



*Metropolis*

PORTRAITS OF CALCUTTA

BY

**SHUVAPRASANNA**

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**SHUVAPRASANNA**

CIMA Gallery Calcutta March 14—26 1994



C I M A

*Centre of International Modern Art*

Sunny Towers 43, Ashutosh Chowdhury Avenue Calcutta 700 019  
Tel nos: 475 2509/74 8717 Fax nos: (33) 26 1743/ 247 4458

This exhibition has been made possible by the generous support of Ganpati Greenfields Ltd, Calcutta



Ganpati Greenfields Limited

**I**t all began one lazy Sunday afternoon last year when Shuvada (as I affectionately call Sri Shuvaprasanna Bhattacharjee) and I happened to be discussing about art and Calcutta.

Calcutta, we both agreed, was a city of contradictions. It evoked extreme love, irresistible passion, a great deal of encouragement and hope on one hand, and nostalgia, helplessness, disappointment, even despair on the other. We decided we could either love or hate Calcutta, but could not possibly be indifferent to it.

I became aware then that Shuvada had already been thinking about these contradictions very deeply and proposed to interpret them in his own way on canvas.

His ideas, I immediately felt, would form a beautiful and thought-provoking set of paintings. I then proposed to Ganpati Greenfields to get associated with this project.

Calcutta to me is more than just a city. It is my home. Born and brought up here, I belong to Calcutta as nowhere else. Shuvada's paintings, I am sure, will be of as much interest to any Calcuttan as they are to me.

I believe Shuvada has produced some outstanding canvases. I hope the viewers will enjoy the works.

I must thank Ms Rakhi Sarkar, Director, CIMA, Centre of International Modern Art, for agreeing to co-organise this exhibition.

HARSH NEOTIA

*Director  
Ganpati Greenfields Ltd*

*Beyond Themes  
Beyond Words*

There isn't another city like Calcutta anywhere in the world. This city has nothing, and yet it has a lot. Here is everything you need to die, and everything you need in order to live. I do not try and dream any special dream about any other place. And yet, dreams become inseparably fused with reality, make life many-splendoured. Stark reality is interpreted differently, viewed differently. This helps a poet to be a poet, a painter to be a painter.

Any creation rises out of chaos, out of troubled times. One could live a regularised, systematic life. Like in a refrigerator. Everything is so well arranged inside it, in a regulated temperature, free from dust, all kinds of dust, I mean. But there would be no variety in that, nothing would grow. Trouble brings people closer together, people with different mentalities.





And something new is born. We create amid chaos, while, paradoxically, dreaming of a peaceful, trouble free life all the time.

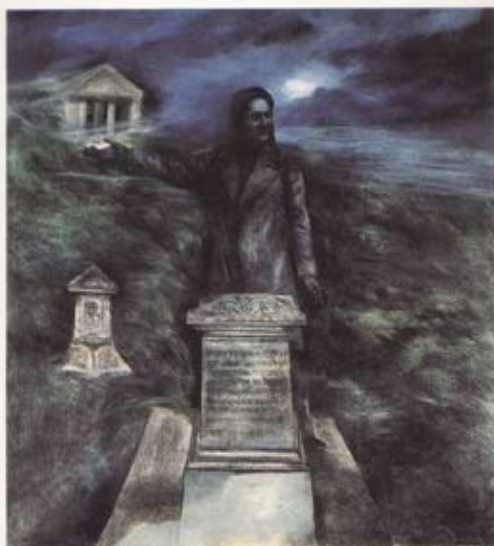
I am curious about the times I live in, the city, the environment. My paintings are built out of these. In the heart of Calcutta, I find innumerable themes, subjects. I have painted its buildings, its pollution, its traffic, its intellectuals. Even its ravages. And I have painted its birds.

But these are not really the birds you know. Not really owls or vultures. I have given them human expressions, the expressions of people all around me. I also draw big fishes. Sometimes there are these big fishes that eat up the little ones.

Some of these shapes I paint seem so familiar to me, like I have known them for aeons, since the beginning of the world. They may look so fragile, transient on one hand, and so eternal on the other. I am looking for a way of expression that is in parts fantastic and neo-realistic. I would not say surrealistic, for that would mean a lot more of dreams. I feel the life of every Calcuttan has a lot of fantasy in it.

Over the past one or two years, I have been trying to develop a medium that is not directly oil. I have used acrylic, charcoal and rice paper, with an overall coat of oil to get a fused effect. It is not possible to achieve that effect in any other way.





My work over the past twenty or twentyfive years has not seen any revolutionary changes, though there may have been certain changes in form or subject. Every person has a central character of his own, a basic philosophy. Unless there is an accident, that cannot change radically. If you are figurative today and abstract tomorrow, it only means you are being playful.

I favour certain colours, blues, browns, burnt sienna or burnt amber. And black. I see black as an union of many colours, a colour that has absorbed all the rest. Black has many dimensions, it is never flat. It can have a blue aura or even a red one. In my thoughts, I associate Kali, the goddess of darkness, *kalo* (black) and Calcutta together.

Art may communicate something to a viewer. But I do not create art so I may communicate. I paint because I have an urge to, in my own style. It is not my job to motivate the viewer. Illustrators may convey a thought, cartoonists may make a comment on the state of the society. But my experiments are just mine. The viewer needs to arrive at the same frame of mind as mine to understand my work. Someone offers me a book in Latin, say. It will have no value for me, I will not be able to appreciate the beauty of Latin literature. One needs to prepare himself over the years in order to



understand art.

My paintings, therefore, will not have a special appeal for a Calcuttan. Some of my paintings may smell of wet green moss, for instance. It is the way I have seen Calcutta, different from the experiences of any other person living in the city. A connoisseur who lives 15,000 miles away may perhaps find something that interests



him though.

What every creator wishes to achieve is a universal appeal. There should be no language problem while judging the merits of a painting. One should go beyond themes, beyond words. You feel the winter wind send a shiver down your spine. A word from your beloved, the haunting call of a bird may send another kind of happy shiver through your being. There can be no clearcut definition for these feelings, nor should you wish to seek any logical explanation.

To try and reach that ultimate abstraction, that is the aim of any creator. Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* retains her appeal even today for no one knows precisely where her charm lies, because her smile can have a hundred different interpretations. That is how it is possible for innumerable poets to talk about a single flower.

I began painting when I was four or five. I would do portraits of all those patients who visited my father's clinic. I loved it then, and it is a profession now. So, the pains of painting are mine by choice, the joys of painting are mine by choice. I am not angry with the world, for I find it childish to get angry. But I am amused by a lot of things. If you were to look for a dominant emotion in my works, it would be fun. Even happiness is funny.


















*Died in Calcutta 28th July 1891*  
Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas  
165 cms x 153 cms 1993






*Tagore Tagore Tagore*  
Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas  
165 cms x 153 cms 1993







*Whenever you see colour think of us*  
Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas  
165 cms x 153 cms 1993



*Fish I*  
Charcoal, acrylic on board  
78 cms x 101 cms 1994





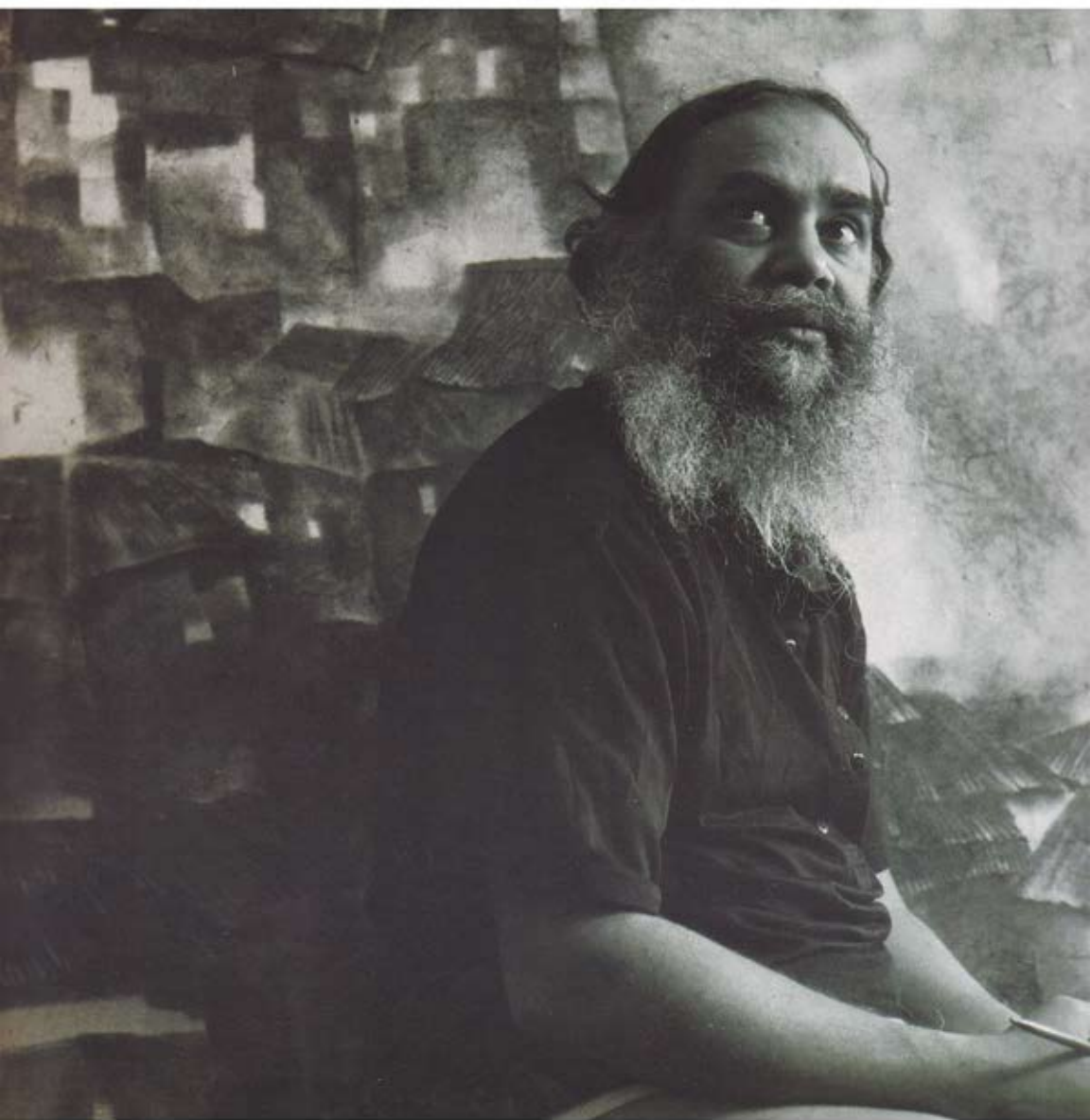
*Owl V*  
Charcoal, acrylic on board  
78 cms x 101 cms 1994



1. *Winter morning in Calcutta* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
2. *Near the maidan* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
3. *Whenever you see colour think of us* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
4. *Route no. 7 and 8* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
5. *Tagore Tagore Tagore* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
6. *Signal* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
7. *Michael Madhusudan Dutt the blue poet* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
8. *Died in Calcutta 28th July 1891* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
9. *A play* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
10. *Middle tone* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
11. *A statue* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
12. *Delhi chalo!!!* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
13. *In search of Oscar in Calcutta* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
14. *Night in Calcutta* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
15. *A procession* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 165 cms x 153 cms 1993
16. *Middle tone I* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 89 cms x 86 cms 1994



17. *Middle tone II* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 89 cms x 86 cms 1994
18. *Middle tone III* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 89 cms x 86 cms 1994
19. *Middle tone IV* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 89 cms x 86 cms 1994
20. *Middle tone V* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 89 cms x 86 cms 1994
21. *Owl I* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 127 cms x 127 cms 1994
22. *Owl II* Charcoal, acrylic, oil on canvas 127 cms x 127 cms 1994
23. *Bird I* Charcoal, acrylic on board 78 cms x 101 cms 1994
24. *Owl II* Charcoal, acrylic on board 78 cms x 101 cms 1994
25. *Owl III* Charcoal, acrylic on board 78 cms x 101 cms 1994
26. *Owl IV* Charcoal, acrylic on board 78 cms x 101 cms 1994
27. *Owl V* Charcoal, acrylic on board 78 cms x 101 cms 1994
28. *Owl VI* Charcoal, acrylic on board 78 cms x 101 cms 1994
29. *Fish I* Charcoal, acrylic on board 78 cms x 101 cms 1994
30. *Fish II* Charcoal, acrylic on board 77.5 cms x 101.5 cms 1994
31. *Fish III* Charcoal, acrylic on board 77.5 cms x 100.5 cms 1994
32. *Fish IV* Charcoal, acrylic on board 56 cms x 71 cms 1994
33. *Owl* Lithograph 70 cms x 50 cms 1993
34. *Aves* Colour Intaglio 50 cms x 33 cms 1993
35. *Wings* Colour Intaglio 50 cms x 33 cms 1993



**Born:**

1947

**Studied:**

1969

Indian College of Art, Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta

**Solo exhibitions:**

1972/ 1987

Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Calcutta

1973/ 1975/ 1978/ 1980-81

Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi

1974

Gallery Les Hirondelles, Geneva, Switzerland

1975

Gallery Atlantis, Aix-En-Provence, France

1976

Gallery Den Barg, Geneva, Switzerland

1977

Decor Art Gallery, Calcutta

1979

Walburgisschule, Werl, Germany

Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta

1980

National Museum, Singapore

1981

Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta

1983/ 1989-90

Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay

1983

Kreissparkasse, Ludwigsburg, Germany

Volkshochschule, Essen, Germany

1988

IDM Gallery, Munich, Germany

St Paulus Fastellte, Ludwigsburg, Germany

1989

The Gallery, Madras

1990

Indian Museum, Calcutta

Sridharani Art Gallery, New Delhi

1991

Artage Gallery, Calcutta

La Gallerie, Dhaka, Bangladesh

**Group Exhibitions:**

1969

*Art and Artists*, Calcutta

1970

*Calcutta Painters*, Calcutta, Bombay*Epar Bangla Opar Bangla*, Calcutta

1971

*Calcutta Painters*, New Delhi

- 1975 Gallery Kunsthaus, Stuttgart, Germany  
*Silver Jubilee Exhibition*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
- 1977 Inaugural Show, Decor Art Gallery, Calcutta  
 Gallery 26, New Delhi
- 1985 *Graphic Art in India since 1850*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi  
*III Asian Art Biennale*, Bangladesh
- 1986 *II International Biennale*, Havana, Cuba
- 1987 *Indian Drawings Today*, Jehangir Art Gallery, Bombay
- 1989 Bombay Art Society, Centenary Exhibition
- 1990 *300 years of Calcutta*, Birla Academy of Art and Culture,  
 Calcutta
- 1991 *II International Biennale*, Ankara, Turkey  
*VII International Triennale*, New Delhi  
*The Downtrodden and We*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi
- 1992 *Silver Jubilee Exhibition*, Birla Academy of Art and Culture,  
 Calcutta  
*To Encounter Others*, Kassel, Germany  
 Saitomo Museum, Japan
- 1993 Kunstverein Ludwigsburg, Studio Helmi Prechter,  
 Augsburg, Germany

#### **Workshops:**

- 1982 Poster Workshop, British Council, Calcutta
- 1983 All-India Painting Workshop, Max Mueller Bhavan,  
 Calcutta
- 1988 Workshop, Horniman Museum, London
- 1990 Indo-German Artists' Camp, Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta  
 Painting Workshop, Coonoor
- 1991 Advance Lithography Workshop, Tamarind Institute, USA  
 Lalit Kala Akademi, Madras
- 1993 Graphics Workshop, Obergabenseite, Dresden,  
 Druck- und publikations GmbH: Kupferdruckerer Lothar  
 Becker, Munich, Germany



**Awards :**

- 1977 Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Calcutta  
1978 Lalit Kala Akademi, West Bengal  
1979 All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, New Delhi

**Publications :**

- 1976 Joint Editor, *Anarchy and the Blue*  
1977 Published *Artists*, a collection of woodcut prints  
1981 Editor, *Art Today*  
1983 Edited *The Eyes of Time*, a portfolio of drawings  
1992 Edited portfolio *Dream and Reality*, a collection of drawings  
1993 Published *Between the Earth and the Sky*

**Permanent Collections:**

- National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi  
Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi  
Government College of Art, New Delhi  
Lalit Kala Akademi, UP  
Lalit Kala Akademi, West Bengal  
Chandigarh Museum  
Punjab University  
NCERT, New Delhi  
Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Calcutta  
Air India  
Taj Group of Hotels  
Times of India Group  
WHO, Geneva  
Kratel, SA Stuttgart, Germany  
Glenbarra Art Museum, Japan

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## Ganpati Greenfields Limited

**G**anpati Greenfields Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Gujarat Ambuja Cements Ltd was set up a few years ago specifically for the development of tourism related projects and other creative ventures.

Ganpati Greenfields is at present developing a large tourism-cum-farmhouse complex at Raichak (West Bengal) called Shyamolima.

Shyamolima is an integrated development project which comprises many sub-parts. It includes an upmarket resort hotel with a conference centre, a cluster of corporate farmhouses, an exclusive tree-house complex, a country club and an NRI enclave.

All the above are separate projects being developed within the sprawling 50 acre Shyamolima complex. Each has its own distinct architectural flavour designed to serve specific requirements.

In addition, Ganpati Greenfields has acquired a large property in the Sunderbans and soon proposes to start developing a safari resort of international standards. It is exploring the possibilities of other tourism related projects and is actively involved in conceptualising the creation of an integrated 'heritage conservation park' near Calcutta.

Ganpati Greenfields is committed to encourage creative excellence which may be in the form of art or architecture. It has set up a first of its kind independent studio called Udayan. This studio will not only serve as a creative think-tank and give architectural support to the activities of the company but it is also hoped that from time to time it will provide creative advice to other organisations.

Ganpati Greenfields has made its home in Calcutta, the creative and artistic capital of India.

This exhibition, *Metropolis: Portraits of Calcutta by Shuvaprasanna*, is a salute to the city where we belong.

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*Director* Rakhi Sarkar  
*Curator* Baruna Bhattacharjee  
*Administrator* Nita Bhagat  
*Venue* CIMA Art Gallery, Calcutta  
*Dates* March 14 to 26, 1994  
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*Designer* Amiya Bhattacharya  
*Editorial consultant* Sohini Sen

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