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SMS VIEWS
Voices. Visions. Perspectives.
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Ramkinkar: Harvest of Monsoon

Judhajit Sengupta

Of the artists whom I like most here and abroad, Ramkinkar is one of them. I am writing here what I think about him and his art. It is absolutely my own view. Anybody may agree with it or not.

The most significant characteristic of the creative personality is this robust simplicity and profound honesty to express his innermost soul without any pretence. His distinguished artist's creative personality is very much vocal in his drawing especially. Maximum time in his drawings, one may feel that the artist deliberately avoids any softness, delicacy or risk in his drawings. Instead of soft delicate flowing lines, he used to draw very strong broken lines one after another, overlapping each other in a very limited space. As if his intention were to impose strength and weight of mass rather than delicacy and tenderness. Thus, the drawings of his female nudes were that out of this posture.

It may seem that with every stroke of these strong lines he wanted to exert himself in these drawings. As if the main purpose of these drawings is not to create any poetry but to announce loudly the victory of an object to occupy an area in the vacant space.

I think this masculine vigour may be… This masculine vigour was in him genetically. He came from a barber-Santhal family. Because of that, his so-called social status was below the level. Out of poverty in his very early boyhood, he had to sit under some big tree beside the road with the barber's instruments if he could earn some money by cutting or shaving the beard of some passerby. But most of the time he sat idle. That time the boy used to engrave drawings on the trunk of the tree. Drawings on the trunk of that tree marked the beginning of his journey to becoming an artist.







When he grew older, he assisted the potters who made the clay idols of Goddess Durga for the Puja festival. Afterwards, he tried to make such images himself and gained a reputation among the people of the villages of Bankura where he lived.

The people of the village in Bankura where he lived included Ramananda Chattopadhyay, the editor of Prabasi Patrika, who was a dweller of the same place and was very close to Rabindranath Tagore. He heard about him. One day he went with Ramkinkar Baij to Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan and told him about the boy. Without any delay, he was admitted to Kala Bhavana under the guidance of Nandalal Bose.
This was the beginning of him becoming an artist.

As the mission of education in Santiniketan was to make a total man aesthetically, rationally, socially and morally. To perform this perfectly, the process of teaching should not be guided by any definite rules and regulations. This will be the best possible when pupils take their lesson within nature, or under the trees, in the open air, expanding their minds in vast space.

But that was quite different from the general education system, which was job-orientated. So, the general mass rejected it. So only a section of Bengali elites, who were much more advanced culturally and economically, sent their offspring to Santiniketan to take education. In that sense, as a student, Ramkinkar was an exception there.

The schooling of Santiniketan was very polite, modest, and had a deeply rooted calmness, in accordance with the philosophy of the Upanishads. In Kalabhavan, art was also practised in a way that was in tune with that. Mainly, the Oriental style of art was taught there. The pictures drawn there had a very gentle look, with very mild tonal variation, less contrast of colour, and very delicate rhythmic lines. It was quite relevant to the cultural environment of Santiniketan, and somehow that had an urban sophistication. Though Ramkinkar was trained up, but it may be due to the genetic factors which I have mentioned before that he kept himself detached from that sophistication. He was an artist of his own soil. In the real sense, he was a son of the soil. In the deepest of his heart, he loved the nature he lived in. His creation was its witness. The nature of Birbhum and Santiniketan — its vast land; red soil; ups and downs with khoai; the vanished horizon; its rural people and their way of life — were mostly the subjects of his creation. To bring the virgin purity of the objects, his art style became very rustic and rough, which was not of Santiniketan schooling.

Ramkinkar began to paint on canvas with oil colours to express his passion properly and the nude model. One time, Leena, the subject of his study, and all those were a bit upset and not in tune with the Kaladhara lesson but more quietly grew a frictionless atmosphere to express himself. Suddenly, the activity of opinion was growing between Ramkinkar and his teacher Nandalal Bose.

He can make a reaction to what manner he expressed himself when we were at the sculptures like Taj or Santal Parcher. At first, it was not something like that which is not made by any human being but made by nature itself. It may be the broken branches of a big tree or a termite mound that took that shape due to erosion caused by sun, rain and wind. This was possible due to an invented method applied by Ramkinkar. He made these by mixing cement and gravel and finished these, keeping the features of the figures less defined.

When the sculptures were placed in the open air at the Kalabhavan compound, they looked like the creation of nature, free from any human effort. Certainly, that was the motivation of Ramkinkar. In that sense, these were the outstanding examples of environmental sculpture. The same thing was about the sculpture of Sujata. When it was placed within some trees, it looked just like a trunk of a tree.

It seems that Ramkinkar always attempted to make his art as nature itself, without any sophistication, without any artificiality, without any so-called perfection. That is the originality. That is the identity that is the great news of him as an artist. His unconventional style of work was a bar to earning money. His commission works were rejected several times; he had to face poverty, but he did not care. Conventionally, his lifestyle was not so acceptable. Many elites of Santiniketan misunderstood him. Even his teacher did not cooperate with him all the time in his creative sphere.

But Rabindranath could only assess him. He could realise his spirit of life, a dominant passion for creation. Rabindranath stood by Ramkinkar and inspired him to go ahead dominantly with his creative work, ignoring all the bars he would face.

The Untold Story of Building 'SMS' Art Organization

Puja Sarkar

I am Puja Sarkar - an Indian multidisciplinary contemporary artist, curator, and cultural practitioner based in Kolkata, India. My artistic practice is deeply autobiographical and socially engaged, and it naturally extends into my role as the founder of '**SMS' - Artistic and Socio-Cultural Organization**, established in 2009 and co-founder of **Bhalobasa Welfare Society (Non-Profit Organization)**.

The foundation of 'SMS' was not born out of privilege; it was born out of struggle. As a young artist and student pursuing my Master's degree, I stood at a crossroads, uncertain of my future. I was filled with dreams, yet surrounded by rejection, invisibility, and constant doubt. I had no resources, no institutional backing, and no access to established art networks. Like many emerging artists, I realized early that talent alone was not enough to sustain a career in the art world. This realization was not just personal—it reflected a larger truth. I saw many talented young artists around me slowly give up on their dreams, not because they lacked ability, but because they lacked opportunity, guidance, and visibility.

Instead of accepting this reality, I chose to respond to it. As a teenager navigating my own struggles, I began to envision a platform—one that I never had, but deeply needed. A space where artists could be seen, supported, and encouraged. These personal experiences and the understanding became the foundation that inspired me to build a platform - **SMS** - that connects creativity with community consciousness and could offer opportunities, visibility, and encouragement to other emerging and young artists. That vision became **SMS**.



In my early years, the journey was far from easy. I was young, and my ideas were often dismissed as unrealistic. I faced criticism, discouragement, and even humiliation. Many questioned my capability, while others simply did not take my vision seriously. Many people laughed on me to break my will power; however, they failed after thousand attempts. I kept my vision very strong with selfless dedication. I understood as a student my vision was out of box so not believable and acceptable or understood to others/ society. In this journey, I faced numerous humiliations; At times, it felt like the world was trying to break my will. **But something within me refused to give up**. I held on to my belief with quiet determination. **Every rejection, every negative comment, every obstacle became a source of strength. I transformed doubt or negative comments into motivation and resistance into resilience**. A few senior artists believed in me during those early days, their encouragement became a crucial force that helped me continue when everything else seemed uncertain.

I founded SMS with a clear and unwavering intention to create a platform where artists - emerging and established could share ideas, experiment freely, and grow together. Over time, SMS evolved beyond an artist collective. It became a space for inclusion, mentorship, collaboration, and social responsibility.

It grew into a living ecosystem where art is not only created, but also shared, discussed, and connected to real life. In the Indian context, art exists at the intersection of culture, economy, and social reality. Yet many artists - especially those outside major cities struggle to access visibility and recognition. Organizations like **SMS** play a vital role in bridging this gap by offering alternative platforms, peer support, and a sense of belonging that goes beyond competition.

Over the past 18 years, SMS has curated numerous national and international exhibitions, collaborative workshops, and interactive sessions (talk shows) that bring together artists, curators, educators, and social thinkers. We have displayed our wide range of art collections through major art fairs and selected sponsored shows. We have built meaningful collaborations with galleries, institutions, media houses and organizations, creating opportunities for artistic exchange and dialogue.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, 'SMS' spirit became even more important for supporting the artistic community. In 2020–2021, SMS organized the all-India fundraising exhibition **"EMPATHY"**, raising essential funds through art. These funds were later distributed to artists through structured initiatives such as **SMS scholarships and SMS grant programs** ensuring dignity, support, and continuity during a time of crisis.

Our work extends beyond the art world. Through our sister organization, **Bhalobasa Welfare Society (Non-Profit Organization)**, we engage in social initiatives that support underprivileged children, elderly individuals, and marginalized communities. By integrating art into social development, we aim to create spaces of healing, empowerment, and human connection. **This dual vision—artistic growth and social responsibility defines the true identity of SMS.**

Through this journey, I have learned that when artists come together with empathy and intention, they do more than create—they build ecosystems of care, courage, and change. Collectives/art organization matter because they keep art rooted in its most essential truth-**community**.

For me, SMS is deeply personal. It is my response to the isolation I once felt. It is the platform I once searched for. What began as a personal struggle for survival has evolved into a collective vision - to support, mentor, and uplift artists who continue to face challenges within a competitive and often inaccessible art ecosystem.

I share this untold story not as a conclusion, but as an invitation. To every young artist who feels unseen, unheard, or uncertain - you do not have to wait for validation. You can create your own path. You can build your own platform /join 'SMS'. Because art is not meant to exist in isolation, It is a dialogue, a bridge between inner truth and shared experience—a force that connects life, emotion, and humanity.





I shared my untold story of the making an art organization as a teenager against all odds to inspire other artists in India. I believe, art is not about practicing art lonely or creating in isolation, as an artist I feel artist has social responsibility to share exchange and celebrate the dialogue and vision of internal truth through art to others as like healing, untold story that will be the bridge between art and life with special phenomena. Through SMS, I aim to inspire other artists by sharing this untold story - the story of building an art collective/organization as a teenager. Art connects life, emotion, and healing - it builds a bridge between art and humanity, between expression and existence.

SMS was born from struggle, but it lives to nurture hope. It stands for every artist who dares to dream without a safety net-proving that when creativity and compassion come together, art becomes not just a practice, but a powerful movement of connection, purpose, and change.

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Birth Centenary of Biren De – A Pioneer of Neo-Tantric Art

Samba P. Biswas

Biren De (1926–2011) was a leading modern painter in India, known for starting the **Neo-Tantric movement** in Indian art. He brought together spirituality, geometry, and abstraction to create a style that connected ancient Indian philosophy with modern art.

Biren De was born in 1926 in Kolkata. As he grew up, Indian art was moving away from colonial academic styles toward more local and modern ideas. He first studied traditional academic art at the **Government College of Art & Craft in Kolkata, then learned about** modern art movements from around the world. These experiences helped him move from figurative art to abstraction.



Biren De's early works were **figurative and expressionistic**, often depicting human struggles and social themes.

However, by the 1960s, his style had transformed dramatically. He became deeply inspired by Indian spiritual traditions, Tantric philosophy, and the Symbolism of energy, light, and cosmic forms. This shift led him to become a leading figure in **Neo-Tantric art**, a modern reinterpretation of ancient tantric symbols.



Biren De's mature works are instantly recognisable for their radiating geometric patterns, Use of circles, bindus (dots), and mandala-like forms, as well as Vibrant, glowing colours that suggest spiritual energy. His paintings often evoke cosmic consciousness and Inner awakening. The relationship between the human and the universe. Unlike traditional Tantra, his work was not ritualistic but **philosophical and meditative**, aimed at universal appeal.

Throughout his career, Biren De gained both national and international recognition: Exhibited widely in India and abroad.

He had participated in major art exhibitions across Europe and the United States and received awards from institutions like the **Lalit Kala Akademi.** His work helped position Indian modern art on the global stage.

Biren De remains a key figure in Indian modernism. His contribution lies in: Bridging **ancient spirituality with modern abstraction,** inspiring future generations of artists exploring metaphysical themes and establishing Neo-Tantric art as a respected movement.

His paintings continue to be displayed in major galleries and collections, admired for their depth, harmony, and spiritual resonance. Biren De was more than just a painter—he was a visionary who translated the invisible realms of consciousness into visual form. His art invites viewers not just to see, but to **experience inner stillness and cosmic unity**, making his work timeless and profoundly meaningful.



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The Ascetic Artist Narendra Chandra Dey Sarkar

Pulak Das

An ascetic or spiritual practitioner is usually a person who lives in seclusion. When we think of a saint or ascetic, we usually imagine people who move within the spiritual realm. But many artists, poets, writers, and people involved in creative work also belong to this category. Artists are a kind of spiritual practitioner in their own way. In today's art practice, perhaps no one would consider it wise to work with the single-minded devotion and meditative concentration of an ascetic as these artists once did.

Gallery curators often tell artists that they must stay "updated," meaning they should only think about the eventful present; the traditions and heritage of the past are supposedly not for them. They are told that whatever disturbs or agitates them in the present should be their only concern. They say there is no such thing as pure joy; art should not be practiced for the sake of joy. Instead, preparing a **concept note** first is considered essential. Artists are expected to prove that what they think is the only truth and that nothing else can exist beyond it. It is a strange kind of brainwashing.

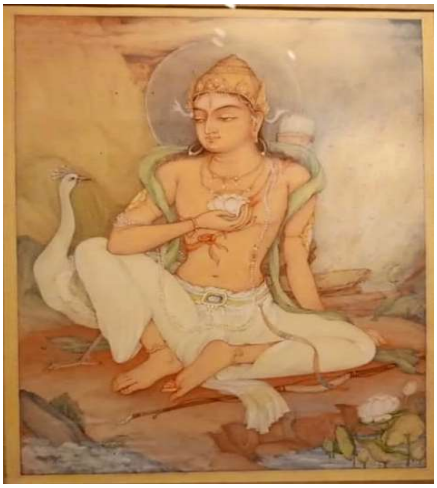


All around us there is an unhealthy competition to move away from one's own self and gradually become the "self" of the gallery.

"Those who are blind
seem to see the most today."

In this atmosphere, a recent exhibition of the veteran artist **Narendra Chandra Dey Sarkar** took place. While looking at his works, the words of Rabindranath Tagore resonate in the mind:

"Where the deity of the midnight soul
awakens alone…"



The artist sits alone before the canvas. A devoted worker in art becomes immersed in the deep blue serenity of devotional practice. Distanced from his surroundings, keeping himself in the background, he applies the brush with a blue hue through the eyes of knowledge bestowed by the goddess of learning. He shapes the divine swan as a symbol of pure knowledge. From the churning of the ocean emerges **Lakshmi (Shri)**, rising from the unfathomable ocean of the artist's mind. On the other hand, the heroic **Balabhadra** binds his beloved **Revati** with the bonds of love, while holding a plough in another hand—symbolizing the desire to make the earth fertile. In another painting, the divine commander **Kartikeya**, with extraordinary physical grace, stands alone in a dense celestial forest.

We all know why the Government Art School was established and how it gradually expanded. During India's glorious Swadeshi movement, the search for ancient India, its heritage and traditions, led to the development of indigenous art under the guidance of the great art master **Abanindranath Tagore**. At that time, through the dedicated efforts of the principal **E. B. Havell** and Abanindranath Tagore, the **Indian Style Department** was formed at the Government Art School. Abanindranath's personal artistic language developed into a strong structure and became a subject of practice among the public.

In an era when people often abandoned their own heritage in favor of foreign influences, this artistic movement showed a new path—this is historically true.

Just as **Raja Ravi Varma** reimagined mythological India with new aesthetic charm, Abanindranath Tagore





rediscovered Indian mythology, folk tales, and everyday life in Bengal through a magical interplay of light and shadow. Later, as we became increasingly aware of global art and as the enthusiasm of the Swadeshi movement slowly faded after independence, Western art—its techniques and philosophy—began to fascinate us. Our artistic practice gradually turned in a different direction, and from that time onward the tradition of the **Indian Style** began to face questions.

At **Santiniketan**, under the direct influence of **Rabindranath Tagore**, the great artist **Nandalal Bose** rediscovered this Indian artistic tradition in a different form. In his paintings, the mythological gods and heroes of the past gave way to the indigenous people of Birbhum—the Santals, laborers, and the landscapes of Khoai and Kopai. Later, at the Government Art School, artist **Dhirendra Nath Brahma (1924–2014)** carried forward the mythological narrative tradition of the Indian Style. At the same time, the transformed approach introduced by Nandalal Bose at Kala Bhavana also influenced the students of the Indian Style department of the Government Art School. Thus, both traditions—the older mythological narrative style and the modified approach introduced by Nandalal Bose—continued side by side at the Government Art School.

A worthy successor to this legacy is the artist we are discussing today, **Narendra Chandra Dey Sarkar**. Born in **1932 in Cooch Behar**, he graduated from the Government Art School in **1957** and later served as an art teacher at the same institution for **35 years** before retiring. He can rightfully be considered one of the last **"living legends" of the Bengal School of Art**. Immersed in his own world, this artist had almost been forgotten by us—something that seems to be a typical trait of Bengalis. It is astonishing to think that someone who has been deeply engaged in painting for over eighty years could be forgotten so easily.

Special thanks must be given to contemporary artist **Abhijit Saha**, the main organizer of this exhibition. Because of him, we have once again had the opportunity to see and reflect upon the works of the respected artist Naren Babu. In this exhibition, along with mythological narratives, we also see depictions of ordinary people and their simple lives—their joys, sorrows, laughter, and enthusiasm. At the same time, the artist also brings forward his spirit of protest on the canvas.

Today, the Indian Style department at the Government Art College is almost on the verge of extinction due to arrogance and neglect. Endless debates about what is art and what is not have pushed this department into darkness through unforgivable indifference. In reality, alongside practical art education, the teaching of art history, tradition, and heritage—what we call theory—was absent in the Government Art College for a long time. As a result, due to a lack of historical awareness among many of the institution's authorities (who themselves studied there), the Indian Style department has been pushed into the shadows of neglect.

Debate and disagreement may exist, but while looking at Naren Babu's artistic creations, the heart fills with joy. At the same time, one feels sorrow thinking that perhaps there will be no one left to master the careful brushstrokes and loving layers of color that create such divine magic. There is nothing unjust about this tradition of learning, yet we are gradually pushing this style toward extinction. It is our hope that this department will once again continue with dignity, supported by skilled teachers.

Finally, I offer my respects to the revered artist **Narendra Chandra Dey Sarkar**, who remains devoted to the practice of art.

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Understanding For Appreciation – Part 1

Silajit Ghosh

Currently, for understanding any and every thing, we in general, give cognizance to and rely majorly over impressions, that we receive and perceive from the outer reality, as comprehended by our physical sensory organs and stated authentically by the faculty called "Science".

Again, Science per se, give cognizance to facts which are proved physically in laboratories of the outer world itself, verifiable anywhere and anytime, with the same outcome as appear to all of us universally.

Now, this phenomenon called "UNDERSTANDING" has many layers which are defined by the various facetsor states of existence of it, as has been termed, at least in terms of reliability and certainty as follows:

1. Scientific knowledge based of verifiable experiments
2. Various interpretations of it perceived by different individuals
3. Possibilities based upon future regressions
4. Individual Feelings and Intuitions which are yet to be verified through universally established laws
5. Hopes
6. Intentions
7. Imagination

Apart from all of the above, we can also reach a state of intuitive but concrete knowledge, just by means of observing. For an example in this regard, we may consider the case of, some profound similarities between two diametrically opposite concepts originating from the two mutually and extremely remote faculties, say Physics and Spirituality.

Going to the core of this issue, we can consider as follows, the two definitions as stated by (A) Pure Science and (B) Spiritual beliefs as stated by all of the majorly prevailing spiritual disciplines pervading humanity:

"Energy can neither be created, nor destroyed …. The only change of its state can just be, getting transformed from one of its forms to another."

"Atman or the Spirit was neither born, nor it can die … The only change of its state can just be, getting transformed from one of its forms to another."

The facts to be considered here are: (1) The First one as above has been verified by Science in physical laboratories and the Second one was conceived originally by some independent and singular human mind purely through meditation and self-contemplation, and (2) The nature and extent of the similarities between the two concepts as above, establishes it clearly and bluntly, that these are eventually one and the same.

Thus, with careful observation, it can be concluded that the objectives of each and every event happening in the whole of the universe ULTIMATELY, have one and only objective i.e. expression and propagation of the factual knowledge that "Basically Everything possible are "ONE" and inter-connected, as the same has been created from a Source, which is Singular and moreover, this very fact is getting continuously expressed as The Ultimate Truth, through all The Happenings that are taking place universally".

Thus, the basic idea behind all faculties of humanity, "ART" being one of them, is based on the concept as above.

At this juncture, the notion that arise logically is, whether ART is being created by a human being consciously or ART is just a universal creative urge, getting expressed through human mind on its own, using it only as a medium of functionality, to fulfill its basic need of expressing everything, in pure aesthetic terms.

Now, coming specifically to the basic idea behind my personal ART, is "to just "ALLOWING" it to happen on its own by using all of my individual consciousness, spirit, mind, body, brain and heart, merely as a brush, spreading colours on the canvas".

The Basic Conceptual Techniques for Creating My Art

The is an old faculty of "Swara Yoga" and the most modern concept of "Quantum Entanglement" as stated in the principles of Quantum Physics and its most famous "Double-slit experiment", proving beyond all doubts that, at the sub-atomic levels, state of matter and its behavior, whether to show the characteristics of either a wave or a particle, depends solely on the act of observation by a conscious observer. Incidentally, the Nobel Prize in Physics for the year 2022 has been awarded, for proving the above physical law conclusively under controlled laboratory conditions.

Thus, while creating my art, my sole objective remains, keep on trying to maintain, a state of deepest of mental stance and merely observe myself as a medium of creation only and not as the creator himself.

This is accomplished by complete surrender of all of my egoistical traits and letting go, all possible concerns pervading the outer reality. The whole process is carried out by means of contemplating over the idea of absolute void or the zero state, allowing art to happen automatically and grow organically, on its own. This very idea, makes all my works seem to be a product of pure accident, always hovering over the razor-sharp edge between conscious personal effort and that of spontaneity and automation.

Installation Project: Dinosaurs in the Courtyard

Dipayan Ghosh

Dinosaurs in the Courtyard is a site-specific installation that explores the intricate intersection of geopolitical fragility, urban ambition, and latent existential disquiet, symbolizing the untapped potential and precarious dynamism of underdeveloped regions within emerging economies. Constructed from an aluminum skeletal frame, evocative of an incomplete architectural interior, and vertically adorned with utilitarian plastic chairs and dried tea tree branches, the piece transforms the functional into a fragmented architectural dialect, questioning conventional notions of stability and progress.

This fragile structure becomes an allegory for urban spaces caught in the liminality of rapid growth and spatial vulnerability. A 16-foot hand-painted canvas presents an aerial abstraction of the site's topography, invoking the complexities of transitional environments. It mirrors the precarious corridors that connect disparate regions, whose geostrategic importance is marked by their susceptibility to disruption. These spaces embody the vulnerability of urban sprawl, where the threat of upheaval lurks beneath the veneer of globalized advancement.





The dinosaurs, metaphorical giants of dormant fears, act as a sardonic commentary, encapsulating latent unease amidst the certainties of human progress. The title balances absurdity with gravity, reframing militaristic narratives into an existential critique of resilience within volatile frontiers. Through its synthesis of rigidity and organic change, Dinosaurs in the Courtyard layers contested identities and the precariousness defining spaces in flux.

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