

RABIN
DUTTA
2021

A Retrospective Exhibition
of

Rabin Dutta

Reality to Romanticism and Back
Curated by
Debdutta Gupta

In the loving memory of

1942 - 2022



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An Exhibition initiated by
Supriya Dutta -
wife of Late Rabin Dutta

Curatorial Assistance

Maitreyee Mukherjee

Acknowledgements

Jolly Dutta

Kallol Bose and the
management of Academy of
Fine Arts, Kolkata

14x8 in, Acrylic on paper



Reality to Romanticism and Back

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A shift from one's own home to an unknown land for survival - a struggle to find life's stability – a hunt to rediscover oneself – it all culminated in Rabin Dutta's exploration as an artist. A person with an acute sense of empathy for the working class – an artist with the constant fight to bring forth his observations of society to all through his art.



Artwork done for the Rotary Club of Calcutta

Dutta's entire body of work brings forth the constant experimentations he did with his visual language. Dutta's education in the field of applied arts and his long career as a graphic

designer in major advertisement houses contributed to this approach, where creating a visual language appropriate for a particular artwork/message took priority over creating a singular style of expression that defined his artistic oeuvre. But one thing that remains constant when we look at his complete body of work is his continuous commentary on the struggles of the working-class majority. His constant concern for the working class must've been a result of the struggles of migrants he experienced and observed as a child post-migration to West Bengal. Therefore, a great deal of investigation into Marxist philosophies, communist ideologies, and critical commentary on the right-wing leadership of the country becomes evident throughout his body of work.

The language of the contemporary advertising world transpired into Dutta's works, contributing to the compositional structure, the sense of order that is apparent in his paintings, the creation of forms, and the qualities of expressionism. The use of symbolism borrows

22x15 in, Acrylic on paper



directly from his experience as a graphic designer. In fact, the connection to advertisement goes to depths where certain compositions even get directly transferred from posters to the canvas. The force of movement that exists in his depictions of the working class translates his attitude of resilience as a left-wing believer – an aspect of his life that constantly fuelled his art. The elasticity within his lines and the elongated nature of his figures rendered a sense of awakening in his struggling middle class, which makes him, and his protagonists stand apart from his contemporaries and predecessors. Rabin Dutta's reinventing stylistic qualities bring along certain connotative elements that keep on

adding layers of commentaries to his artworks, making them more intricate on one hand, and direct on the other.

Human beings are at the core of Dutta's paintings, even in places where they aren't present. The supremely expressive faces of his paintings create a completely different conversation on his use of colours, lines, and texture – the combination of which renders each individually distinct. There are even instances where birds and animals have been painted

24x18 in, Acrylic on paper



rendering them with humanistic emotions.

Much into his career, Dutta painted a considerable number of paintings where his style deeply reflected the pre-modern Indian aesthetics of miniatures. In such paintings,



the isolation of the central figure, often in the company of an animal or bird, relays a sense of contemplation and reflection, a throwback almost. These paintings convey a certain calm, a rather composed temperament, contradicting his remaining body of work, almost hinting at a phase of his life where he paused to question the situation and re-evaluate the circumstances, in a life filled with wars. Dutta has on several occasions taken shelter in the tools of cubism to communicate the utter chaos he felt around him. On such occasions, the subjects appear to vary from one another, depicted through lines which are different from the other iterations.

Throughout his artistic career, Dutta has constantly challenged himself, never settling,

constantly exploring – expressing the various conversations he had with his own self. Starting with a volume of romantic landscapes – in search of the lost home of his childhood, followed by his thorough documentation of the hard-working labour class. Dutta gradually moved towards developing a language steeped in political commentary, shouting about the reality of the times, charged to protest against the capitalistic society. As opposed to the sorrow-filled and suffering characters of Zainul Abedin's paintings, Dutta was a cheerleader of the common mass, fighting for the land and people of Bengal for more than six decades. Standing at the onset of 2024, the artist Rabin Dutta stands significant because of this strong language of protest that he developed and pursued throughout his life. At a time when artists and the art world are searching for a singular mode of expression and creating a set distinct style of one's own, Dutta's works are exemplary evidence of how an artist's ideals and thoughts could be his characteristic rather than a strict visual language to define him by.

~ **Debdutta Gupta**
(Curator)

ARTWORKS



12x15 in, Acrylic on handmade paper



13x9 in, Acrylic on paper



21x15 in, Mixed media on handmade paper



11x8 in, Linocut

19x11 in, Oil on paper





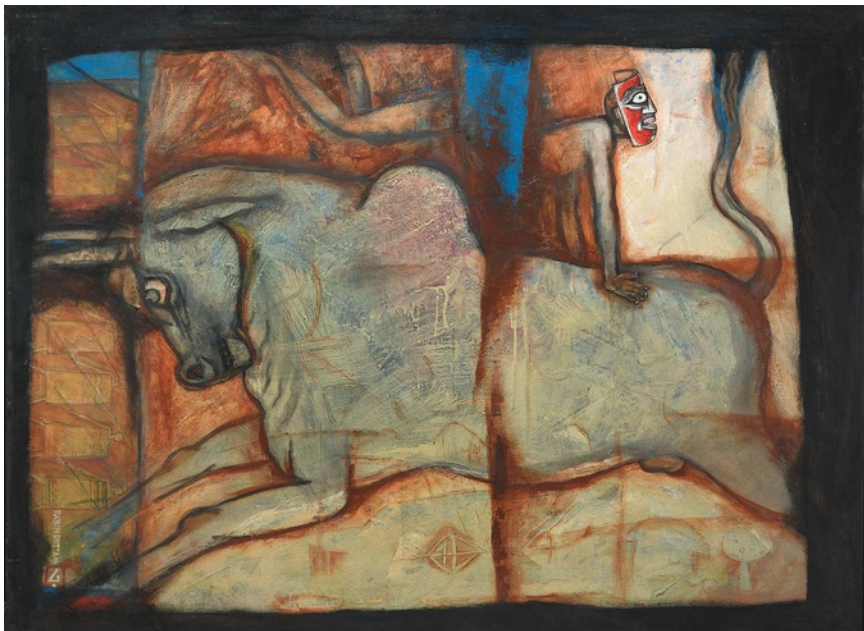
12x9 in, Oil on paper



11x15 in, Acrylic on handmade paper



13x9 in, Mixed media on paper



36x48 in, Acrylic on canvas



10x11 in, Poster colour on paper



15x11 in, Acrylic on handmade paper



22x15 in, Acrylic on handmade paper



12x9 in, Acrylic on paper



18x12 in, Acrylic on paper



Art Education

First Class From Govt. College of Art & Craft, Kolkata Art Appreciation Course,
First Class First from Calcutta University
Participated in many workshops (Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai)

Exhibition

Art Fair Kolkata
Lokechitrakala From 1975, 1985
Solo: Gaganendra Shilpa Pradarshashala, Kolkata 1994
Annual Exhibition, Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata
Annual Exhibition, Rajya Charukala Parshad
Participated in Several National Art Exhibitions (Chennai, Bangalore, Delhi)
Group Exhibition from 1975 to 2002
Solo: "Gallery g" of Bangalore, 2004
Group: Bajaj Art Gallery, Mumbai, 2006 and 2007
Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, 2006 and 2007
Chitrakut Art Gallery, Kolkata 2007
"Paradigm of expression" curated by Debdutta Guta ,organised by
Janus Art Gallery at Lalit Kala Academy, Delhi, 2007
Nehru Centre, New Delhi, 2008
'Transcendental Compassion' - Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, 2009

Collection

Painting Presented to Mr. Fidel Castro, Ex-President of Cuba
Rotary Club of United States of America
400 sq. fit Mural Bidhan Nagar Municipality
200 sq. fit Mural DVC Corporate Office, Kolkata
200 sq. fit Mural Sukanta Sadan, Barrackpore
Works Collected in Many Private & Public Collection in India & Abroad

Contribution To

Charukala Parshad, Govt. of West Bengal
Bangla Academy, Govt. of West Bengal
Natya Academy, Govt. of West Bengal
VI th World Congress of Jesuit Alumni /AE
Alumnorum Societas (St. Xaviers' Old Boys Association)
Examiner: Govt. College of Art & Craft, Calcutta University, Budwan
University
Member: West Bengal State Academy of Dance Drama
Music & Visual Arts (Rabindra Bharati)
Visited United States & Canada as a guest in
Cultural Programmes