



Kolkata Centre for Creativity

In collaboration with

Gallery Rasa

Presents

Scenes from Santiniketan & Benodebehari's Handscrolls

Kolkata, 20th May 2023: Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC) in collaboration with Gallery Rasa inaugurated 'Scenes from Santiniketan & Benodebehari's Handscrolls', a historic exhibition curated by Prof R Siva Kumar on 20th May at 5:00 P.M. This one-month long (20 May - 20 June) exhibition has put on display for the very first time—Scenes from Santiniketan—the earliest and longest handscroll ever painted by Benodebehari Mukherjee, depicting the 1920s landscape of Santiniketan, one of the primary art centers of the country. Besides this recently discovered 44.6 feet-long original scroll, the exhibition also features reproductions of all other handscrolls and existing fragments, including one from the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. In the words of the curator Prof. R. Siva Kumar,

About the Exhibition

The landscape handscroll is an East Asian innovation. While ancient Indian artists were keen observers of nature, landscape as a distinct genre was unknown in India before itinerant European artists brought it to India during the colonial period. While European landscapes presented appealing views as a framed scene, East Asian landscape handscrolls allowed showing a place in its totality.

Modern Indian artists became familiar with East Asian handscrolls and landscape tradition through early 20th-century Pan-Asianism. But none used it as imaginatively as Benodebehari.

Although later handscrolls by him had been more popular, the discovery of this handscroll offers an insight into his early career, which was devoted to exploring nature as locally manifested. The present exhibition exploring Benodebehari's handscrolls at KCC provides new insights into his engagement with landscape as a means of self-expression and a record of the evolution of his inner self.

Richa Agarwal, Chairperson of Kolkata Centre for Creativity, expressed her enthusiasm about the collaboration with Gallery Rasa and R Siva Kumar, a renowned art historian, and curator in

India, to bring the exhibition to Kolkata. She said, "KCC is dedicated to promoting and preserving India's rich artistic heritage. This unique exhibition showcases the early works of Benodebehari Mukherjee, one of India's most celebrated modern artists. It offers a rare insight into Benodebehari's creative process and his deep engagement with nature and landscape. We invite everyone to join us for the opening of Scenes from Santiniketan & Benodebehari's Handscrolls on May 20th and experience the magic of Benodebehari's art. We hope that this exhibition will be a valuable addition to the city's vibrant art scene and that it will inspire a new generation of artists and art enthusiasts."

Reena Dewan, Director, Kolkata Centre for Creativity said, "KCC is thrilled to curate the exceptional exhibition 'Scenes from Santiniketan' & Benodebehari's Handscrolls' that provides a rare glimpse into the artistic journey of Benodebehari Mukherjee, a pioneering figure in the Indian modern art movement. We are particularly delighted to showcase the newly discovered 42.3 feet handscroll, Scenes from Santiniketan, which is a rare piece of work among his creations. The exhibition will also feature copies of his important scrolls from the collection of museums and collectors to better understand his artistic journey and it would offer a unique opportunity to see his body of works on scrolls in one place. This exhibition is a must-see for art lovers and anyone interested in the cultural heritage of India."

About Benodebehari Mukherjee

The influence of nature on the work of Benodebehari and his outlook towards his life has been of primary importance. In fact, emphasis on Nature was central to Rabindranath Tagore's vision for Santiniketan School and the community growing around it. Tagore's love of nature was profound. For him the wide-open skies, spaciousness, and tranquility of the countryside symbolized freedom. His paintings of nature are evocative, filled with a sense of mystery and longing, often depicting large, old trees by a river. Tagore believed that "nature [is] the greatest of all teachers" and that "children should be surrounded with the things of nature which have their own educational value."

Benodebehari responded to Tagore's call instantaneously unlike any of his contemporaries from Santiniketan. While Nandalal Bose also responded to Tagore's call and engaged with nature, it was a practice that evolved with time as he moved away from the trappings of the Bengal School. In contrast, Benodebehari took to Nature like a duck to water.

It is perhaps not without a reason that Benodebehari's student Satyajit Ray mastered the skills of portraying nature in all its shades and significances.

About Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC)



A unit of Anamika Kala Sangam Trust (AKST), Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC) is a multi-disciplinary interactive art and creativity Centre located in Kolkata, West Bengal. It is the first in Eastern India to make Art accessible to the visually impaired and differently-abled under their 'Art for All' initiative. Spearheaded by Richa Agarwal as its Chairperson, the 70,000 sq. ft. center champions the art and cultural landscape of contemporary India since November 2018. It comprises an Amphitheater, Exhibition & Learning Spaces, Dance studio, Conservation Lab, Books & Materials Library, Creative Culinary space, Craft & Design outlet, and a Skill Development Maker's section. Integrating several expressions of art and design to highlight their common creative core – KCC encourages visitors to explore, interact and design ideas on various art forms. KCC works in the areas of Capacity Building, Well-Being, Conservation & Restoration, Craft & Design, Culinary, and Visual and Performing Art. It acts as a catalyst for Artistic enhancement through Displays, Presentations, Fellowships, Laboratories, Residences, Conservation, Research, and Discourses. The programs at KCC are designed on the principles of Cultural Diversity, Gender Equality, Conservation of the Environment, and Inclusion of people with different abilities. The Centre offers free entry to the public and is open between 11 am to 6 pm. For more information about exhibitions and conferences, please visit www.kolkatacentreforcreativity.org