



**SHALL WE
DANCE:** Aparna
Rao and Soren
Pors with
their work

AMIT MEHRA

Artist duo, Pores and Rao, weaves interactive fun into their unusual work

THE decoy creature waves its mechanical arms and wobbles from side to side as soon as a viewer comes near, the pygmies, on the other hand, only step out from behind their white frames when there is absolute silence. In one corner, an automated man balances on his head, in another, a sword automatically moves up and down, its hilt appearing on one block and the blade emerging from another.

These are some of the `beings' created by Bangalore-based artist duo, Pors and Rao i.e. Soren Pors and Aparna Rao. Their automated mechanical creatures are a mix of a sleek design sense and quirky humour that destabilises the very idea that objects of design have to be useful. Their first solo show in Delhi, at Vadehra Art Gallery, had coincided with the India Art Summit.

Rao studied at NID in Ahmedabad and at Interaction Design Institute, Ivrea, Italy. Pors trained at the Department of Media Art and Technology at Utrecht School of the Arts, Holland, and at IDII, Italy. In 2005, he and Rao joined forces and have since worked together.

"When we start designing an object, we do not know what it's going to become. There is an intuitive logic that

guides us," says Rao. "It is only after the object is made that we understand the stories behind it and why we chose to give a certain decoy a long neck and round bottom," explains Pors. The long neck, he adds, is to ensure that the built-in sensors can accommodate an antenna to pick up the movements of people coming towards it. The round bottom, on the other hand, is so that it can sway from side to side while waving its arms frantically.

This comical creature comes in several versions. "We usually work on an object two or three times to get to the point where we are happy. We call these versions, we do not make editions," says Pors. The works begin at Rs 3.5 lakh and the price increases depending on the proportions and complexity of the subject.

Before they began making mechanical objects, Pors and Rao were known for their humorous non-functional creations like the "Uncle phone". This two-meter long, shocking red phone was a tongue-in-cheek comment on the way in which Rao's uncle uses a regular telephone. "It requires two people to operate -one to dial and another to speak," explains Rao, adding that her uncle would ask people to help him do mundane tasks that he could well have done on his own. Now that they have moved on to making mechanical objects, the duo believes that "creations have minds of their own and, though we work with technology, our intention is not to fetishes it".