

Press Release

Solo Exhibition by **Ali Akbar P N** at Emami Art, 2024

Name of the Exhibition: **The Salts of Many Seas**

Date: **June 28 – August 20, 2024**

Venue: **Ground Floor, Emami Art**

Exhibition Overview

The solo exhibition, 'The Salts of Many Seas', showcases Ali Akbar P N's recent artworks, including paintings, photographs, sculptures, digital prints, a video, and a book. Ali Akbar is a contemporary artist born in Kerala and based in Vadodra, Gujarat. Ali Akbar's thematic preoccupations traverse the delicate terrain of memory, identity, local and global historical narratives, and the socio-political undercurrents pervading contemporary politics of the subcontinent.

Ali Akbar deftly interweaves archival research, site-specific explorations, and an acute sensitivity to contemporary socio-politics in his artistic practice. Drawing upon historical artefacts, architectural relics, and socio-political events, the artist endeavours to unravel the intricate layers of syncretic space while grappling with the spectre of its gradual erosion and loss. The intercontinental connections forged through ancient trade links are central to his thematic engagements. By navigating through the history of the oceans and the history of the land, he tries to look at how the political and cultural dynamics have been changing in the past few years. Ali Akbar's visual lexicon is characterised by a striking blend of the real and the speculative. His paintings, with erased brush strokes, torn surfaces and often resembling partially damaged archival photographs, invoke an intriguing sense and curiosity. His digital prints and evocative video installations, with the non-linear narrative and their enigmatic juxtapositions of temporally disparate subjects, create a realm of imaginary and contested historical episodes. They create an ambiguous sense of time, poignantly critiquing the dominant archival paradigms and challenging conventional notions of truth, agency, and archival privilege. The sculptures are a subtle remark on the unusual modes of material exchanges practised in the mercantile world in the bygone era.

Quote by Richa Agarwal

At the end of June, we are opening three solo exhibitions of our represented artists, Bholanath Rudra, Ali Akbar PN, and Ujjal Dey. The three talented artists are well-known, and we are showcasing their most recent artworks, which are distinctive in style, approaches, and medium use. While Rudra's large-scale watercolours depict the moonlit landscapes where the hard truth is spoken in an eloquent language, evoking empathy, Ali Akbar's critical works – paintings and videos – deal with the questions of migration and memory, seas and trade, and movement of cultural forms and motifs across time and places. Besides them, Dey's textiles are closely bound to the soil materially and culturally. Deep regional connections give his work a culture-specificity.

All in all, the solos represent differences but, at the same time, similarities and unities in the ideas and practices of the artists. I believe that students, critics and art lovers will enjoy the shows, finding them to be three distinctive ways to confront some of the troubled truths of the contemporary world. I wish the exhibitions all success.

(Says Richa Agarwal, CEO of Emami Art)

Quote by Ushmita Sahu

Emami Art is a significant space in South Asia for discourse building and cutting-edge practices in contemporary art. The curatorial perspective in bringing together three solos by three of our represented artists, Bholanath Rudra, Ujjal Dey and Ali Akbar, engaging in diverse practices is to create a dialogue on some of the most urgent concerns of our present times in the subcontinent as well as globally. Though at first glance, any common idea does not connect them, they all align with the thematic vision of time and change. There is a sense of urgency in all their works for critical intervention to understand and protect the fundamental tropes that make life possible. The ideas of past, present and future appear entangled in their works. So, understanding the present is as important as understanding the past and thinking about the future. I hope this will be an excellent opportunity to learn and explore the artistic practice and visions of the three emerging artists.

(Says Ushmita Sahu, Director & Head Curator of Emami Art)

Artist's Bio

Ali Akbar P N

Ali Akbar P N was born in 1996 in Koolimuttam, Central Kerala. He completed MVA in Painting from Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara, Gujarat, in 2020 and BFA in Painting from the Government College of Fine Arts Thrissur, Kerala, in 2018.

Ali Akbar was selected by an eminent jury for the first award at the annual all-India open call awards and exhibition, *IMAGINARIUM 2.0* at Emami Art Kolkata 2022, and he participated in the *IMAGINARIUM 3.0 Residency* at Emami Art in 2024.

He has participated in many exhibitions, including *All That is Hidden: Mapping Departures in Landscape, Terrains and Geographies*, Emami Art, Kolkata, 2024; *Fault Lines: Visual Symptoms of Discordances in Indian History* at Conflictorium, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, *Embark*, 2023, Baroda; *India Art Fair 2023*; *Baroda Anuelle 2023*, Gallery White Vadodara; Architecture Digest Design Show in December, Mumbai, 2022; *From Where All That Sweat?*, Trivandrum 2022; *The Flying Goat Show*, Goa 2022; Open Studio, Baroda 2021; *Untitled III* Online Exhibition, Priyasri Art Gallery Mumbai 2020; *Nasreen Mohammedi Studio Display*, MSU Baroda 2019 – 2020; *Prologue 18 Final Display*, Govt. College of Fine Arts Thrissur 2018; *Kala Mela Art Exhibition*, Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi 2018; Group Show in Onyx Art Gallery, Kochi 2017; *Charcoal Group Art Exhibition*, Calicut 2017; *Kasthuri Sreenivasan Trust Annual Show*, Coimbatore 2017.

He currently resides and works in Vadodara, Gujarat, India.