

- Title: **Pensive Moons**
- Date: June 28 – August 20, 2024
- Venue: Ground floor (Gallery 1)

Exhibition Overview

Bholanath Rudra's solo exhibition, which shows his most recent large-scale watercolours, offers an expanded view of the forest landscape at night. Traditionally, the moonlit landscape is associated with an idyllic rural life, which expresses the artist's appreciation of nature, bucolic romances, myth and spirituality. 'Pensive Moons,' however, interrogates the relationship between land and identity, imagination and history, exploring nocturnal forests as sites of contemporary concerns and discourses – violence, trespass and survival. Unlike contemporary artistic approaches to the landscape obsessed with archives, maps, statistics, description and analysis, Rudra's moonlit landscapes are predominantly romantic, evoking high feelings and a sense of drama. While swaying us with tremendous scenic beauty, they slowly take us closer to the grim truths, speaking of the anti-poaching narrative not in the language of sign but in the language of similitude and metaphor: the crescent moon resembles the elephant's tusk and vice versa.

Bholanath Rudra is undoubtedly the most potent Indian painter working in watercolour today. Dark, luminous and rich in tonality and texture, Rudra's watercolours have an eloquent visual presence reminiscent of Abanindranath Tagore or Samuel Palmer. The critical content in his work is inseparable from the visual pleasure of the paintings. The glowing moons in the paintings lure us with their sublime beauty and make us think, evoking empathy.

Bio: Bholanath Rudra (b 1984)

Born in Kolkata, Bholanath Rudra studied painting at Rabindra Bharati University, graduating in 2013. He is a member of the Society of Contemporary Artists, Kolkata, which he joined in 2019.

He was the subject of the solo shows 'States of Mind' at the Society of Contemporary Artists, Kolkata, 2018 and 'Mechanical Libido' at the Academy of Fine Art, Kolkata, 2013.

His work has been featured in many group exhibitions, including Hub India – Maximum Minimum at Artissima (Torino, Italy, 2021); 'All That is Hidden' at Emami Art (2024); 'Freedom: From Despair to Dream' at Aakriti Art Gallery (Kolkata, 2022), 'Fluid Boundaries' at Emami Art, Kolkata (2020); Annual Art Exhibition of Society of Contemporary Artists (2023, 2022, 2020, 2019, 2017); Annual Art Exhibition at Birla Academy of Art & Culture (2014, 2016, 2018); CIMA art gallery, Kolkata (2017); at Rajya Charukala Parshad, Kolkata (2017-19); in the International Exhibition of Manab Jamin (2012-15); at AIFACS, New Delhi (2017); the State Art Gallery, Hyderabad (2019); at Karnataka Lalit Kala Akademi (2017); Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC) (2018); in the Annual Exhibition at Emami Art (2015, 2017); among others.

Bholanath was an artist in residence at the Kira A. Princess of Prussia Foundation in collaboration with Emami Art Residency (Sept-Oct, 2022).

He was honoured with many awards, including the State Gallery of Art Award, Telangana Government (2019), Birla Academy Annual Exhibition Award (2018), Rajya Charukala Parshad Annual Award (2017),

National Exhibition Award, Lalit Kala Akademi, Karnataka (2017) and All India Watercolour Exhibition Award, AIFACS (2017). His works were shown at the India Art Fair, New Delhi (2020).

Bholanath Rudra lives and works in Kolkata.

Press Statement

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.

- **Richa Agarwal, CEO, Emami Art**