
Jogen Chowdhury

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The picture of Jogen Chowdhury, small as they are, make an impression of an array—a personal record of people.

Through the gentle irony of his very original drawings, he is relating to various manifestations of painting and sculpture in our tradition. In his reference to a painting or a sculptural pose, he deromanticises the image by taking away the proliferation of additive detail and moulding the body as if its material were malleable clay.

What emerges then is an opaque fleshiness of face and figure, which is always in the process of bulbous expansion like foliage.

The hands, with their fingers sprouting like roots make their symbolic crawl into depths, looking for life and nurture.

The postures are created with a fluid line, with an exaggerated flaccidity given to parts of the body. The surplus flesh, even its grotesque overhang is ripe with the rich flavour of tropical fruit.

The limbs curved and entwined as boneless extensions of the body give the figure an innate complacency of being able to reach everywhere. As if, it is to say that the gods in our pluralistic society are omnipotent but get disfigured unfortunately, when their powers are mortalised.

Jogen's approach is to disturb the real in portraiture. There is no event or narration but the creation of a type from another familiar type.

He works mainly with ink on paper, barely tinting areas with a singular purpose to exaggerate what he calls the indigenous perception of people. He feels that we have a particular way of sensing and identifying characters—the way they squat gesticulate, smile and tilt the head. These postures liquify in the hands of Jogen, enhancing features of the body and face to an extent that many of the portraits border on a picaresque depiction which is immediately combined with a delicate pathos.

It is good to know that painters like Jogen, while being critical of the things around them, also offer up themselves for a questioning almost saying that this is the way we are, let us look at ourselves closely.

Excerpts from:

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