



Penniless in Paris to shaking up art scene



Shombit Sengupta is bringing his 'Gesturism' artworks to Bengaluru on January 16

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BENGALURU, DHNS: Growing up in abject poverty in a Kolkata refugee camp, Shombit Sengupta landed in Paris with \$8 in his pocket and even swept the floors for a living.

Years later, this Indo-French artist would shake up the art world, pioneering a brand new movement called 'Gesturism', now all set for a Bengaluru showcase.

In Sengupta's own words,

Gesturism is about art celebrating the limitless gestures of all living beings, of the movements of life itself. It was in 1994, a full 23 years after his daring foray into France, that Sengupta coined that word, one that would define how he captured impromptu, vibrant movements in his arresting paintings.

On January 16, Sengupta's Gesturism artworks themed 'Hidden Figuratives' will come alive at the city's Gallery Time & Space. Vividly

colourful, the paintings are dense with multiple layers of strokes. At first glance, the subjects are not well defined. But look deeper, and the figures would appear to move around on the canvas.

But decades before his works inspired artists across the world, Sengupta had to endure extreme hardships in the slum-like refugee camp in Shohidnagar, about 50 km from Kolkata. The place had no electricity, sanitation or potable water.

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A few of the Gesturism artworks created by Shombit Sengupta.

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To escape this miserable state, "As a child, I would cross the Ganga into the erstwhile French Colony in Chandan Nagar. It was a different world, with Western architecture and promenades. The paintings of renowned European painters in the French museum library there inspired me," Sengupta recalled.

That sealed his determination to carve a niche for himself in European art. At the age of 19, he dared to be different, arriving virtually penniless in Paris. The culture shock hit him, yet he hung on. But his decision to stay put in

the heart of Paris against all odds would change his destiny, forever.

Sengupta wanted to be in the heart of French society. "I chose to work as a sweeper in a lithographic print shop near Paris. Many famous painters of the time would come there to get their lithographs made. I interacted with them, learning techniques of Western art."

On the invitation of French auto major Renault in 2016, Sengupta had transformed the exteriors of a car in quintessential Gesturism style. It was the first time an artist had narrated a story onto an art car.