

Silent Narratives: Objects in Dialogue

Solo Exhibition by Malay Saha

Curated by Reena Dewan

Inauguration: April 19 at 6:30 PM

exhibition will continue until May 3, 2025, 4 – 8 pm, except Mondays

B-CAF (Bridging Culture & Arts Foundation)

Regent Apartments, Regent Estate, Raipur Road, Baghajatin, Kolkata

Exhibition Organised by: B-CAF, Bridging Culture and Arts Foundation

Exhibition Curated by: Femina Gamechanger Awardee Reena Dewan

Guest of Honour: Hiran Mitra, Eminent Artist

Bonnya Bose, Cultural Entrepreneur and Curator

Ayan Sen, Eminent Architect

B-CAF, Bridging Culture and Arts, brings to the city a Solo Exhibition of **Malay Saha** after 12 long years. Malay, an artist from **Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan**, and a **Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant awardee**, is a contemporary artist whose works are in the collections of prestigious museums, including the **National Gallery of Modern Art and the Botswana National Museum**, among others. His practice navigates the intersections of memory, materiality and power. This exhibition marks a renewed engagement with his artistic journey, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of his evolution with subtlety and quiet conviction.

His artistic journey, shaped by his formative years in Santiniketan during the Communist era, is marked by a deep engagement with materiality, space and power dynamics. Feelings of isolation during this period led him to imbue domestic objects—chairs, beds and pillows—with layered meanings. What began as mere representations of everyday objects gradually evolved into potent political symbols. The chair, in particular, emerged as a recurring motif, its anthropomorphic form embodying both presence and absence—a structure of power that he felt was missing from his own life as a student navigating institutional hierarchies.

Malay's fascination with miniature painting, with its multiple viewpoints and fluid spatial constructions, plays a critical role in his practice. His engagement with this tradition was further shaped by his evening sessions with his teacher, K.G. Subramanyan, whose own explorations of multi-perspective compositions deeply influenced Malay's approach. The division of space within his canvases, the rejection of a singular vanishing point and the construction of fragmented yet cohesive narratives all reflect this lineage. In his works, perspective is not fixed but shifts dynamically, compelling the viewer to navigate the image with an active gaze.

“My work is not conceptual; it is purely visual, as I give primary importance to the act of seeing,” says Malay.

His surfaces are often textured with a meticulous stitch-like pattern—a tactile memory derived from the coarse, woven *duri* upon which he once slept. This painstaking mark-making becomes an act of inscription, a form of labor that embeds personal history into the canvas, evoking both endurance and impermanence. The repetitive process mirrors the physicality of embroidery and weaving, transforming texture into both a visual and haptic experience.

In this new body of work, Malay has made a decisive shift in form—from the structured geometries of squares and rectangles to the fluidity of circles. This movement signals an expansion of his spatial explorations, offering a sense of continuity rather than containment. Additionally, he introduces a radical departure from his earlier two-dimensional compositions by incorporating layered paper structures that elevate the surface. This shift invites the viewer into his space, a stark contrast to his previous works, where engagement remained observational, confined to a distant, multi-view perspective, says Reena Dewan, Curator of the show.

This transition—from observing to inhabiting—marks an evolution not only in Malay's formal language but also in his conceptual inquiry. The act of inviting the viewer into his constructed spaces reflects an openness, a gesture of inclusion and perhaps a reconciliation with the city. His decision to present this body of work as a solo exhibition in Kolkata is not merely a homecoming but a deliberate re-engagement with the cultural and artistic landscape that once shaped him. Through these works, Malay Saha continues to navigate memory, materiality and the politics of space with quiet yet profound intensity.

(text by Reena Dewan)

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Malay Saha is a contemporary artist whose practice navigates the intersections of memory, materiality and power. Trained at Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, where he completed his Master of Fine Arts in 1995 and at Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, where he earned his Bachelor of Visual Arts in 1992, Malay's artistic journey has been shaped by both his academic rigor and lived experiences across continents. Malay's work is deeply rooted in an exploration of domestic objects—chairs, beds and pillows—transforming them into symbols of authority, absence and socio-political narratives. His engagement with miniature painting, with its multiple viewpoints and layered spatial constructions, informs his distinctive visual language. Inspired by his mentor, K.G. Subramanyan, he embraced fragmented perspectives and textured surfaces, rejecting a singular, linear way of seeing. His meticulous stitch-like mark-making, derived from the coarse *duri* (woven mat) he once slept on, becomes both a personal and political act, embodying endurance and impermanence.

His artistic career spans over three decades, with notable recognitions including the Senior Fellowship (2010) and Junior Fellowship (1997) from the Ministry of H.R.D., Government of India, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (USA, 1996) and multiple prestigious awards from Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, Birla Academy, Kolkata and the Botswana National Museum, Southern Africa.

Malay has held solo exhibitions at prominent venues, including Triveni Art Gallery, New Delhi; Right Lines Art Gallery, Bangalore; and Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata. His works have also been showcased in major group exhibitions at Jehangir Art Gallery, Mumbai; Lalit Kala Akademi, New

Delhi; Birla Academy of Art & Culture, Kolkata; CIMA Gallery, Kolkata; and National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi. He has exhibited internationally, notably at the National Museum, Botswana, where he lived and worked for three years, engaging with artists from Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

Malay's works are part of significant collections, including the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), New Delhi, the Botswana National Museum, Southern Africa and various private and corporate collections worldwide.

His recent works mark a pivotal shift—from structured rectangular compositions to the fluidity of circular forms, incorporating layered paper structures that invite viewers into the space rather than keeping them at a distance. This transition signifies an evolution in his artistic inquiry, reflecting a profound engagement with space, perception, and viewer interaction. With this solo exhibition at B-CAF—his first in Kolkata after 12 years—Malay Saha deepens his ongoing artistic dialogue. Though he has remained engaged with the city's art scene through group exhibitions, this return to a solo format offers an immersive experience that challenges traditional notions of perspective, structure and spatial dynamics.

(text by Reena Dewan)