



Art of Photography

With his World of Wearable Art exhibition this month, lensman ROHIT CHAWLA has consolidated his position in the world of FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY



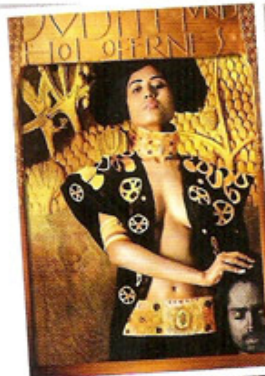
edge, and the images graphic yet minimalist.”

The World of Wearable Art is Chawla's fourth exhibition that chronicles his love for fine art photography. Two of his previous collections, each an ode to master artists Raja Ravi Varma and Gustav Klimt, were the ones that created the buzz and set the tone for Chawla's expertise in this niche. Commissioned by the Bird Group for their Annual Photographic Art Calendar series, the images were photographic versions of iconic paintings, recreated in 3-D with models such as Ayesha Thapar and Chitrangda Singh shot in exactly the same poses as that of the subjects in the paintings like *The Kiss* and *Adele Bloch Bauer*. Chawla admits the work was a lot tougher to put together than his current exhibition. “It's fairly complicated. Every single prop and set has to be recreated to perfection and the clothes are created in plaster of paris. In the Klimt series, Chitrangda had to be virtually airlifted into it.”

Where the Raja Ravi Varma exhibition toyed with old-world styling and was more realistic, Gustav Klimt's fascination with the female body and frank eroticism were slightly toned down to suit Indian sentiments. Each series though is reminiscent of Chawla's love for graphic minimalism and the symmetry of straight lines, apart from giving fine art photography an opportunity to gain an audience in the country. Next in line is Chawla's series on Paul Gauguin, to be shot in Tahiti or French Polynesia. “I think photography in India has gotten democratised to a very large extent, and therefore there is a need to up the ante. It is no longer enough to just document.” ■

World of Wearable Art exhibition is on at Volte gallery, Mumbai, second week of April onwards.

By Preetika Mathew Sahay



Fornasetti-inspired imagery at Chawla's WOW exhibition; from the *Wanderlust* series; Rohit Chawla; *Judith* from the Klimt series; socialite Puneet Juneja in the Raja Ravi Varma series

Ask veteran photographer and ad filmmaker Rohit Chawla about his views on fashion photography in the country and you're bound to receive a response that's not just candid, but also perhaps a tad bit different from his contemporaries. “I think fashion photography has become puerile. It shouldn't just be about making clothes look good. There has to be a next step that is part of the growing up of photography—we need to bring the craft back.”

Chawla is certainly doing his bit to steer the trend in this direction. Over the past four years, the lensman has held exhibitions that have combined fashion with unlikely cohorts and catapulted him into the world of fine art photography. And his World of Wearable Art exhibition (WOW) this month is the latest in his chosen medium of expression. The series focuses on radical, eccentric garments where the body serves as a canvas. Shot entirely in New Zealand, the images are juxtaposed against the picturesque landscape of the country. “I think this is the closest I have come to fine art photography. The clothes are cutting-

