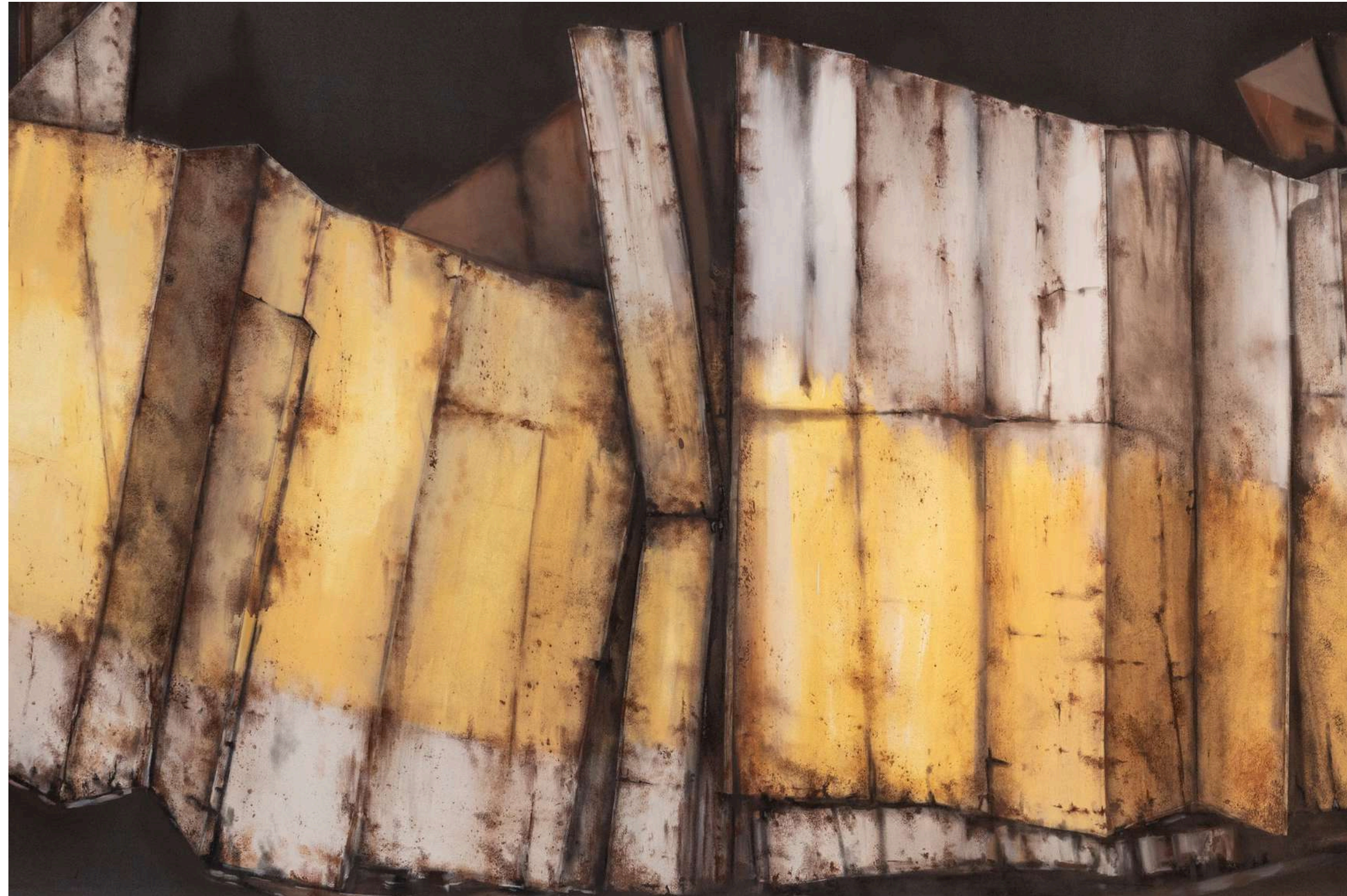


Suman Dey

Portfolio



A self-taught artist and one of the prominent painters in Bengal working in the language of abstraction today, Suman Dey (b.1981) 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.

Watch the artist discuss his last solo





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 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.

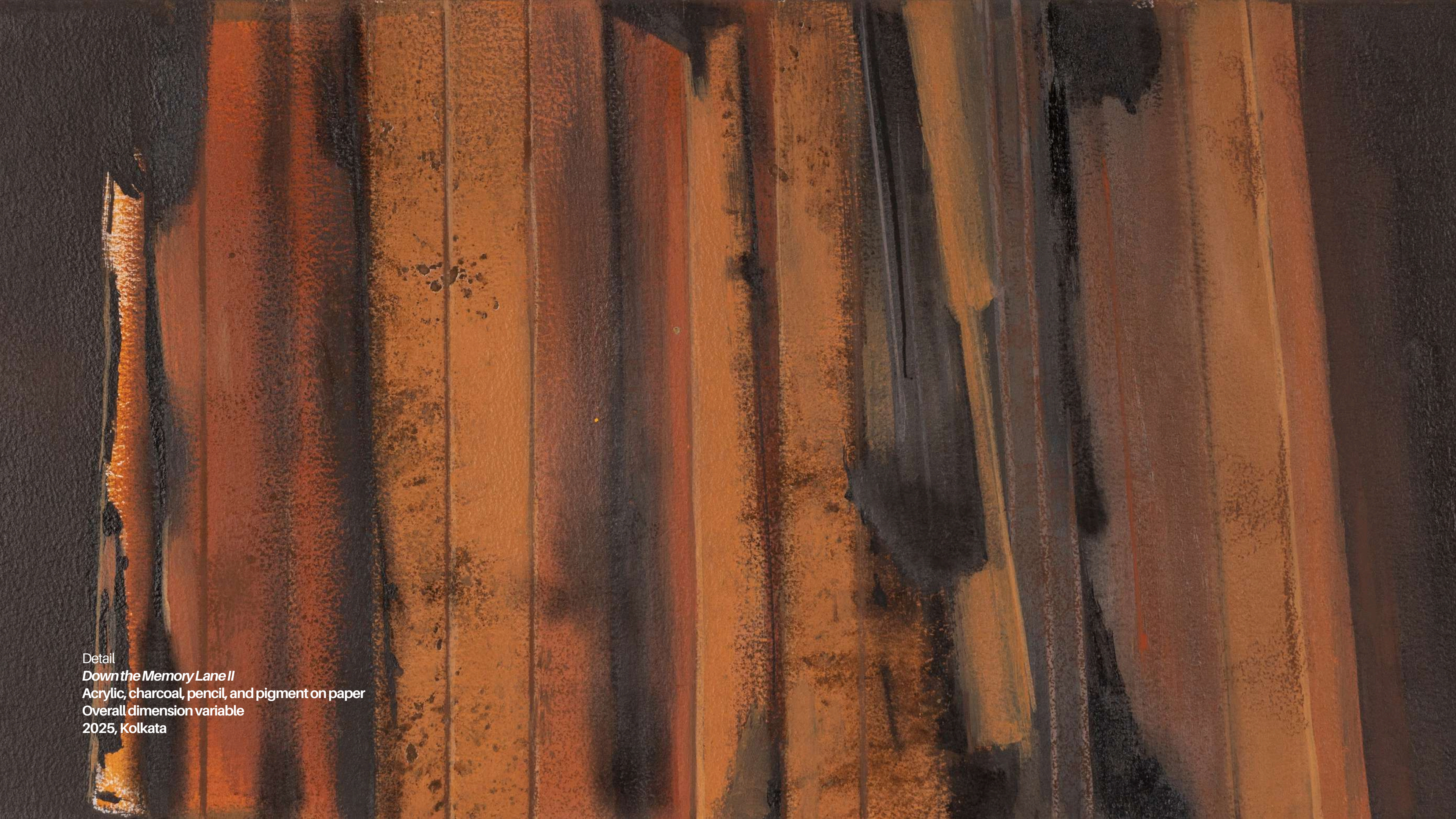
Abstract space, it may be argued, cannot be conceived in the abstract. It certainly has content but is evanescent and can only be grasped through a detached, meditative practice dealing with abstraction. By creating a contradictory space at once homogenous and divided, unified and fragmented, Suman Dey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

Know more about Dey's practice





Down the Memory Lane II
 Acrylic, charcoal, pencil, and pigment on paper
 Overall dimension variable
 2025, Kolkata



Detail
Down the Memory Lane II
Acrylic, charcoal, pencil, and pigment on paper
Overall dimension variable
2025, Kolkata



Decay I, II
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on canvas
60 x 60 x 1 in. each
2025, Kolkata

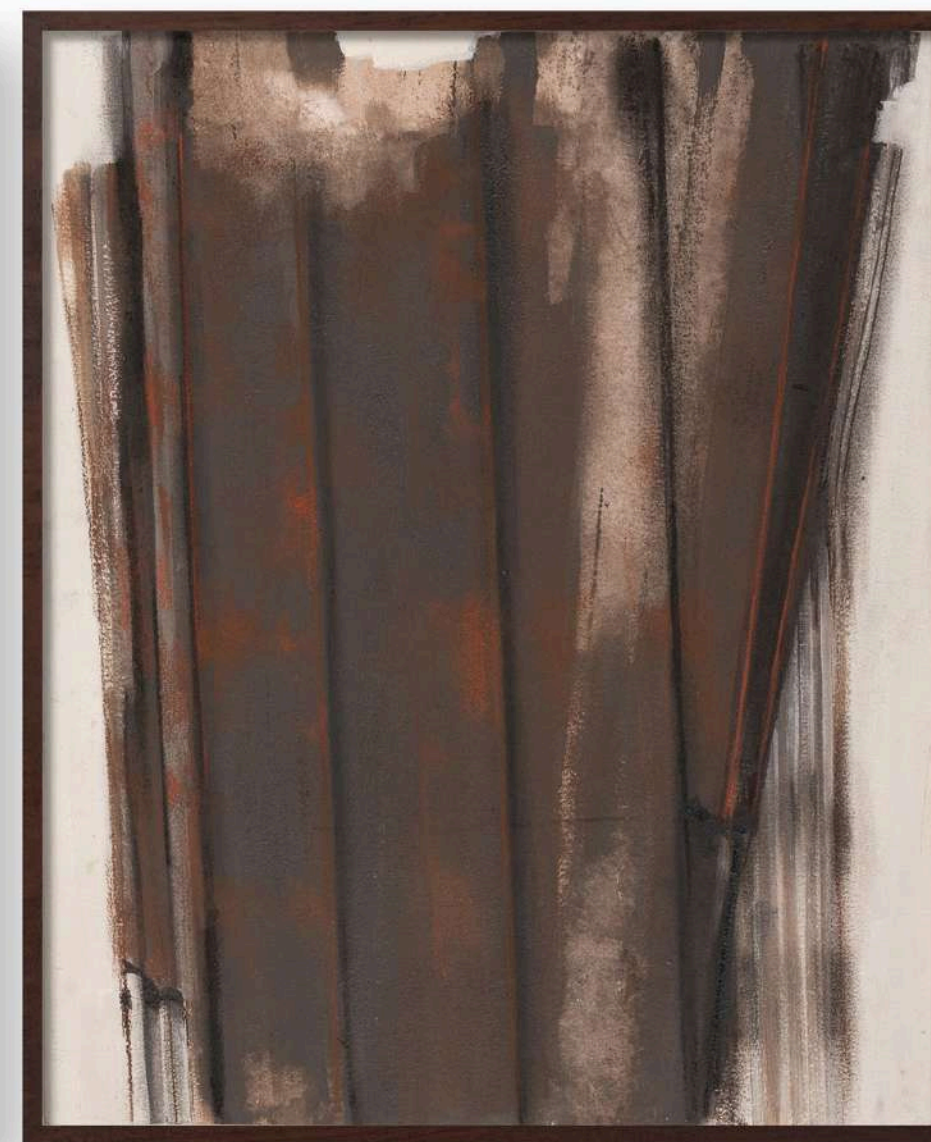


Detail
Fragment of Thought I
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on canvas
47 5/8 x 47 5/8 x 3/4 in.
2025, Kolkata





Installation view
Art Mumbai
2025



Down the Memory Lane I
Acrylic, charcoal, pencil, and powder colour on paper
Overall dimension variable
2025, Kolkata



Each major series of works manifests the artist's feelings about personal and societal events, albeit in distinct ways. The predominantly pale colour palette serves as a reflection of the artist's introspective nature and perception of society. Occasionally vibrant colors burst forth onto the canvas, revealing moments of positivity and emotional release.

After My Own Heart I
 Acrylic, charcoal, pencil on paper and
 printed board pasted on paper
 10 5/8 x 8 1/4 in. each
 2022-2025, Kolkata

Nature V is among Dey's new body of polyptych works which signal a shift in his practice. By creating colorful compositions through the arrangement of smaller, separate frames, Dey foregrounds the quiet power of organic forms.

After My Own Heart III
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on plywood
10 3/8 x 8 1/2 in. each
2025, Kolkata

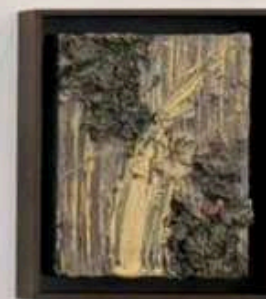




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Installation view
India Art Fair
2026



After My Own Heart II
 Acrylic, charcoal, pencil on paper and lokta paper,
 printed paper, board pasted on paper
 Overall dimension variable
 2025, Kolkata

"A self-taught artist, Suman Dey has developed a distinct abstract language, previously centred on personal memories, family, and the circumstances of his upbringing. In this current set of works, however, there is a noticeable shift in subject, colour, and most significantly, format. The paintings here are an ode to the sacred act of noticing. As Dey navigates his urban existence, he notices traces of time everywhere. He sees stains left on a wooden table by an overfilled earthen cup at a roadside tea shop, remnants of posters torn off public walls to make space for newer advertisements, marks of bygone years on old buildings, insects and creatures of the earth making their presence known amidst the bustle of the city, elements of nature being systematically erased by rampant urbanisation. These otherwise unremarkable yet indelible sights – of forms, flora, and fauna – constitute the basis of Dey's recent works. As he pays close attention to the phenomena that make up the city, so do we. We are, after all, what surrounds us."

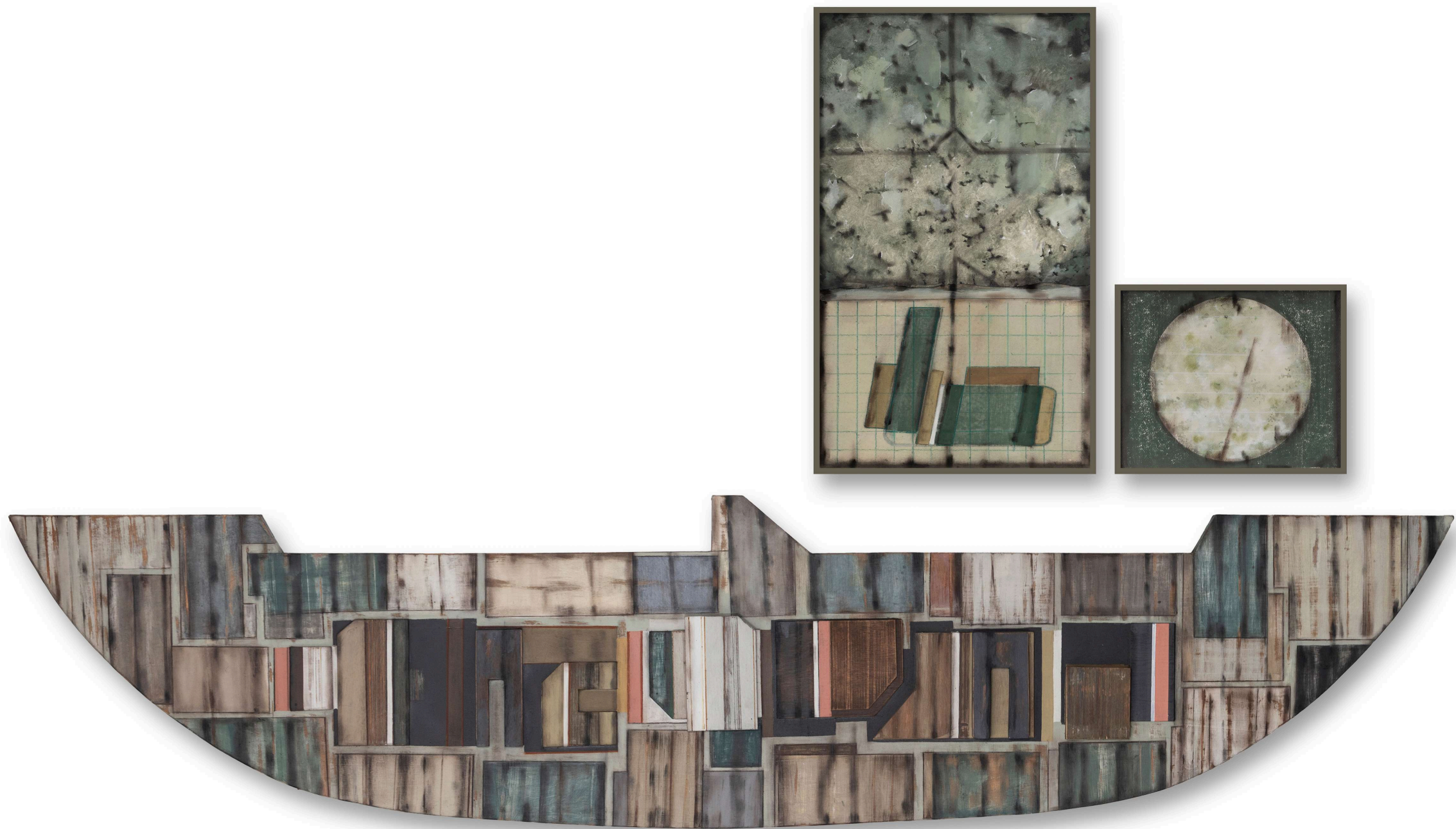
[excerpt from the exhibition note, *Chance Remains of Another Time*, 2026]



Installation view
Chance Remains of Another Time
Emami Art, Kolkata
2026



Detail
Testimony of Life
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on canvas
69 1/8 x 115 3/8 x 1 5/8 in. overall
2025, Kolkata



Adept in the art of noticing, Suman Dey uses abstraction as a mediated, visual dialogue with the world, rather than a pure formal strategy. The ordinary sights, signs, stains, and marks in a city and its varied surfaces – be they natural or man-made – form the basis of his recent works. This large-scale work in 3 parts, resembling a boat, highlight a number of box-like shapes that are brighter than the ones surrounding them. It takes inspiration from the artist experiencing rapid urbanisation around himself – watching older buildings being demolished or renovated to usher in new structures. The boat stands as a metaphor for the cityscape being reshaped over time.

Detail

Journey

Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on plywood,
on board canvas, and on acid-free paper

A: 29 7/8 x 17 7/8 in.

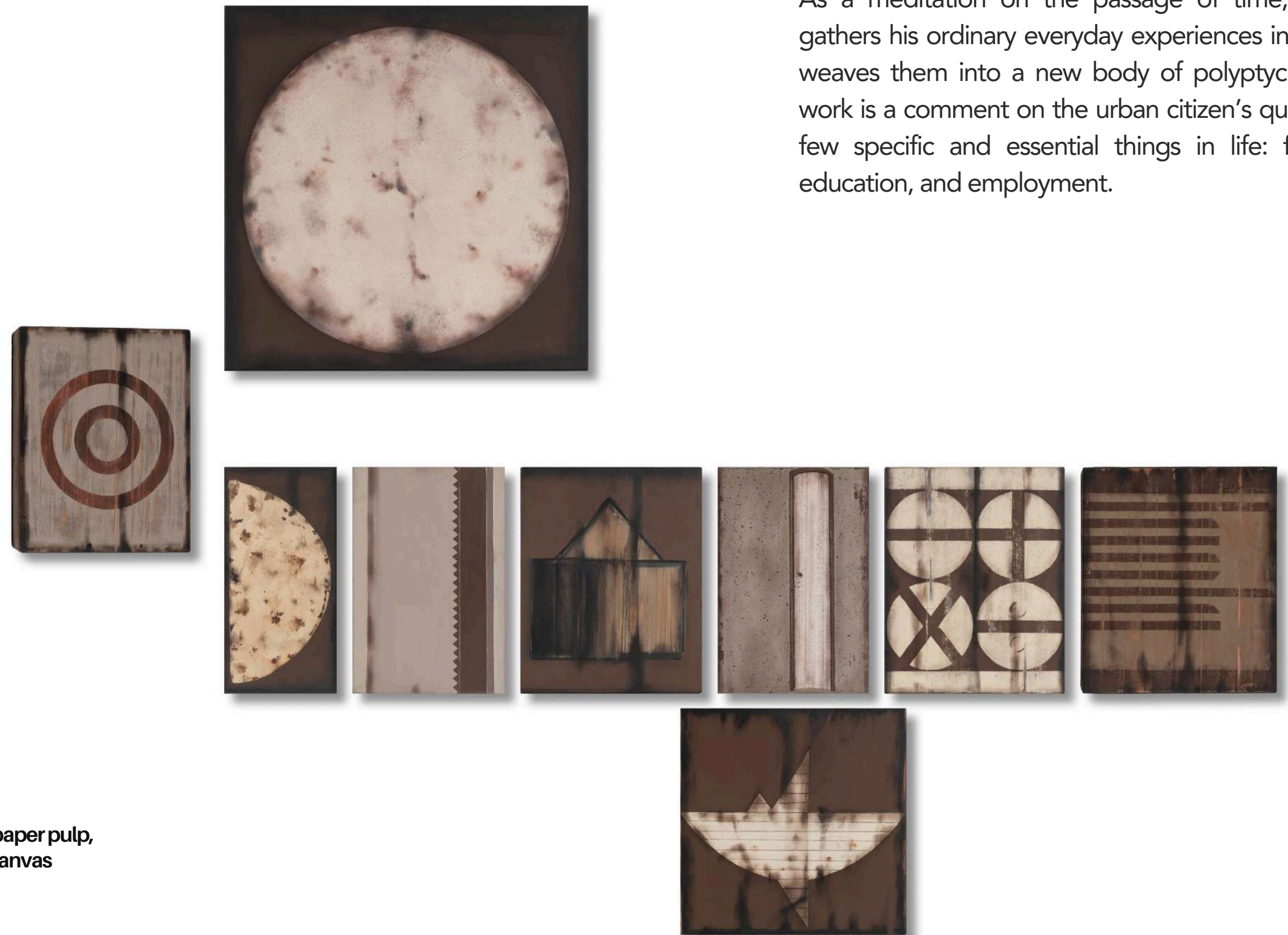
B: 11 3/4 x 15 in.

C: 22 x 95 1/2 x 1 5/8 in.

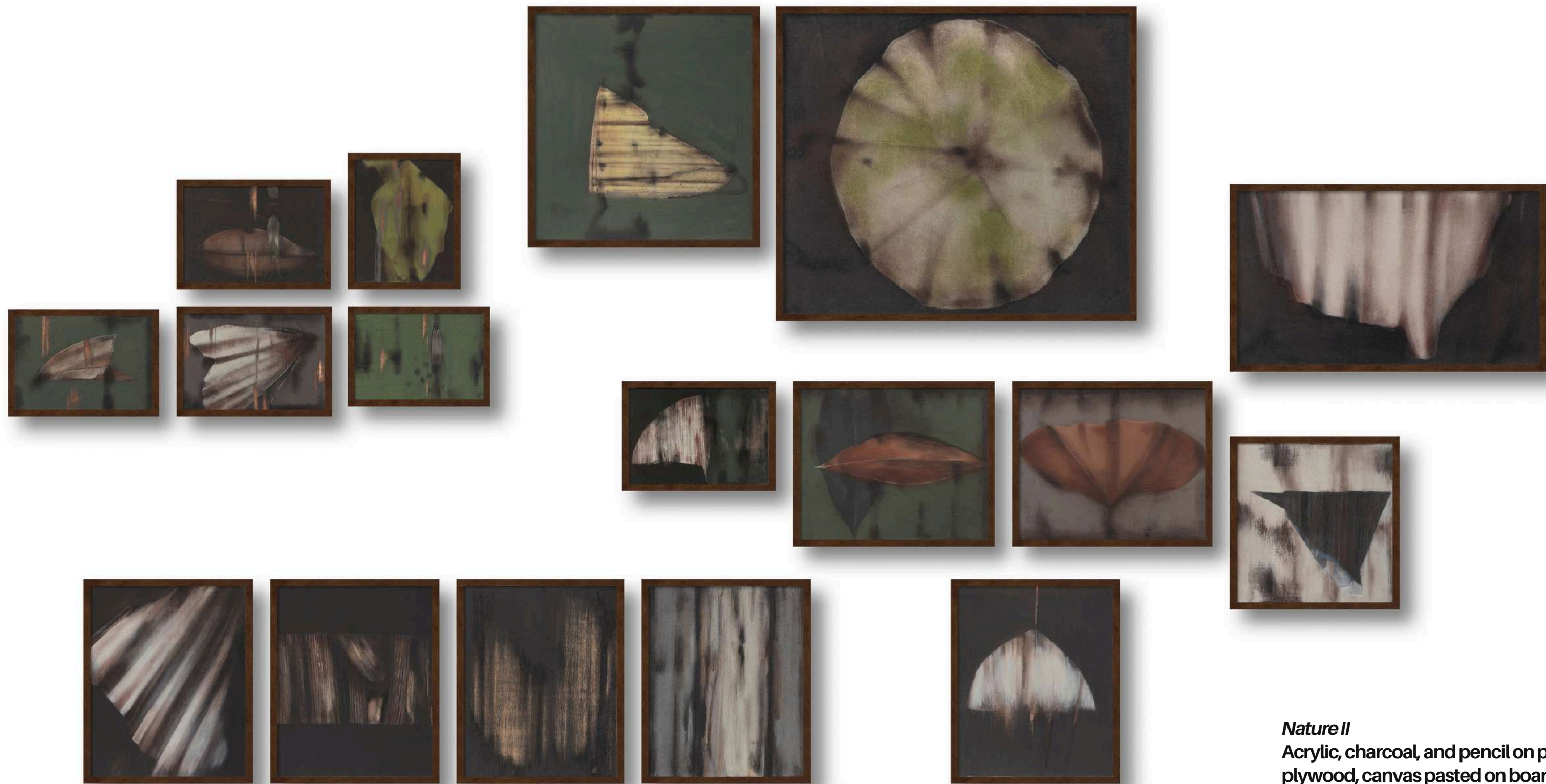
2025, Kolkata



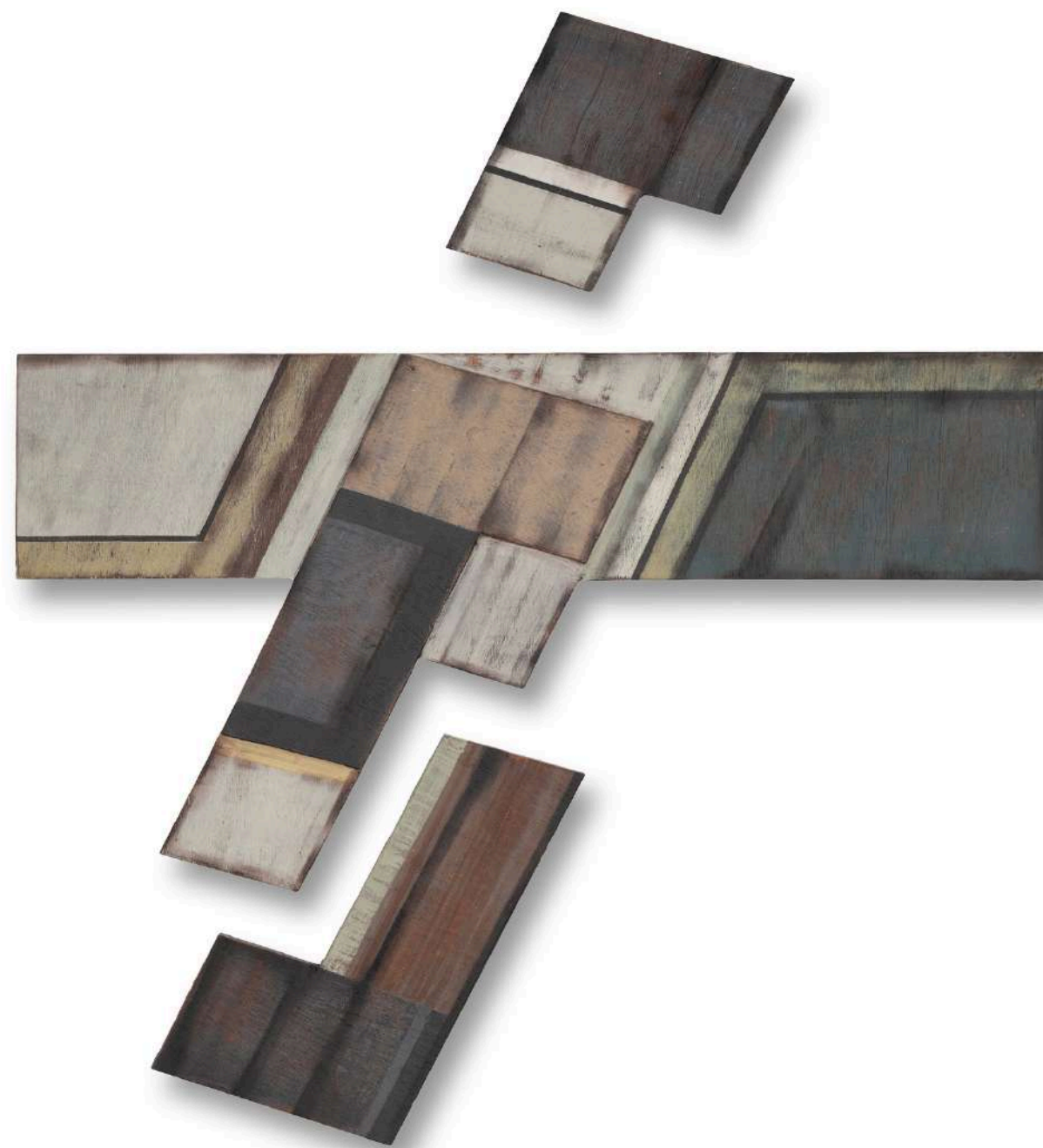
As a meditation on the passage of time, Suman Dey gathers his ordinary everyday experiences in urbanity and weaves them into a new body of polyptych works. This work is a comment on the urban citizen's quest towards a few specific and essential things in life: food, shelter, education, and employment.



Quest
Acrylic, charcoal, pencil, paper pulp,
printed paper, board on canvas
pasted on plywood
61 3/8 x 84 1/2 in. overall
2025, Kolkata



Nature II
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on paper,
plywood, canvas pasted on board
Overall dimension variable
2025, Kolkata



Nature VI
 Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on plywood
 A: 35 7/8 in. in dia.
 B: 33 1/8 x 31 3/4 x 1 in. approx. overall
 2025, Kolkata



Installation view
Chance Remains of Another Time
Emami Art, Kolkata
2026

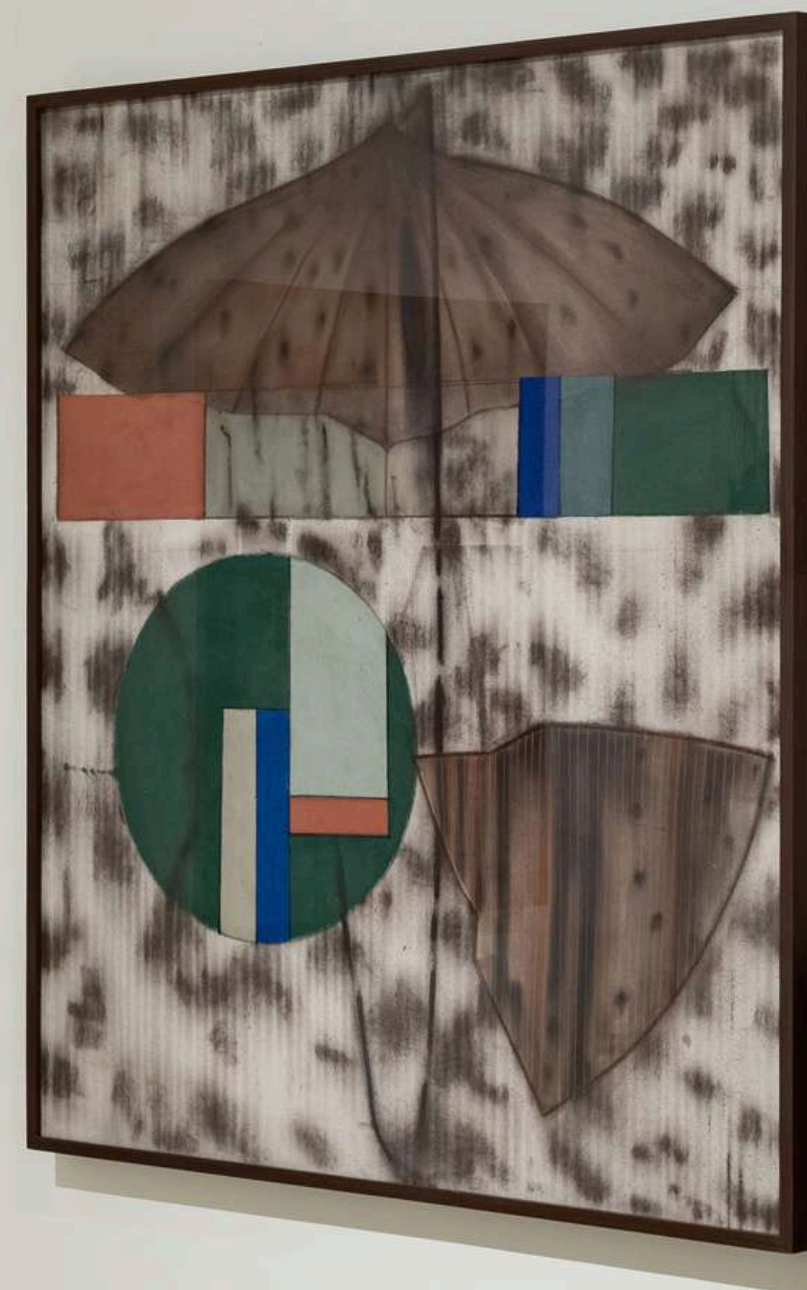
Here, Suman Dey has depicted the beauty of natural forms he sees around the city. By creating colorful compositions through the arrangement of smaller, separate frames, Dey foregrounds the quiet power of organic forms.



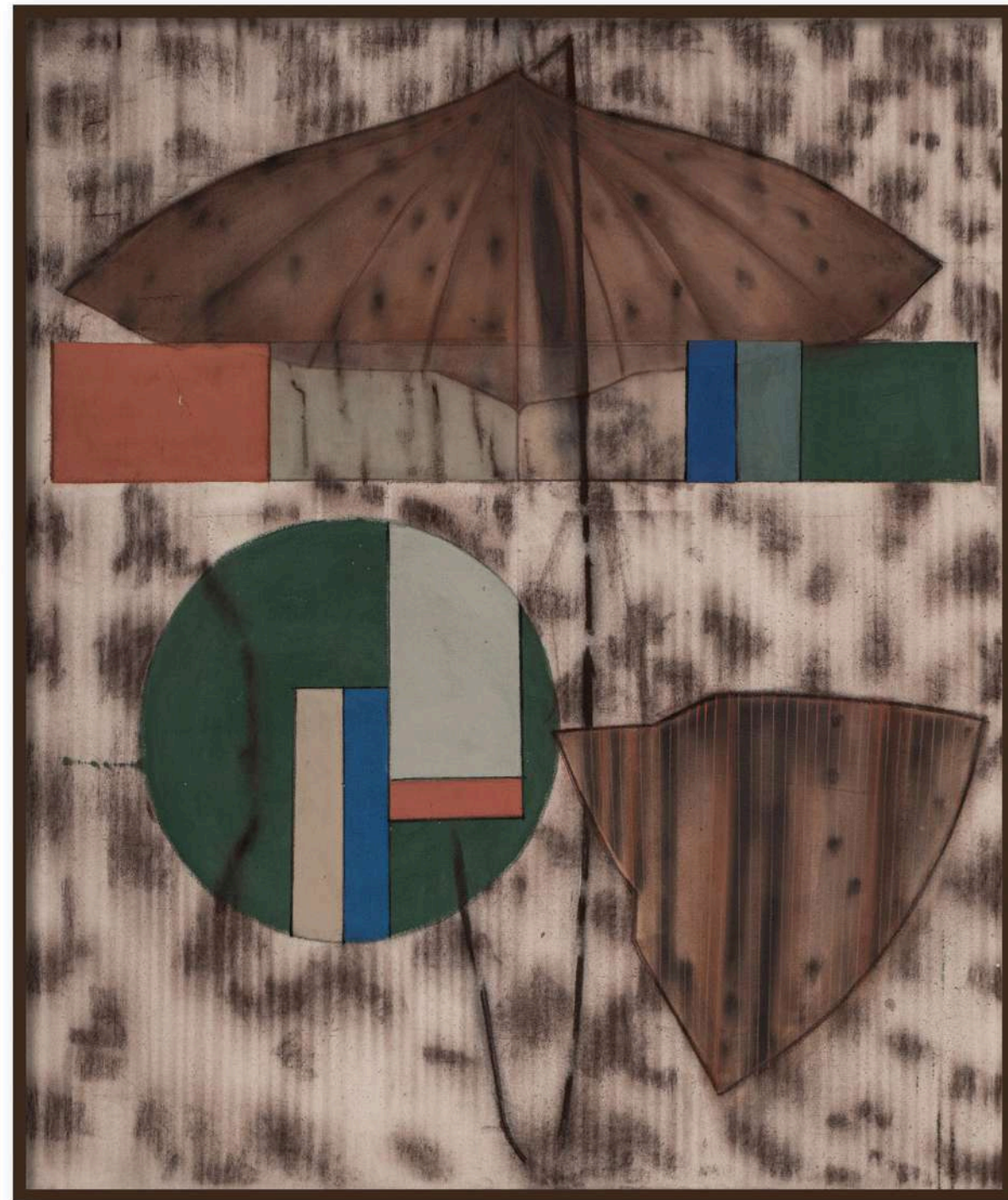
Nature I
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on paper
73 1/4 x 155 7/8 in. overall
2025, Kolkata

Nature VII
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on board canvas
29 3/4 x 25 3/4 in.
2025, Kolkata

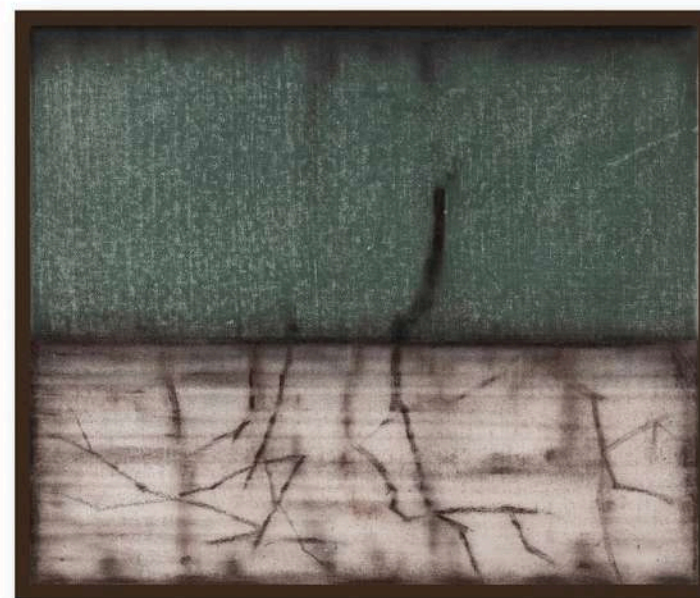




Installation view
Chance Remains of Another Time
 Emami Art, Kolkata
 2026



Nature V is among Dey's new body of polyptych works which signal a shift in his practice. By creating colorful compositions through the arrangement of smaller, separate frames, Dey foregrounds the quiet power of organic forms.



Nature V
 Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil
 on board canvas
 A: 35 7/8 x 29 3/4 in.
 B: 14 7/8 x 17 7/8 in.
 2025, Kolkata



Impressions II (Series: Impressions)
 Acrylic, charcoal, pencil on paper and on
 canvas pasted on board
 32 1/2 x 71 1/4 in. overall
 2025, Kolkata

Nature III, Acrylic, charcoal, pencil, and Lokta paper pasted on canvas, A: 17 7/8 x 72 x 1 in., B: 18 x 18 in., 2025, Kolkata



“In pursuit of documenting the memories and traces left by his interactions with certain physical spaces and natural forms, a new format emerges in the polyptych works presented for the first time in this exhibition. By arranging smaller, fragmented parts to make a whole, Dey welds together diverse, heterogeneous elements – images, sights, signs, and emotions – within a single artwork. This act of amalgamation mirrors the fragmentation of both city structure and urban memory owing to rapid and relentless expansion. With this, he holds together notions of celebration and decay, memory and loss, all at the same time.”

[excerpt from the exhibition note, *Chance Remains of Another Time*, 2026]

This work is a comment on the urban man's lofty aspirations in life and the consequences of such ambition, often leading to destruction of natural flora, fauna, and older structures -- as visualised through the image of a painted target, a staircase, and fragmented forms.



Aspirations
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on canvas
and lokta paper pasted on canvas
Overall dimension variable
2025, Kolkata



Installation view
Chance Remains of Another Time
Emami Art, Kolkata
2026



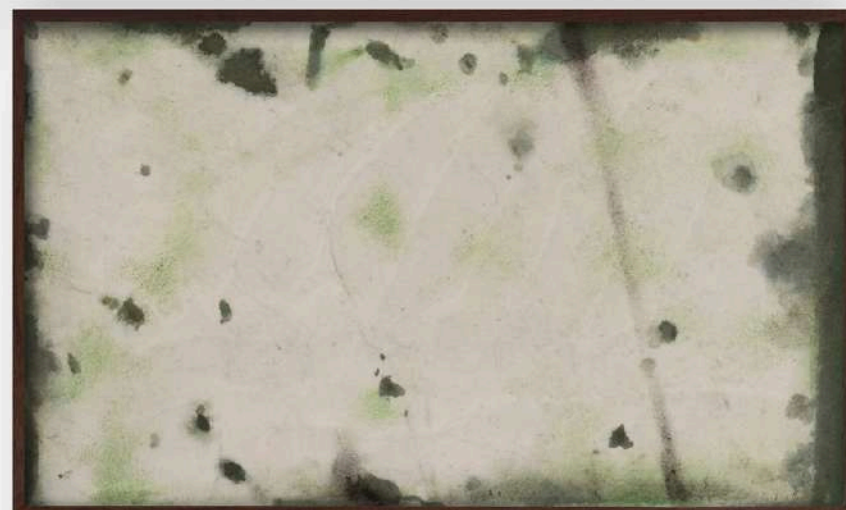
Nature, displaced
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on plywood
53 1/2 x 120 1/8 in. approx. overall
2025, Kolkata

Here, Dey has created fragmented forms resembling the wings of an insect, building on the phenomenon of winged insects and butterflies being forced to be displaced from their native homegrounds due to the rapid urbanisation.

Impressions I by Suman Dey is among his new body of polyptych works which signal a shift in his practice. Unlike his large-scale grey canvases, for which he is better known, he creates colorful compositions through the arrangement of smaller, separate frames, upholding the ethos of discontinuity and openness. Characterised by its fragmented nature, it allows him greater freedom to amass diverse heterogeneous elements – images, signs, and emotions – within a single artwork.

Impressions I
Acrylic, charcoal, pencil, paper
pulp, printed paper, board on
canvas pasted on plywood
65 3/4 x 89 1/8 in. overall
2025, Kolkata





Suman Dey works in the language of abstraction. Instead of meditating on pure forms, he distils images or memories of the objects through a series of drawings, transforming representation into abstract motifs. In other words, his works have images, emotions, flows, and restraints latent underneath his abstractions.

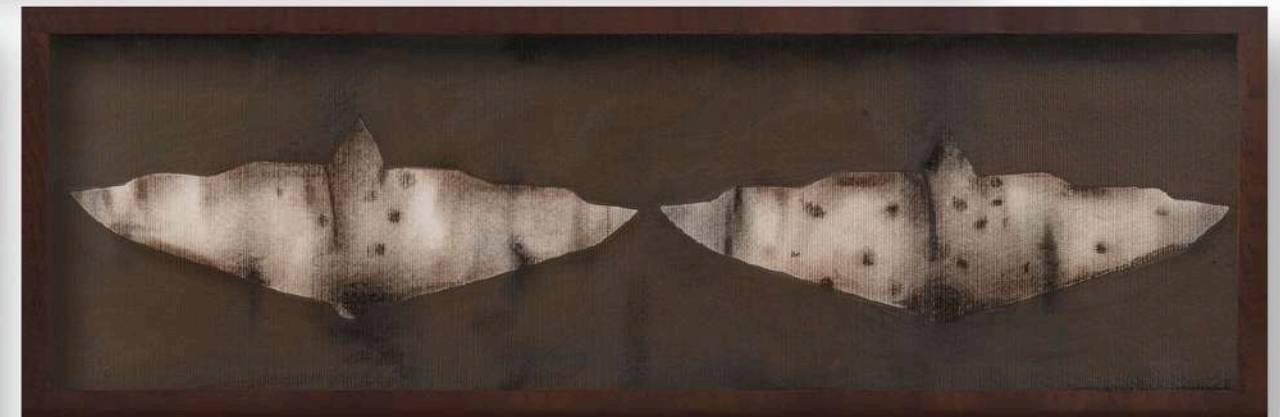
Ebbs and Flows (2)
 Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on paper
 Overall dimension variable
 2024, Kolkata



Installation view
Art Mumbai
2025



Ebbs and Flows (1)
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on Lokta paper
Overall dimension variable
2023 - 2024, Kolkata



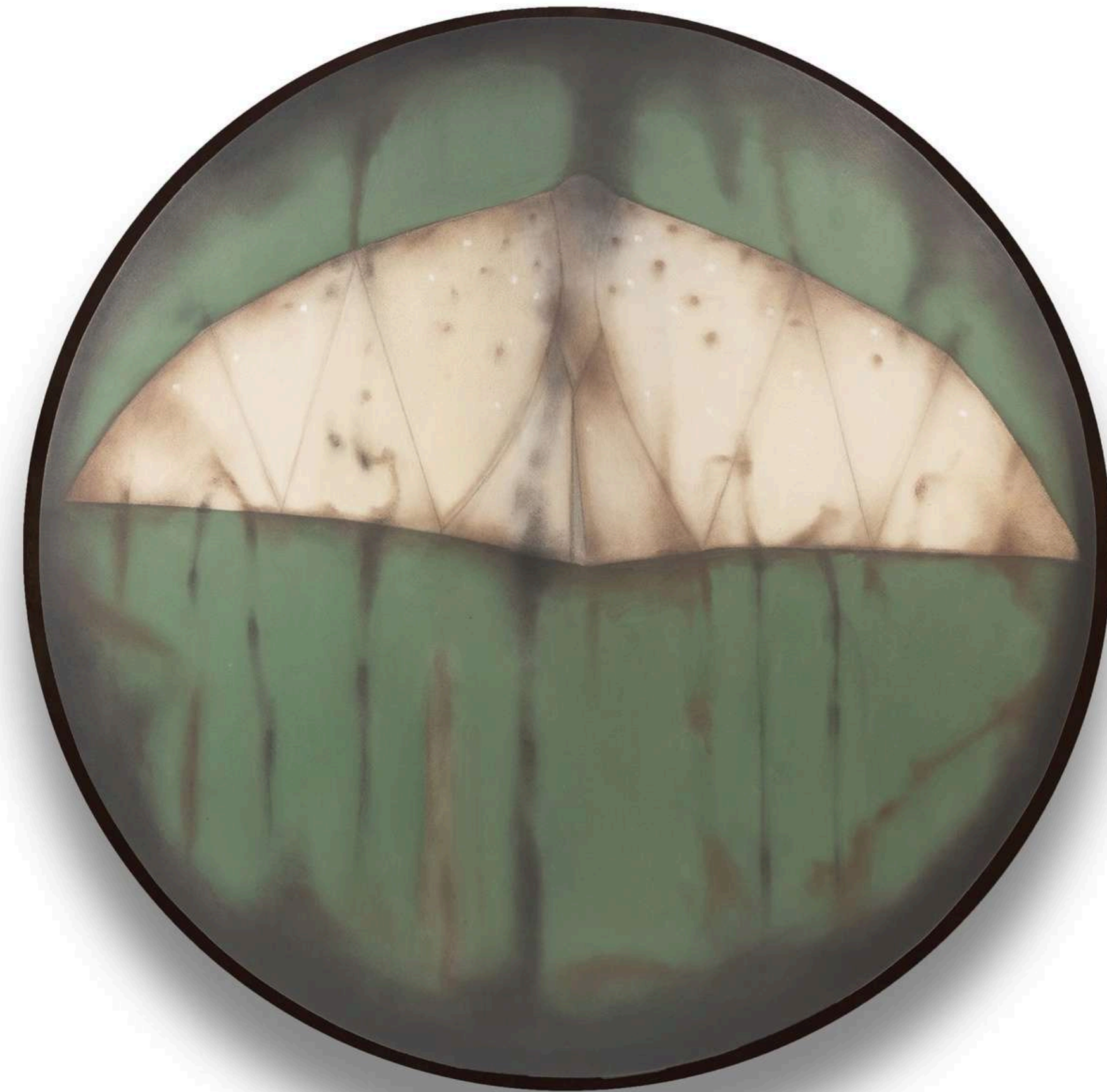
Journey
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on Lokta paper
Overall dimension variable
2024, Kolkata



Installation view
There are Tides in the Body
Curated by Damian Christinger
Emami Art, Kolkata
2024



Ebbs and Flows (3)
Acrylic, charcoal, and pencil on paper
Overall dimension variable
2024, Kolkata



This artwork by Suman Dey is constituted under his *Butterfly* series, which he initiated at the beginning of 2019. It stems from his concern regarding the diminishing number of butterflies due to pollution. The forms of wings in the artwork convey an open-ended perception of abstraction to the viewer. The diameter of the wings also depicts a sense of limit.

Migration
Acrylic, charcoal and graphite on canvas
36x36 in.
2023, Kolkata



Bags of Memories, Acrylic, charcoal, graphite, canvas, and Nepali handmade paper pasted on board, 2023, Kolkata

Form I
Acrylic, charcoal, graphite and Nepali handmade
paper pasted on paper
30 x 36.8 in.
2023, Kolkata





“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.”

[excerpt from the curatorial note, *The Lost Fragrance of Memory*, 2023]

The Sudden Strike, Acrylic, charcoal and pencil on canvas, 72 x 186 in., 2023, Kolkata



Dey's art practice and its changing forms find inspiration in his workspaces and the nature of the work he has been doing over the years. They also witness the overlapping of memories. The artist's recent works talk about the crisis of basic amenities in today's society and how common people are deprived of healthcare and education. Symbolic references are prominent in these works.

Installation view
The Lost Fragrance of Memory
Emami Art, Kolkata
2023



The Lost Fragrance of Memory reveals Suman Dey's unique style, a mellowed world of lines, shapes and colours. A self-taught artist, Dey is one of the prominent painters in Bengal working in the language of abstract. His 1981 work *Memory* reproduces the use of familiar objects and their impact on the viewer's mind, but, unlike the abstract artists striving for the absolute and pure form, Dey is the essential reality of things and their substance, enmeshed in the insubstantiality of dreams and memory. The exhibition includes his particularly the large-scale paintings of compelling visual forms in 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 shop, a local block printing factory and homeopathic dispensary, before entirely devoting himself to painting. Dey studied art in books and galleries and taught himself the art language, combining this with his conversations with the established senior artists. His early paintings based on mythological themes showed his reliance upon the Bengal School artists. But his later works from around mid-1970s onwards gradually dispensed with the figurative style, pouring his perceptions and studies into a highly individualized abstract language.



Decay-II, III
Acrylic, charcoal and pencil on canvas
36 x 36 in.
2023, Kolkata



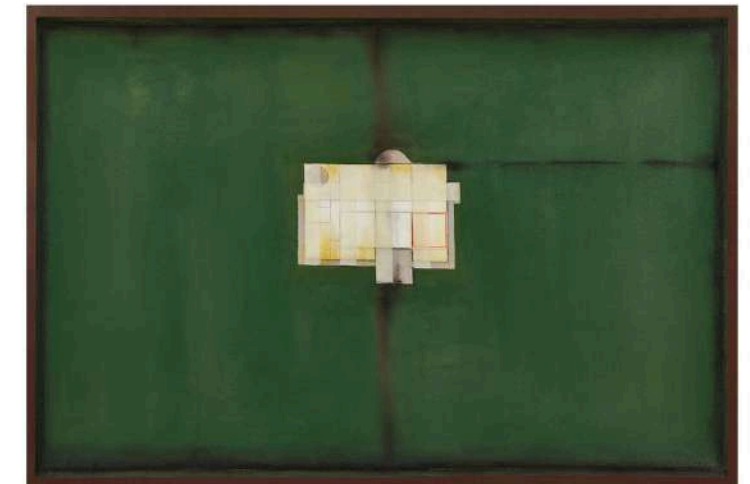
Unexpected Storms - I
Acrylic, charcoal and pencil on canvas
48 x 48 in.
2023, Kolkata

Installation view
The Lost Fragrance of Memory
Emami Art, Kolkata
2023





Remains
Acrylic, charcoal and graphite on canvas
30 x 102.3 in. overall
2022, Kolkata



This artwork depicts an attempt to escape urban reality and throws light on the artist's concern regarding the environmental crisis. Dey's art practice and its changing forms find inspiration in his workspaces and the nature of the work he has been doing over the years. They also witness the overlapping of memories. Symbolic references are prominent in these works.

The Lost Fragrance
 Acrylic, dry pastel, graphite and charcoal
 on paper
 39 x 128.2 in. overall
 2022, Kochi



Detail
Synthetic Faith
Acrylic and charcoal on canvas
78 x 60 in.
2021, Kolkata





Dey's art is deeply rooted in his lived experiences, domestic ambience and overlapping memories. His choice of colours reflects the change of emotions in the artist's mindscape. While working in abstraction, Dey has played around with different forms and given new meaning to conventional structures.

Form 1
Acrylic, charcoal, pencil on Nepali
handmade paper pasted on board
24.8 x 49.6 in. overall
2021, Kolkata

Untitled
Acrylic on Nepali handmade
paper pasted on board
40.3 x 30 in.
2021, Kolkata





Suman Dey (b. 1981) is a self-taught artist who works in the language of abstract art.

His solo shows include *Chance Remains of Another Time*, Emami Art, Kolkata, 2026; *The Lost Fragrance of Memory*, Emami Art, Kolkata, 2023; and exhibitions at Taj Bengal, Kolkata, 2011 and 2014; Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, 2014; ECA Art Walk, Kolkata, 2011; and Chemould Art Gallery, Kolkata, 2008. His duo exhibitions include ones at the Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, 2009 and 2015, and Silpi Art Gallery, Kolkata, 2008.

He has participated in numerous group exhibitions including *Vichitra/विचित्र* organised by Emami Art and Kolkata Centre for Creativity in collaboration with Bihar Museum, Patna, 2026; *Fragments of Our Times* presented by Open Window at Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, 2026; *Zero to Infinity* presented by Open Window at Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, 2025; *There Are Tides in the Body: Indo-Swiss Group Exhibition* curated by Damian Christinger, Emami Art, Kolkata, 2024; The Annual Exhibition at Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata, 2022, 2018, 2017, and 2016; India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, 2018; State Gallery of Art, Hyderabad, 2017; Lalit Kala Academy, Bhubaneswar, 2016 and 2017; Annual Exhibition at Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata, 2016 and 2017; Emami Chisel Art All India Exhibition, Kolkata, 2016 and 2017; Annual Exhibition organised by the Rajya Charukala Parshad, 2016 and 2017. His works were presented by Emami Art, Kolkata at India Art Fair 2026, 2025, 2024; Art Mumbai 2025, 2024; India Art Fair EDI+IONS Hyderabad 2025.

Dey was awarded the Jury's Special Mention Award by the Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata, in 2022 and the Certificate of Merit by Emami Chisel Art, Kolkata, in 2017.

Suman Dey lives and works in Kolkata, India.

EMAMI ART

Emami Art is a prominent contemporary art gallery and cultural production space located on the ground floor of the Kolkata Centre for Creativity's Green Building. Established in 2017, it adopts a forward-looking, multi-dimensional approach that reflects South Asia's history, socio-cultural, and geo-political narratives. Emami Art operates within an inclusive framework where profitability supports sustainable resource regeneration and public service.

Committed to promoting a regional, national, and international agenda, Emami Art emphasizes community engagement, socially relevant initiatives, and institutional partnerships. With a multi-year vision for the future, it continues to be a catalyst for change, research, innovation, and inclusivity.

