Weaving technology with tradition

France-based scenographer makes carpets made of e-waste and natural materials

Waste to wealth: Visitors taking a look at the carpets at the e-waste weaving exhibition organised at the French Institute of Pondicherry, IFP Director Frederic Landy with Sophie Chandoutis, right, a scenographer from Lyon in France. • T. SINGaravelu

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Computer circuits weaved together with wires interspersed with carpets made of natural materials hung inside the conference hall of the French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP). Sophie Chandoutis, a scenographer from Lyon in France, who deftly prepared these installations made of e-waste collected in India, is now displaying her works at the ‘E-Waste Weaving Exhibition’ organised at the IFP in Puducherry.

Through her work, Ms. Chandoutis questions the technological obsolescence and the digital globalisation, bringing out the paradox of cultures.

During the inauguration of the exhibition, she said, "From the designing of software to the manufacture of our computers or mobile phones, Asia is the main exporter to Europe and the U.S. All the e-waste from Europe are dumped in India, China and Ghana. These countries are turning into computer cemeteries. This is one of the reasons why I chose to work in India, which is becoming a leader in software technology at the same time fiercely defending its local crafts and traditions.”

She added that she wanted to weave a link between digital culture and the memory of these ancestral crafts based on natural fibre. She used threads of silk, straw and copper to weave natural fibres and interspersed them with punch-cards of Jacquard and printed circuit boards of IBM.

“I began this work a year ago. I planned to weave electronic waste found in India. This journey brought me to Puducherry. I met several craftsmen and discovered almost all the workshops that used the Jacquard looms from Lyon,” she said.

IFP Director Frederic Landy stated that this artistic work was connected with the research work carried out at the institute. “We have programmes on handicrafts which are part of heritage that needs to be protected. This exhibition is a reflection of the knowledge exchange that takes place between France and India,” he said.

The exhibition will be held till May 2.