 [ FOR PRESS ]

The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art presents

**over the edge, crossing the line**

**five artists from Bengal**

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ganesh pyne . meera mukherjee. somnath hore

ganesh haloi . jogen chowdhury

OPENING PREVIEW: 20 January 2019, Sunday, 6.30 pm onwards

KNMA-NOIDA, Plot 3A, Sector 126, Noida, U.P.

Exhibition Dates: 22 January – 20th July 2019

Closed on Monday and Public Holidays, 10.30 am – 6.30 pm

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The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) is pleased to announce the opening of the first exhibition of 2019, **over the edge, crossing the line: five artists from Bengal**, at KNMA Noida on 20th January 2019. The exhibition will continue till 30 June 2019.

Continuing the extensive explorations of different art movements, regions and artistic ideologies within South Asia, this year KNMA presents in-depth oeuvres and artistic inclinations of five modern masters from Bengal: Ganesh Pyne (1937 -2013), Meera Mukherjee (1928 – 1998), Somnath Hore (1921 -2006), Ganesh Haloi (b.1936) and Jogen Chowdhury (b. 1939). Coming from various parts of Bengal, their visual vocabularies reach maturity during 1970s and 1980s, with the city of Calcutta emerging as an intersection point. The social and political changes, witnessing and observing major occurrences like the Bengal famine, the Tebhaga movement, the Bangladesh Language Movement, the Vietnam War, and avant-garde mobilization in the creative disciplines of literature, cinema and theatre, has shaped their individual artistic styles and preoccupations. The chronological radius of the exhibition spans more than five decades from 1960s to early 2000s, showcasing more than two hundred artworks from KNMA collection and loans from artists and private collections.

The exhibition pursues the intensity and the edge at which these five practices seem to be located. It tries to look through the traces of what has remained or distilled through long duree process of artistic gesticulations on canvas or paper. Delving into the empirical and the subconscious, these five modern masters have created extraordinary visuals, meticulously ossified from the worlds seen and sensed. They take viewers on a journey to the unknown, and speak of both, longing and suffering, sometimes through direct representation of the real, and at times with allegories and obscure symbols. The exhibition oscillates between scenes soaked in half-light, colour fields, unbroken lines or contours of a figure, decay and poetic distortions, as if almost hiding the corporeal body and paving paths to view the body of a landscape.

Collective anxieties and turmoil surface often in interesting ways in this selected body of work. The exhibition explores how the transfigured, charged and complex imagery challenges rigid perceptions of viewing. With approximately thirty to forty artworks of each artist, the exhibition takes one through their unique journey from different phases of aesthetic formulations: from being chroniclers, appropriating the roles of narrator, illustrator, image makers and activists to being myth-shapers. A diverse range of techniques, mediums and configurations: paintings in tempera, gouache, watercolours, mixed media, ink and pastels, woodcut, lithography, etching and paper pulp prints and sculptures casted in bronze and plaster of Paris constitute this presentation.

For instance, Ganesh Haloi’s untitled gouache works punctuated with sporadic yet minimal colour patches and hyphenated lines, transport the viewer to imaginary pasturelands. These transitory landscapes hold the memory of real pathways and evoke a sensory and spatial experience of movement. In an almost contrasting rhythm are Ganesh Pyne’s quick jottings in pen and the multi-layered tempera works like *Death* (1975) or *The Swim* which falls between the real and the mysterious. Pyne, who has always been immensely drawn to water, creates these layers of dark undercoats of paint and then applies lighter colours to create mysterious effects, invites us to take detours from the surfatial. Meera Mukherjee’s sculptural explorations of myths and decorative patterns, modelled with a certain solidity of wax, recreate her observations and learnings in bronze-casts techniques learnt from living with the craftsmen of Bastar. Her sculptures like *Nagardola* (Ferris wheel) or *Srishti* depict the cyclical rhythm of human survival.

In Jogen Chowdhury’s *Gulabi Takia* (1977-80) made in ink and pastel on board, or *A Couple* (1984) painted in ink and pastel on paper, one sees the tender or uneven contours of human figures made with intricate crosshatchings. They lack firmness as if mirroring the deformation of societal structures. Somnath Hore’s figures, studies and symbolic open wounds tend towards minimal forms. He pulls our attention to the emaciated bodies who are delicately etched between hunger and fasting. His *Wounds* (1973), the paper pulp prints, though echo the memories of violence in Vietnam war, are reflections on human existence and the sufferings from man-made wars and scarcities.