



Timekeepers

VISUAL ARTS

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It would be limiting to say that the artists whose works were exhibited at *Ekkhan: Situating the Present* (Emami Art) were merely trying to capture the here and now. The present may have been their artistic trigger, but in their art practices and ideas, they layered the history of how we arrived at the present moment. Take Chhatrapati Dutta's depiction of *Shah-Heen-Bagh - In Retrospect*, for instance. The artist used charcoal and tea stain to achieve a startling singed effect of a head with a crown of thorns hanging above it — he was no doubt inspired by the brave women of Shaheen Bagh who willingly bore hardships for the good of the nation but the suggested idea of what happens to a nation abandoned by its leader made it richer.

Chandra Bhattacharjee used charcoal and dry pastel on paper to conjure up a dystopian world — in his dark forest of dead trees, flecks of fire take the place of fireflies and faceless threats to both nature and humans lurk at every corner. But here, too, a careful look will reveal a

shadow of the tree as it was — in essence, the world as it used to be. Veena Bhargava melds the past and the present beautifully and poignantly in her series in which she brings Ganesh Haloi *Face to Face* (picture) with his creations by overlapping his photographs with his artworks: this is truly where Haloi lives on now — in his works.

Goutam Chowdhury explores the many iterations of the relationships between man and woman — loving, violent, perverse, curious and so on. Tapas Biswas turns his gaze towards nature and its decay; an intricate wood and brass sculpture of a wilted flower looks delicate and almost friable in spite of the solidity of its material. Partha Dasgupta's *Bengal Nama* is a clever amalgam of the enamel utensils once popular in this region and its myths and folk traditions. Aditya Basak and Srikanta Paul trace the evolution of the circus in their respective works, with the latter's carnivalesque etchings being strikingly complex. Jayashree Chakravarty's *Expanded Roots* are tactile and teeming with life and Subrata Biswas's terracotta sculptures reminiscent of the bust of Mohenjodaro.