

Biennale and Historicity

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Barely four weeks to go before the curtains will be pulled down for Kochi- Muziris Biennale, admirers continue to flock to the venues. The weekend saw members of Kerala History Association visiting the art hotbeds.

The association members included Ahmed Kabeer MLA and ex-MP Charles Dias. “The biennale theme delves into the historicity of the area and immerses us in history in a different way,” said N Asoka Kumar, secretary of the association.

Another member, writer and journalist K L Mohana Varma, who had also visited the first edition, felt that the biennale could spark something in the youth with its use of technology and a “new generation of creative youngsters could fine-tune the idea seen here”.

Since the ‘Whorled Explorations’ exhibition, curated by Jitish Kallat, opened on December 12, it has received a couple of lakh visitors -political leaders, artists from the film industry, international diplomats, gallery owners, curators and artists from around the world, some of whom had visited the first edition and were curious to see how the second edition measured up. And it is not just the educational institutions that have brought students; special schools and charitable organisations have also visited with children to offer them inspiration and different perspectives.

Social media has been abuzz with visitors sharing their experiences. Last week, former ambassador and Indian representative to the UN T P Sreenivasan tweeted that KMB ‘14 was an “astonishing experience” with “unbounded imagination, assisted by technology and ideal venue... Thoroughly enjoyed it”. British Deputy High Commissioner Bharat Joshi advised on his twitter, “don’t miss it”.

Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, who has exhibited widely in Europe and America, said that the KMB 2014 is “certainly one of the best exhibitions I have ever shown at” on his Facebook account. His ‘Pan-anthem’ at David Hall is one of the 100 exhibits at the biennale.

Amanda Sroka, assistant curator of contemporary art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, said that the “buzz about KMB ‘14 had travelled around with Jitish curating it”. “We wanted to visit to open up the thinking at our museum,” said Sroka. “Coming here, it is interesting to see the contagious sentiment in the community and how the word ‘biennale’ has been immersed into the language here. KMB ‘14 has taken hold of the city even as street vendors and auto rickshaw drivers have taken it as their own. It offers a wonderful, rich experience for all.”