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RECENT & RETROSPECTIVE



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## I am who I am

**S**elf-expression is an instinctive urge, simply nature's way. For those of us who use our heart and our intellect to delve deep into the consciousness, right down to that magical land of the imagined; only to emerge into the world of touch and feeling...it's we who immerse ourselves in the intoxication of expression, trying to reveal the unknown, the unseen and the unheard, using the powers that nature has bestowed on us.

Every day, every hour, there are images that flash across my mind's eye. All I do is release them onto the canvas. I learn the language, the lines, the colours and the craft that makes this possible. The lines and the colours paint the picture - a sumptuous vision born of the seen and the unseen. Not quite the result of a specific pain or pleasure - but the desire to speak out is born of a personal need. That's what I capture on canvas.

Sometimes it makes for art. Sometimes it doesn't. But I play judge as to whether it does or doesn't. Of course the discerning audiences too have their say...but in an entirely different way. That's what creates the conflict. By opening myself up to the world, I also open myself up to scrutiny. Have I been able to express what I had to say? Have I been able to release what's inside me? Can any outsider judge that better than me? Including where I have cut corners with my muse? Who is to tell me the way I have wanted to show this world? Who knows my vision better than I do?

From the beginning of social civilization, there has been an eternal conflict - between nature and society, good and bad, hatred and love, war and peace, beauty and ugliness. The creative mind expresses that conflict through its own evolved techniques. Using words, rhythm, music, lines and all the different media available to the creative mind. Natural evolution has changed the words, the language and the rhythm. The face of the abstract has also changed with time.

How much of my personal life and self-knowledge is really mine? My deepest and most personal self is also a melting pot...I am who I am thanks to the work of nature, the day and age I belong to and the rules with which society binds us to itself. None of us are entirely free of these, so the essence which helps create music or art is also coloured by some of these influences.

Out of all this emerges a thin stream...born of a longing for enquiry. That's what helps bring to light music, art and literature...with a difference, using the varied forms of creative expression. That's how Van Gogh's sunflowers are so different from the flowers that I paint. Pleasure and pain find a resonance in different ways and with different tenors. We use lines and colours to express smells and sounds while music helps reveal the brilliance of colour. The subtle and the abstract turn the silent cacophony into a mute show. The senses and their feelings respond. Colours, the artistry with which they are used, the technique and the craftsmanship of the creator...all work together to create the final painting.

Once a painting is ready comes the courage. And in its wake, another canvas. To resolve incomplete feelings comes more and more and more. The passion of failure powers the creative urge. All paintings remain incomplete as the mind goes in search of another way. But somewhere a connection remains. A painting does not give speeches. It does not give grand messages. It only moves. Art is not about detraction. It's about attraction. It's not about a theme...it spans many. Some can use it to travel beyond a single subject...others remain fixed on a single focus.

A painting is the result of a complex chemical process...catalyzed by the mind and heart, intellect and experience. It can never be only about the head or only about the heart. Either way, there'll be gaps in the vision.

In my presentation, I have tried to offer an expanse including people, cities, birds and animals, time and illusion, shapes and shadows. But they are the excuse. The idea is to use the excuse to find the way ahead. There's no end to that journey...I have been walking endlessly in search of that goal. Maybe it's just a mirage...who knows?

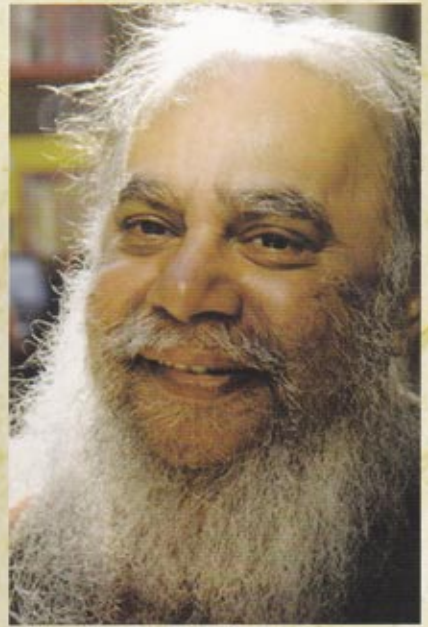
Shruti Dasanna



## SHUVAPRASANNA

Born 1947 Shuvaprasanna or Shuvada as he is fondly called, studied art at the Indian College of Art in Calcutta. His illustrious career spanning over four decades includes a varied range of work as a graphic artist, painter, sculptor, educationalist, writer and art activist.

The urban milieu of Calcutta- its existential agony and survival instinct, its joys and people- the city to which he belongs, has figured prominently in much of his work that often comes in series ranging from cityscapes to clocks to crows and owls. Passion flowers with their discreet erotic undertones and Icon series of Durga, Krishna, Radha and other icons in vibrant hues with a textural use of gold and silver foil, reminiscent of Indian miniature



paintings, pressed delicately onto the canvases, marked a creative breakthrough for the artist. Keen on experimentation he continues to explore new themes, forms and media and his work comes in as assortment of media- graphics, oil on canvas, drawings on paper, charcoal, and mixed media while he has also experimented with sculptural forms and installations. .

Founder, College of Visual Arts and then Arts Acre, now refigured as Arts Acre Foundation- an Artists' Village in Calcutta; and member of Art and Artists, Calcutta Painters, CIRCA Geneva, Shuva has attended numerous workshops and artists residencies. He is recipient of several awards including the AIFACS, State LKA and Birla Academy Awards. Shuva has also written on matters of art and issues of social concern and his art has been exhibited in over 50 solo and group shows in various Indian cities and around the world including the Biennales at Bangladesh, Havana and Ankara and VII-Triennale India. His work features in the collections of National Gallery of Modern Art, Lalit Kala Akademi and College of Art, New Delhi, Chandigarh Museum Punjab University, Birla Academy Calcutta; Times of India Group, WHO Geneva and Glenbarra Art Museum, Japan, amongst others. Shuva lives in Kolkata and works from his studio in the city.