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The French Connection

By Anju Maskeri | Posted 06-Nov-2016

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Paris-based artist Shombhit Sengupta on creating a new form of art based on gestures and his desi inspiration



One of Shombhit Sengupta's artworks from the exhibition

In the 43 years that artist Shombit Sengupta has lived in Paris, the influence of his Indian roots has not dulled. “While France has a singular culture where aesthetics and imaginative power pervade every act of life, India, in contrast, is an extremely heterogeneous, inclusive society with no demarcation of good and bad. I’ve never seen a country this vibrant,” says Sengupta who at 19 moved to Paris, where he took up a sweeper’s job at a lithographic print shop called Atelier Gourdon in Cachan.

Here, he met painters like Arte, Leonor Fini, Jean Carzou, Yves Brayer and others. “When Yves Brayer would come to make his lithographs in Mr Gourdon’s print shop, he would regularly mentor me. This drew me towards Western modern art history,” says Sengupta.

From the trademark luminous water colours he was dabbling in at Kolkata’s Government College of Art and Craft, his visual language changed after the move. The aesthetics, culture and artistic sense of France merged with the chaos and disorder that he grew up. “I began to feel the need to move away from modern art and explore a style of my own,” he says.

Sengupta then, began experimenting in what he likes to call Gesturism art, which he has been experimenting with since 1994. “Gesturism is boundless energy in human conduct; alive, breathing, dynamic and awash with essential pulsations,” he says. Having showcased his work at prestigious art exhibitions in Venice, Milan, Tokyo and Louvre in Paris, Sen is bringing his works to Mumbai at Institute of Contemporary Indian Art Gallery, Kala Ghoda. His last exhibition in Mumbai.

His collection consists of about 40 artworks, which he has been working on since early this year. “I feel gesture is among the great human expressions of ideation; from birth to death, uncountable gestures accompany us all the way,” he explains. As a way of revolting against digital art, Gesturism is based entirely on the artist’s handmade craftsmanship.

After his Mumbai exhibition, Sengupta’s work will be displayed at Barbizon, a place close to his heart. “I owe my inspiration to French painter, Jean-François Millet and one of the founders of the Barbizon school in rural France.” Noted for their naturalism, the Barbizon artists are known for their landscapes of plains, trees and forests. “Hailing from Bengal, I feel a connect to the rustic and raw quality of their artwork.”

Where: Institute of Contemporary Indian Art Gallery, K Dubash Marg, Kala Ghoda

When: NOV 9-22, 11 AM – 6 PM

Call: 22048138

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