

Art meets cosmos, Swiss artists paint astrophysics on walls

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WITH both paintings and the universe open to individual interpretations, it was perhaps apt that Switzerland-based artists Martin Zimmermann and Theodor Scharer should paint a wall at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) as a symbolic representation of how human beings understand the mysteries of universe.

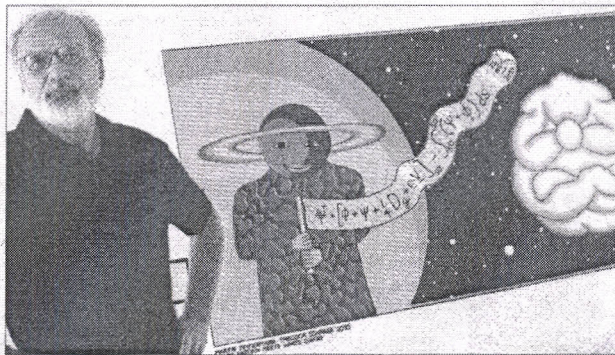
In Pune last month at the invite of IUCAA director Naresh Dadich to execute the art work, the artists had spent two months back home in Geneva brainstorming over the project. "Zimmermann's wife Ruth, an as-

trophysicist, was in town a couple of years ago for a workshop and Martin had accompanied her. Over a casual conversation, we learnt he was a painter and so we asked him to paint something at IUCAA to which he readily agreed. He painted the wall *Across the Universe* at the centre.

Sometime later, I asked him to come again and paint another wall, which he did along with Scharer," Dadich said.

Titled *Saturn Meets White Dwarf*, the second work explores the thoughts of planet Saturn on meeting the Sun, that on having exhausting its nuclear fuel has been reduced to a white dwarf. The painting was officially commissioned on January 27.

Explaining the theme in detail, Zimmermann said, "As we all know, in a



Prof Naresh Dadich with the painting made by Swiss painters Martin Zimmermann and Theodor Scharer at IUCAA

few million years the sun, having exhausted all its nuclear fuel, will become a white dwarf and eat up the earth. The picture depicts Saturn going back in time to see the future, and is communicating this thought with the other planets."

According to Scharer, the duo researched a lot to bring the details of stellar astrophysics to the walls.

"The painting goes into the past to communicate with our present, about what our future would look like."

Zimmermann's earlier work, *Across the Universe*, tells the story of evolution of the universe and its subsequent growth. The painting also has Sir Issac Galilei and Aryabhata at one side.

"Knowledge on any subject and its in-

terpretations are so vast that we cannot confine the same to a science or an art, because what a scientist might view as a complex mass of theories and equations can be simplified by an artist as is the case with these paintings.

Both the artists had their freedom to interpret the ideas according to the way they wanted to see it, so that their creativity will not be restricted," said Dadich.

He said the artists not only flew down for the work on their own expense, but did not charge anything for their efforts.

In fact, both Zimmermann and Scharer say they are open to coming down yet again for any paintings the institute wants.