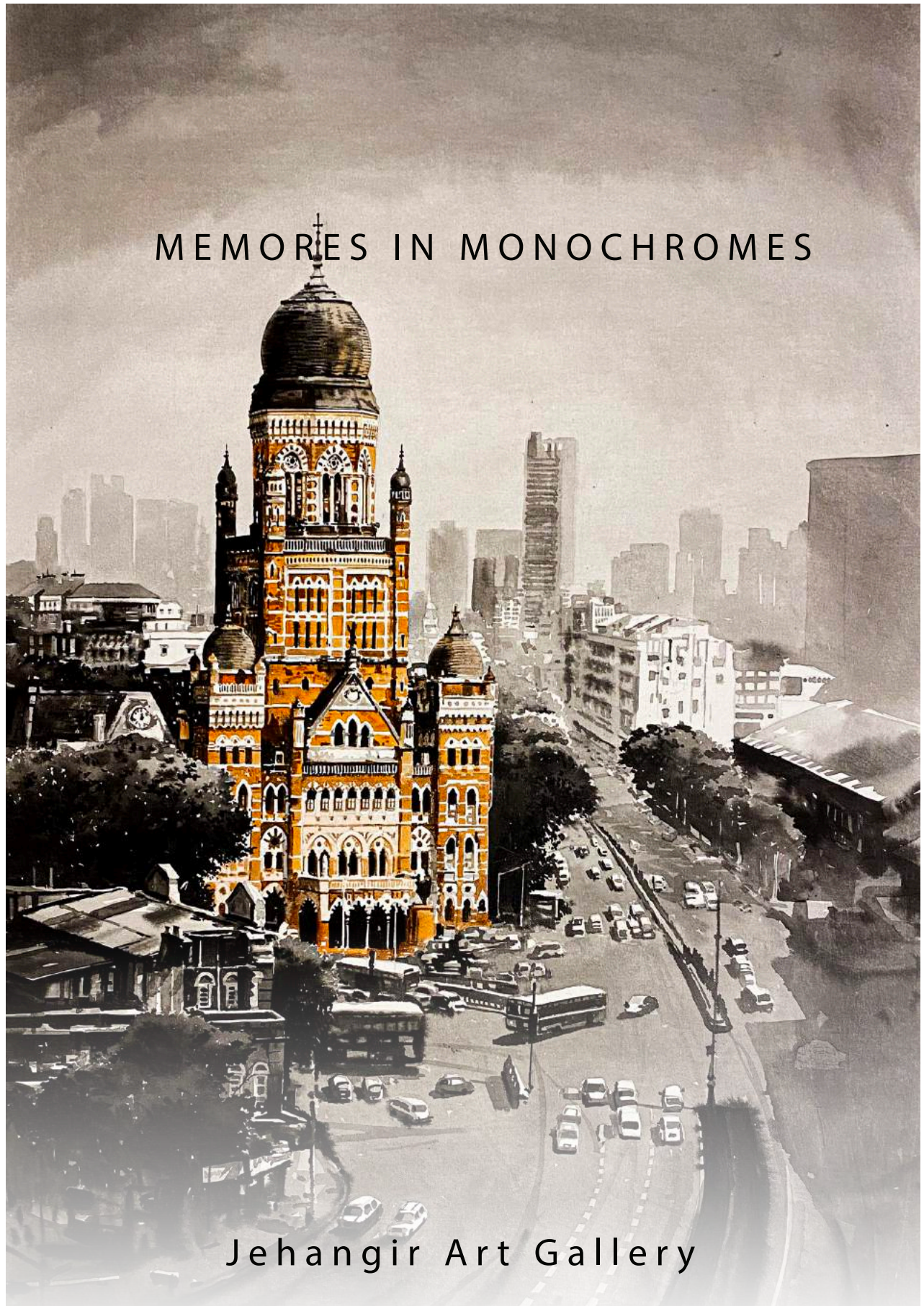


ARPAN BHOWMIK

MEMORES IN MONOCHROMES



Jehangir Art Gallery







Memories in Monochrome: Arpan Bhowmik. Copyright 2023  
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Arpan Bhowmik (b.1977) graduated from the Government College of Art and Craft, the University of Calcutta in 2001. Known for his expertise in both acrylic and watercolour, Bhowmik's largely monochromatic cityscapes have a splash of colour thrown in ever so often lending his art a surreal effect.

Bhowmik's work centres around Kolkata's city life and its evolution through the ages. Large white spaces on his primarily black and white canvas capture and create nostalgia for the cityscape. With a focus on the old Kolkata transport systems, in particular, the trams and taxis that are quintessential to the city's heritage and are now disappearing because they could not keep up with the pace of development.

Bhowmik reintroduces colour into the busy monochromatic cityscape of Kolkata all while questioning the effects of time on one's social environment. Consequently, Bhowmik preserves Kolkata's culturally rich environment and heritage for the next generation. Norms are turned on their head in his work, with the old being portrayed in colour and the new being rendered in grey scale. Through this subversion of artistic practice, the viewer is prompted to question society's evolution while weighing the past against the present.





*'After a hundred years  
Nobody knows the place, –  
Agony that enacted there,  
Motionless as peace.'*

*– Emily Dickinson*

*Arpan Bhowmik's portrayal of cities is an important exposés of intricate designs. Details of the seasons and the time of the day are vital information that shapes the cityscapes' delicate balance in a surreal world of nostalgia, where the past stands 'still'. In the process, the urgency in the immediacy is found in transitioning from recalling this past in Bhowmik's works.*

*His works hold historical visions in their core emphasising a world of reflections that he draws on his canvas to create the blurring lines between the real and the unreal. These monochromatic realistic paintings represent the many hundred years that have borne the weight of life and death. Their silence in projecting daily life has a particular missive on the passing nature of time and the unknown facts buried in these cities. Therefore, Bhowmik's artistic expressions in monochromes render peace to these cities' memories.*

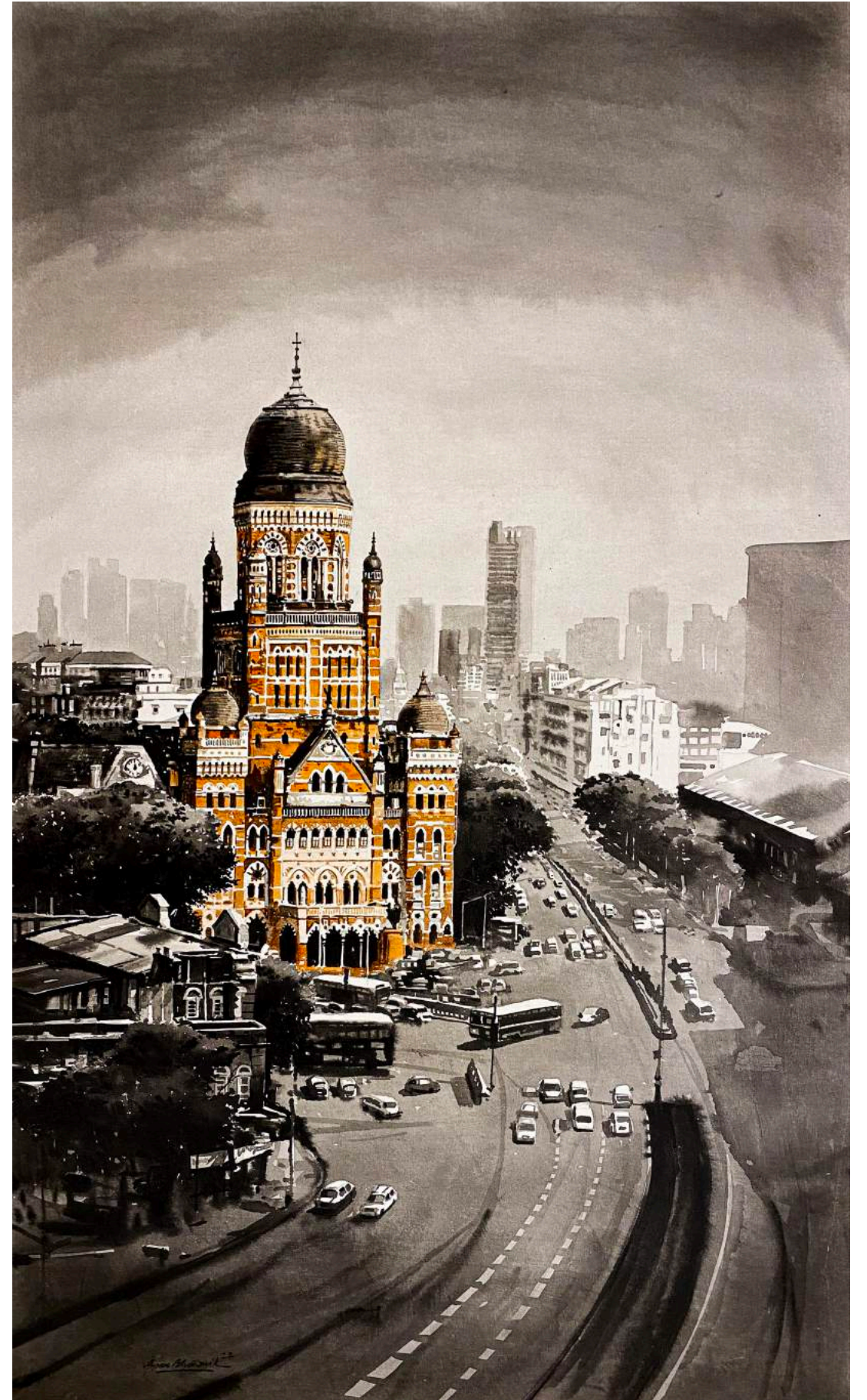
*Dr. Satarupa Bhattacharya*







# MEMORIES IN MONOCHROMES



*Acrylic On Canvas, 60x36 inches, 2022*





*Acrylic On Canvas, 48x84 inches, 2022*





*Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2023*



*Acrylic On Canvas, 72x48 inches, 2019*





Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2023





Acrylic On Canvas, 48x72 inches, 2020





Acrylic On Canvas, 72x48 inches, 2021

*How did you become an artist?*

*I was always an artist. I think I was born with paintbrushes in my hands. It became clear when I was a four-year-old and I started drawing small things. It was good for my parents because I would spend hours doodling and wouldn't be much of a trouble to them. So they encouraged me too. In my teens, I would draw cartoon characters from comic illustrations for hours. I think this helped me practice a lot. It was much later when I started working on 'detailing' that I started becoming more aware of my surroundings. College helped me a lot in understanding my own artistic expression.*





Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2022





Acrylic On Canvas, 48x72 inches, 2018





Acrylic On Canvas, 48x72 inches, 2021





Acrylic On Canvas, 48x72 inches, 2020





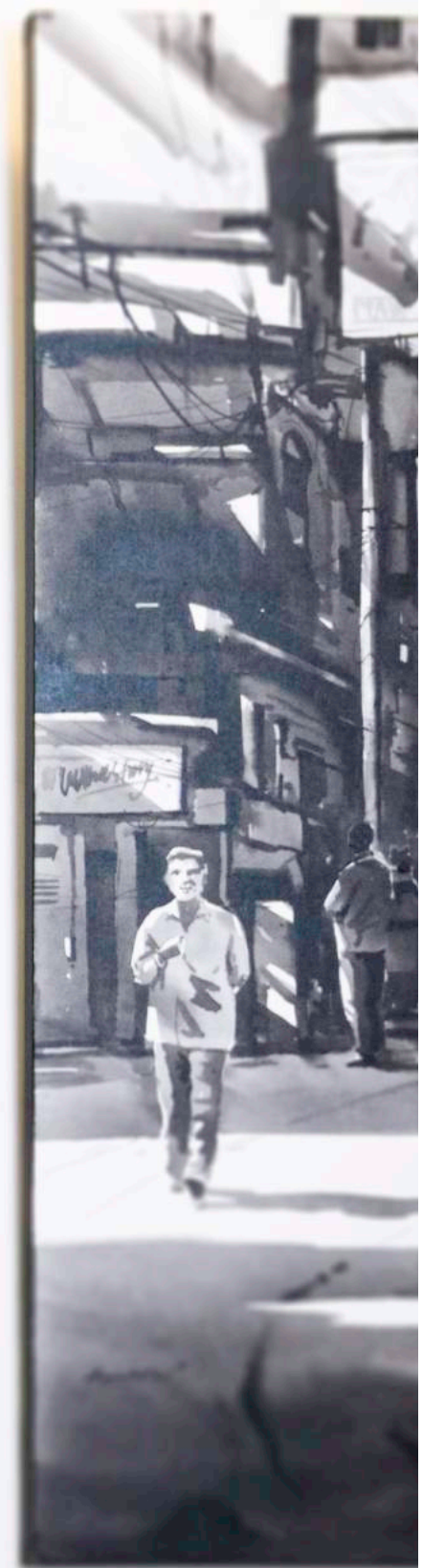
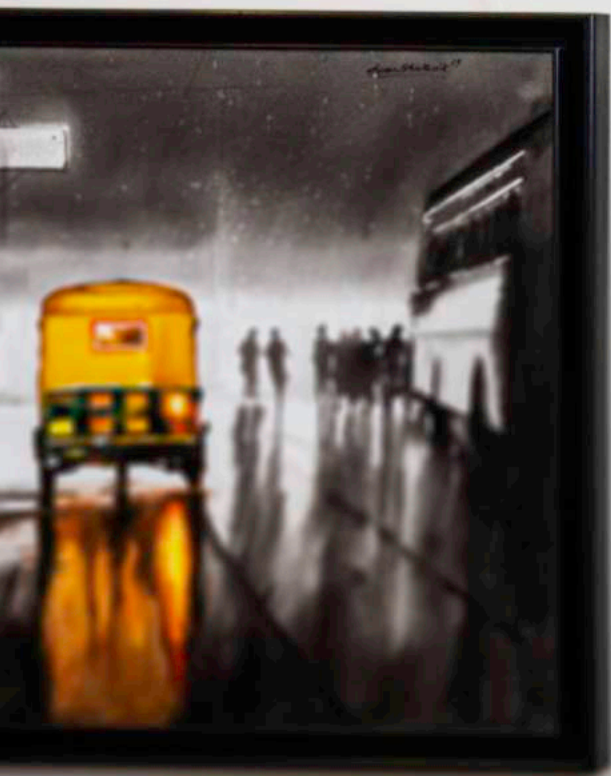
Acrylic On Canvas, 60x36 inches, 2022





Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2022









Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2022





Acrylic On Canvas, 60x36 inches, 2022

*What is your favourite medium?*

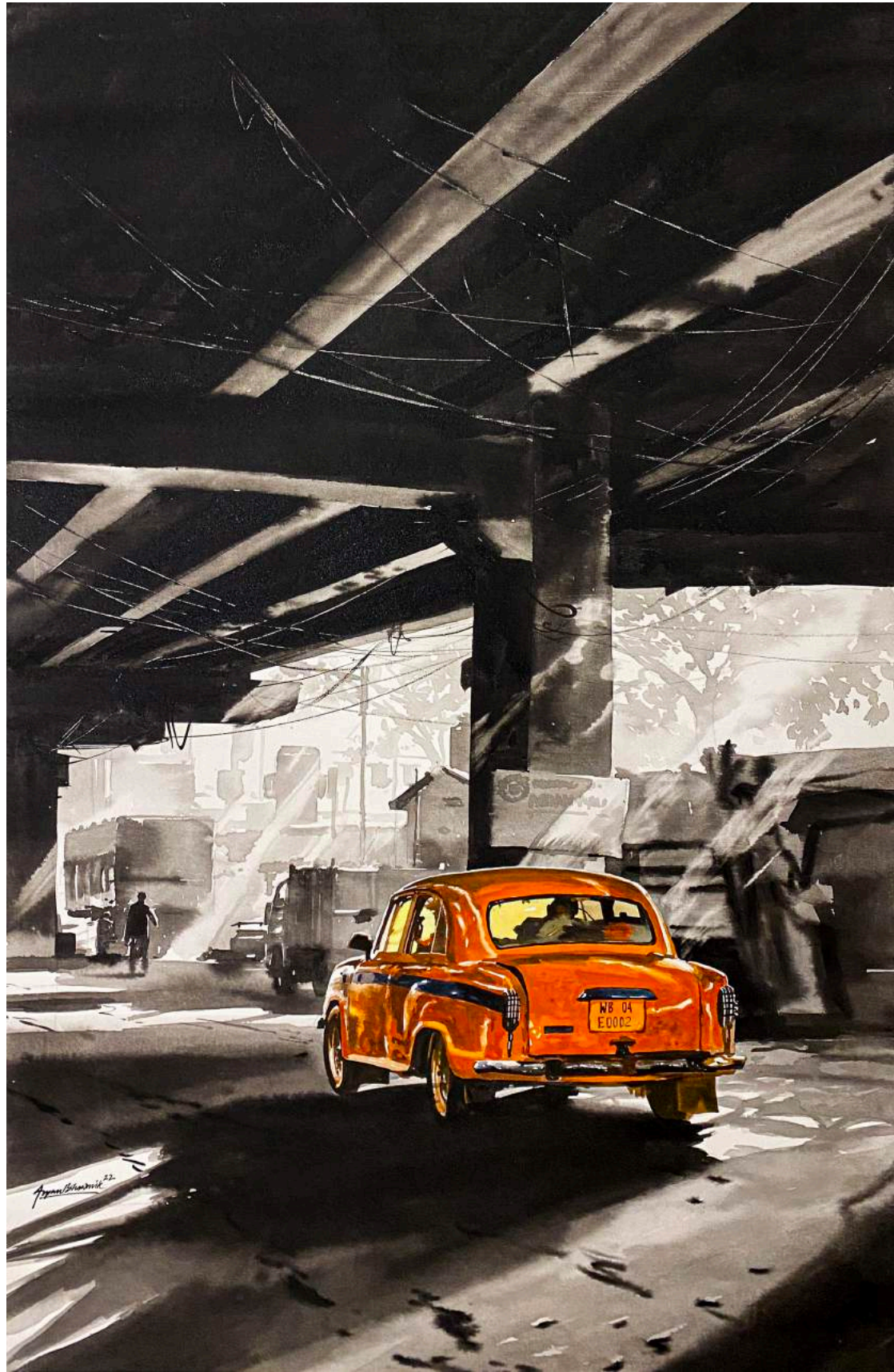
*It has to be watercolour on paper. Actually, my acrylic on canvas is, absolutely, a language that I borrowed from my own watercolour paintings. I love the way coloured water sinks into the paper. Different papers react differently to water. Colour makes the water heavier. So the sinking takes a different amount of time and the result is also very different. It intrigued me so much that, during my college days, I only made watercolour paintings. Later, I realised that this could be a technique and I could work with it in acrylic on canvas too.*





Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2022





Acrylic On Canvas, 60x36 inches, 2022

*In your recent collection, there have been a lot of changes. What would you say the changes are?*

*In my 2020 to 2023 collection, I have dabbled with many mediums. Some of these mediums are new to my practice. I have always been working with flat surface artworks and, a few years ago, I started making sculptures too. This time, I have created acrylic sheet paintings, which require a lot of attention. In this sense, one has to work on minute details and layer the paint as per one's need or imagination in order to get the appropriate results. It is a lot of work, especially skill-related work but it also has a very interesting outcome. My artistic language is definitely different in this medium. I think I would also say that because I was working every day towards this show, my techniques have multiplied and, perhaps, even improved.*





Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2022





Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2022



Who are your favourite artists?

*I have so many artists to talk about. I don't know where to start and where to end. This could very well turned into a book. Abanindranath Tagore has been so important. His miniatures amazed me and I don't know how to explain this inebriating quality in his works. Their sizes are so delicate that the details need a lot of attention just for viewing. Bikash Bhattacharya is another artist, I just love. His realistic paintings are just brilliant. Once, while visiting Holland, I went to see the museum collection at Rijksmuseum. Rembrandt's work just changed the way I saw everything. I learnt a lot by looking at the use of light and shadow in his work. Frankly, I think this list is a too long.*



Acrylic On Canvas, 72x48 inches, 2021





Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2022





Acrylic On Canvas, 60x36 inches, 2022



Acrylic On Canvas, 60x36 inches, 2022





Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2022



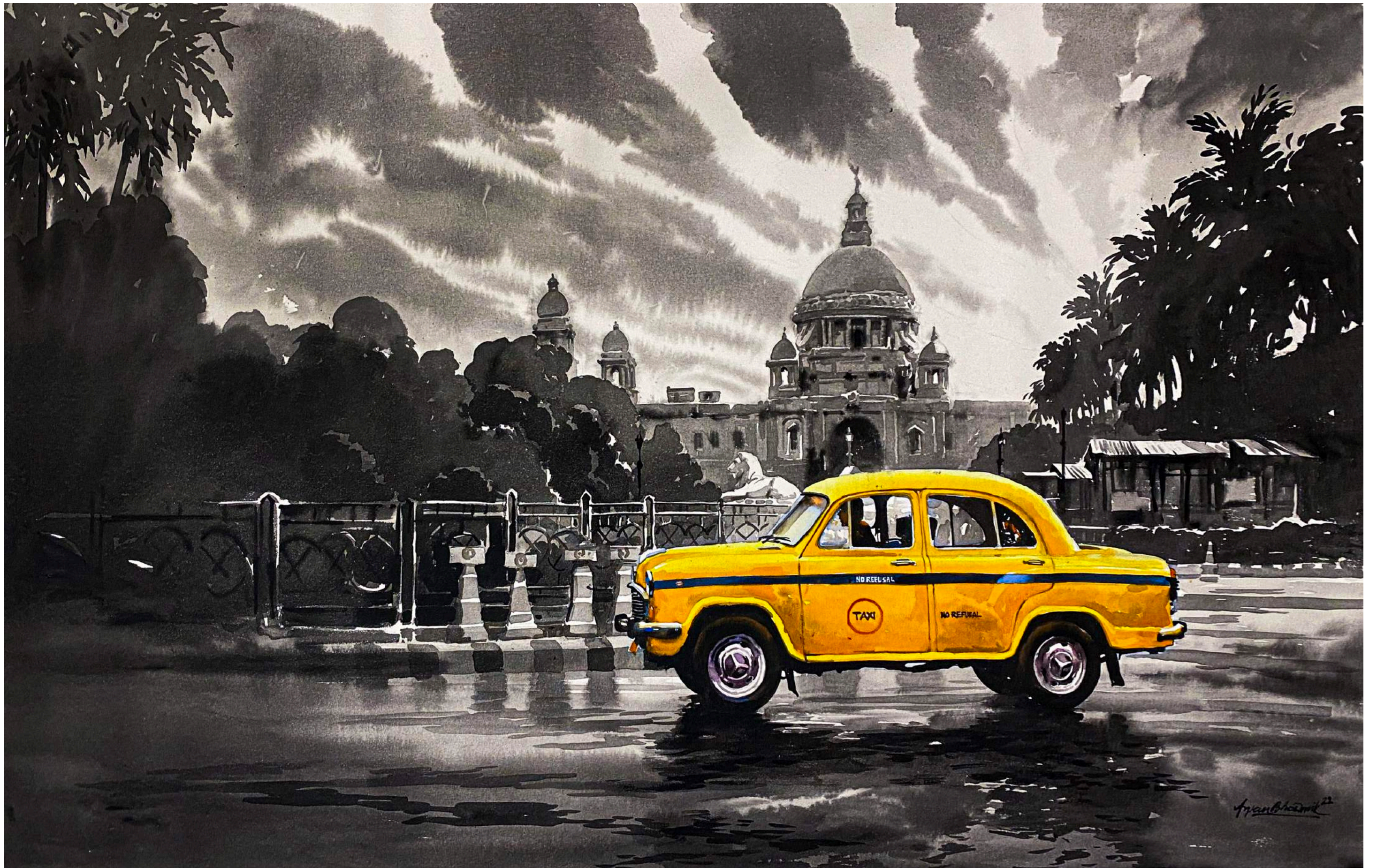
*How did you realise your artistic language?*

*It has been a long journey. I remember that, initially, when I started college, I would draw landscapes. I mean landscape has always been my genre, but, then, I used to make details of my surroundings. My study work was mostly what I saw in my village. The railway station was very important to my initial studies. These were very simple and large watercolour works. Then, the houses in my village were also part of my study. After college, I started looking at Kolkata differently and I created several works focusing on the city's vibe. With time, I began to concentrate on the cityscape. The light and shadow effects on canvas have been a constant engagement. I think the monochromatic sensibility has not changed since my childhood as I love the black-and-white combination. The dash of colours happened after I started my cityscape paintings. Actually, it just happened one day and then that also became part of my work.*



*Acrylic On Canvas, 100x66 inches, 2022*





Acrylic On Canvas, 36x60 inches, 2022





# ROMANCING THE CITY: ON ARPAN BHOWMIK'S REALISM

Realism and romance have had an interesting engagement for centuries now and, given the propensity of the arts today, we are, yet again, at the throes of the ushering rage of revisits to realism that combines with romance. Arpan Bhowmik (b. 1977) is one such particular case in point who has always been in love with both areas since the time he has been 5 years of age. The gorgeous hints of shadows carved around trees arranged side by side till it reaches an arch of old architecture standing behind a deliciously yellow taxi has become a Bhowmik special that no one can miss in the busiest of walls nailed with different artworks from different artists.

*This speciality is so particular that one can spot it immediately and keep it in memory easily. One may see this as a remarkable feat to be so easily memorised or as an act combining the popularist interception with the realist genre: in either case, Bhowmik remains poignant as a language interspersed with several possible meanings.*

*Bhowmik says that he began his artistic career sincerely after he joined the Government College of Arts under Calcutta University for a BA degree. It took him six months to prepare for the entrance exam when he was pursuing a programme at the Indian Art College under Rabindra Bharati at Dumdum. Even though he cracked the exam, he still got a seat in the applied arts department and not in the fine arts department: something he remembers fondly as he remembers the toughness of clearing the entrance exam. It became an important moment for him and it helped him realise his art career and practice.*



*He won several awards and accolades during his stay in college for his elaborate watercolours on paper. In those days, paper was only available in the standard size of 21x29.7 cm sheets. So, he decided to join four to eight of them with (fevicol) adhesive and create a large sheet to give the feel and look of a canvas and created large works, which, at the time, seemed like very big feats. The annual show of his college had so many beautiful works that it was important for him to make a mark along with his peers who were also very powerful artists. Their efforts were very inspiring and Bhowmik felt elated every time he won an award for his work. He found it challenging to keep up with his fellow students but he was always very piqued by those challenges.*



*Acrylic On Canvas, 12x12 inches, 2023*



As soon as he passed out of college, Bhowmik began to look for platforms to showcase his works and he did. Then he felt that a lot of his works, at the time, were not being included in galleries because of his medium. His favourite medium had to change and he found his famous medium of acrylic on canvas. Despite this change, Bhowmik wanted to keep his skills intact. He didn't want to lose the bold to faint effects of colours on paper that he loved so much and so he began to paint in various shades of the same colour in acrylic. So much so that his canvas today doesn't really explore more than three to four colours and each colour is muted or lightened to create light and shadow effects of watercolour on paper. A striking yellow or a muddy red or a brisk shade of blue definitely takes a central seat in the narrative and becomes important to his paintings.



During college, he had drawn realistic images to compliment his surroundings from his village – Janai, Dankuni in Serampore. Here, he learnt to visually recreate the hub-bubs of the locale, such as the railway station and the thatched roofed homes. After his college, he felt the need to capture the essence of Calcutta. Nostalgia and the public commute systems began to intrigue him. The very best way to portray his thoughts on city life was captured through technique mostly while his paintings did portray architecture as landmarks and the pace of a city through technology simultaneously. The yellow taxis, the bright trams, the hand-pulled rickshaws, and similar other vehicles represented his idea of speed and commuting that is so essential to city living. It also signified the ease in movement and quality of life that is so present in cities as opposed to other places. The landmark architecture placed around these moving vehicles stands for the monumental history of the city that has aided in the politics of the space and adds to the telling of the enormous significance of its temporal function. Eventually, he travelled to other cities and his works captured those cityspaces as well while keeping his subjects and romance in place.



*Bhowmik's paintings have a tranquil quality which is hard to miss in his portrayals of a misty morning or a rainy day in the city. The darkness of the night or the pungency of the afternoon sun are also important features that help him in his cause to explore the city through his art. The weather and the time of day are all very visible subjects in his works. They evoke the sense of romance of an old city with its past set in stones. Interestingly, this romance is evocative of the Durga Pooja season too when foggy mornings warn Bengal of the deity's yearly visits or just the winter season laying emphasis on the fertility of the season and land.*



*Acrylic On Canvas, 12x12 inches, 2023*



*When asked about his inspirations then he says that he had always enjoyed looking at Atul Bose's oil paintings, Bikash Bhattacharya's enormous body of works, and Abanindranath Tagore's brilliant renditions of the Mughal arts. He finds Tagore's miniatures so fascinating that he still remains transfixed by the artist's skills. To him, such skills are celestial inspirations and he can witness the miracles of art in his predecessors.*

*Interestingly, Bhowmik does echo the Bengal renaissance in his artworks and his school is imbued in the depiction of cities as a reflection on Bengal's progress as an artistic language and subject. The same city, often, picturised in its festivities and its rush is now being visualised in the most tranquil manner when a certain season sets in or a moment of the day becomes important.*



Acrylic On Canvas, 12x12 inches, 2023





*Bhowmik's portrayals are a reminder for art watchers to look at the simplicities of the cities too, when in its most serene moments, the city becomes less cruel in its pace or less complex in its means. Since, in a painting, Bhowmik is caught depicting this perfect moment, this image becomes quite close to a photograph. The realist genre – as ascribed to the likes of Rembrandt – has always dabbled at depicting reality in the most innate manner while engaging with the miracles of forms, shadows, and lights. Bhowmik builds on it while he brings elements of the miniature styles and the watercolour skills together on the acrylic on canvas medium. To him, his skill is not just about depicting but about feeling the inebriant qualities of an artist's journey. Of course, not to forget that Bhowmik's paintings are a poem on romance, realism, and serenity, but his loudest declaration is his romance with the city space.*



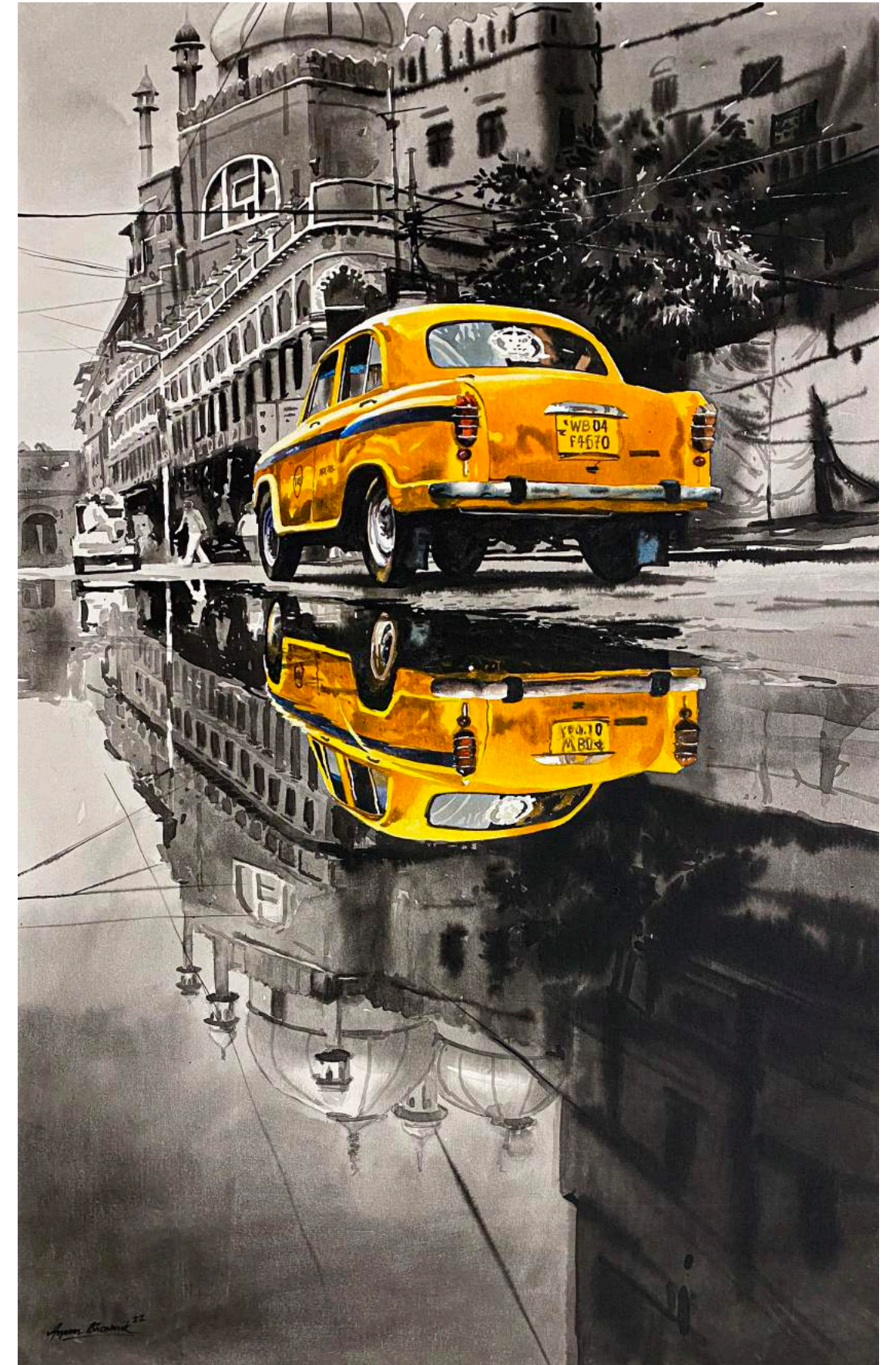


Acrylic On Canvas, 36x72 inches, 2022





Acrylic On Canvas, 72x36 inches, 2022



Acrylic On Canvas, 60x36 inches, 2022



## Academics

*B.V.A (First Class ) from the Govt. College of Art & Craft,  
University of Calcutta, 2001*

*Graduated with Hons. In Bengali, University of Calcutta, 1996*

## Awards

*NOKIA— Asia Pacific, 2000*

*Certificate of Merit, Japan, 2000*

*College Award in Annual Exhibition of Govt. College of Art & Craft, Calcutta,  
for best watercolour, 1999*

*Governors Award (Gold Medal) & Academy Award in All India Annual  
Exhibition of Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta, for best Exhibition, 1999*

*Annual Exhibition of Calcutta Information Center, for best water Colour. 1999*

*College Award in Annual Exhibition of Govt.College of Art & Craft, Calcutta,  
for best water colour, 1998*

*Govrnors Award in Annual Exhibition of Govt. College of Art & Craft, Calcutta,  
for best water colour.1998*

*Atul Bose Award & Academy Award in All India Annual Exhibition of Academy  
of Fine Arts, Calcutta, for best water colour, 1998*

*Awarded Gopal Ghosh Scholarship in Annual Exhibition of Govt. College of  
ART & Craft, Calcutta, for best water colour, 1997*

## Solo Exhibitions

*India Art Festival Virtual Gallery, 2021*

*India Art Festival Virtual Gallery, 2020*

*Art Spice Restaurant, Rotterdam, 2019*

*Easel Stories Art Gallery, Noida, 2019*

*Gnani Arts Art Gallery, Singapore, 2019*

*Gnani Arts Art Gallery, Singapore, 2018*

*Lalit Kala International Kala Mela, 2018*

*Bajaj art gallery Mumbai, 2015*

*Taj Bengal at Taj Bengal Kolkata, 2013*

*Academy of fine arts Kolkata, 2013*

*Taj Bengal at Taj Bengal Kolkata, 2009*

*Asutosh Gallery, Indian Museum, Kolkata, 2006*

RE  
SU  
ME



## Group Exhibitions

*Group Show, Masha Art, New Delhi, 2022*

*Arth Season 4, DLF Mall of India, Noida, 2022*

*India Design ID, New Delhi, 2022*

*Group Show, Masha Art, M 3M, Golf Estate New Delhi, 2022*

*Artwork Showcase, Audi, New Delhi, 2022*

*Group Show, The Quorum Club, Gurugram, 2021*

*Group Show, Artful Weekend, Gurugram, 2021*

*Arth Season 3, DLF Mall of India, Noida, 2021*

*Exhibition at Gnani Arts Art Gallery, Singapore, 2021*

*Arth Season 2, DLF Mall of India, Noida, 2020*

*HT Imagine New Delhi, 2020*

*India Art Festival Delhi, 2019*

*Exhibition at Gnani Arts Art Gallery, Singapore, 2019*

*HT Imagine New Delhi, 2019*

*Arth Season 1, DLF Mall of India, Noida, 2019*

*HT Imagine New Delhi, 2018*

*India Art Festival Delhi, 2018*

*Rangrez, ICCR Kolkata, 2018*

*Soulmate, Visual Arts Gallery Delhi, 2018*

*India Art Festival Mumbai, 2018*

*Art Stage Singapore, 2018*

*India Art Festival Delhi, 2017*

*Affordable Art Fair New York, 2017*

*Affordable Art Fair Singapore, 2017*

*Affordable Art Fair Singapore, 2016*

*World Art Dubai, 2016*

*GOTI –Kolkata 2017*

*GOTI –Kolkata 2016*

*GOTI –Kolkata 2015*

*Varandah art gallery in Singapore 2014*

*Kalpataru multiactivity center Kolkata 2014*

*GOTI –Kolkata 2014*

*GOTI at ICCR Kolkata, 2012.*

*GOTI at Birla Academy of fine arts Kolkata, 2011*

*RABI ART GALLERY, at Academy of Fine Arts Kolkata, 2008*

*RABI ART GALLERY, at Academy of Fine Arts Kolkata, 2008*

*All India Annual Exhibition of Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata 2007*

*Group Exhibition organized by RABI ART GALLERY, at Academy of Fine Arts Kolkata, 2007*

*Group Exhibition at India Habitat Centre Open Palm Court Gallery, New Delhi, 2006*

*Group Exhibition at Sabhaghar, Salt Lake, Kolkata, 2005*

*Group Exhibition at Aryan Art Gallery, New Delhi, 2004*

*Annual Exhibition at Birla Academy of Art & Culture, Kolkata, 2003*

*Annual Exhibition at Birla Academy of Art & Culture, Kolkata, 2002*





## NOTE FROM THE GALLERY

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*A few of the things that instantly come to our minds when we hear the name of this city are, the Howrah Bridge, Writers Building, Tram, Yellow Taxi and a Hand Puller Rickshaw to name a few. Bhowmik through his art wants to keep these images alive.*

*Changing times brings along changing landscapes and visuals but there are without exception icons that will always be related to a space or a city. Kolkata is already seeing modernization in its landscapes and cityscapes and now it is trickled down to its historic mode of transport.*









## About Easel Stories

*With an initiative to support talented emerging artists from India, Easel Stories Art Gallery was founded in the city of Noida, New Delhi in 2015. Through its promotion and assistance offered to Indian artists, the gallery has connected them with potential collaborators, collectors, patrons and other professionals in the art industry. In addition to encouraging artists to experiment and contribute to the diversity of Indian art collections, the gallery assists them in navigating the Indian art market.*





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Changing times brings along changing landscapes and visuals but there are without exception icons that will always be related to a space or a city.

Kolkata is already seeing modernization in its landscapes and cityscapes and now it is trickled down to its historic mode of transport. The yellow taxis will soon be a rare sighting on the streets of Kolkata as the production of Ambassadors has long stopped, and cities see the last few hundred of its yellow taxis.

Arpan says, "in another decade they will just be a memory" and he wants them to be alive for his son to see and tell stories of."

The yellow taxi is one of the many subjects that Bhowmik focuses on, this series, in particular, is an ode to the most hated and loved, mode of transport in Kolkata.





*The gallery facilitates multiple initiatives such as support programs and exhibitions for its artists to assist them with outreach nationwide whilst seeking to inspire and motivate innovation in art. It extends its assistance to art collectors and enthusiasts worldwide to acquire an art piece that communicates diversity and ingenuity. The gallery persuades its patrons by assisting them in commissioning artworks to collaborate with artists.*

*The founders of Easel Stories Art Gallery Mr Akshay Chandra and Mrs Taroonima Sen currently manage the gallery as they continue to promote their ambition to assist underrepresented Indian artists who contribute to the concept of experimentation.*





Acrylic On Canvas, 12x12 inches, 2022



Acrylic On Canvas, 12x12 inches, 2023





Acrylic On Canvas, 12x12 inches, 2023



Acrylic On Canvas, 12x12 inches, 2023



















