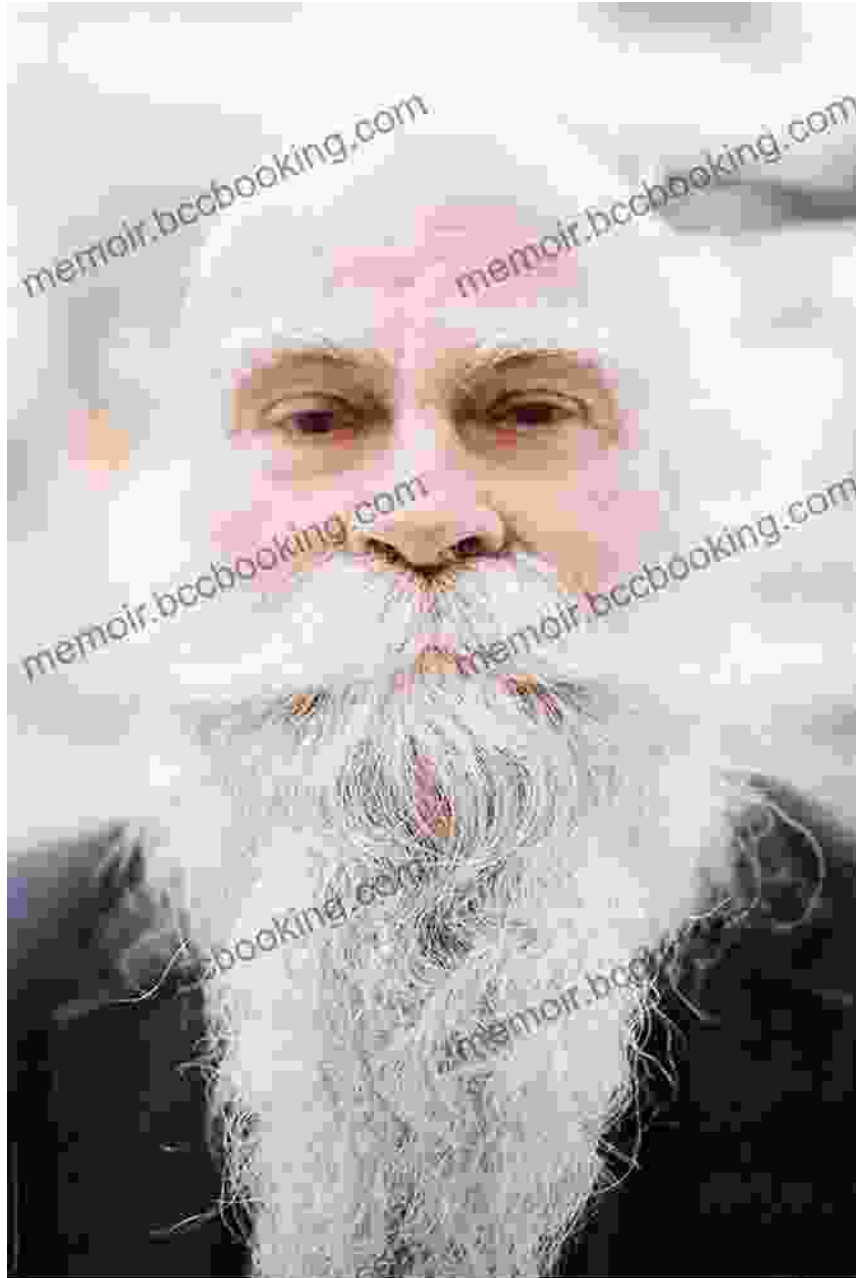


Nek Chand: Changing India and the Hidden World of Art



The Secret Kingdom: Nek Chand, a Changing India, and a Hidden World of Art by Barb Rosenstock

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English



File size : 31387 KB
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Print length : 48 pages



Nek Chand Saini, affectionately known as Nek Chand, was an extraordinary individual whose life and art left an indelible mark on Indian contemporary art. Born in 1924 in Shakargarh, now in Pakistan, Nek Chand was forced to flee his home during the tumultuous partition of India in 1947. As a refugee, he settled in Chandigarh, a newly planned city designed by the renowned Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier. Little did anyone know that this humble refugee would go on to create one of the most captivating and unique art environments in the world, transforming a forgotten wasteland into a surreal wonderland.

Nek Chand's artistic journey began in the early 1950s when he started collecting discarded materials from construction sites and junkyards. With an eye for the discarded and overlooked, he began to assemble these found objects into sculptures. However, his artistic endeavors were met with disapproval from the authorities, who deemed his work as unauthorized and an eyesore. Undeterred, Nek Chand continued to create in secret, working under the cover of darkness to avoid detection.



The Rock Garden: A Hidden Paradise

Over the course of nearly two decades, Nek Chand meticulously transformed a 13-acre plot of scrubland into a hidden paradise, now known as the Rock Garden. Using recycled materials such as broken ceramics, glass bangles, scrap metal, and discarded bottles, Nek Chand created a labyrinthine world of sculptures, waterfalls, and courtyards. His artistic vision extended beyond mere aesthetics; he also incorporated environmental concerns into his work, planting trees and creating ponds to attract wildlife.

The Rock Garden is a testament to Nek Chand's boundless imagination and unwavering determination. Despite facing numerous challenges and setbacks, he never abandoned his dream of creating a space where people

could escape the mundane and connect with their inner child. His sculptures, often whimsical and playful, invite viewers to engage with their surroundings and discover hidden meanings within the seemingly chaotic arrangements.



Nek Chand: The Artist and the Man

Nek Chand's artistic style has been described as a fusion of folk art and outsider art. He drew inspiration from traditional Indian crafts and folk tales, incorporating vibrant colors and intricate patterns into his sculptures. However, his work also transcended these categories, defying easy classification. Nek Chand's unique vision and unconventional approach earned him international recognition as a pioneering artist.

Beyond his artistic achievements, Nek Chand was also a dedicated environmentalist and social activist. Through his art, he raised awareness about the importance of recycling and waste management. He employed local villagers and underprivileged youth to work on the Rock Garden, providing them with employment opportunities and a sense of purpose.



Legacy and Recognition

Nek Chand's Rock Garden has become a major tourist attraction in Chandigarh, drawing visitors from around the world. It has been recognized as a site of national importance by the Indian government and has been featured in numerous international publications and documentaries. In 1988, Nek Chand was awarded the prestigious Padma Shri, one of India's highest civilian honors, for his contributions to art and culture.

Nek Chand's legacy extends far beyond the Rock Garden. He inspired countless other artists to embrace unconventional materials and challenge

artistic norms. His work has also played a significant role in promoting environmental awareness and community engagement. The Nek Chand Foundation, established after his death in 2015, continues to preserve and promote his work while supporting emerging artists and community projects.

Nek Chand's story is a testament to the transformative power of art. From humble beginnings as a refugee, he rose to become one of India's most celebrated contemporary artists. His Rock Garden is a living testament to his unwavering determination, creativity, and unwavering belief in the power of transformation.

Through his art, Nek Chand not only changed the face of Chandigarh but also left a lasting legacy that continues to inspire and captivate people all over the world. His journey is a reminder that even in the most challenging of circumstances, the human spirit has the capacity to create something truly extraordinary.



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