

EMAMI ART

THE LOST FRAGRANCE OF MEMORY

A solo exhibition by **Suman Dey**

October 15 – December 30, 2023

11 am - 7 pm (Sundays Closed)

Ground floor, Gallery 2

Foreword

'The Lost Fragrance of Memory,' Suman Dey's first major solo exhibition, marks our longstanding friendship and years of working together; he is one of the artists with whom we began our journey as a contemporary art gallery around five years ago in Kolkata with a broad and open outlook. It is a moment of happiness, and we are delighted to present his show of recent paintings at Emami Art.

Suman Dey is known for his large-scale works with compelling abstract forms and rich tonality. I am particularly fond of his unique pictorial style and treatment and admire how, as a self-taught artist, he has succeeded in developing a highly refined and evocative language of abstraction with the help of books and by visiting art exhibitions. Although non-representational, his paintings are not pictures of nothing – the expression we often use to describe abstract art. Instead, seeing how his formal experiments and spatial imagination connect the past – his memory and history are fascinating. I hope that Dey's works will enchant the students and art lovers, who will find them worthy in the context of the contemporary practice of abstract art in India.

I thank Suman Dey and my team at Emami Art; the exhibition would not have been possible without their effort and dedication. I wish this show every success.

Richa Agarwal
CEO, Emami Art

The Lost Fragrance of Memory

reveals Suman Dey's unique spatial imagination, a mellowed world of lines, shapes and colours. A self-taught artist and one of the prominent painters in Bengal working in the language of abstraction today, Suman Dey (b.1980) repudiates the use of familiar objects and their material existence, but, unlike the abstract artists striving for the absolute and pure forms, he adheres to the essential reality of things and their substance, enmeshed with the insubstantiality of dreams and memory. The exhibition includes his recent works, particularly the large-scale paintings of compelling visual forms and rich tonality for which he is better known.

Born in Kolkata to a humble family, Suman Dey discontinued formal education early to support his father. He did several odd jobs, working at his father's roadside *Paan Shop*, a local block printing factory and homoeopathic dispensary as an assistant, before entirely devoting himself to painting. Dey studied modern art and artists in books and galleries and taught himself the art language and idioms by combining this with his conversations with the established senior artists. Initially, his paintings based on mythological themes showed his reliance upon the lyrical style of the Bengal School artists. But later, around the mid-2010s, his works show how Dey gradually dispensed with the figurative style, pouring his personal experiences and studies into a highly individualized abstract language.

Around 2019, Suman Dey started his notable *Journey* and *Butterfly* series, stimulated by surrealistic ideas. However, unlike the surrealists, who establish congruity between the phantasmagoria of the unconscious and the object of everyday life, he shows deep attachment to the phenomenal things and the memories and anecdotes associated with them, giving visual existence to many imaginary spaces and tempi. In the works on display, he is not constrained by the limitation of any particular experience. Memory and desire are dissociated from everyday life's immediate, trivialized space; they are uncoupled and then cobbled back together in his long and meticulous art practice. Freed from the need of describing a particular thing, person or idea, the possibilities are endless. In undermining immediacy and the power of the present tense, Suman Dey uses the whole of human experience as his model, swinging between proximity and distance, between the empirical and universal.

Abstract space, it may be argued, cannot be conceived of in the abstract. It certainly has content, but this content is evanescent and can only be grasped through a detached, meditative practice dealing with abstraction. By creating a contradictory space at once homogenous and divided, unified and fragmented, Suman Dey utilizes abstraction as the most effective language to capture memory, not as an entity, but as a trace.

- Arkaprava Bose



Artist Biography

Suman Dey is a young contemporary artist based in Kolkata. Largely self-taught, he works in the language of abstract art, distilling the visible form into an abstract motif. His work, which usually tells no story, shows his intense contemplation and careful formal exercises. Composition and Form are two recent series of paintings that show his complex handling of the non-representation language of art oscillating between the purity of form and emotions and memories of the world.

Suman Dey has exhibited widely in India. He participated in solo shows at Taj Bengal, Kolkata (2011, 2014); ECA Art Walk, Kolkata (2011) and Chemould Art Gallery, Kolkata (2008). His works have also been shown in many duet and group exhibitions in the Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata (2009, 2015, 2017); Shilpi Art Gallery (2008); in the Birla Annual Exhibition at Birla Academy of Art & Culture, Kolkata (2018, 2016); in the Annual Exhibition at Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata (2017), in the All India Exhibition at Emami Art (2016, 2017), in the Annual exhibition organised by the Rajya Charukala Parisad (2016); State Gallery Of Art, Hyderabad (2018), India Habitat Centre, New Delhi (2018, 2022, 2023) and in a Group Exhibition 2020 at Emami Art, Kolkata, among others.

He was awarded the Certificate of Merit for his work in the All Indian Exhibition at Emami Art, 2017. Suman lives and works in Kolkata, India.

Artist Statement

A self-taught artist and one of the prominent painters in Bengal working in the language of abstraction today, Suman Dey (b.1980) repudiates the use of familiar objects and their material existence, but, unlike the abstract artists striving for the absolute and pure forms, he adheres to the essential reality of things and their substance, enmeshed with the insubstantiality of dreams and memory. His recent works include large-scale paintings of compelling visual forms and rich tonality.

Born in Kolkata to a humble family, Suman Dey discontinued formal education early to support his father. He did several odd jobs, working at his father's roadside *Paan Shop*, a local block printing factory and homoeopathic dispensary as an assistant, before entirely devoting himself to painting. Dey studied modern art and artists in books and galleries and taught himself the art language and idioms by combining this with his conversations with the established senior artists. His initial paintings based on mythological themes showed his reliance upon the lyrical style of the Bengal School artists. But his later works, around the mid-2010s, show how Dey gradually dispensed with the figurative style, pouring his personal experiences and studies into a highly individualized abstract language.

Around 2019, Suman Dey started his notable *Journey* and *Butterfly* series, stimulated by surrealist ideas. However, unlike the surrealists, who establish congruity between the phantasmagoria of the unconscious and the object of everyday life, he shows deep attachment to the phenomenal things and the anecdotes associated with them, giving visual existence to many imaginary spaces and tempi. The limitation of any particular experience does not constrain him. Memory and desire are dissociated from everyday life's immediate, trivialized space; they are uncoupled and then cobbled back together in his long and meticulous art practice. Freed from the need to describe a particular thing, person or idea, the possibilities are endless. In undermining immediacy and the power of the present tense, Suman Dey uses the whole of human experience as his model, swinging between proximity and distance, between the empirical and universal.

Abstract space, it may be argued, cannot be conceived in the abstract. It certainly has content but is evanescent and can only be grasped through a detached, meditative practice dealing with abstraction. By creating a contradictory space at once homogenous and divided, unified and fragmented, Suman Dey utilizes abstraction as the most effective language to capture memory, not as an entity, but as a trace.



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Unexpected Storms - II

Acrylic, charcoal and pencil on canvas

102 x 78 in. (259 x 198 cm.)

2023, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

ABI 894



Suman Dey (b.1981)

The Sudden Strike

Acrylic, charcoal and pencil on canvas

72 x 186 in. (182.8 x 472.4 cm.)

2023, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

AB1881



Detail of *The Sudden Strike*



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Unexpected Storms - I

Acrylic, charcoal and pencil on canvas

48 x 48 in. (122 x 122 cm.)

2023, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

ABI 886



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Decay - II

Acrylic, charcoal and pencil on canvas

36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)

2023, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

ABI 887



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Decay - III

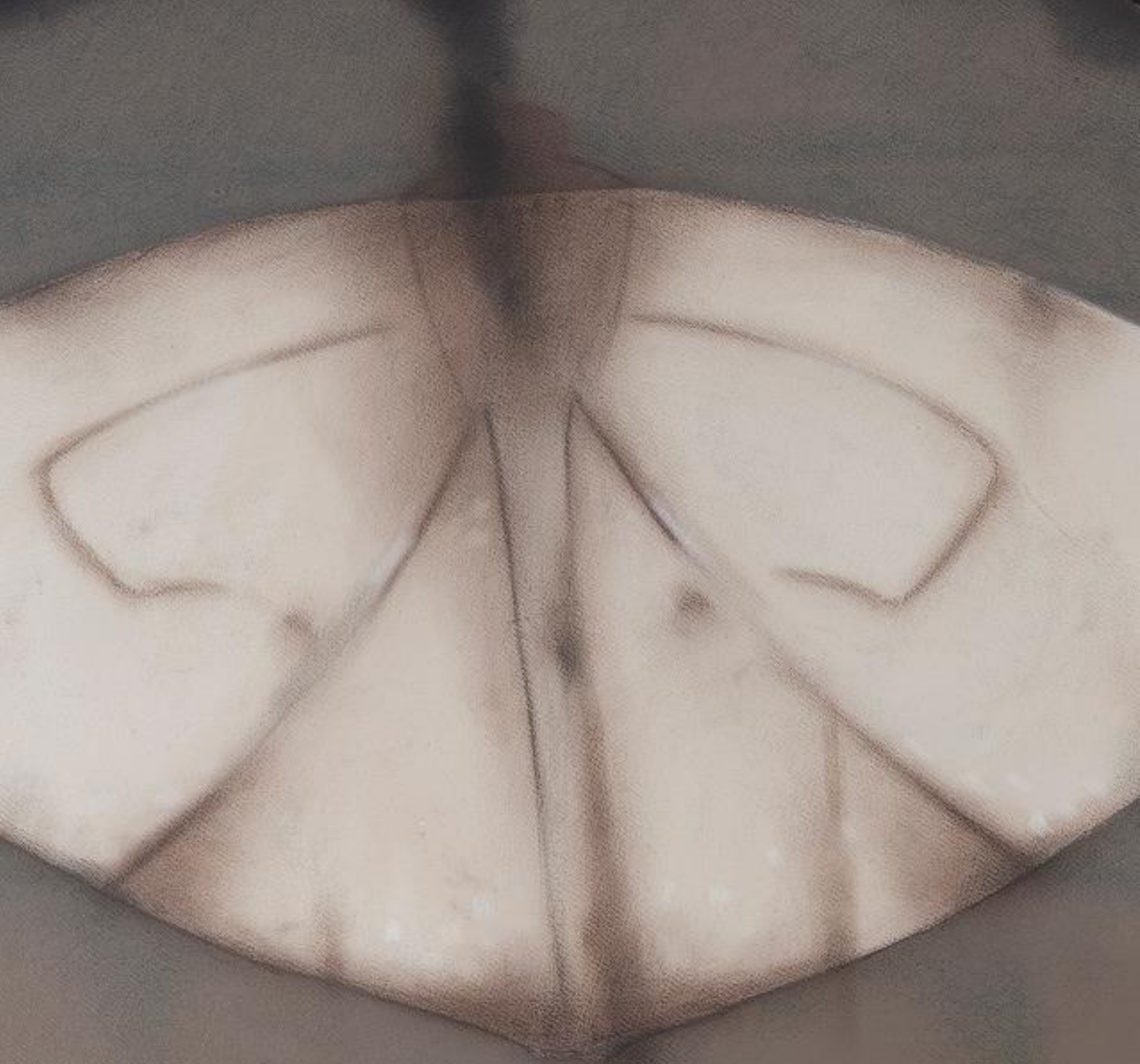
Acrylic, charcoal and pencil on canvas

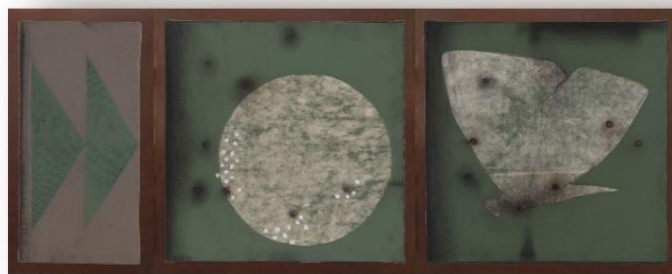
36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm.)

2023, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

ABI 888





Suman Dey (b.1981)

Decay

Acrylic, charcoal, pencil, dry pastel and Nepali handmade paper pasted on canvas

A - 35.6 in. (90.4 cm.) dia.

B - 10.5 x 5.2 in. (26.6 x 13.2 cm.)

C - 10.2 x 10.2 in. (25.9 x 25.9 cm.)

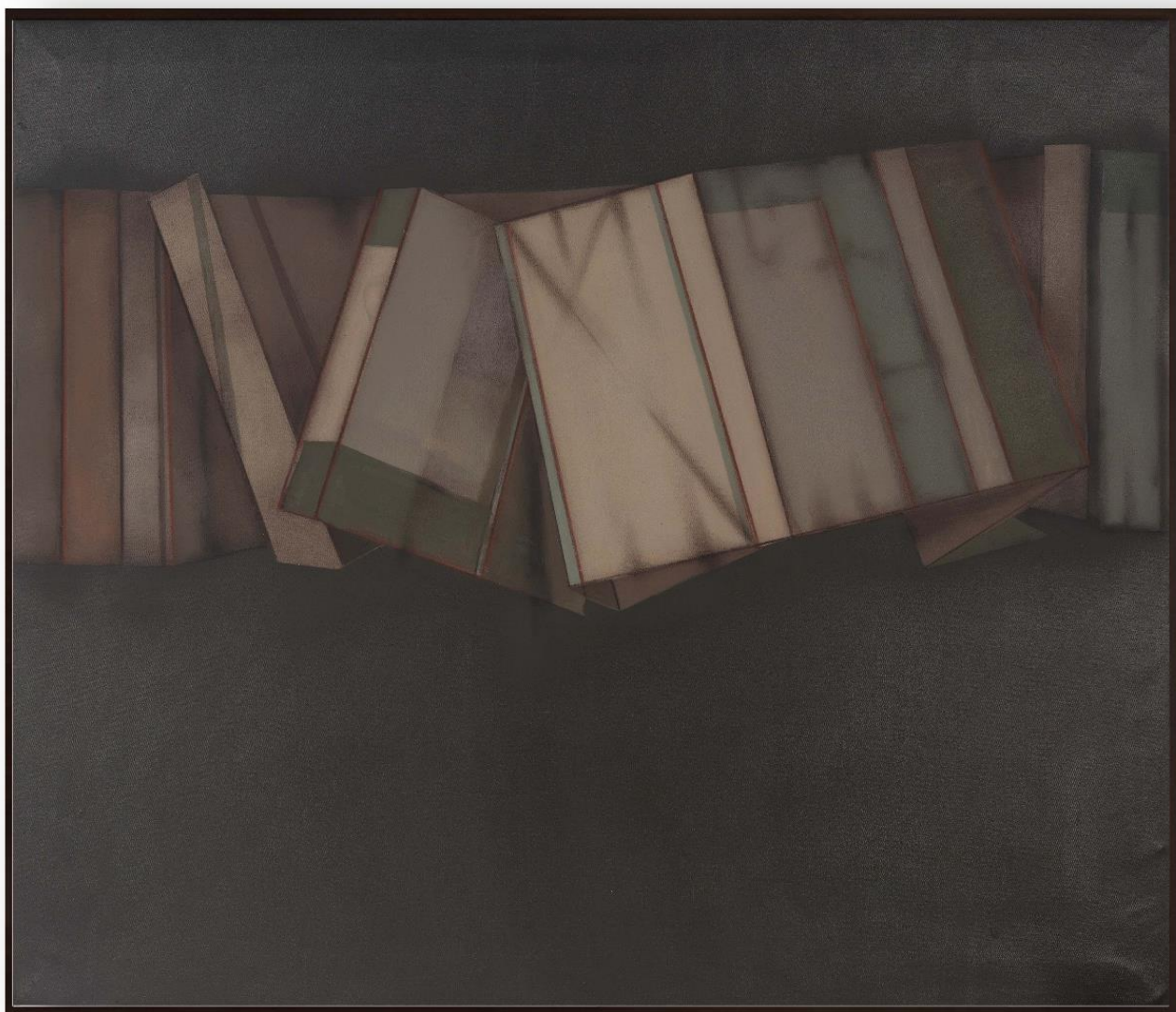
D - 10.2 x 10.2 in. (25.9 x 25.9 cm.)

Suite of 4 works

2023, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

ABI 880



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Up's and Down

Acrylic, charcoal and pencil on canvas

33.5 x 39.5 in. (85 x 100.3 cm.)

2023, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

ABI 889



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Synthetic Faith

Acrylic and charcoal on canvas

78 x 60 in. (198 x 152 cm.)

2021, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

C6660



Detail Of Synthetic Faith



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Remains

Acrylic, charcoal and graphite on canvas

30 x 102.3 in. (76 x 271 cm.) overall

A - 30 x 30 in. (76.2 x 76.2 cm.)

B - 30 x 72 in. (76.2 x 182.8 cm.)

Diptych

2022, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

ABI 185



Detail of Remains



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Form

Acrylic, charcoal, graphite, printed paper and Nepali handmade paper pasted on board

40 x 100.3 in. (102 x 254.7 cm.) overall

20 x 20 in. (51 x 51 cm.) each

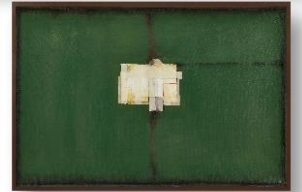
Suite of 6 works

2022, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

ABI 182





Suman Dey (b. 1981)

The Lost Fragrance

Acrylic, dry pastel, graphite and charcoal on paper

39 x 128.2 in. (99 x 325.6 cm.) overall

Suite of 12 works

2022, Kochi

Signed in English (on the reverse)

ABI 304



Detail of *The Lost Fragrance*



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Form 3

Acrylic, charcoal and pencil on Nepali handmade paper pasted on board

24.6 x 24.6 in. (63 x 63.5 cm.)

2021, Kolkata

Signed in English (lower right and on the reverse)

EAI 630



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Form I

Acrylic, charcoal, pencil on Nepali handmade paper pasted on board.

24.8 x 49.6 in. (63 x 126 cm.) overall

24.8 x 24.8 in. (63 x 63 cm.) each

Diptych

2021, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

EAI 632



Detail of *The Form I*



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Untitled

Acrylic on Nepali handmade paper pasted on board
40.3 x 30 in. (102.3 x 76.2 cm.)

2021, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

EAI 627



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Form I

Acrylic, charcoal and dry pastel on canvas

30 x 30 in. (76.2 x 76.2 cm.)

2019, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

EAI618



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Form II

Acrylic, charcoal and dry pastel on canvas

30 x 30 in. (76.2 x 76.2 cm.)

2019, Kolkata

Signed in English (on the reverse)

EAI619



Installation view of *Form I and II*



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Untitled II

Acrylic, charcoal, graphite and white pencil on canvas

30 x 90 in. (76.2 x 228.6 cm.)

30.7 x 90.5 in. (78 x 230 cm.) framed size

2020, Kolkata

Signed in English (lower right)

EAI 626



Detail of *The Untitled II*



Suman Dey (b. 1981)

Composition

Acrylic, dry pastel on Nepali handmade paper pasted on canvas

42 x 42 in. (106.6 x 106.6 cm.)

2019, Kolkata

Signed in English (upper right)

EAI617

EMAMI ART

KOLKATA, INDIA

Emami Art is a contemporary art gallery based in the green purpose built Kolkata Centre for Creativity building in Kolkata, India. Promoting emerging, mid-career and established artists and engaging with contemporary and historical material, the gallery produces exhibitions of modern, contemporary and cutting-edge art as well as commissioning artists to create site-specific pieces.

The gallery programme includes a regular lineup of talks, seminars, panel discussions and conversations with artists, curators and key partners. The gallery delivers its commitment to providing a long-term supportive environment for emerging talent through free access to mentorship programs, workshops, residency opportunities and innovative educational activities that facilitate artistic development. It also stages events across the cultural spectrum, such as concerts, performances, symposiums, publications, collaborative projects, film screenings, and learning-orientated incubator programmes.

EMAMI ART

Kolkata Centre for Creativity

777 Anandapur | E.M. Bypass | Kolkata 700107 | 033 6623 2300

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