



NIGHT WATCH

Recent works of Shuvaprasanna

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Recent Works: Mixed Media & Sculptures

of

SHUVAPRASANNA

15th February – 1st March, 2008
Art Alive Gallery, New Delhi

Night Watch

by Ina Puri

Shuvaprasanna is a child of the hallowed midnight hour when India, in the words of its first premier Jawaharlal Nehru, was preparing to keep its tryst with destiny. But he grew up in a world where the euphoric flush of optimism at having shaken off the yoke of British rule quickly gave way to a sense of national apathy and despair. As a young adult, he sought his identity in the vortex that was India, post-Independence. Poverty, joblessness and a gnawing disillusion only added to his feeling of being marginalised. Like other young men, he too felt inspired by the radical teachings of the age.

The intellectuals, especially in Bengal, saw the Leftists as a political party that shared their sensibilities and, for decades along with the rest, Shuvaprasanna too saw no reason to change his ideological leanings. However, the recent spate

of ordered violence, organised with brutal precision by that same party changed all that. The initial outpouring of betrayal and incredulity gave way to anger and retaliation. The artist expressed his views unequivocally and walked in silent protest alongside the multitudes in processions that just grew in size as days passed, drawing attention to the scandal of Nandigram, where goons plundered, maimed, raped and slaughtered to bring a motley group of then unarmed villagers to their knees because they dared to disobey the powerful State government. Each morning's newspapers published yet more devastating accounts of the unequal battle. For the intelligentsia, it was a throwback to the violence that ravaged the state in the 1970s. Only, the killing fields of Nandigram, circa 2007 was more visible, telecast as they were into polite drawing rooms.

For Shuvaprasanna, now in his 60s, this was now a part of his personal history.

This is part of the sub-text to his imagery addressing the angst-ridden turmoil of present-day West Bengal. Shuvaprasanna's drawings and paintings stem from the mood of the present times. If the village pond is lush with pretty pink lotus blooms, this is not the time to notice them because, not too far away, lie the rotting carcasses of butchered bodies – men, maybe children or women. There is, all around, the cloying, sweet smell of death. The green paddy fields are haunted with the sceptre of the slain.

Shorn of any religious affiliation, the foot soldiers enact their roles in Nandigram's Butcher's Theatre like puppets. While as

a thinking person, the artist is weighed down by the savagery he is witness to, there is another life that struggles to claim his attention. Like the flowers that stubbornly refuse to wither in the barren battle-scarred fields, the imagery of the plants is imbued with sexual energy and abandon. The unbridled sexuality of the flower-image opening out as if to seek an innocent union is to reiterate that, beneath all the brutality and bloodletting, there is life and love. The nectar, petal, pollen, stamen, lip, detailed in voluptuous contours are an abstraction of erotica almost. Shuvaprasanna refers to the Tantrik Art or even the ancient texts where the male and female celebrate their union with complete joy. The creepers, flowers and leaves re-enact the tableaux of love-making with the same passion. Violence and lust are connected in the bizarre and macabre arabesque thus.



Once upon a time, in the popular nursery rhymes and fables that children grew up on or even in the *pattachitras* of yore, the cat was the epitome of domesticity. In the artist's present oeuvre, however, in

their changed roles, they are predators, the fanged, vicious, snarling creatures of the night. Perhaps you're familiar with 'Icons', a series that Shuvaprasanna had once worked on. The paintings consisted of the gods and goddesses accompanied by their *vahana*. Thus, Durga stood majestically proportioned on a lion, Lakshmi had a docile owl at her feet, Saraswati a

swan. Today, the divinities have forsaken the devotees and in their place, animals and birds reign in splendid solitude. The owl, with its piercing eyes, has an armour of feathers stiffened with hostility. The deadly hawk, its beak and talons curved in predatory preparation, appears ready to swoop on the unwary, preening, even chauvinistically aware of his prowess. They are the predators seeking new preys, with their senses alert to the minutest sound or blur of movement. Silent as the grave until they go for the kill, jubilant that they will be the victors – that is nature's diktat.

On Shuvaprasanna's canvas, the cat stretches out its limbs in agile, coiling and sinuous fluidity. In this visual drama, there is no escaping the artist's mastery as he balances the forms to bring about a complex choreography. In their sheer



vitality and power, they make a thrilling impact...almost like the suspense thriller in its vividness. Vulturine. Rapacious. The creatures of the night, like their sub-human counterparts, are keepers of the night. The dexterity with which Shuvaprasanna approaches his subject is not puzzling for one who has followed his art. For as long as one can remember, the artist has made his protagonist, the ubiquitous crow, the ever-familiar icon one associates with the city of Calcutta. Perched atop the electric wires connecting distant poles, the crow in Shuvaprasanna's pictorial world is omnipresent, keeping an eye on the ways of

the world and the world is no wiser—and that is a paradox if there ever was one.

Sculptures add another dimension to the painter's oeuvre and are again a complex exploration of the artist's personal angst about the state of the world. Like Orwell, the artist uses the imagery of animals to reflect on present climes. The owls, cats and boar are predators who stalk their victims in the dead of the night. Shuvaprasanna's use of metallic sheen on the body parts

of the sculpted animals to embellish or adorn is perhaps ironic. There is a trophy won after all and the victor is in a jubilant mood.

That child of the bewitched midnight hour is an older man and he would still like to keep the hope alive that one day there will be justice for all. But until that happens, people have emptied his pictorial landscape and the divinities have fled. Only the creatures of the nocturnal world keep vigil. ■

Ina Puri is an author, columnist, independent curator and film producer. She began her journey by putting together alternate theatre festivals and innovative, contemporary shows by little known artists in Kolkata. Contemporary art soon became her prime obsession and, for over a decade now, Ina has focused her energies on the art scene in modern India. Her work as an independent curator and impresario, with practically every leading artist of the day, has allowed Ina to understand and view the contemporary scene from very different vantage points.

Ina's close association with Marjit Bawa has resulted in a series of memorable shows, as well as the *Rajat Karmal* award-winning documentary – *Meeting Marjit* (directed by Buddhadeb Dasgupta) which she also co-scripted. Ina is also the author of *In Black & White*, the definitive biography of Marjit Bawa.

In between all that though, Ina hasn't strayed from her basic objective of promoting young Indian artists or from putting her fingers in as removed a pie as the biography of santoor maestro Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, *Journey With a Hundred Strings*, or, for that matter, *The Illustrated History of the Raj Shavan in Kolkata*. Ina also remains firmly committed to the promotion of young artists and of new ideas.

She has recently edited *Faces of Indian Art* a definitive book documenting studios of Indian artists. She has also completed scripting and co-producing a documentary on Padma Vibhushan awardee Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma. Ina Puri is a consultant with Emami Art Foundation.

The Bird Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 39.5" x 27.5"





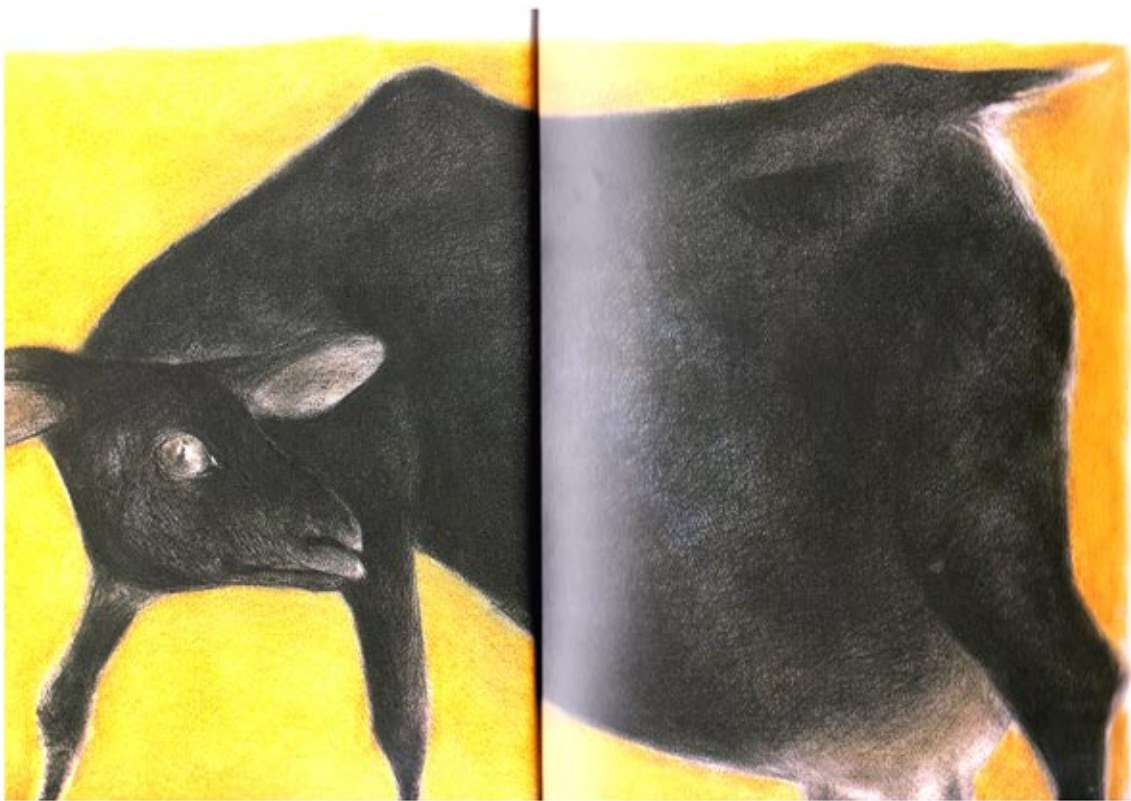
The Cat Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 22" x 30"



Street Dogs Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 27.5" x 39.5"



M. B. W. 1/17





The Goat Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 27.5" x 39.5"

The Owl Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 30"x 22"





Illusion Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 30" x 22"



Middletone 2 Charcoal, Pastel & Acrylic on Paper 60" x 36"



Shirley M. M. 07

The Owl Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 22" x 30"





Sunil Panamra '07

The Goat Bronze 39" x 16" x 23"



The Owl Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 30" x 22"

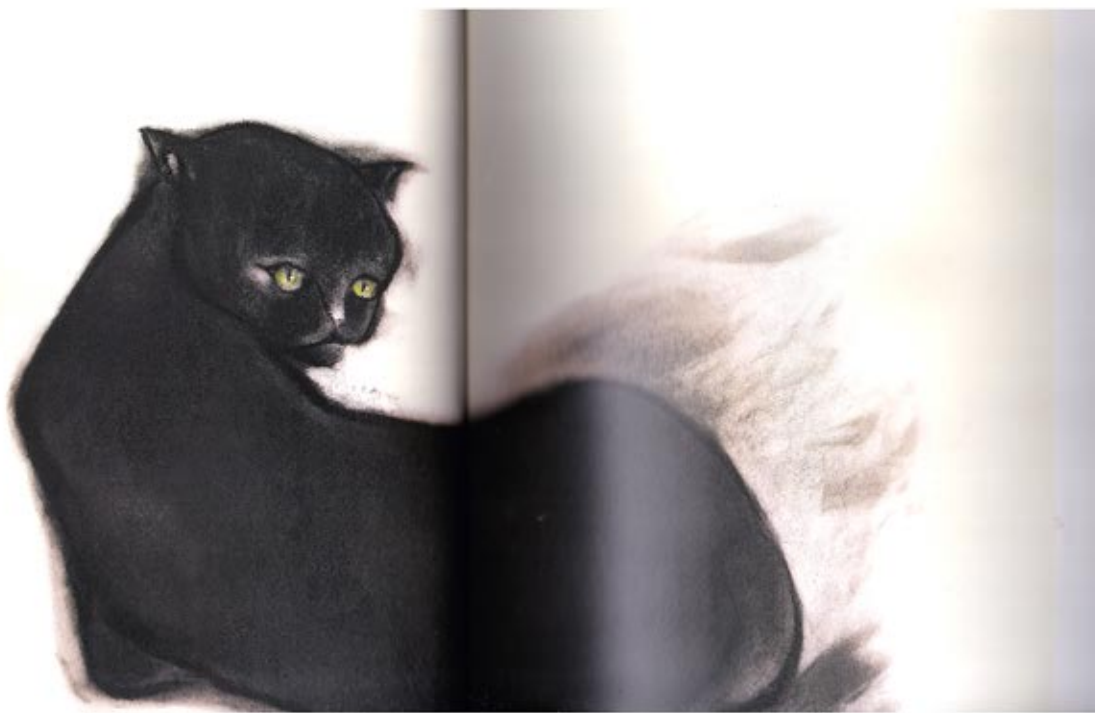


W. J. W. W. W. W. W. W. W. W. W.



Illusion Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 22" x 30"







The Owl Charcoal & Acrylic on Board 15.5" x 12.5"



Shunpizama '09



The Crows Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 39.5" x 27.5"



Shiva Prasad 07

The Cat Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 30" x 22"



Shirley Prussman '07

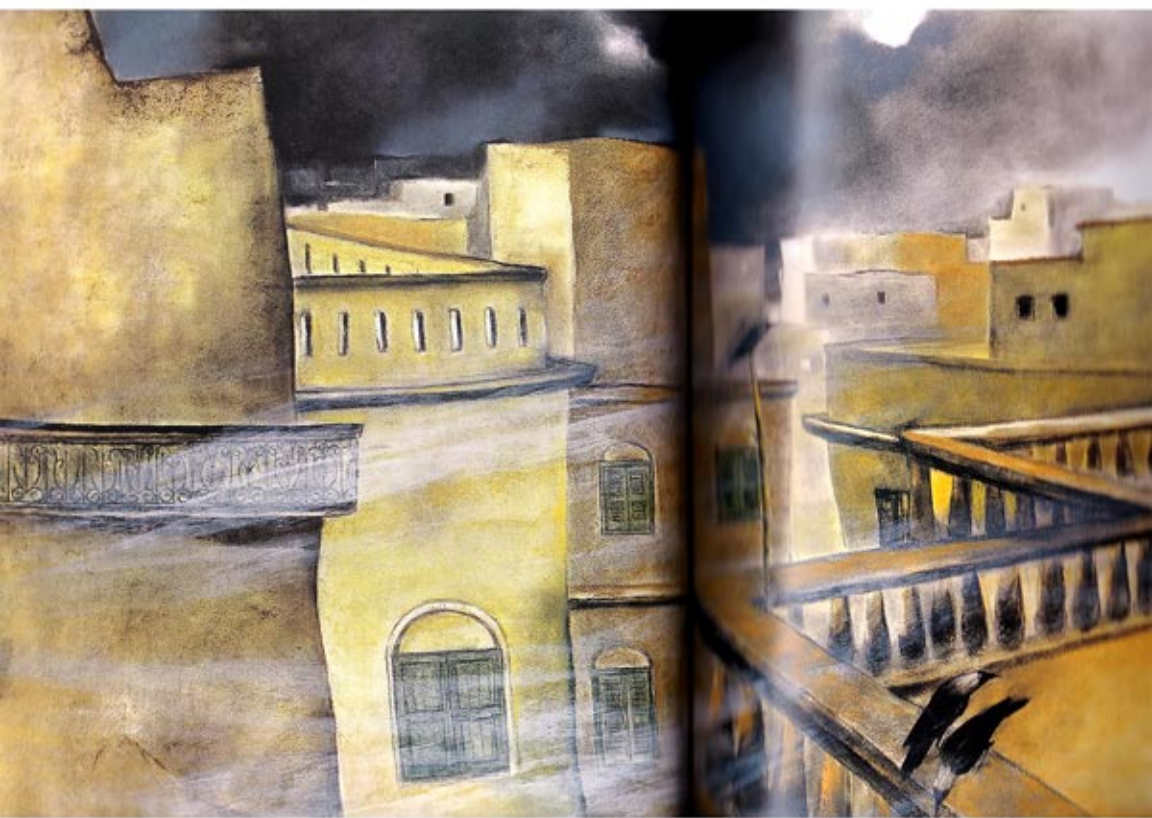
The Cat Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 39.5" x 27.5"

Shiraparamidit



The Hog Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 27.5" x 39.5"





The Bird Bronze 17"x13"x9.5"



The Owl Charcoal & Acrylic on Board 15.5"x 12.5"



Suvrasamma's

Street Dog Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 27.5" x 39.5"



by Ivan Prusamec



The Cat Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 30"x 22"



ShivaPrasanna '07



Shuafasanna 17

The Owl Charcoal & Acrylic on Board 15"x 15"



Illusion Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 30" x 22"

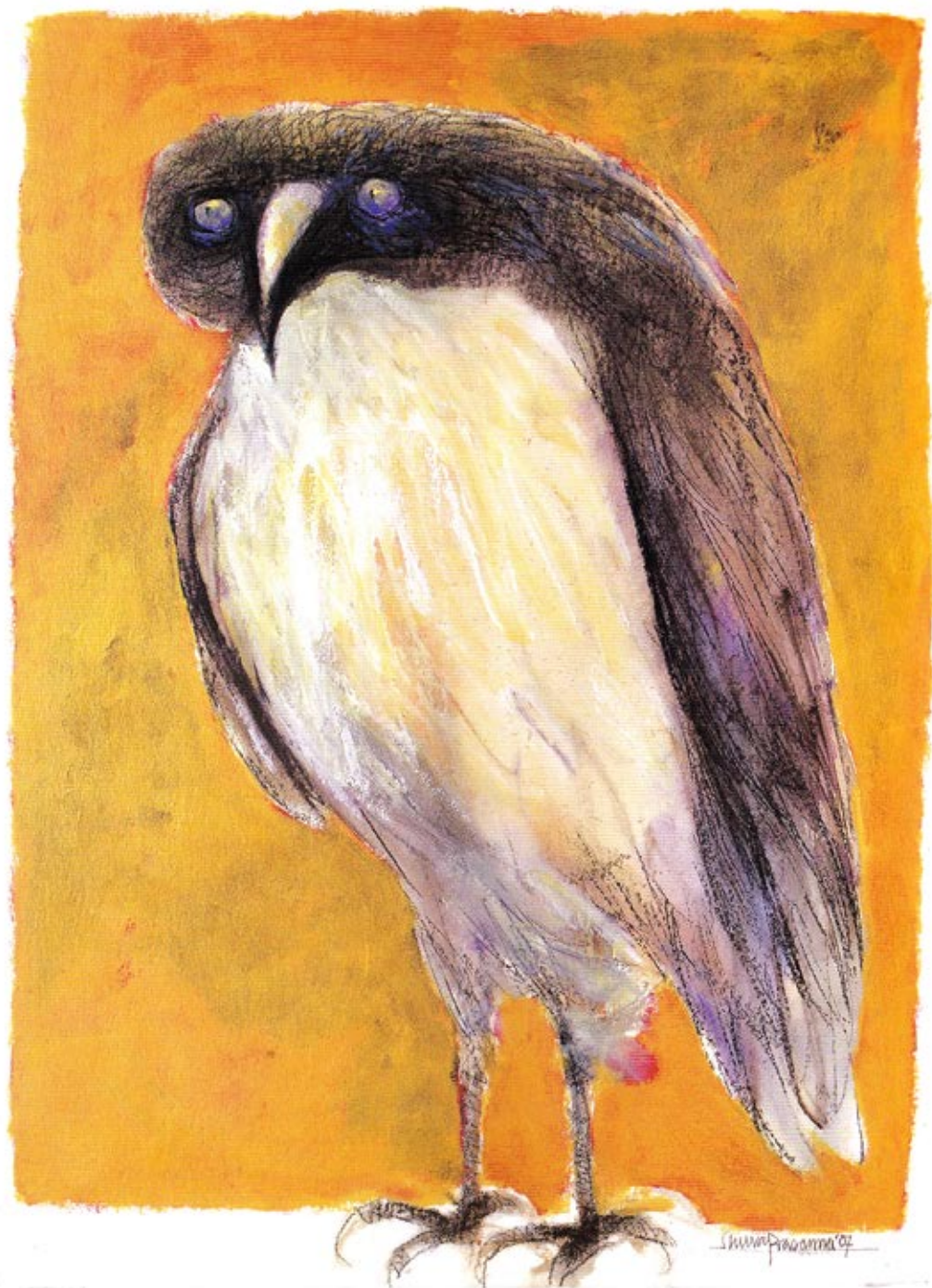


MuraGusama '7

Illusion Bronze 21" x 22" x 8"



The Owl Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 30" x 22"

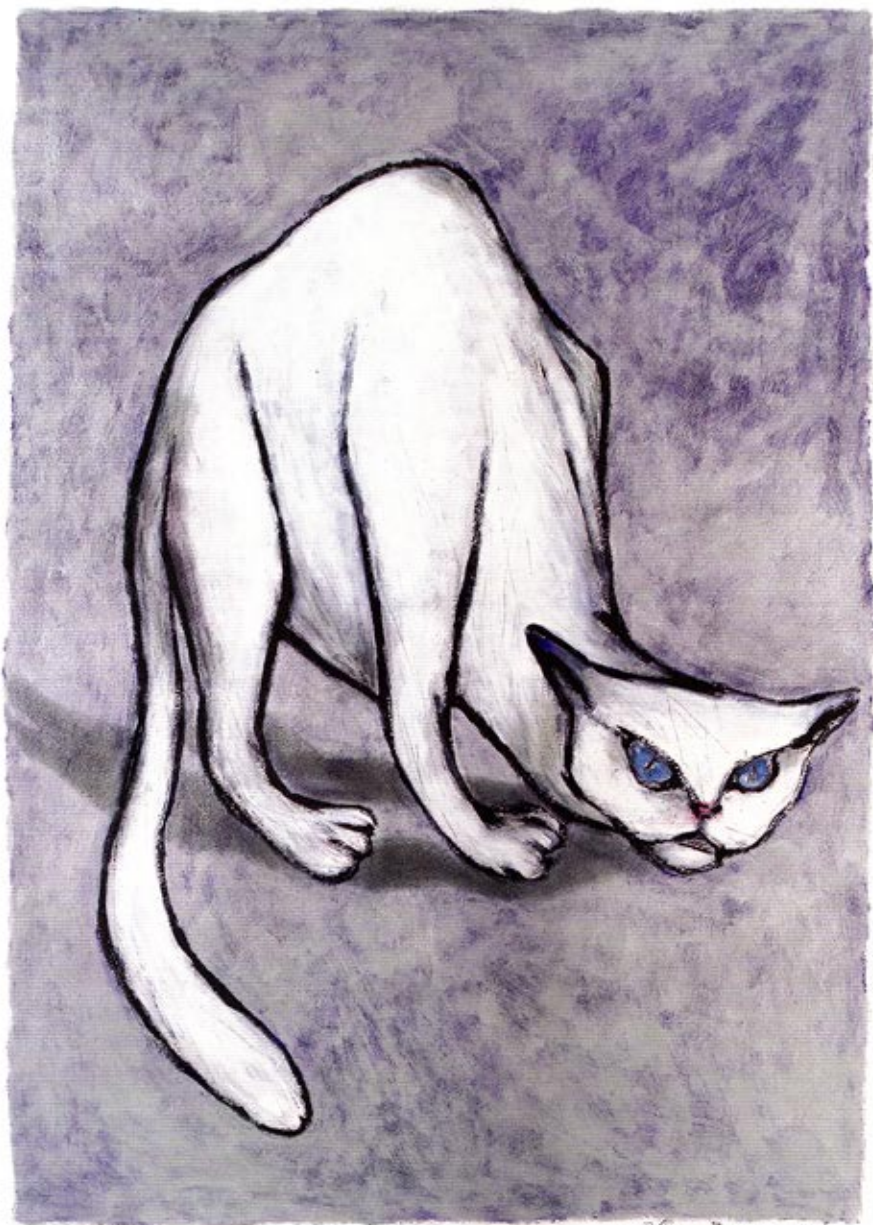


Illusion Bronze 19" x 13" x 16"





The Cat Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 39.5" x 27.5"



ShinaPasama 07

The Bird Bronze 16" x 12.5" x 9"





Illusion Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 22" x 30"







The Cat Bronze 27"x14"x14"





Illusion Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 39.5" x 27.5"



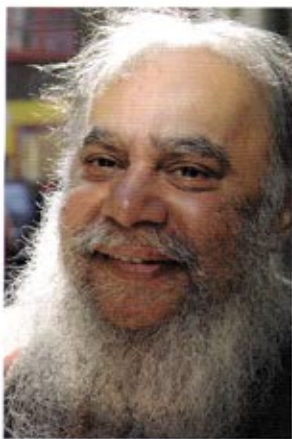


The Owl Charcoal & Acrylic on Paper 39.5" x 27.5"



Illusion Bronze 36" x 17" x 19"





SHUVAPRASANNA

- 1947 Born in Calcutta.
1969 Graduated from Indian College of Art (R.B. University, Calcutta).

Solo Exhibitions

- 1972 Birla Academy, Calcutta.
1973 Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.
1974 Gallery "Les Hirondelles", Geneva, Switzerland.
1975 Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi; Gallery Atlantis, Aix-En-Provence, France.
1976 Gallery Denbarq, Geneva, Switzerland.
1977 Décor Art Gallery, Calcutta.
1978 Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.
1979 Walburgischule, Werl, Germany; Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta.
1980 National Museum, Singapore; Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.
1981 Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta; Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi.
1983 Calcutta Art Gallery; Calcutta; Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai; Kreissparkasse, Ludwigsburg, Germany; Volkshochschule, Essen, Germany.
1985 Painter's Home Gallery; Calcutta.
1987 Birla Academy, Calcutta.
1988 IDM Gallery, Munich, Germany; St. Paulus Pastelite, Ludwigsburg, Germany.
1989 Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai; The Gallery, Chennai.
1990 Indian Museum, Calcutta; Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai; Sridharani Art Gallery, New Delhi. Art Age Gallery, Calcutta; La Gallerie, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
1991 Birla Academy, Calcutta.
1992 Kunstverein Ludwigsburg, Germany; Studio Helmi Precther, Augsburg, Germany.
1993 "Metropolis": Portraits of Calcutta; CIMA Gallery, Calcutta; ABC Gallery, Benaras.
1994 Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi; Gallerie Grewal Mohanjeet, Paris, France.
1995 Painter's Home Gallery, Calcutta; Gallery Sanskriti, New Delhi.
1997 Joint Show with Shipra Bhattacharya, Art Today, New Delhi.
1998 An Appreciation of Ted Hughes, Exhibition of Crow Paintings, British Council, Calcutta; Art Indus, New Delhi.
2000 'Shuvaprasanna's Icon & Retrospective, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, organized

- by Art Indus, New Delhi; Fine Art Company, Mumbai; Gallery Sumukha (Recent & Past) at Bangalore; Artworld, Chennai; Fine Art Company, Mumbai
- 2002 'Icons and Illusions' organized by Gallery & Arts India, New York, USA, 'Madhura' at Art Indus, New Delhi.
- 2004 'Lila' at Sridharni Art Gallery organized by Art Indus, New Delhi, 'The Golden Flute' at Gallery Artsindia, New York.
- 2005 'The Golden Flute' at Cymroza Art Gallery, Mumbai organized by Indian Fine Art & Cymroza Art Gallery.
- 2006 "Evocative Expressions" In Quest of Krishna at Art Alive Gallery, New Delhi and same show at ITC Sonar Bangla Art Gallery, Kolkata; The Devine Flute, at Arts India West, USA.
- 2007 "Madhura – The Golden Flute" at Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre by Indian Contemporary.

International Exhibitions

- 1985 III Asian Art Biennial, Bangladesh
- 1986 II International Biennial, Havana, Cuba
- 1990 II International Biennial, Ankara, Turkey
- 1991 VII International Triennial India, New Delhi. Visited United States under the auspices of the USIA; Visited England under the sponsorship of British Council.
- 1992 "To Encounter Others", Kassel, Germany.
- 1993 Visited Germany under the sponsorship of Inter Nations.
- 1995 III International Biennial of Prints, Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal.
- 1997 Indian Contemporary Paintings, Christie's, London
- 1998 Contemporary Indian Paintings, Sotheby's, New York
- 2003 6th EME Triennale Mondiale D'Estampes Petit Format 2003 in France
- 2004 Scenes from a Voyage organized by Art Voyage in association with Art Pilgrim; 'Parbon 2004', group exhibition at Sheraton Hotel, Dhaka, organized by The High Commission of India in Dhaka, Real Concepts and MAA consortium, Dhaka.
- 2005 "Group exhibition" at Reflections Art Gallery, Hong Kong.
- 2006 "Group exhibition" at Singapore organized by Gallery at Positive; "Group exhibition" at Singapore organized by Gallery Art Resource Trust; "Group exhibition" at Singapore organized by Fiidaa art.
- 2007 "Power of peace" at Bali organized by Tao Art Gallery; "Group exhibition" at Singapore organized by Fiidaa art; "Group exhibition" at Singapore organized by Rangoli art; Tehelka art auction at London, organized by Bonham's, 'Art Auction' at New York organized by Kmoma & Christie's; "Group exhibition" at Singapore organized by Artworld; 'group exhibition' at Dubai organized by Mystic Inspiration.
- 2008 "India Splendor" at Singapore organized by Habiart Foundation.

Workshops

- 1982 Poster Workshop, British Council, Calcutta.
- 1983 All India Painting Workshop, Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta
- 1988 Workshop in Horniman Museum, London.
- 1990 Painting Workshop in Coonoor, Chennai; War and Peace, Indo-German Artists Camp, Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta.
- 1991 Advanced Lithography Workshop with Tamarind Institute, USA, and Lalit Kala Akademi, Chennai.
- 1992 Gangotsav Art Camp at Riverside Diamond Harbour, West Bengal.
- 1993 Graphics Workshop in Obergrabenpresse, Dresden, Germany; Druck and Publikations GmbH and Kupferdruckerer Lothar Becker in Munich, Germany; Painting Workshop of Artists from Bangladesh and West Bengal, at Bangladesh Deputy High Commission, Calcutta.
- 1995 International Workshop - Art and Nature, New Delhi; Graphics Workshop in Obegrabenpresse, Dresden, Germany.
- 1999 Workshop on Contemporary Works of Bengali Artists, Bengal Foundation, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- 2000 Painting Workshop at Taj Bengal, Calcutta; Painting Workshop at Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi; Painting Workshop at Taj Coromandel, Chennai, Painting Workshop at Myher, Madhya Pradesh.
- 2001 Art In Nature, Indo-German Workshop in connection with German Festival in India.
- 2002 'Art workshop' organized by Sanghi Industries at Hyderabad
- 2003 'Le Royal Meridian Mumbai Art Camp' organized by Gallery Beyond
- 2004 Kodaikanal Art Camp organized by Artworld, Chennai; 'Artists workshop' organized by Surya Prakash at Hyderabad; 'Artists workshop' organized by Eastern Command HQ; Dubai Art Camp organized by Intex, Dubai.
- 2005 'Art workshop' organized by Gandhara Art Gallery, Kolkata; 'Le Royal Meridian Mumbai Art Camp' organized by Gallery Beyond; Kodaikanal Art Camp organized by Artworld, Chennai. South Africa Art Camp organized by Gallery Nyva, New Delhi; ITC art Camp, Kolkata, organized by Popular Prakashan, Mumbai.
- 2006 'Intercontinental art camp' organized by Intercontinental Marine Drive and Indian Fine Art, Mumbai; 'Cambodia art camp' organized by Gandhara Art Gallery; 'Art meet at Gwalier' organized by Institute of Technology & Management; 'Russia art camp' organized by Gallery Art Resource trust; 'London art camp' organized by Old world Hospitality; 'Printmaking camp' organized by Gallery Rasa; 'Myanmar art camp' organized by The Eye Within.
- 2007 'Art workshop' at Hyderabad, organized by Gallery Space; 'Camp Vatsayana' at Varanasi organized by Different Strokes; 'Art workshop' at Hyderabad, organized by Ochre India; 'Sculpture workshop' at Jaipur organized by Gallery Sanskriti; 'China workshop' organized by Filmlogic; 'Europe workshop' organized by Gallery Sanskriti; 'Edinburgh workshop' at Edinburgh organized by Pritish Nandy Communication.

Awards

- 1979 Awarded by AIFACS, New Delhi
- 1978 Awarded by State Lalit Kala Akademi, West Bengal
- 1977 Awarded by Birla Academy, Calcutta.

Art Organizational Works

- 1969 Founder member, Art and Artists, Calcutta.
- 1970 Joined Calcutta Painters, Calcutta
- 1972 Jt. Secretary, Calcutta Art Fair
- 1974 Member, CIRCA Geneva, Switzerland
- 1976 Founded College of Visual Arts, Calcutta
- 1984 Founded Arts Acre, An Artists' Village, Calcutta.

Publications

- 1976 Edited with Shakti Chattopadhyay, *Anarchy and the Blue*
- 1977 Published *Artist*, a Collection of Woodcut Prints
- 1981 Editor *Art Today*, a journal on movement of contemporary visual arts in India
- 1982 Edited Portfolio *The Dream and Reality* (a collection of drawings)
- 1983 Edited Portfolio *The Eyes of Time* (a collection of drawings)
- 1993 Published *Between the Earth and the Sky*
- 1995 Published *Wondering Silence* (Drawings and Contemporary Bengali Poems)
Published *Shuttle* Portfolio of Graphics and verses by Obergrabenpresse, Dresden and Calcutta.
- 1998 Published *Bishanna Swadesh* (Drawings with Poems of Partha Raha)
- 1999 Published *Ma-Nishad* (Drawings with Poems of Jay Goswami)
- 2000 Published *Shuvaprasanna: Vision Reality and beyond* by Chitrotpala Mukherjee.
- 2002 Published "*Aamaar Chhelebel*" an autobiography of Shuvaprasanna
- 2003 Published "*Swapna, Swapna noy*" a Bengali short stories for children's by Shuvaprasanna; 'Call of the Real- Contemporary Indian Artists of Bengal' published by Mapin.
- 2005 Published "Onno Nagorik" a collection of proses by Shuvaprasanna.

Permanent Collections

National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi; Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi; Govt. College of Art, New Delhi; UP State Lalit Kala Akademi; Chandigarh Museum; Punjab University; NCERT, New Delhi; Birla Academy, Calcutta; Air India; Taj Group of Hotels; Times of India Group; WHO Geneva; Kratel SA Stuttgart, Germany; Glenbarra Art Museum, Japan; HEART, India; Radisson Ffort, Raichak, West Bengal; The Museum of Modern Art, Sitomo, Japan; Gujarat Heavy Chemicals, Delhi, Telecom Venture Group, Hong Kong, etc.

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