

RANEN AYAN DUTT | A PERISCOPIC JOURNEY THROUGH SEVEN DECADES

Opening at 6 pm, Saturday 16 April to Saturday 14 May 2016 at Galerie 88 Kolkata

The lines have come a long way, traversing seven decades. Some sharp and narrow while others soft and generous but always precise. Segueing between changing time, colours and mood, the lines of Ranen Ayan Dutt have been creating a world of their own.

At times that world has mirrored ours – tangible and practical or etched moments of evanescence, nostalgia for the lost streets, stations and the life they breathed or others in incandescent visions or apparitions. A childhood in the then touchingly close while irascibly distant pre-partition Bangladesh, the young Dutt sustained his passion and talent through scholarships and a deep influence of Abanindranath and Jamini Roy. The lines were further enriched and nurtured by the renowned commercial artist Annada Munshi, the man who gave the world Satyajit Ray - the illustrator and took over the British dominated world of commercial art. Munshi selected Dutt, fresh out of art-college.

Back in the days when hand-made didn't come with exotic price tags, Dutt joined in Stronach Advertising. The legendary LA Stronach was the agency for General Motors in the USA. He was later instrumental in setting up a branch in Kolkata. Dutt then joined J Walter Thompson (JWT). The icon of Indian advertising, Subhash Ghosal then took him to the Manager Charles Moorhouse at JWT. Dutt spent the next twenty years as Chief Art Director at JWT and created campaigns which have left a warp and weft of associations in our minds. Oil to steel, tea to cigarettes, all were touched by Dutt's deft lines, and became a part of popular consciousness through campaigns for the Tea Board, Tata Steel, the Jabakusum oil and Wills Made for Each Other.

The lines then assumed a third dimension with the space shifting from the canvas to architecture. Dutt's pavilions and murals for Tata Steel, Tea Board and Steel Authority of India's earned accolades globally and some like the Bengal pavilion have become permanent structures in the capital. Landmarks like Air India building, Exide Industries and the Indian Institute of Coal Management have been shaped by Dutt's aesthetics. What memory is to man, archive is to mankind, states the State Bank of India (SBI) archival museum website. Be it a significant part of the financial history of the country through SBI or the lives of luminaries like Raja Rammohan Roy, even the first floating maritime museum, Dutt has created archives which are an interesting confluence of history, art and architecture for future generations. He was awarded the DLitt by the Rabindra Bharati University.

A periscopic journey of seven decades of Ranen Ayan Dutt is a library of experiences. The collection is the portrait of an artist as a not so young man informed by mosaics of life. Blurring divisions between commercial and fine art, clutter and space, private vision and public memories, Dutt has created an idiom which can act as a periscope for our lives.

The lines continue their journey.
