

CHANDRA
Bhattacharjee



Dissolving the Surface

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Bhattacharjee

29th March – 14th April, 2023





Pradeep Jena IAS

Chief Secretary
Government of Odisha

Foreword

CHANDRA BHATTACHARJEE: The Soul Painter

Chandra Bhattacharjee paints subjects infusing life with a soul that communicates the internal feelings of the subject to his viewers who get engrossed and become a part of that life and that soul and try to understand the deeper meaning that the soul conveys to the external world through the life of the body. The body without life cannot have a soul while every body with life doesn't necessarily have a soul. Chandra portrays the inter and intra relationship between the body, life and soul in such a subtle yet powerful way that sometimes his paintings witness a complex yet homogenous interplay of colour, mostly monochromatic subduction with forms, some small but powerful array of light and sensual strokes and texture, that deeply integrates into the mind of his viewer. He plays with light and darkness, mostly transgressing each other in a nuanced and subdued manner, often creating a soothing optical illusion conveying the message of the soul. The spectral bandwidth of his monochromatic colours, a subtle and smooth variation between black and white mixing into shades of grey, creates the form and somewhere a ray of light, as smooth as silk coming from the moon, traversing through the stratosphere, filtering through various layers of the space and the sky, getting little extra shades of light from the stars, adds a magnificent dimension, enlivening the body. The artist tries to portray that the body with life acquires the soul after rounds of filtration of eternal knowledge coming from cosmic sources.

Chandra's series *Dissolving the Surface* is all about interplay of light and darkness. Form becomes a by-product of that interplay, and a subconscious manifest, often portrayed as metaphors to convey the inter-relationship of body, life and soul. Chandra's subjects are our daily, everyday companions. We meet and come across them always and everywhere. But mostly we ignore them. Sometimes light adds volume to the subject while other times, it de-voluminizes the space and creates a void, a feeling of emptiness, hopelessness and despair. Chandra very creatively plays with light and darkness, lingering grey and sepia with splashes of subdued, cool light creating a reverberating calmness while forcing the viewer to deeper thinking, more intense reflection and understanding of the soul.

Chandra, you are truly a Soul painter. You create a magnificent mesmerising effect with subdued, cool colours, play light and darkness very intensely and carefully draw your viewers to discreetly interact with the Soul.

This exhibition showcases some of the later creations of Chandra ranging from large format to medium sized to small ones and collage of small paintings. All par excellence. And in every single one, the viewers will themselves talk to the Soul beneath the subject.

Wish you all the best Chandra Bhattacharjee.

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GALLERY ARTISTMINDZ

Curated by **Jyoti A. Kathpalia**

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Untitled | Acrylic on canvas | 48 x 72 inches | Private collection



Arun Kumar Bera
Director
Gallery Artistmindz

Director's Note

The vision of Artistmindz has been to encourage an Indian cultural and artistic resurgence and bring to the limelight, the immensely talented and eminent artists on the Indian Artscape.

I have always believed that art and culture are the biggest unifying forces. Art is the panacea of the wounded civilisation, and it is a means which can transcend divisions and effect a connect between diverse people. After all it is the cultural and artistic richness, its diversity that makes India in its truest sense. Artistmindz has always endeavoured to keep this richness of art and tradition alive. Keeping this vision Artistmindz has presented the works of artists from all over India.

I am very happy to present this solo exhibition *Dissolving the Surface* by Chandra Bhattacharjee. This exhibition brings forth a series of watercolours on paper. Chandra is also a photographer par excellence and who has ventured deep into the forests with his camera, taking pictures of the flora and fauna. Chandra's art imbues these photographic effects with the sensitivity and artistic genius of his brush strokes so that each drawing becomes a solemn expression of his artistic creativity and expression.

Chandra Bhattacharjee is a self-made artist, one who struggled against all odds to be where he is today. Chandra was born in 1961 in West Bengal. Over the years Chandra has emerged as one of the finest stars in Indian art. His brilliance in water colours has its roots in his academic training in fine arts that he had as a student in Kolkata. Chandra graduated from the Indian College of Art and Draughtsmanship in 1986 and did his Post-Graduation in Fine Arts from Kala Bhavan, Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan in 1989. He is the recipient of gold medal from Rabindra Bharati University in 1986 for excellence in fine arts. He has also been awarded the Taj Gaurav award in 2008. Leaving his village and moving to Kolkata to pursue training in art, exposed Chandra to the world of the bazaar, the streets, and the city. His development as an artist was also deeply influenced by his surroundings as well as his academic training. Chandra Bhattacharjee lives and works in Kolkata.

As Director Artistmindz, I can say that to present artist of such calibre and creativity is itself an extremely fulfilling experience for me. Artistmindz will continue in its endeavour to bring the best and most unique in art from all across India. After all art is the common denominator of all humanity.



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 2021



Jyoti A Kathpalia
Curator

Dissolving the Surface

Sometimes, far from the colours it is the monochromes and the negative plates that delve into the soul and tell a story — a story of a deeper consciousness moving slowly in the objects and the world around, observing, cogitating and creating. The power of black and white transparencies is tremendous. They tell the story of the inside, an insight that is hidden and which the artist's consciousness has tapped and brought to the surface of the sheet like myriad little veins that lie undiscovered, and a sudden flash of light reveals magically the inner patterns that go back to the primal truth of our lives, that envision the very roots of our civilisation and the world in which we live today. And in that moment the viewer realises that they are witnessing a complex interplay of the subject and the object, of the artist and his canvas. So complex and profound is this, that the subjectivity of the artist seems to have somehow crossed the boundaries of being and brushed itself in the myriad ways of light and a thousand shades of black onto the paper.

Chandra Bhattacharjee's series titled *Dissolving the Surface* is an elucidation of this rare phenomenon. Through his treatment of wavelengths of light and spectra of blacks, Chandra Bhattacharjee seems to have crossed the boundaries of his medium.

"I work on flat surfaces. Unlike a sculptor or an installation artist, whose raw material may already have dimension, my experiment is to heighten, expand the scope of canvas or paper. But not literally so — as obviously I'm not interested in creating three-dimensional images. With my paintings I re-see the most regular sights, incidents and characters that we come across directly or indirectly almost every day," says Chandra.

Chandra's style moves beyond Bengal's academic watercolours. The astounding and yet nuanced chemistry of dark and light that Chandra has achieved in this suite of small works of watercolour on paper is something that he has been developing over the years. He breathes life into his paintings as much with his assiduous brush strokes as with his ability to leave spaces of native paper. This manifestation of light and dark lends itself to the eternal paradox of darkness and light, encompassing the everlasting riddles of human civilization.

Issues of ecology and the preservation of our home, the Earth, concerns with the destruction of the natural vegetation and loss of entire species have always been with Chandra, the man, the

photographer, the artist and the thinker. These concerns are what he carries with him in his creative and artistic journeys. But alongside these anxieties are the hidden, subconscious rhythms, the slow penetration of paper by the artist's mind and his quiet fervour — so much so that the surface of both the canvas and the individual consciousness stand unveiled for that evanescent moment when the viewer's eye goes deep into the artwork. This is accompanied by the discovery that not all is a simple dualism, not all is surface and depth. Sometimes, depth can be revealed in the surface. It is this perception that marks the series *Dissolving the Surface*.

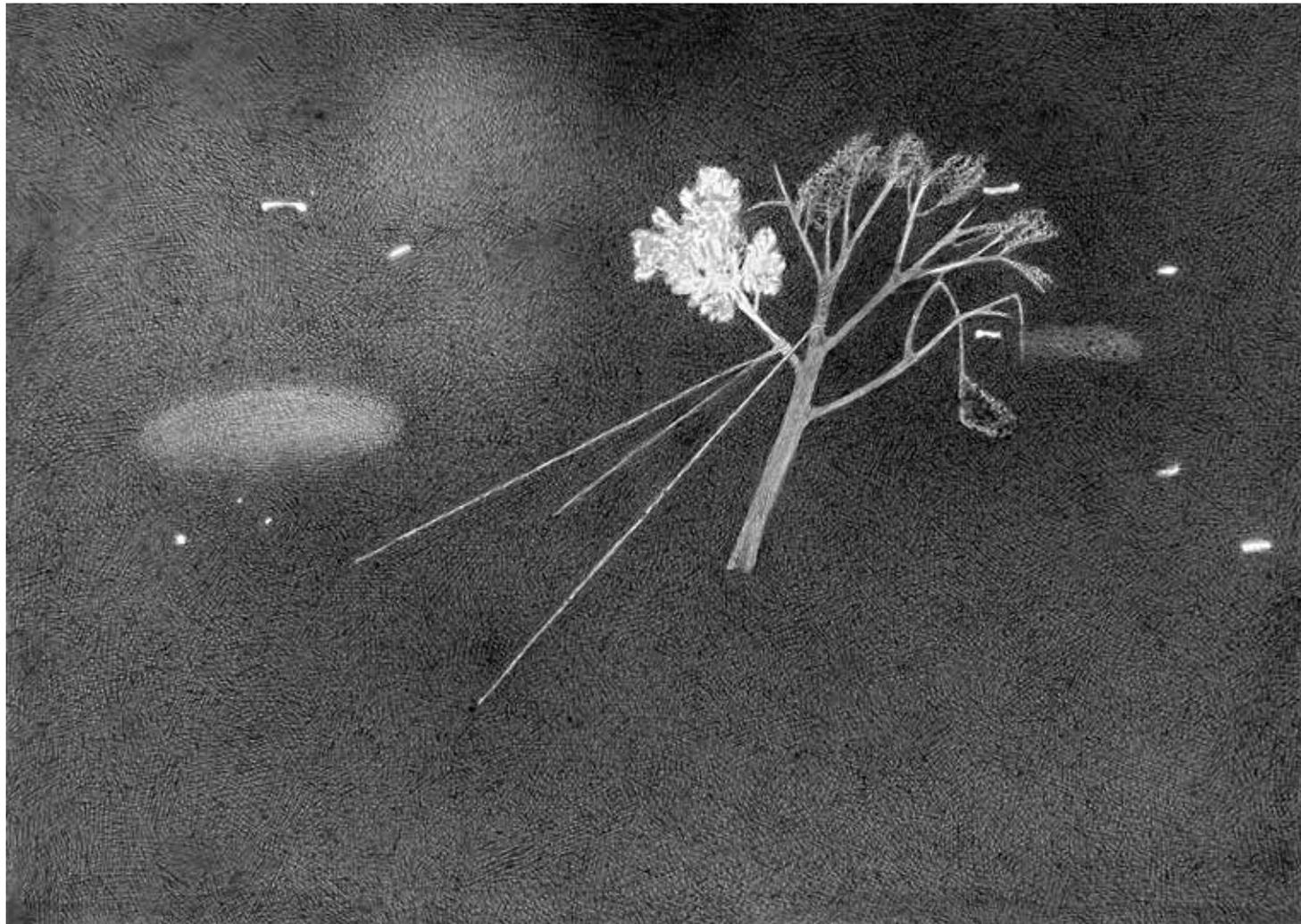
"I am a version of a 'slow thinker,' not given to spot responses and instant attitudes — it runs opposite to my nature. I allow the so-called little things to seep in, accumulate, construct their own spaces and echoes. My work offers me an opportunity to make sense of these inputs. The thin line between the paper's surface and my reflections dissolves in the process," he says.

The manmade forest fire depicted so oft in his paintings, destroys all but its destructive glow is eerily beautiful, drawing the viewer into questioning the deceptive serenity of the aftermath. In one work, a tree is shown as spangled with small globules of light that lie shimmering as lit fruits on branches. The viewer looks at the beauty of this tree in the forest. The light, which may be emanating from a catastrophic forest fire is a lambent, throbbing glow here. The trees, so delicately done, can be the most evocative poem to the resplendence of nature, yet they may also carry a haunting threnodic quality. Another painting of the bird, soft and bathed in luminosity, and the sliver of light both threatening as well as a radiant feather is once again a beautiful testament to the space that Chandra persistently opens up, the in between space which questions a simple black and white, and takes one to the very edge of consciousness, the brink of the surface and beyond.

Chandra's paintings partake of many photographic effects like chiaroscuro and spotlight brilliantly combining his interest in black and white films with the boyhood memories, both fluid and photographic, of unrestrained nature in his village. The empty spotlight is another visual symbol or perhaps a metaphor that Chandra uses in many of his works. These elements of light mark a unique characteristic of his artistic practice where he simply leaves blank spaces on his canvas/paper thereby avoiding the opacity of the white pigment. In this series, light itself becomes a complex symbol. At moments it points to the absent figure, at times to destruction as a fire and at moments just a sheer whimsical and arbitrary play of light. Both of which are an intrinsic part of life. Layers of colour and effects of grey tone wash bestow a porosity, a tactility, and the fine mesh like effects



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 11.7 x 16.5 inches | 2021



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 11.7 x 16.5 inches | 2021

rendered with brushstrokes hearken to a window, perhaps a glance into deeper worlds, as if this porosity is a surface itself that is dissolving towards an elusive revelation.

The key elements of the beginning of civilization and the rout of the forests through the very element i.e., fire that initiated human dwelling and civilization is Chandra's account and critique of where we find ourselves today. Chandra explores the light and dark effects with the flair of a skilled artist and the depth of a sensitive philosopher. Perhaps that is the reason there is a state of paradoxicality and an innate complexity in his work. The light for example is both the light of the forest fires and at the same time the light of illumination.

The presence of rocks and boulders as possible obstructions, but also strong signifiers of the earth and witness to the march of civilisation, the beasts of burden, all take the viewer back to the very beginning and facilitate a similar route to the passage beyond accoutrements of modern consciousness. Chandra goes back to the roots of our civilization and paints objects like the humans, animals, trees, huts, all these take the viewer away from the modern urbanity to another mode of existence.

At another level, Chandra's work strikes a chord with the rhythms and landscapes of his childhood. Chandra's work strikes a chord with the powerful rhythms and landscapes of his childhood. His subjects may also be traced to the open fields where he ran barefoot with his friends, flying kites in wild abandon, and coming back home to a quieter life indoors where he watched in fascination as his aged aunt embroidered atypical forms and landscapes in their dimly lit adobe hut.

These impressions cogitate, gestate in the mind of the artist and then there is an effulgence, an eruption of these and a myriad of other impressions stored in the heart and the mind which come out as an emanation, a flow of creative outpourings so strong and intense that they seem to dissolve and in a moment of artistic genius connect the materiality of paper and the immateriality of spirit.

Chandra Bhattacharjee is one of the very few artists who taps on the innermost sources of creativity and move in a trajectory that is uniquely and singularly his own. It is not determined by the conventional, or the worldly but instead he as an artist charts his own destiny with a confidence, and with a subtlety and innocence, that can only be the mark of a true artist.



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 11.7 x 16.5 inches | 2021



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 11.7 x 16.5 inches | 2021



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 2021



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 11.7 x 16.5 inches | 2021



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 10 x 13 inches | 2019



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 11 x 14.5 inches | 2020



Gardener | Acrylic on canvas | 66 x 180 inches | 2019 | Private collection



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 7.5 x 11 inches | 2020



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 2019



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 10 x 14 inches | 2019



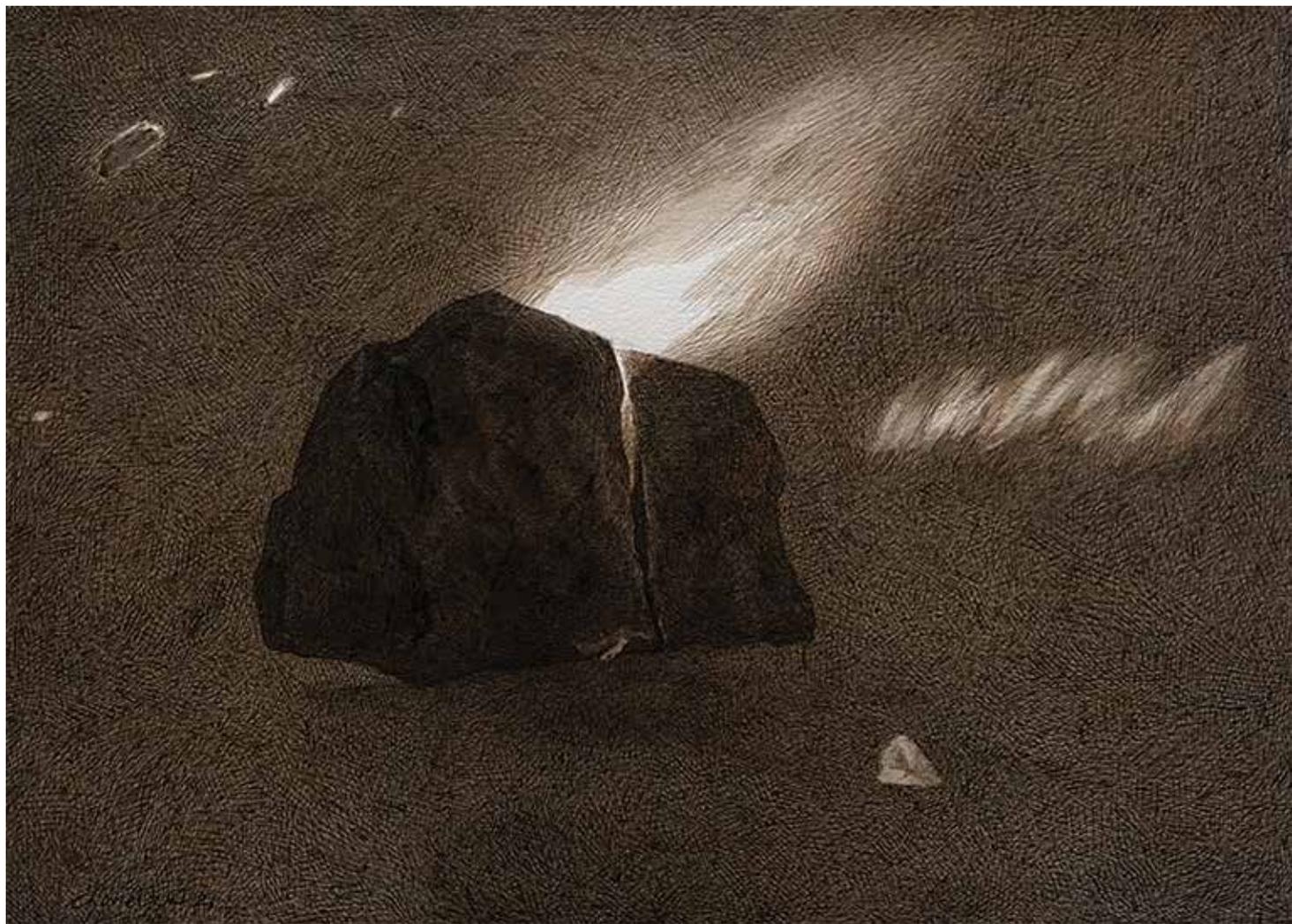
Untitled | Water colour on paper | 11.7 x 16.5 inches | 2021



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Untitled | Water colour on paper | 2020



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 11.7 x 16.5 inches | 2021



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 11.7 x 16.5 inches | 2021



Untitled | Water colour on paper | 8 x 5.5 inches | 2020

Dissolving the Surface

A Solo Exhibition of Chandra Bhattacharjee

Exhibition opening date - 29th March 2023 (5.30 pm) to 14th April 2023

Odisha State Museum, Exhibition Gallery, Bhubaneswar

Presented by Artistmindz and curated by Jyoti A Kathpalia, Chandra Bhattacharjee's solo exhibition *Dissolving the Surface* is an important milestone in the Indian art scene. The exhibition contains a suite of smaller artworks rendered in watercolour on paper, by the artist.

Chandra Bhattacharjee has always explored art beyond the horizons of conventional expectation. Commenting on the uniqueness of the title and the series itself he says, "I allow the so-called little things to seep in, accumulate, construct their own spaces and echoes. My work offers me an opportunity to make sense of these inputs. The thin line between the paper's surface and my reflections dissolves in the process."

Chandra's works have been largely concerned with issues of ecology and the preservation of Earth, the loss of entire species. These concerns are what he carries with him in his creative and artistic journeys. But alongside these anxieties are the hidden, subconscious rhythms, the slow penetration of paper by the artist's mind and his quiet fervour — so much so that the surface of both the canvas and the individual consciousness stand unveiled for that evanescent moment when the viewer's eye goes deep into the artwork. This is accompanied by the discovery that not all is a simple dualism, not all is surface and depth. Sometimes, depth can be revealed in the surface. It is this perception that marks the series *Dissolving the Surface*. Commenting on the artworks in this exhibition, the curator Jyoti A Kathpalia notes, "Layers of colour and effects of grey tone wash bestow a porosity, a tactility, and the fine mesh like effects rendered with brushstrokes hearken to a window, perhaps a glance into deeper worlds, as if this porosity is a surface itself that is dissolving towards an elusive revelation."

According to Arun Kumar Bera, Director, Artistmindz, "Over the years Chandra has emerged as one of the finest stars in Indian art. His brilliance in water colours has its roots in his academic training in fine arts that he had as a student in Kolkata. As Director Artistmindz, I can say that to present artist of such calibre and creativity is itself an extremely fulfilling experience for me. Artistmindz will continue in its endeavour to bring the best and most unique in art from all across India. After all art is the common denominator of all humanity."

The exhibition will be inaugurated by Shri Pradeep Kumar Jena, Chief Secretary, Government of Odisha is the esteemed Chief Guest on Saturday, 29 March 2023 at 5:30 pm. It will be on view till the 14 Apr 2023 Odisha State Museum, Exhibition Gallery, Bhubaneswar.





Chandra Bhattacharjee

Date of Birth: November 18, 1960

Graduated from the Indian College, of Art and Draughtsmanship with a first class first in 1986. Conferred gold medal for excellence in fine arts by Rabindra Bharati University in 1986. Received Taj Gaurav award in 2008. Honoured by the President of India as artist-in residence at The Rashtrapati Bhavan in November 2020. Chandra started his career as a billboard artist, subsequently did a stint as a graphic designer with The Economic Times.

Solo shows

Night Forest, Art Alive, Delhi; 2020. A Skyful of Chains, Galerie 88, Kolkata; 2015. Wired, Gallery Veda, Chennai; 2012. Visual Diary, Galerie 88, Kolkata; 2010. Aeons Visible, Galerie 88, Kolkata; 2008. The Gallery on Cork Street-Threshold, London; 2007. Indelibilities, Palette Art Gallery, Delhi; 2007. Small format works, Sumukha, Bangalore; 2006. Jehangir Art Gallery; Mumbai 2005. Galerie 88, Kolkata; 2005. Gallery Threshold, Delhi; 2004.

Palette Art Gallery, Delhi; 2003. Crimson, Bangalore; 2001. 1998. Shridharani Gallery, Delhi, Apparao Galleries; 2001. Apparao Galleries; Chennai 1998. Art Heritage, Delhi; 1997. Centre Art Gallery, Kolkata; 1994, '95, '97

Selected group shows

- 2021 Hub India, Classical Radical, a triparte museum show, Accademia Albertina di Belle Arti, Turin, Italy. Fluid Realities, Art Alive at Bikaner House, New Delhi
- Constellations, EmamiArt, Kolkata
- 2020 India Art Fair, 2020.
- Art: Bengal Now, Gandhara Art Gallery and Dhoomimal Gallery, New Delhi
- 2019 Art Now, Art Alive, New Delhi. Mahabharat, Birla Academy of Art & Culture, Kolkata
- Summer 2019, Palette Art Gallery, New Delhi. Body, Shanghamugham Art Museum, Kochi. Curated by Johny ML. In Proximity, Gandhara Art Gallery Kolkata, IAF
- 2018 Residency at Studio Arnawaz, Cholamandal Artists Village, Chennai. Black Hole Project, AM, Kolkata. Art Now, Art Alive, New Delhi. Viswasroopa, Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata. Curated by Johny ML. 50:50, a digital art show to celebrate 50 years of Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata. Curated a photography show, Fields of Depth, based on a workshop in Shantiniketan. Works exhibited in Ganges Art Gallery, Kolkata. Constellation, Sarjan Art Galley, Bihar Museum.
- India at 70, Shridharani Gallery, New Delhi. India Art Fair
- 2017 Jaipur Art Summit, Jaipur. 100 Years of Champaran Satyagraha, Bihar Museum

Reclaiming Gandhi, Museum of Goa. India at 70, Bangkok Arts & Culture Center and Chulalongkom University Art Center.

- 2016 The Epic Journey, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Art One at Avani, Calicut. Masterpieces 2016, New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata. Art Now, Art Alive, Mumbai. India Art Fair, New Delhi
- Kolkata Contemporary at Jehangir Art Gallery, Aakriti Art Gallery
- 2015 Winter Oeuvre, Birla Academy of Art & Culture, Kolkata. SOFT CITY, Range Art Gallery, Kolkata. The Changing Spaces, Mirage Art Gallery, Kolkata
- 2014 India Art Fair, New Delhi. The Mahatma, Art Alive, New Delhi. Art for Concern, Mumbai. Divergent Horizons, Lalit Kala, Chennai
- 2013 Lost in Transition, The Harrington Street Art Centre, Kolkata. Collection of Indian Contemporary Art, Art Alive. When High and Low Art Meet, Art Alive, New Delhi. Curated by Rupika Chawla. Shram o Shramik. Ganges Art Galley, Kolkata. Curated by Prasanta Sahu. Think Small, Art Alive, New Delhi. Palette Summer, Palette Art Gallery, New Delhi. Age of reason, Indian Art Circle, Delhi
- 2012 Art Summit 2012, New Delhi. Art for Humanity, Mumbai
- Indien Garten der Kunste, Aalen, Artco Galerie GmbH, Germany
- 2011 Just One! Artco Galerie GmbH, Germany. Tales from Tagore, Akriti Art Gallery, Kolkata. Negotiated Positions, Gallery Blue Spade, Bangalore. Cross Currents, curated by Sushma Bahl, Gallery Art Positive, New Delhi. Art Chennai 2011, Chennai, Kodaikanal. Art Summit 2011, New Delhi

- 2010 Portrait of an Artist, Dhoomimal Art Centre, New Delhi. 10 X 10, Threshold
- Art Celebrates (CWG 2010), Threshold-LKA, New Delhi. SNOW, curated by Ranjit Hoskote; Palette, Delhi. arts. i Redux, Religare Arts Initiative, Delhi.
- Unclaimed Spaces, Gallery Threshold, Delhi
- 2009 The Art of India: 20 Years of Contemporary Indian Art, Gallerie Muller & Plate, Munich. Indian Contemporary Art, Visual Art Gallery, Hong Kong-Gallery Sumukha
- Indian Harvest, SG Private Banking Gallery, Singapore. Art Against Terror, Gandhara, Kolkata. Big Dreams, Crimson, Bangalore. Synchronicity, Delhi
- 2008 Life is a Stage, ICIA Gallery, Mumbai. Magic of Monochrome, Gandhara, Kolkata.
- Art Now, A Glimpse, Emami Chisel Arts, Kolkata. Art Divergent Discourses, Tangerine Art Space, Bangalore. Gallery Muller & Plate, Munich. New York Academy of Art. Gaze Within, Gaze Without, Gandhara Art Gallery, Kolkata. Harmony show, Mumbai. Synchome 4, Akar Prakar/Tao Art Gallery
- 2007 Art Singapore. Adana Biennale, Adana, Turkey. Imprints, The Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo. Diverse Idioms, Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre, Hong Kong.
- Power of Peace, Bali/The United Nations
- 2006 India on Canvas, New Delhi, exhibition & auction organized by Khushi. Synchome 3, annual show of Akar Prakar, Kolkata. Sensuality, Perception and the Self, curated by Dr Alka Pande, Galleria, New Delhi. Angkor, Gandhara. Art of Young Bengal, curated by Pranabranjan Roy, Akriti Kolkata. Chivas

Art, Gallerie 88-Chivas Regal, Delhi/Mumbai. Merging Cultures, Chelsea College of Art & Design, London, Lasalle-SIA College of Fine Arts, Singapore, New Colours of Sumukha, Bangalore.

2005 XI Indian Triennale India. Ways of Seeing, Art Alive, Delhi. Bikash Bhattacharya, A Source of Inspiration, Birla Academy, Kolkata, Delhi. Harmony, Mumbai. Ardhanarishwara, Tao, Mumbai. Indian Contemporary Art, Sumukha-Quayside Gallery, London. Water colours, Gallerie 88, Kolkata. Versions, Birla Academy.

2004 New Paradigms II, Threshold, Delhi. Bondings, ITC Sonar Bangla, Kolkata.

Contemporary Expressions from India, Siddhartha-Gallery Beyond, Kathmandu

Harvest 2004, Arushi, Delhi. Viart show, Delhi. Summer show, Palette, Delhi

Scenes from a Voyage, Nehru Centre, London. Red, Palette, Delhi, Gandhara Art Gallery, Kolkata. India Habitat Centre, Art Pilgrim, Delhi

2003 Hope with Heart, Parkinson's Disease Foundation of India-Taj Palace, Mumbai.

Contemporary Artists, Palette-Gandhara, New Delhi

2002 Tomorrow's Blue Chip, Delhi/Chennai, Apparao Galleries.

Gallery Espace, Argosy, Dubai Marine Beach Club

Autumn festival of theatre and art, auction conducted by Patrick Bowring, Gallery Espace,

New Delhi. Singapore Art Fair (with Apparao Galleries) Palette annual show, New Delhi. Surya Gallery, Hyderabad. Concern India Nehru Centre, Mumbai. Sheen of Metal, Palette, New Delhi.

Gallerie 88 annual show

2001 Palette 2001, New Delhi. Cymroza, Mumbai. Nude studies, The Guild, Artworld, Hong Kong. Small format show, Sumukha, Singapore.

The Guild, Hong Kong. Pao gallery- Saffronart, Hong Kong. The Art of Bengal, Art Today, Delhi. Harmony, Mumbai

2000 Threshold, Vizag. Surya anniversary show, Hyderabad. Chitrakoot, Kolkata. Visions and Attitudes, Jehangir, Mumbai. Crimson, Mumbai

1999 Son et Lumiere, Mumbai. Salar Jung Museum, NGMA, Hyderabad. Gaaja Gallery, Singapore. Crimson, Bangalore. Apparao Galleries, Toronto, New York, Singapore

Collections

Museum of Bengal Modern Art, Arts Acre Foundation, Kolkata. Jordan National Gallery of Fine Art. Govt Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh. Bihar Museum, Patna

Workshops

Participated in over 50 international workshops and art expositions in Greece, China, Mexico, South Africa, Norway, Hungary, Czeck Republic, Denmark, Kenya, Cambodia, Austria, Vietnam, Bangladesh, among others.



GALLERY ARTISTMINDZ

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