



Untitled 12 | Oil Pastel On Handmade Paper, 11" x 15 " | Year -1970

Art Exposure & Shrine Empire at Frieze

Spotlight at Frieze Masters 2025

Dates: 15-19 October

Artist: Amitava Das

Press Release

Art Exposure and Shrine Empire are pleased to present a focused selection of works by Amitava in the Spotlight section of Frieze Masters this year.

Frieze Masters Spotlight presentation

Amitava's practice is defined by preoccupations in India during the insurgencies and uncertainties that a newly formed national context was faced with, with the Cold War looming in the backdrop. Part of a generation that was born in the moment of Independence from colonial rule in 1947, Amitava was already familiar with early anti-colonial and post-independent modernisms in India, as well as post-war art in Europe such as the work of Giacometti, and Surrealism from an early age. These early influences led him to explore his own interiority in the 1960s, when he was an art student.

The works that will be featured at Frieze Masters are mostly from the 1970s, and capture a prominent period in his practice that marks a departure from early considerations maintained by his practice to look outwards at the complex interrelations between the human experience and the world around.

In this endeavour of contemplating external realities, two strands of work emerge as significant propositions by the artist in the 1970s. On one hand he frequently returned to his childhood in the idyllic landscape of Shimla, with its mountainscapes, greenery and creaturely existences, situating human existences as enmeshed with, and even corporeally constituted of the natural and more than human, animate and inanimate, lifeforms around them, in concurrence with the global rise of ecological consciousness in the decade. Another simultaneous body of work poetically responds to the politics of the time in a Soviet-leaning, Non-Aligned nation state, that did not know whether to turn right or left, caught between the allure of capitalist consumerism and the romantic ideals that fuel revolutions. These works unconsciously draw from his awareness of student movements, protest cultures, the revival of Che Guevara in the public imagination, and the poetry of Jibananda Das and Shakti Chattopadhyay.

Artist Bio:

Amitava (b.1947) lives and works in New Delhi. He graduated from the Delhi College of Art in 1972. Amitava has been strongly influenced by the existential philosophy of Sartre and Camus as well as the poetry of Jibananda Das and Shakti Chattopadhyay. The existential dilemma of a man thrown into a world as a stranger is characteristic of his work. In his paintings, Amitava introduces a single figure within a dense, turgidly rendered space. His work is primarily based on human situations, where man is both the creator and the destroyer. The natural and artificial are cleverly fused to show the interdependence of the man-made and natural worlds. He tries to bring out the inner struggles of men placed in difficult times. From the gentleness and resignation in his earlier works, he moved on to canvases that depict the violence and avarice of modern times. Working with a variety of mediums, Amitava uses watercolours, oils, and pastels to portray his thoughts and feelings evoked by his observations of the life around him. In the 70s, Amitava co-founded the New Group, a Delhi-based artists' collective. He taught art at Jamia Millia Islamia (1974–75) and was a visiting faculty member of College of Art and Women's Polytechnic, Delhi (1977).

Amitava has designed publications, exhibitions, interiors, furniture and created trade fair graphics. He has been profiled in *A Painter's Portrait*, a film by K. Bikram Singh for Doordarshan, and featured in numerous other television programmes. He co-curated the contemporary Indian art exhibition *The Yellow Deity* for the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, Hungary.

He has held several solo exhibitions, including *In Another Time That is Now* at Bikaner House, a collaboration between Shrine Empire and Art Exposure, New Delhi (2024); *Come Play With Me* at Bagash Art Gallery, Dubai (2006); *Galerie FIA*, Amsterdam (1997); *Sakshi Gallery*, Mumbai (1993 and 2004); and *Art Heritage*, Delhi (1990 and 1996).

His group exhibition history spans decades and continents. Most recently, his work has been featured in *India Art Fair* (Shrine Empire, 2025), *If We Knew the Point* at Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Delhi (2024), *Art Mumbai* with Art Exposure (2024), and *Miracle of Absence* at Art Exposure, Kolkata (2024). In 2024, his works also appeared at the *India Art Fair* (Shrine Empire). Prior to this, he exhibited in *Old Bengal, Modern to Contemporary* (Series – I) and *Phase – II: Contemporary Practices*, both at Gallery Kolkata (2020 and 2019 respectively). His earlier exhibitions include *Drawing '94* at Gallery Espace, AIFACS, New Delhi; *India Songs – Multiple Streams in Contemporary Indian Art* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney and Orange Regional Gallery, Australia (1993); *Indische Gegenwartskunst* in Mainz, Germany, and Stettin, Poland (1993); *Contemporary Indian Art* in Dhaka, Bangladesh (1992); and *Three Contemporary Artists* in Bremen, Germany (1991).

In the 1980s, Amitava participated in *War and Peace – Contemporary Paintings* at Max Mueller Bhavan across Indian metros (1990), *Contemporary India Painting* in Darmstadt, Germany (1989), the *Fredrikstad Biennale of Prints* in Norway (1984), *Contemporary India Painting* in Moscow (1984), *Grenchen Triennale – International Exhibition of Prints* in Switzerland (1982), *Prints at Galerie Steinmetz* in Bonn, Germany (1981), and the *All India Exhibition of Drawings* in Chennai (1981). His earliest major exhibitions include *The Pictorial Space*, curated by Geeta Kapur at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi (1977), and *Two Painters – Amitava Das and Manjit Bawa* at Black Partridge Gallery, New Delhi (1977).

Amitava received a fellowship from the Federal Republic of Germany in 1989 for advanced exposure to exhibition and graphic design. He was awarded the National Award in 1976 and the Sahitya Kala Parishad Award in 1982. His works are part of significant collections including those of the Society of Contemporary Art, London; National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi; Bharat Bhawan, Bhopal; Punjab Museum, Chandigarh; and Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.

About Art Exposure

Art Exposure is a modern and contemporary art gallery based in Kolkata, India. Dedicated to advancing critical conversations around South Asian art, the gallery bridges historical practices with emerging voices. It showcases artists from modern masters to emerging talents, spanning generations and geographies.

In 2024, Art Exposure moved into a new 7,000 sq ft space, focused on promoting sustained and critical dialogues on modern and contemporary art practices. Alongside exhibitions, the gallery produces publications and catalogs that offer critical essays, scholarly writing, and archival insights — expanding global discourse and offering fresh perspectives on South Asia's rich artistic heritage.

About Shrine Empire

Anahita Taneja and Shefali Somani founded Shrine Empire in 2008. Since its inception, Shrine Empire has consistently focused on promoting artists from the South Asian region whose practices emphasize process, research, and conceptual use of media and material. The gallery's programming has created a unique identity for the space through curated exhibitions and propositions, as well as commissioned projects which explore crossings between aesthetics and social/political concerns of its immediate context.

Shrine Empire's community includes a large network of local and international partners and contributes to building discourse on contemporary art. The gallery has previously participated at leading art fairs including Art Basel HK, Art SG, Artissima, Asia Now Paris and Art Dubai.

The founders who were recently awarded the Officier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government, consolidated their outreach initiatives under the not-for-profit Prameya Art Foundation.

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