



## **Shataborsher Roopkatha**

Hundred Years of Fairy Tales

A rare collection of drawings by Ganesh Pyne





**Shataborsher Roopkatha**  
Hundred Years of Fairy Tales

A rare collection of drawings by Ganesh Pyne

[www.aakritiartgallery.com](http://www.aakritiartgallery.com)

**Sales**

Aman Bachhawat  
9874881111  
aman.chisel@gmail.com

Ravi Gupta  
9830411116  
artshop@aaakritiartgallery.com

**Enquiry**

N.G. Rao  
9830411115  
admin@aaakritiartgallery.com

**Creative**

Sayan Paul  
033 22893027  
webadmin@aaakritiartgallery.com

**Text**

Nanak Ganguly

Published by: Priya & Vikram Bachhawat for  
Aakriti Art Gallery Pvt. Ltd.

Printed at CDC Printers Pvt. Ltd. Kolkata.

Price Rs. 400.00

© Aakriti Art Gallery Pvt. Ltd. 2020.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication can be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

INDIA  
**art** FAIR

---

30th January - 2nd February 2020

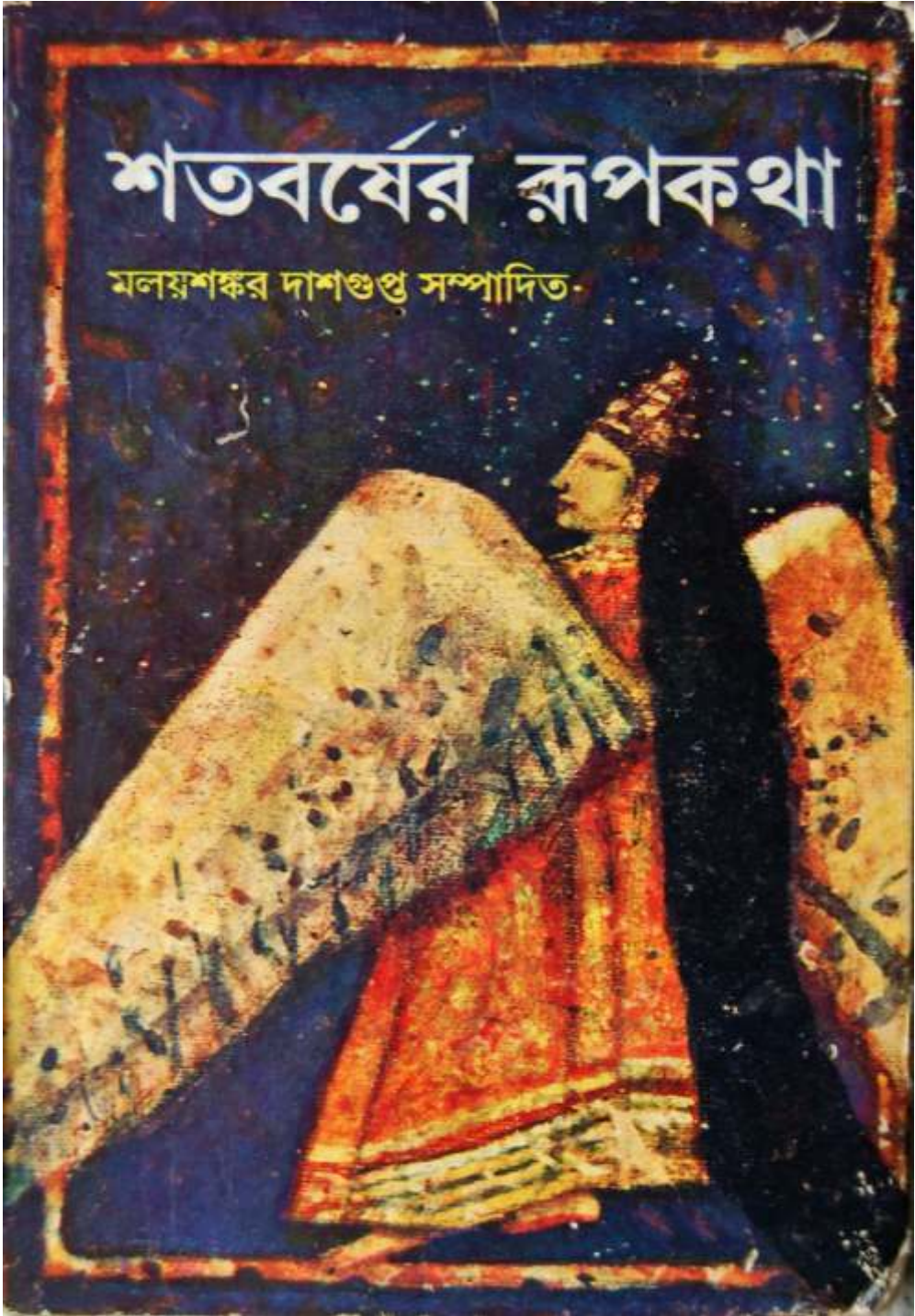
**Aakriti Art Gallery**

**BOOTH NO - A11**

NSIC Exhibition Grounds, Okhla Industrial Estate, New Delhi

# শতবর্ষের রূপকথা

মলয়শঙ্কর দাশগুপ্ত সম্পাদিত





## **THE FLIGHT OF THE WHISTLING ARROW**

Ganesh Pyne, the Master was commissioned in 1982 to do an unique set of drawings as part of illustrations for 'Shataborsher Roopkatha' (100 Years of Fairy Tales) - an anthology of fairy tales written by iconic writers of Bengali Literature, edited by Malay Shankar Dasgupta and published by Book Trust, Calcutta in 1983. The list of authors is a veritable who's who of Bengal- Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Lal Behari De, Shivrath Shastri, Trailokyonath Mukhopadhyaya, Rabindranath Tagore, Upendrakishore Ray Chowdhury, Gaganendranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, Sukhalata Rao, Sukumar Roy, Premendra Mitra, Tarashankar Bandopadhyay, Gouri Dharmapal, Syed Mustafa Siraj, Narayan Debenath, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Shirsendu Mukhopadhyay, Nabaneeta Dev Sen and several other stalwarts. A list which is enough to give anybody goosebumps.

Ganesh Pyne (1937-2013) was not only a man of great learning but a painter of delicate sensibilities. The purpose of such an anthology and illustrations act as a repository of our culture and each of those leisured, luminous days we spend dreaming of allegory and fables to meet an approaching moment. But at least as a reader we can speak to these vendors, and this dispenses one from having to construct with one's imagination with a mere visual perception fails to provide, and to recreate our lives, magnifying its charms, and in front of these

drawings moreover, precisely because one speaks to them, one can learn where and at what time it will be possible to see them again in beatitude and peace. One's impression of the sonata, music being too little exclusive to dismiss about other people suggest that we should find in it. (-Marcel Proust, *Within a Budding Grove*). Equally exciting are the letters exchanged the Master and the editor; notably painter's anxiety and editor's supreme confidence in Pyne's capabilities.

Pyne, over his five decades as a painter, watched and considered the changes in art around him, rather steadfastly appreciated the elegance and fact of using limited means to send rich, cultivated signals. In this sense he was an idealist, attempting to regain the freshness, craft and intellect of early modernists, particularly the neo-Bengal artists. In its thoughtfulness, steady progress, benign lucidity, and range of historical inspirations, his work refuses the notion that the high ground of late modernism is necessarily made by rejecting the past. Drawing in Chandrachura Rajputra (*Moon capped Prince*) written by Lalbehari De, one holds on to the space in a vast middle of broken vectors instead of strands; the substance of a wakeful dream materializing image and reality, dream and component made by teasing lines, beguiling the viewer into a seemingly no-win game of illusion and recognition of many beginnings and no closure. His employed a subjective apparatus not as a passive spectator but as a critical insider who directs the 'plot' through the very media of realism which he employed to realize them. Drawing of the lonely woman at the window in Lila Majumdar's '*Kheede*' (*Hunger*) is also a kind of melancholic contemplation about modernity's own past whose spell was diffused by modernity itself. These are made pointed, magnetized under the threat of potential loss, and this does not always resolve itself in the artist's favour permeated by an undeniable sense of sadness, and awareness of the anguish, frailty and impermanence of life. He made pictorial and aesthetic sense out of a personal despair and its experience of a lacerated and injured world, the energy, vigour, romanticism and sensuousness of the way they were painted provide a celebratory transcendence as we see these images through a very modern lens of fragmentation, and an existentialist's concern for the self.

His fascination with the fables and mythology in various settings depict not only

a reality but primeval values also what an artist chooses to look at and his strong and subliminal feelings about it. In 'Pancha Puspa' by Nabaneeta Dev Sen, his depiction of the queen nursing the ill projects a great metaphorical and emotional richness; a more focused and self-referential depiction of the psychological intimacies alludes to in the works as of the 1970's balancing tradition and aesthetics. The humanity and enactment of the human gesture in the Master's work, which infuse them, may be traced in some measure to his own experience and the love for humanity he imbibed early in his life- the world of our human experience, the beauty of human concern is a sacred value.

the lash across my face that night we adored . . .  
soon every night and all, when your sweet, amorous repetition changed.  
(-Robert Lowell).

They create their own untimely rhythm which he records in temperas, in what we feel to be a cool objective way. In the end in these illustrations make us seek his work out as if we needed it, and make us cherish it, long after "our common suffering" has become extinct. Something of the same quality is transmitted- an oddness, a disturbing quiet. Throughout the decade and into the 1990s, he had forged an unlikely coupling of togetherness and layered expressionism.

We all know that his role as a Master practitioner in tempera was paramount, bristling with his contribution all over with unyielding restrictions. He truly heralded a genre, appearing at a critical juncture of our art movements, both by unique brilliance of his colour technique, recalling vast fields of painted space and evolution of form, our pre modern texts and cultural traditions. He was able to choose a spectrum and create a symphony with predominating colour as a keynote, the texture laid with luminosity, imagination and precision in his temperas. He made pictorial and aesthetic sense out of a personal despair and its experience of a torn and wounded world of myth and allegory. And yet the energy, intensity, romanticism and sensuousness of the way they were painted provide a distinction of the subject matter. Whether this desperate humanism, sustained only by the sheer energy of despair, does not fail to recognize at least one major resource which exists, almost visibly, in the very fact of our language. Being would emerge at last through the image.

He was quintessentially Indian in his polyglot melding of many cultures. There is a lot of truth in the traditionally held view of Pyne as a bridge figure between avant garde and the emergent radical Indian Contemporary art of the sixties, but it is also an oversimplification. He repudiated avant-garde in the early sixties in the thick of modernism totally. Despite his vast contribution in the making of a language that marks the emergence of an Indian contemporary art in the sixties that denounced western brand of abstractionism and created a vocabulary that remained one of the legacies to younger Indian artists who had looked at his art and then moved from it along very different paths carrying with them the bits of poetic explosion of his work.

Though he continued to paint largely in tempers more like that of the paintings of the mid to late 80's and later, we are encountered by sheer eclecticism he never wanted to be any more precise. Take for example the drawing in Samaresh Mazumdar's 'Mone-mone', the illustration gradually emerges and arouses our reception, only by identifying, tracking down and laying bare the supreme workings of a great Master and precepts that are scattered far and wide in the vast sea of story- telling that have been able to gather those legacies and make them blossom in such a way as to give our life to something original and sublime. These are works not to be locked away for posterity or for academic rigueur. These are spaces for us to enter and fathom unfathomable depths.

In Ganesh Pyne's world, the figures waiting, inured to their own vulnerability, appear suspended in zones of unspoken communication, whose nature we can only speculate upon.

He never allows the visual text to become inert or allows the form to become murky or dissolve into a grisaille rather he reinvents the art of the tempera through his skilled handling and inner unfathomable depths of the soul, by restoring to the background fields that are carried toward infinity. The poetic and structural sign of another immersion in an essentially fluid domain will take us a step further in the exploration of Pyne's ingenious mystique meditations of myth, woe and allegory. This is perhaps the stillness of the forms of his earliest

work, now rendered to suggest a separation between his subjects in an active world. Above all, even if there is a promise of pleasure, the suggestion of anxiety and torment is never far away invading our dreams and invoking meditative silence. How does one wade across these somnolent sloughs, the sparse and efface grounds where all our leads are buried as in his well known works in temperas? Here he foregrounds other devices to celebrate the surface, illuminating, inexorably bringing to life, tending a surface he fears might dull. The visual parable is construed on an imaginary triangle whose matrices are represented by the audience, himself and those individuals who serve as the protagonists of his paintings that we know. A viewer understand this better who has soaked in his work, now that whole alien existence had given away to the resurgence of the heart rending memories while we read this timeless tales that encircle and ennoble our souls. In reality there is a world of difference between real grief, joys like our own which literally crushes the life out of us, which one has lost for the person one loves; another kind of grief, transitory when all is said, as by which passes as quickly as it has been slow in coming, which we do not experience until long after the event, grief or joy as such many people feel, from which the grief such as so many people feel, from which the grief that was with us at this moment differed only in assuming the form of involuntary memory that facilitates him with two important kinds of visuals: the static and the moving. Pyne situates his subjects in a way that capture these points of coincidence through canny editing, through vantage, through the choice of detail and through the deployment of figures in space.

His skill to crave up experience through the structure, grid and buoyancy of lines and rhythms of composition are eloquent. One senses a crafting out of pictorial conventions, of attitudes and of free associations that swivel between dream and reality. The works have a nervous, inchoate narrative quality, as figures, both wraiths like and robust, take on symbolic weight as they get filtered through liquid swells and flows as in Debiprasad Bandopadhyaya's tale titled 'Moniraj'. Not so much in profile as in a look-away effort that annuls, impossibly, all lines of gaze. A slow, sonorous muffle blows across the air. One hears also an uncertain wind build up and, then, drop. Does it seem that these figures had once been out of reference; an absence that no longer is? It is a long line of soaring that

Pyne creates because we are tracing the real and composing a plane of consistency, not simply imaging or dreaming? Her body luminesces through earth, silhouetted shadow, as a patch of light touches her hair and lives precisely in its recesses creating a spatial paradox, almost sensuously. One sees the impending darkness like a swirl, a slow sonorous muffle blows across the night. One hears also an uncertain wind build up and then, drop and as the brooding images shuffle across the painted screen, they seem to offer an increasingly diminishing possibility of pat interpretation which gives the work its haunting edge. (page 341). The primacy of the lines of flight must not be understood in a chronological sense, or in the sense of an eternal generality. Rather, it points towards the 'untimely' as fact and principle; a time without rhythm, a haeceity like a wind that stirs at midnight, or at noon or dusk. It is vulnerable like an upturned inscription; but also, resolute like an image that refuses the journey across the mind's aperture in a stop-go movement- a realist balance that has long ceased to be a picture-fable. The images here refuse to disavow their own separation in a narrative splurge. They create their own untimely cadence in order not to eschew the real to pitch their sanity in a new political sign keeping the viewer on the edge. How will the pure sound stand against the predictable phrase? The great ruptures and oppositions' pitching one against another. But does one negotiate 'the little cracks and imperceptible ruptures that come from the south'? The drawings in this book are illuminated where compositions of moments seized with a visual felicity by an entirely expressive means, but it never gives itself away as external sign-rich in privacy and inwardness. His language and verve is an act of his mind where the memory mode plays a vital part; the memory of surface values remains with us whether we are looking at his images or not.

"all by all and deep by deep  
and more by more they dream their sleep  
no one and anyone earth by April  
wish by spirit and if by yes."  
(-E. E. Cummings).

Blending fact and fiction, Pyne incorporates representations of one's self alongside his fantastical creations, complicating conventional representations

of the self with humor and wit. Swinging between distance and intimacy, his drawings deal with his own reassembly of an idea on a previously unseen realism he always aspired. A languor of an infinite yearning, celibate but still singing. It is through such discourse that the other become anonymous and structures eternal texts of desire. The viewer walks into them as if in half remembrance, unanchored, There are strands, one holds on to the textures in a vast middle of broken vectors; the substance of a wakeful dream materializing image and reality, dream and component made by teasing lines beguiling the viewer into a seemingly no-win game of illusion and recognition of many beginnings and no end. Pyne controls the 'plot' through the very media of realism which he employs to realize them.

Those blessed structures, plot and rhyme-- why are they no help to me now  
I want to make something imagined, not recalled? I hear the noise of my own  
voice:

The painter's vision is not a lens, it trembles to caress the light.  
(- Robert Lowell).

As Pyne's drawings take shape, areas of concentration usually start to play off in a fable. The linear elements run back and forth and occasionally establish distant satellite areas at the end of their sweep. But more and more strongly, dredging up some surrealistic subconscious visualizing the possibility of a tangible object, yet defies identification. Quiet enigmas of subtle refrain, their viewings result not in conversance but in fresh acts. In the end it makes us seek his work out as if we needed it, and makes us cherish it, as some source of potion, long after more of a bygone era has become indistinct, sadly.

**Nanak Ganguly**

pen & ink on paper  
6 x 5 in



**Mone Mone**  
pen & ink on paper  
7.8 x 5 in



**Saat Bhai Champa**  
pen & ink on paper  
8 x 5.25 in



1000 20 000

**Rajkumari Poncho Pushpa**  
pen & ink on paper  
8 x 5.25 in



1. 10. 1911

**Chandrachur Rajputra**  
pen & ink on paper  
8 x 5.25 in



9/5

112970 2012 4

**Maniraj**  
pen & ink on paper  
8 x 5.5 in

5/5



*Handwritten signature or text at the bottom right of the drawing.*

**Ramdhanur Golpo**  
pen & ink on paper  
8.25 x 5.7 in



1/2001 1/2/2001

**Pori-r Golpo**  
pen & ink on paper  
8.5 x 5.5 in



515

**Kheede**  
pen & ink on paper  
8.5 x 5.5 in



**Buro Angul**  
pen & ink on paper  
8.5 x 5.5 in





## CHISEL ARTS

20 Balmukund Macker Road | Kolkata - 700007  
033 22699944 | 033 22735610 | 9830411112  
[chiselarts@vsnl.net](mailto:chiselarts@vsnl.net) | [www.chiselarts.com](http://www.chiselarts.com)

# **Aakriti Art Gallery Pvt. Ltd.**

12/3A, Hungerford Street | Kolkata- 700017  
33 22893027 | 22895041 | 9830411115 | 9830411116  
artshop@aakritiartgallery.com | [www.aakritiartgallery.com](http://www.aakritiartgallery.com)