





CHANDRA SHEKHAR DEY

Reality, Fantasy & Dilemma

Friday 3rd to 17th May 2024

galleri **KAYA**
a contemporary art center

Exhibition sponsor



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titled "Reality, Fantasy & Dilemma" at Galleri Kaya.*

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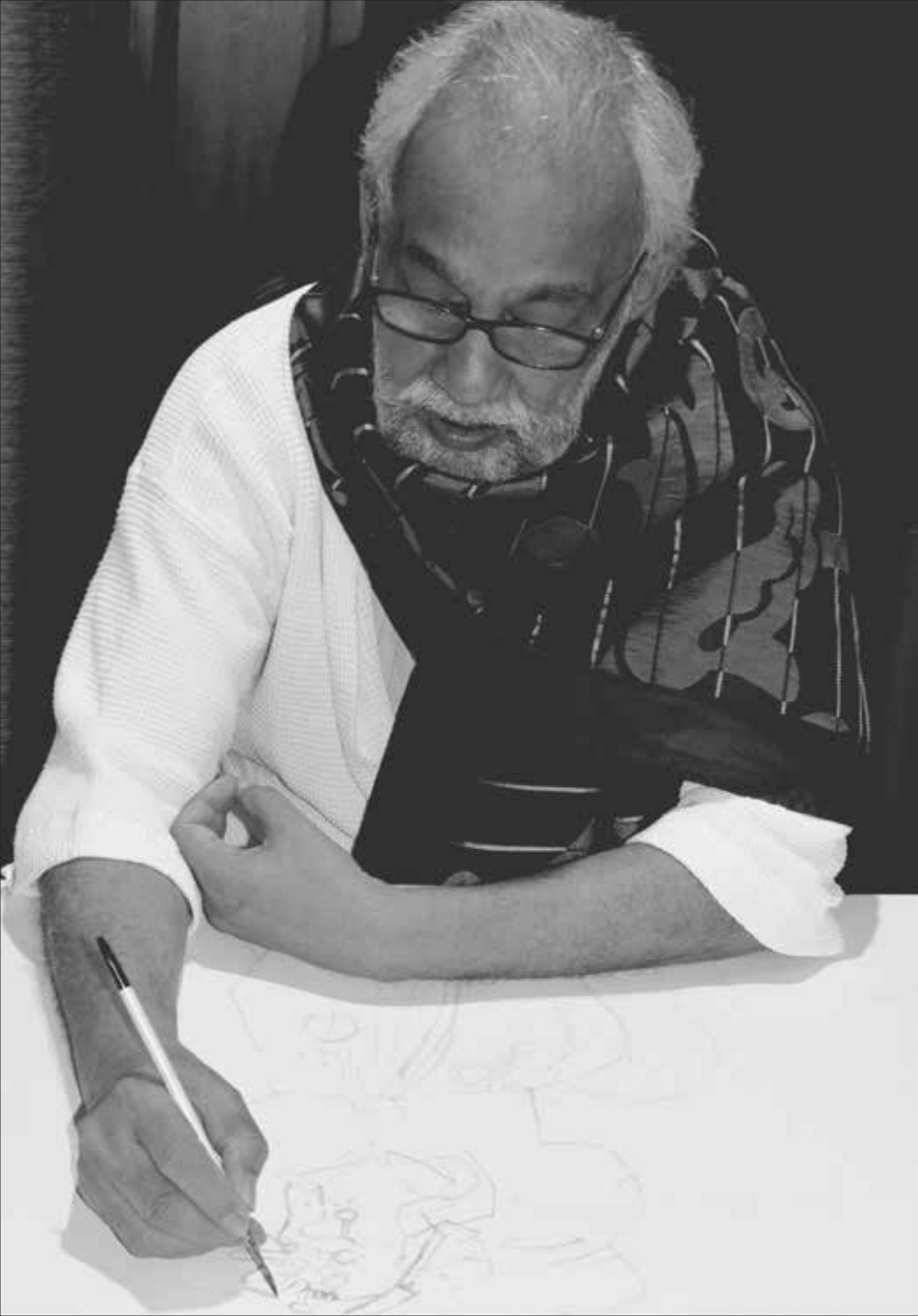
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Chandra Shekhar Dey's exploration through the realm of artistic creativity

Takir Hossain

Prologue

I had the pleasure of meeting Chandra Shekhar Dey for the first time in approximately 2003/2004 at a gallery in Dhanmondi. From our initial introduction, it became apparent to me that the painter was reserved and distant from unnecessary societal matters. Being a passionate and true introvert, I consistently observed his avoidance of human preoccupations, publicity, media attention, and fame. Despite his humble and soft-spoken nature, Shekhar maintains a low profile while undeniably being one of the leading painters from the 1970s, a time when the nation faced significant challenges in attaining sovereignty. Throughout that period, our nation encountered numerous social and political dilemmas, navigating through various upheavals. Despite these obstacles, our creative abilities flourished with fresh dreams, ideas, and concepts. We aspired for a free, liberal, non-communal, and progressive environment for our innovative endeavours, but unfortunately, the afore-

mentioned circumstances dashed our hopes and led to a return to dictatorial rule. The voices of freedom were silenced, and liberal thoughts suffocated as we witnessed the sporadic yet widespread rise of terror, instigated both by the state and apolitical outlaws. During this tumultuous period, the country experienced many highs and lows in all aspects. As a keen observer, Shekhar closely examines the ever-changing socio-political and economic conditions of our nation.

Birth, period of adolescence, and subsequent enrollment at both Dhaka and Chittagong Art College

Chandra Shekhar Dey was born in 1951 to a low-middle-class family on Jubilee Road in Chattagram (Chittagong). Adjacent to their residence, his father owned a garage where he would build and repair rickshaws, baby taxis, and bicycles. At the age of 7 or 8, Shekhar would spend his entire day observing the activities of Rang Mistri, as they adorned the vehicles with vibrant colours, depicting birds, flowers, trees, and animals. Chandra was captivated by this process and developed a deep passion for it. Within his family, his elder sister, whom he affectionately called "didi," held a special place in his heart. She was a student at Chittagong College and possessed a strong cultural and political awareness. One day, she gifted Chandra a calendar featuring reproductions of famous paintings, including one by Picasso titled "Lovers." This was Chandra's first encounter with Picasso's artwork, and it left a lasting impression on him during his formative years.

Shekhar has vivid memories of a signboard painter from his early years. Ahmed Husain, a cinema-hoarding painter originally from Kolkata, moved to Chittagong where he settled down. During his childhood, Shekhar was greatly influenced by Ahmed Husain, who served as one of his main sources of inspiration. Shekhar would spend hours observing Ahmed Husain's artistic endeavors. Known for his exceptional portraits, Ahmed Husain attracted many renowned individuals to his studio to have their likenesses captured by his skilled hands. He was particularly adept at painting cinema posters and billboards, eventually establishing an art shop called "Cinema Palace". Shekhar's childhood was filled with the sights of horse-drawn carriages, indicating that he grew up in an area with distinct urban characteristics. Notable poets and writers such as Shamsur Rahman frequented his local neighborhood. It was during his tenth grade that a relative gifted Shekhar a set of drawing sketching pencils and Winsor & Newton's chalk pastel, further fueling his passion for painting.

Shekhar's elder sister had a strong bond with Chhatra Union activists and traveled to various locations across the country. During a visit to Art College in 1966, she was thrilled by the atmosphere of the institution. The lush greenery and peaceful surroundings left a lasting impression on her, prompting her to recommend Shekhar to enroll there. Having completed his matriculation at Chittagong Municipal School, Shekhar gained admission to Dhaka Art College in the same year. After enrolling Dhaka Art College (now the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka), Shekhar considered himself fortunate to have encountered dedicated teachers such as

Rafiqun Nabi, Monirul Islam, Anwarul Haq, and Abdul Baset. The invaluable lessons imparted by these teachers played a pivotal role in shaping him into a painter with a unique artistic voice. Through meticulous guidance, they familiarized him with the intricacies of painting, various techniques, and the art of detailing. Upon completing his BFA, Shekhar pursued his MFA at the Department of Fine Arts, Chittagong University, where he was mentored by renowned teachers like Rashid Chowdhury, Murtaja Baseer, Devdas Chakraborty, among others. These teachers not only broadened his artistic horizons but also instilled in him values of morality, humanity, and individuality, shaping him into a modern and well-rounded individual.

Shekhar's modes of articulation

Shekhar's artistic versatility is evident in his ability to adapt to various modes of expression throughout his career. He skillfully transitions between different styles on his canvas, showcasing his talent for maintaining multiple modes of expression simultaneously. Throughout different stages of his career, he has delved into realistic, semi-realistic, surrealistic, folk, abstract impressionism, symbolism, figurative, neo-expressionism, and more. His meticulous attention to detail is evident in the careful arrangement of figures in his work. Each piece is a result of his measured brush strokes and soft textures, creating a splendid appearance on canvas or paper. Shekhar's distinct language, conveyed through his lines, reflects his dedication, perseverance, and passion for art. As a pioneering figure in the modern art movement in Bangladesh, he has established himself as a versatile artist, proficient not only in painting (oil,

acrylic, and mixed media) but also in watercolour, pen drawing, charcoal, pastel, ink, and pencil sketches. His profound study of human subjects further distinguishes him in the art world. When I first laid eyes on Shekhar's paintings nearly twenty years ago, I was captivated by his figural compositions, particularly the detailed portrayal of human faces and their expressions on canvas. His preference for intricate details and provocative lines is evident in his work. Scribbles, lines, blurred figures, and unfamiliar objects are all prominent features in his pieces. The themes of struggle, desire, and joy resonate strongly throughout his art. Shekhar is part of a generation of painters whose perspectives on life and art were deeply influenced by the War of Liberation. The stark contrast between light and shadow in his paintings often evokes feelings of loss and pain. Many of his enigmatic faces seem to exist in a world of their own. Figures sometimes blend with various triangular shapes, tree skeletons, small luminous forms, as well as oval, pottery, and other intriguing shapes. By combining elements of folklore, fragments of myth, and vibrant, interactive forms, Shekhar bridges the gap between reality and fantasy in his works. Unreal aspects of life and their components are depicted with an illustrative quality in his art. Both a sense of eeriness and an impression of depth are apparent in his pieces. The seasoned artist has dedicated himself to exploring his themes thoroughly. Throughout the years, he has diligently captured surrealistic metaphors through human figures, shadowy atmospheres, captivating eerie forms, and scenes from his surroundings.

I am truly impressed by the vast range of artistic creations by Shekhar, including his figural and soothing compositions. His ability to express his inner thoughts and thought processes is remarkable. The time and effort he puts into drawing his figures is evident, as their facial expressions convey various moods. I find his paintings outstanding and they provoke deep contemplation, largely due to his serious and honest approach to his work. Shekhar is a dedicated workaholic who devotes considerable time to the details of his subjects, without seeking wealth or cheap popularity. Throughout his career, he has explored different styles, including single line based drawing and the use of healthy lines to bring his characters to life. His gestural drawings of alluring and elegant women are particularly captivating. Shekhar's exploration of line-based portraits, especially of women, encompasses a wide range of themes from reality to fantasy, imagination to imperfection. At times, he delves into a psychological journey through his portrayal of surrounding characters. He sometimes borrows characters from fiction or his own imagination, creating figures that do not exist in the real world, adding a touch of surrealism. Shekhar paints his figures and portraits from different perspectives, capturing varied modes of expression. His works depict sensual figures, figures in pensive moods, figures in close proximity, and convey their affections, longings, yearnings, conflicts, and movements. He also infuses romanticism into his portraits. The colours he uses in his works are often vibrant, but occasionally subdued to convey the significance of the characters. There are also moments when the shades take on a dreamy and romantic quality. Many of his canvases feature lavish abstract images, incorporating elements such as boats, fishes, and enigmatic forms.

Conclusion

Chandra Shekhar Dey possesses both a strong work ethic and a scholarly demeanor. Through the passage of time, he has diligently pursued experimentation. He has dedicated his artistic endeavors to portraying women in various forms of expression, including romantic, contemplative, and semi-nude seated figures. His meticulous analysis of their characters allows him to infuse his depictions with his own emotions, sensations, and affections. It is evident that Shekhar has passionately studied the intricate details of visages, ornaments, and movements of figures, as well as the compositions they inhabit, for a considerable period of time. The artist demonstrates great care in crafting his compositions and arranging the figures, occasionally incorporating animal forms. As a result, he intricately renders the front side of the figures, contrasting their backgrounds with either black or white. Through his spontaneous lines, he skillfully captures the subtlety, silence, and profound insights of his subjects' traits. Furthermore, his portraits serve as symbolic representations of the contemporary world, reflecting the harsh realities, fantasies, and social and individual dilemmas of the post-modern era.

The writer is an art critic and cultural curator.



Childhood memory Acrylic on canvas 128 x 115cm (50x45in) 2023



Ecstasy of east & west Acrylic on canvas 127 x 114cm (50x45in) 1996-2023



Composition Acrylic on canvas 122 x 107cm (48x42in) 2023



Fantasy Acrylic on canvas 183 x 147cm (72x58in) 2024



Unknown ritual Acrylic on canvas 127 x 114cm (50x45in) 2024



Ancient artist Watercolor on paper 76 x 56cm (30x22in) 2024



She loves birds Watercolor on paper 56 x 76cm (22x30in) 2024



Enchanting memories Pen & ink on paper 56 x 76cm (30x22in) 2020



Life of a boatman Acrylic on canvas 81 x 104cm (32x41in) 2023



Oriental face-2 Acrylic on canvas 58 x 46cm (23x18in) 2020



Lost and found Acrylic on canvas & wood 84 x 149cm (33x58.5in) 2000-2023



Stylist Watercolor on paper 56 x 76cm (30x22in) 2022



Waiting-2 Watercolor on paper 53 x 75cm (21x29.5in) 2019



Reader Pen & ink on paper 21 x 29cm (8.25x11.5in) 2003



Couple Watercolor on paper 56 x 76cm (22x30in) 2023



Stories of my time-4 Pen & ink on paper 28 x 39cm (11x15in) 2020



Posture-4 Pen & ink on paper 56 x 76cm (22x30in) 2021



Amicable jethu Acrylic on canvas 46 x 56cm (18x22in) 2023



Look at me Charcoal on paper 50 x 70cm (20x27.5in) 2020



Model-3 Pen & ink on paper 56 x 76cm (22x30in) 2023



Mother & child Ink on paper 56 x 76cm (30x22in) 2020



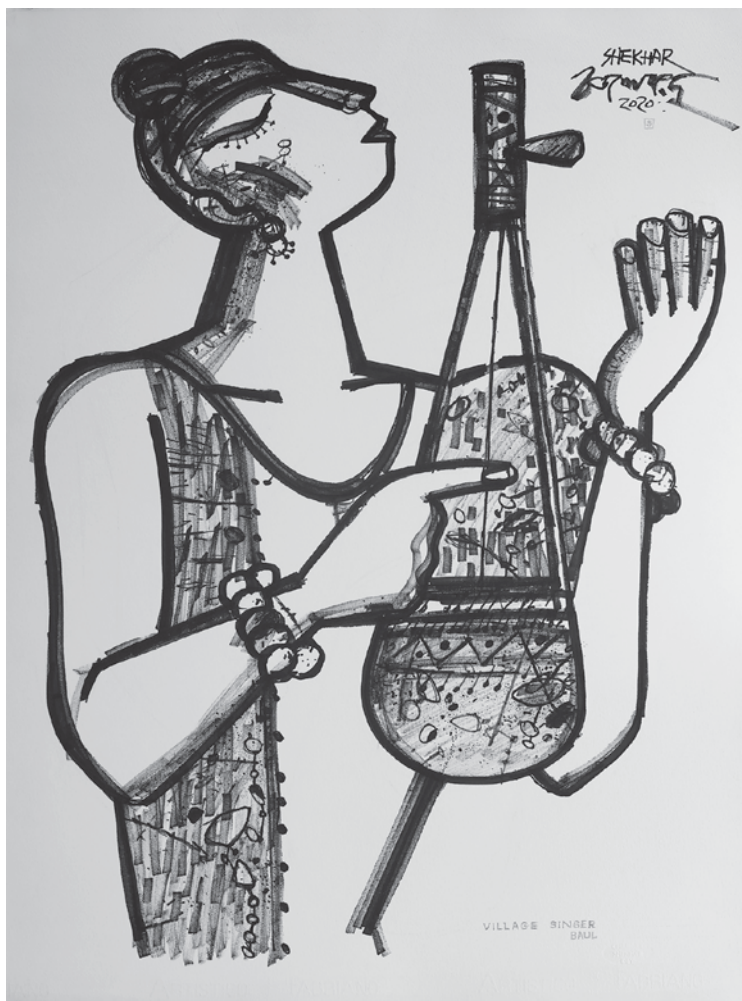
Nature Watercolor on paper 76 x 56cm (30x22in) 2022



Waiting for boat Watercolor on paper 56 x 76cm (30x22in) 2022



Rhythm of darkness Pen & ink on paper 56 x 76cm (30x22in) 2022



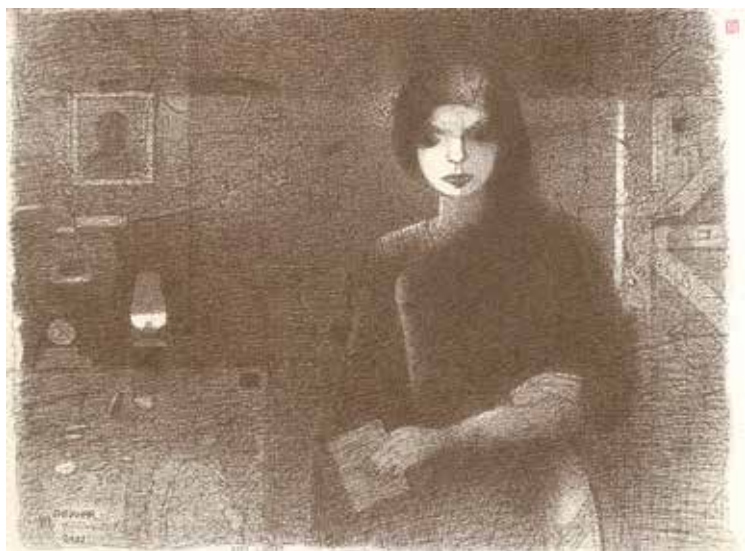
Village singer "Baul" Ink on paper 56 x 76cm (30x22in) 2020



Flute player Ink on paper 56 x 76cm (30x22in) 2020



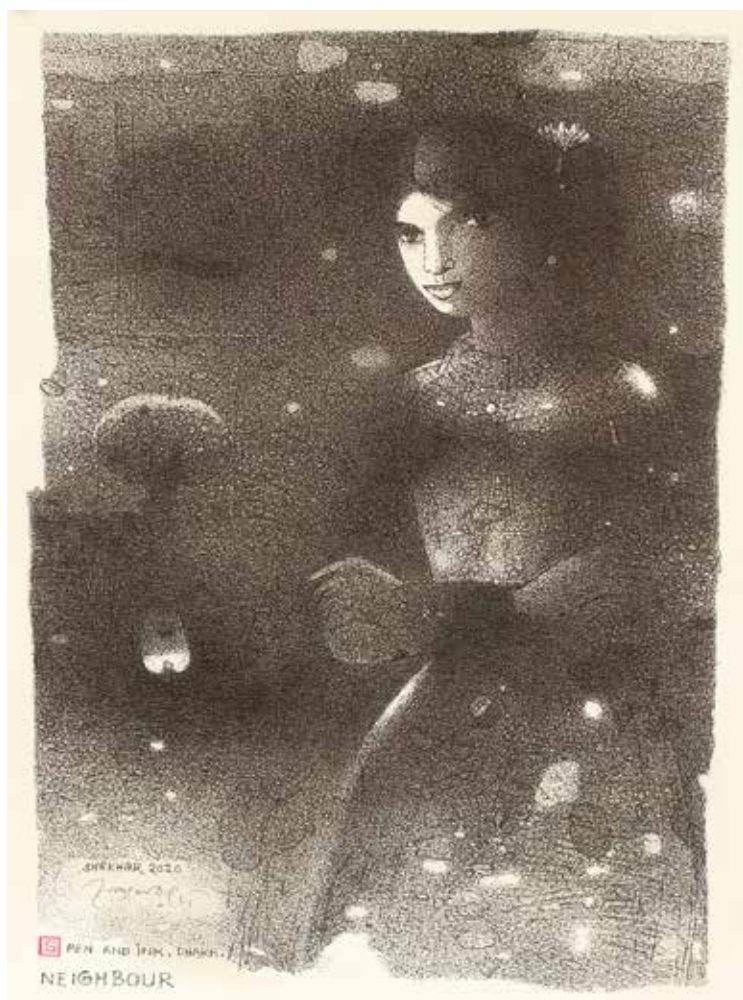
The Poetess Watercolor on paper 56 x 76cm (30x22in) 2022



Dim light Pen & ink on paper 38 x 28cm (15x11in) 2021



Moonlit night Pen & Ink on paper 39 x 26cm (15x10in) 2021



Neighbor Pen & ink on paper 38 x 28cm (15x11in) 2020



Leisure time Pen & ink on paper 36 x 44cm (14x17in) 2019



Early morning relaxation Mixed media on paper 33 x 34cm (13x13.2in) 2023



Silhouette of ethereal beauty Mixed media on paper 30 x 27cm (12x10.5in) 2023



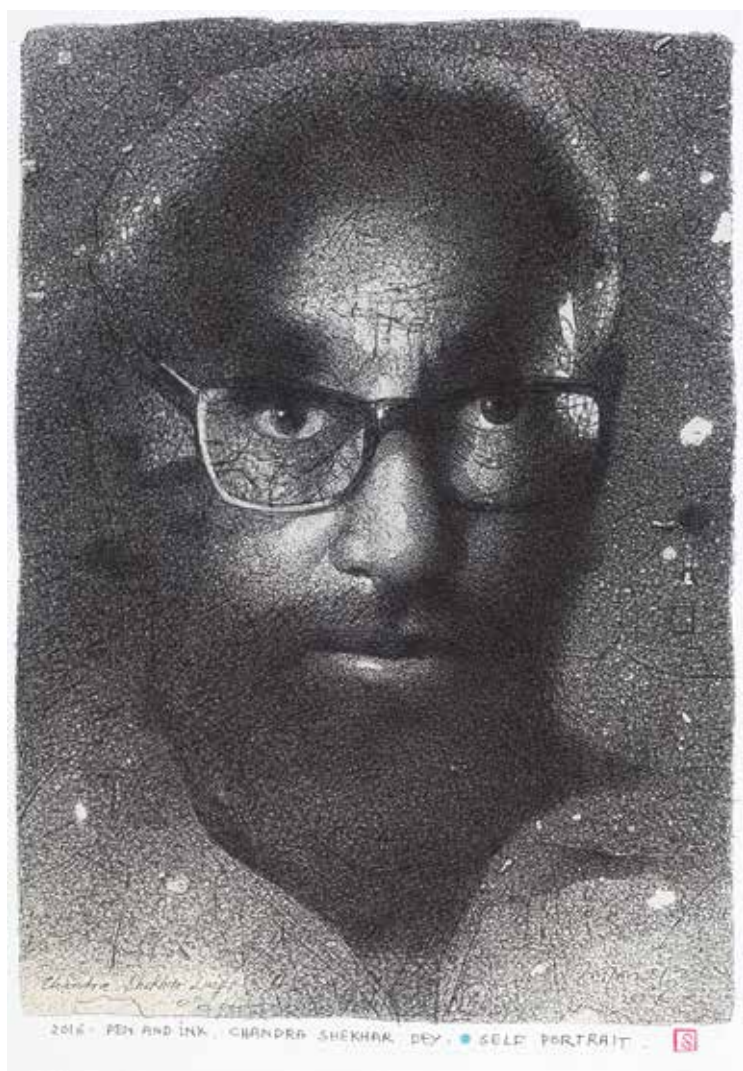
Drawing Ink on paper 21 x 30cm (8.2x12in) 2016



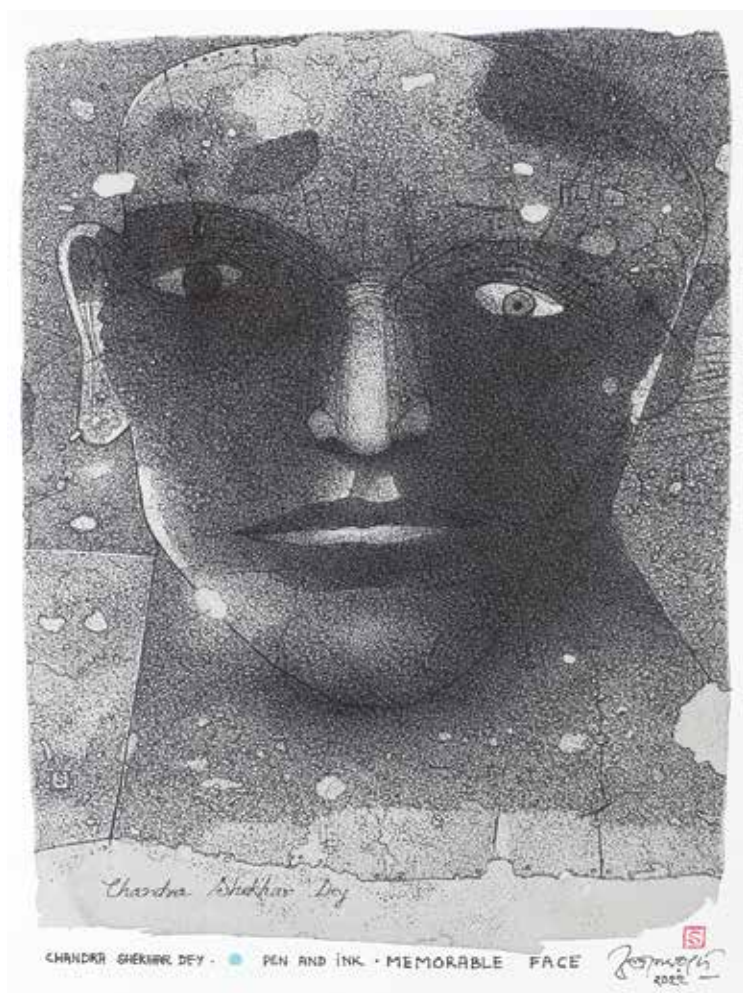
Dressing up Pencil on paper 21 x 29cm (8.25x11.5in) 2017



Model-2 Pencil on paper 28 x 34cm (11x13.5in) 2017



Self portrait Pen & ink on paper 28 x 38cm (11x15in) 2016



Memorable face Pen & ink on paper 28 x 38cm (11x15in) 2022



Waiting Ink on paper 36 x 44cm (14x17in) 2019



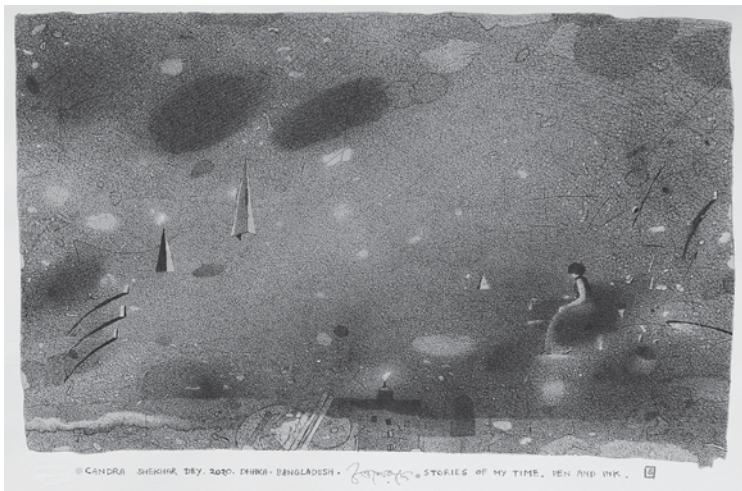
Resting Pen & ink on paper 36 x 44cm (14x17in) 2019



Dancer Pen & ink on paper 36 x 44cm (14x17in) 2019



Posture-6 Pen & ink on paper 38 x 56cm (15x22in) 2020



Stories of my time-3 Pen & ink on paper 56 x 38cm (22x15in) 2020



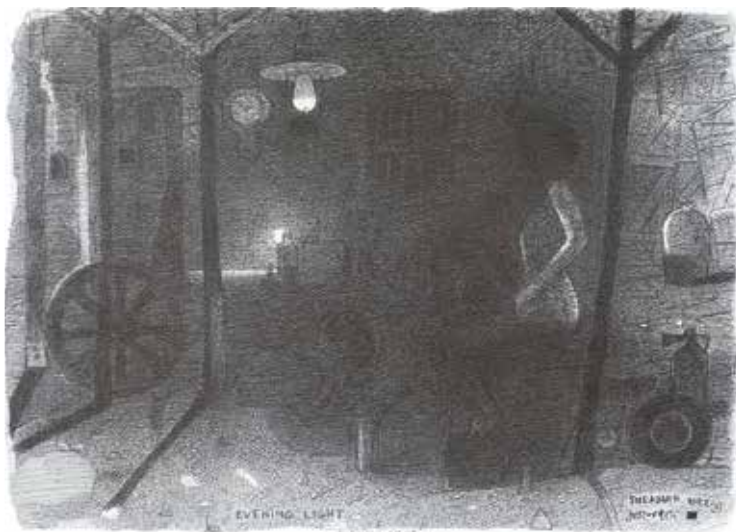
Reflection of moonlight Pen & ink on paper 56 x 38cm (22x15in) 2018



Majestic Pen & ink on paper 75 x 56cm (29.5x22in) 2022



Unknown moment Pen & ink on paper 38 x 28cm (15x11in) 2022



Evening light Pen & ink on paper 42 x 30cm (16.5x12in) 2022



Art class Pen & ink on paper 42 x 30cm (16.5x12in) 2022



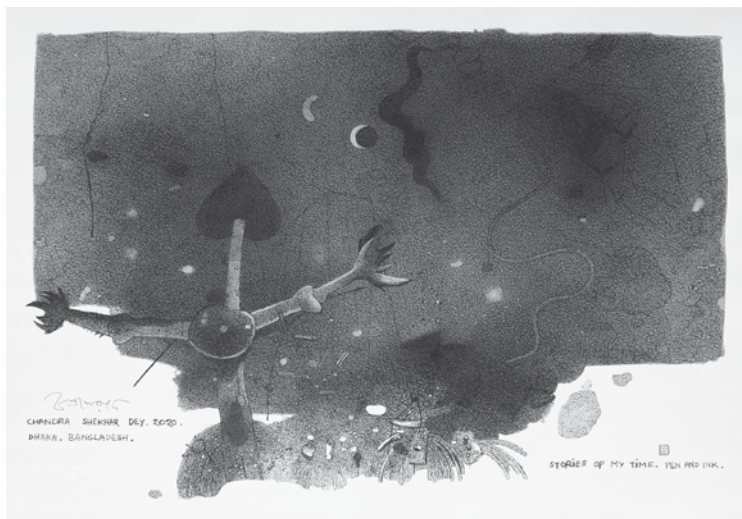
Posture-3 Ink on paper 38 x 56cm (15x22in) 2020



Posture-5 Pen & ink on paper 38 x 56cm (15x22in) 2020



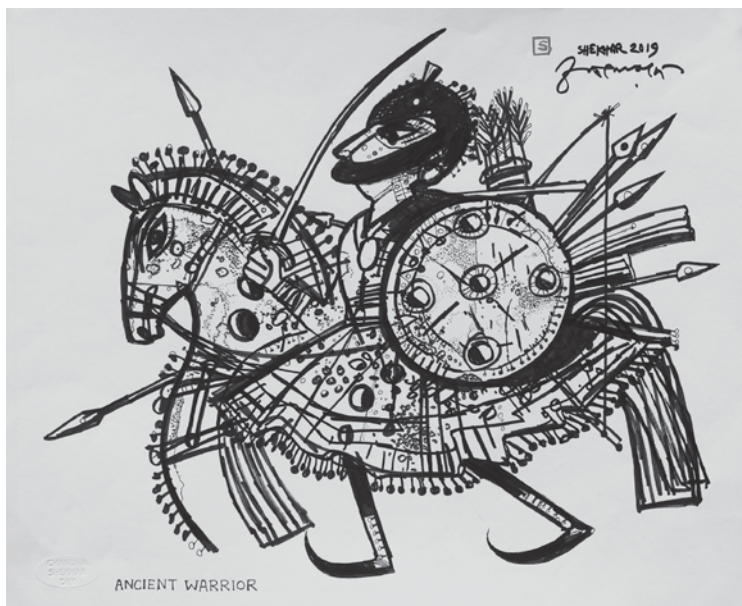
Posture Ink on paper 60 x 50cm (24x20in) 2020



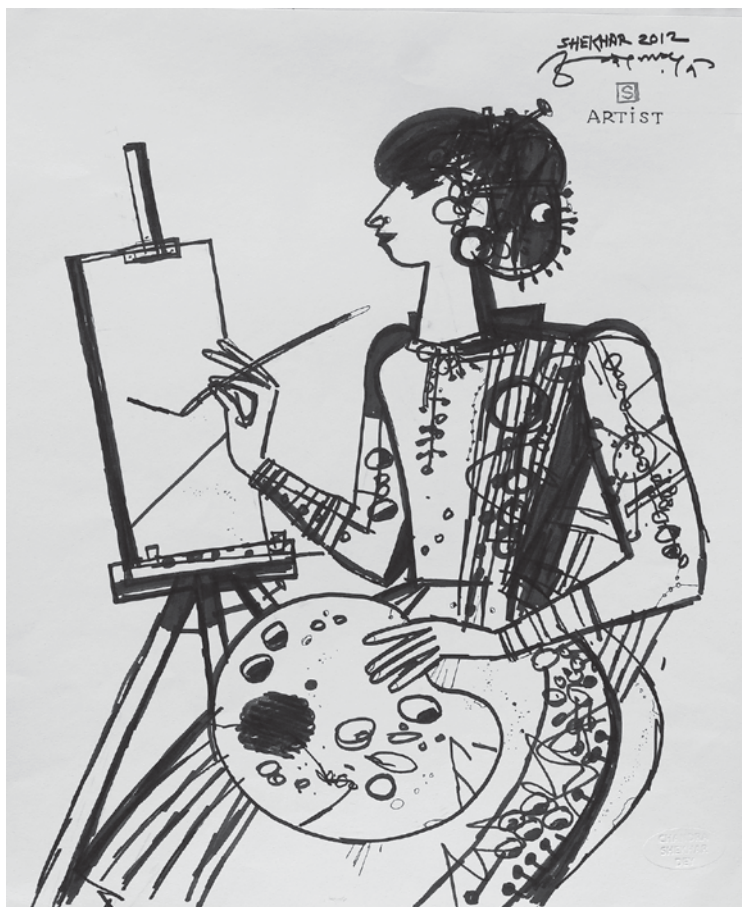
Stories of my times-2 Pen & ink on paper 56 x 38cm (22x15in) 2020



Untitled Ink on paper 36 x 44cm (14x17in) 2019



Ancient warrior Pen & ink on paper 44 x 36cm (17x14in) 2019



Artist Pen & ink on paper 36 x 44cm (14x17in) 2012



Stories of my time Pen & ink on paper 56 x 38cm (22x15in) 2020



Lovers-1 Pen & ink on paper 56 x 72cm (22x28in) 2022



Lovers-2 Pen & ink on paper 56 x 72cm (22x28in) 2022



Affection Pen & ink on paper 56 x 76cm (22x30in) 2022



Flute player-2 Pen & ink on paper 56 x 50cm (22x20in) 2023



Leisure time-2 Pen & ink on paper 56 x 50cm (22x20in) 2023



Leisure time-3 Pen & ink on paper 56 x 50cm (22x20in) 2023



Study Pen & ink on paper 56 x 50cm (22x20in) 2023

Chandra Shekhar Dey

Born : 1951, Chittagong, Bangladesh.

Education

1975 : Master of Fine Arts, University of Chittagong.

1972 : Bachelor of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka.

1967 : S.S.C, Chittagong.

Solo Exhibitions

2024 : Reality, Fantasy & Dilemma, Organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2001 : Gallery 21, Shatmosjid Road, Dhaka.

1989 : Shaju Art Gallery, Gulshan, Dhaka.

Group Exhibitions

2023 : “Classic 10”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2023 : 19th Anniversary Exhibition, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2022 : “Affordable Autumn”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2022 : “Of Men and Nature”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2022 : 18th Anniversary Exhibition, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2021 : 17th Anniversary Exhibition, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2020 : “20”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2020 : 16th Anniversary Exhibition, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2020 : “SCALED UP”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2020 : Celebrating Nature, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2019 : “Affordable Autumn”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2019 : “17”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2019 : Soaked in Paper, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2019 : 15th Anniversary Exhibition, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2018 : 14th Anniversary Exhibition, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2017 : 13rd Anniversary Exhibition, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2017 : “CHARCOAL”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

2017 : Contemporary and Modern Art of Bangladesh, organized by
Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

- 2016 : “20=40”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2016 : 12th Anniversary Exhibition, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2015 : “DRAWINGS”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2015 : 12th Anniversary Exhibition, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2013 : “GLIMPSES”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2012 : Water Rhymes, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2012 : Born in the Fifties, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2006 : “UDHBODHON”, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

International Exhibition

India (SAARC Workshop), Zimbabwe, Japan, England.

Art Camps, Art Trips and Artscation

- 2023 : “AUTUMN SONATA-2”, Art camp at Galleri Kaya,
organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2022 : “AUTUMN SONATA”, Art camp at Galleri Kaya,
organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2007 : “RENEWAL OF NATURE”, Art camp at Jamuna,
organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2022 : 3rd Kolkata Art Trip, India, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2022 : Bhawal Art Trip, Gazipur, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2022 : Encountering Nature, Jhandi, India,
organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2021 : 3rd Artscation, Radisson blue, Dhaka,
organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2019 : Hua Hin Art Trip, Thailand, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2019 : 2nd Kolkata Art Trip, India, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2019 : Kolkata Art Trip, India, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.
- 2019 : 2nd Place Art Trip, Sylhet, organized by Galleri Kaya, Dhaka.

Awards

- 1968 : Best exhibitor, Dhaka Art College.
- 1972 : Best Painter, Dhaka Art College.

1975 : Best in all Media, National Young Artist exhibition,
Bangladesh Fine Arts Academy (Shilpakala), Dhaka.
1976-77 : Best Award, Life in Bangladesh, Cultural Ministry &
Bangladesh Fine Arts Academy (Shilpakala), Dhaka.
1992 : Postal Dept. Award, Osaka, Japan.
2000 : Grand Award, Annual exhibition, Shaju Art Gallery, Dhaka.
2017 : Academy Padak (Medal), Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka.

Former Occupation

1973-1977 & 1984-1988 : Lecturer, Chittagong Art College.
1980-1982 : Tapestry Studio Manager under Artist Rashid Choudhury,
Dhaka. 1988-2016 : Co-artist and designer of Terra cotta and Tapestry work
under Syed Abdullah Khaled, Dhaka.

Member

Gonoshilpi, Dhaka Painters group Dhaka Art Circle.

Commission Works

Chittagong Circuit house, Dhaka Museum, Ahsan Manzil, Dhaka Army
Museum, Tejgaon New Church (Tiles Mural & paintings), Museum of
Modern Art Delhi, BRAC Publication (Illustrations and book cover designs),
National Board of Education Publication (Book cover designs and Illustra-
tions).

Collections

Many private collections in Bangladesh, USA, U.K, Germany, Poland, Russia,
India, Pakistan and Australia.

Present Position

Freelance artist.



CHANDRA SHEKHAR

DEY