from Korea. "Working at Matrimandir, I was impressed with the perfect beauty and strong life-force of the tiny wild flowers," he wrote in his introduction to the exhibition. "They were manifesting perfection of the divinity." And he started to paint them in a calligraphic style – a work he described as "com-



'Inocenza'. Acrylic on paper by Grazi

municating with the flower in meditation, expressing their beauty in the oriental beauty of emptiness." His work captivated the essence of the flowers, as well as the attention of the public.

The *Autumn in Kyoto* exhibition of photo collages from Franz was displayed in the Aurelec cafeteria. The collages evoked a Japanese autumn through rich images of trees, landscapes and tea ceremonies, inset with the occasional photo of a young kimono-wearing Mother. The graphic shapes contrasted well with delicacy of presentation. These beautiful artworks deserved a better display space than behind the buffet serving tables!

Lesley



'Chandreka's self portrait' Silk art by Diane Smith

Is Auroville art lacking in variety?

Much Auroville art shares an ethereal quality, a delicacy of execution, soft colours, and a focus on nature and otherworldly female images. Do Auroville artists broadly have a tendency towards certain artistic styles and themes, to the point where Auroville's collective art offerings start to become monochromatic? Will Auroville ever produce edgy art that pushes boundaries in its themes, genre and execution, while still maintaining the high standard of execution that we see in Auroville?

Art that makes socio-political commentary is largely absent, as Auroville artists generally focus on rendering visual an interpretation of the 'inner', keeping the two domains separate. Art that challenges viewers to think about Auroville in different ways is also lacking. Is it possible for artists to bring, for example, some of the subversive elements of the Genius Brothers on to the exhibition walls in Auroville?

In terms of genre, multi-media art – currently popular in the West – is largely neglected in Auroville. Whilst Auroville has hosted very credible exhibitions by its photographers, these artworks are usually literal representations. The importance of concept and innovation is often overlooked by Auroville artists. Is it time we expanded our interpretation of Mother's focus on beauty and aesthetics to develop art with diverse conceptual approaches across new and exciting genres? Lesley

POPULATION STATISTICS

Comparing statistics – Auroville Population 1999 – 2010

Comparative overview by nationality						
Nationality	Nov.05	Nov.06	Nov.07	Nov.08	Nov.09	Nov.10
Indian	736	760	799	876	918	932
French	261	279	290	303	323	324
German	226	232	226	228	242	247
Italian	85	89	93	100	111	118
Dutch	77	75	83	78	81	88
American	61	65	67	70	80	80
Russian	40	41	45	46	52	50
Swiss	42	50	53	52	53	47
British	50	51	45	49	47	46
Spanish	30	32	33	34	36	43
Israeli	16	21	28	23	27	42
Korean	20	25	19	24	31	36
Belgian	17	19	19	18	19	26
Swedish	12	13	14	17	24	22
Canadian	23	23	24	23	23	17
Ukrainian	15	16	16	16	15	16
Australian	12	12	12	12	13	13
Austrian	10	10	7	7	8	8
South African	1	1	6	7	6	8
Tibetan	7	6	7	6	6	7
Japanese	4	4	4	4	4	7
Danish	3	3	3	2	3	6
Slovene	2	2	2	4	7	6
Argentinian	8	7	7	7	7	6
Brazilian	2	3	5	3	3	5
Nepalese	1	1	3	4	4	4
Sri Lankan	4	4	4	4	4	4
Belorussian	1	1	1	2	3	3
Portuguese	0	0	0	0	1	3
Taiwanese	0	0	0	0	3	3
Hungarian	3	3	4	6	6	3
Icelandic	0	1	1	2	2	3
Colombian	1	2	1	1	2	2
Latvian	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ethiopian	2	2	2	2	5	2
Bulgarian	2	2	2	2	2	2
Lithuanian	2	2	1	1	1	1
Thai	0	1	2	2	1	1
Algerian	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kazakh	1	1	1	1	1	1
Irish	1	1	1	2	2	1
Moldavian	0	0	0	0	0	1
Egyptian	0	0	0	0	0	1
New Zealander	1	1	1	1	1	0
Norwegian	0	0	1	1	1	0
Finnish	1	1	1	1	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0	0	2	0
Total	1783	1865	1935	2044	2184	2238

It's that time of year when we look back and see just how far Auroville is progressing in terms of counting heads. Rather than simply look at the current figures let us see what changes have occurred over the last decade.

Despite continuing infrastructural challenges faced by Auroville, most importantly the housing situation and water requirements for a developing city, the population continues to grow. In 10 years it has increased by a whopping 31%. Still, the male/female ratio for both adults and children remains almost constant at approximately 52% and 48% respectively.

In 1999 the number of minors (under 18 years old) was 399, in 2010, however, this figure has grown to 515. The youth of Auroville is 23% of the present population; in 2000 it was 26%.

On 1st November, 2010 the total population of Auroville (including Newcomers and Newcomers' children) stood at 2238, only 54 more than in 2009. This represents a growth of 2.5%, the slowest for some time. (2008 witnessed a growth of 5.3% while 2009 saw growth of 6.8%). The slow increase this year is largely due to the fact that for a considerable time no new people were being admitted to Auroville pending resolution of the ongoing housing crisis.

Auroville is presently home to 43 nationalities. In 1999 there were 31 nationalities.

The percentage of the population represented by each nationality remains almost the same as 10 years ago. The Indian population has grown the most from 507 (1999/2000) to 932 (2010). This is an 84% increase. Closely following are the French and Germans. Today these three nationalities alone make up 67% of Aurovilians. The Italians, Dutch and Americans have also a significant presence, together about 10% of the total population.

Since the year 1999 Auroville has lost and gained the following nationalities:

Lost: Moroccan, Estonian and Kiwis (New Zealand), Norwegians and Finns.

Gained: Israeli, South African, Nepalese, Bulgarian, Ethiopian, Icelandic, Latvian, Thai, Taiwanese, Algerian, Kazakh, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Danish, Egyptian and Moldavian.

It must be pointed out, however, that

Auroville population adults and minors by gender						
	Nov.05	Nov.06	Nov.07	Nov.08	Nov.09	Nov.10
Adults	1370	1464	1489	1587	1704	1723
males	728	786	788	836	890	899
females	642	678	701	751	814	824
Minors (< 18 years)	413	401	451	458	480	515
males	220	215	233	243	262	276
females	193	186	218	215	218	239
Total Total	1783	1865	1940	2045	2184	2238

most of the nationalities which disappeared off the radar only ever had 1 or 2 representatives.

Looking at the statistical comparison you can see that the top 5 nations, in terms of growth of numbers over the last decade, are the Indians, French, Israelis, Italians and Koreans. They are followed by the Dutch, Americans, Russians and Germans.

However, if you look at the actual percentages there are a number of nations which have more than doubled their presence. These include the Koreans, Japanese, Slovenians and Belarusians. The Israelis were not even on the radar in 1999. Today 42 of them are residents.

Louise

PASSING

Maurizio

Maurizio Gabriel Musi, born in Italy, passed away on December 29 in Creativity due to complications from a lung disease. Maurizio was 55 years old.

Maurizio first came to Auroville in 2003 and joined in January 2006. He will be remembered as a fine musician, playing different string instruments including guitar, mandolin and bass, who was familiar with Western classical, flamenco, jazz and other music. He was known for his ability to transform the most insignificant piece of music into something original, and for his fine and gentle playing. As music teacher he encouraged and supported numerous young musicians.

Maurizio also participated in the Auroville Choir. He also worked at the Pour Tous Distribution Centre preparing meals, until his health failed. He was cremated at Adventure's farewell grounds on January 3rd. To listen to his music visit <http://www.aurovillradio.org/arts-a-culture/music/1998-a-tribute>



PHOTO COURTESY AUROVILLE RADIO