

Politics meets art on Shuvaprasanna's crowded canvas

by **Archana**

YOU DON'T have to be a political encyclopaedia to know about Mamata Banerjee — it's hard to ignore her. You can't be in the art world and choose to overlook Shuvaprasanna Bhattacharya, popularly known only by his first name. And if the two are friends, is it possible not to ask one about the other?

"There is no politics involved in my art," says the Kolkata-based artist when quizzed about the Union railway minister who's also the Trinamool Congress president. The question was bound to come up because the artist and the political leader joined hands for Banerjee's campaign against the Tata Nano plant in Singur and the SEZ in Nandigram.

"I am a conscientious citizen, so we've had discussions on several occasions. She has come to my house often but there is no politics involved," Shuvaprasanna says. "She once asked me to contest the Lok Sabha elections but I declined."



A retrospective showcasing Shuvaprasanna's work opens at the Lalit Kala Akademi on February 21

The 64-year-old artist is all set for the February 21 opening of his *Black, Brown & The Blue* retrospective at the Lalit Kala Akademi (the accompanying book of essays, edited by Sushma Bahl, was released last month).

Shuvaprasanna is no stranger to high-profile associations. The Noble Prize-winning German author and playwright

Gunter Grass spent three months with the artist in Kolkata in 1986-1987; the result of the stay was his book, *Show Your Tongue*.

Shuvaprasanna unfailingly responds to the socio-political-economic scene around him. That lends his oeuvre the kind of depth that gets the world talking. His connect with the real world around him comes across in his latest artistic

riposte to the political situation in his home state. It's a canvas inspired by the killing of the residents of Netai, a village near the Maoist stronghold of Lalgarh in West Midnapore district, by armed CPI(M) cadres on January 7. It'll not be a part of Shuvaprasanna's retrospective, but will be unveiled at Rakhi Sarkar's CIMA gallery in Kolkata on March 18.

What Delhi will get to see at the retrospective is a selection of the best work to come out of his long and eventful career. "It is important to take such a holistic view from time to time, to see how art and an artist's personal style have evolved over the years," Shuvaprasanna says. As all those who follow art would know, the exhibition will also highlight an important aspect of the artist's repertoire — his insider's view of the many layers of life in Kolkata, his city and his Muse.

— *Shuvaprasanna's retrospective opens at Lalit Kala Akademi, Copernicus Marg, on February 21. It will be on till March 4; 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.*
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