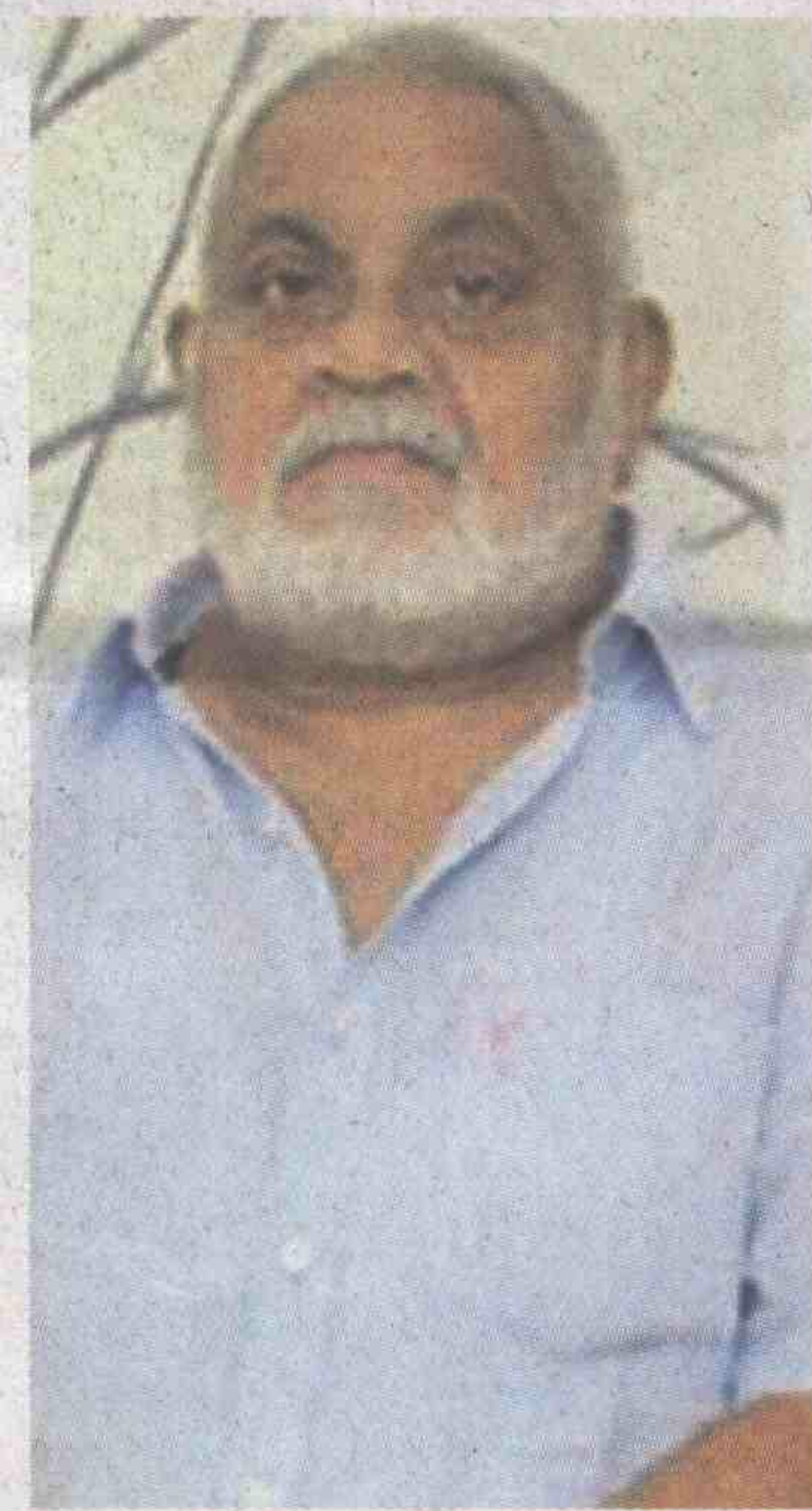




Brute force and brush strokes



Milind Nayak

DARSHANA RAMDEV

“Once in a while, I let go while I work. I consciously let go of all inhibitions and determine that the painting has to go beyond what I was doing so far. I cross the barriers of self doubt and hit out at the canvas,” writes renowned painter Milind Nayak, about his latest show, *Eternal Spring*. The show, which begins today, is more proof of Nayak's artistic meanderings, the constant dynamism of his style.

Booker-prize winning author Graham Swift describes Nayak's work, saying, “Milind's pictures have real structure, which is alive, tense and volatile.” Nayak, on the other hand, likens himself to a ten-year-old gazing, full of wonder, at the beauty of a tree or a pond filled with flowers. “How will these memories of over fifty years reinterpret themselves in a painting?” he asks.

Nayak, who has always preferred the brute force of the knife to what he calls the “politeness of the brush,” has explored wood as a substrate with oils and acrylics. The discovery was incidental. “I needed a small canvas but couldn't find one. That's when I noticed a board that had been primed and left in a corner by my assistant, so I used it!” The surface of the plywood was very different from anything he was used to - “The knife moves on its own, finding its grooves. The colours navigate through the surface of the wood, too, taking on tones that are very different from any other surface.” The first thing he did after the experiment? “I called my carpenter!” he laughed.

The idea of dribbling colour onto the surface also happened almost by chance. “I had a couple of black stools that I

thought looked quite depressing,” said Nayak. “I filled an oil paint can with acrylic and dribbled it over the stools. The technique worked and I carried it over to these paintings as well.” It's a difficult way to work, but as he puts it, “My hand knows how to do it now.”

Things were going well until he suffered another bout of ill-health. “I got an infection in my foot and was forbidden from standing at my easel all day,” said Nayak. Circumstance has rarely deterred him, however and he sat instead, his injured foot resting on his knee, to continue working. “I call it the *eka pada bandasana* (bound foot pose),” he chuckles.

His changeability in terms of style has fetched him a good deal of flack from the artist community, but Nayak, the self-professed “lone wolf” doesn't lose any sleep over this! “I left that collectivism behind a long time ago,” he said, almost dismissively. “It's a subset of culture where everything is made up. And to an artist, honesty is everything.”

Is survival easy on the fringes? “The art market is down, down, down,” he concedes. “Even so. Being a professional artist means building a network of buyers and gallery owners. It means communication. If you don't do these things, you will always be unknown and unappreciated. I have half a mind to conduct a two-day workshop on what it takes to be a professional painter!”

Not that commercial acclaim is any measure of success to Nayak. “Success? Finding joy in your art,” he said at once. “Changing your style or approach doesn't matter. It's recommended. How else will you learn and grow? If you're honest, it will shine through, no matter what you do.”

WHAT: *Eternal Spring*, by Milind Nayak

WHEN: March 11 to April 1

WHERE: Sublime Galleria, UB City, Vittal Mallya Road