



# ABSTRACT

**MONALISHA BHOWMICK**

**S**HOMBIT SENGUPTA is a renowned Franco-Indian artist credited with creating Gesturism Art - an art-vision, not movement; and bringing forth a totally new dimension—désordre harmony. His works were recently exhibited at Bengaluru, in an exhibition called 'Abstract with Hidden Figuratives'.

Born in a refugee camp around Kolkata, in abject poverty, Shombit Sengupta's journey towards art was motivated by his passion to become an artist. His adrenaline rush comes from transforming his vision onto the canvas. As a student at the Government College of Art and Craft in Kolkata, he learnt that France represented freedom of artistic expression, and at the age of 19, he daringly catapulted himself to Paris, and started out by doing odd jobs in Paris. Today, he is both, successful, as well as reputed. Art drove him to be alive, and stay alive. Sengupta's work retains the Indian aesthetic.

**Your Bengaluru Exhibition is the latest display of your art. What was the theme of the exhibition?**

It is my new work, my recent work with the same concept which I had developed in 1994, which is called Gesturism art.

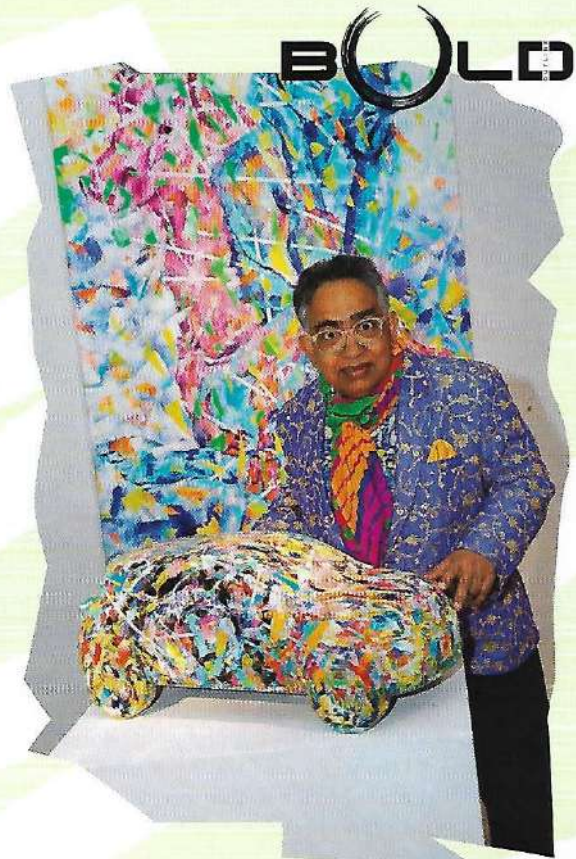
**Would you classify Gesturism as an art movement?**

No, not a movement -- that is not so easy. Man starts work, he creates one new idea, but creating a movement is not so easy. A movement happens when they talk. So I cannot say Gesturism is a movement, it will be a lie. Initiated a new idea/ thought and it is my vision. Now if the other people want to join this vision, then only it can be called a movement.

**What is the concept behind Gesturism?**

Started seeing a new dimension, which I called Gesturism art, which means 'The Abstract With Hidden Figuratives'. If you see all my paintings, you'll know. Today's generation is like everything is open to everyone, nothing is hidden. But art is something where it has to have some story – a hidden aspect which people discover when they view the art.

In abstract form, you'll find some story. If you watch my painting, you'll find a lot of things that are totally opposite to the current social media wave

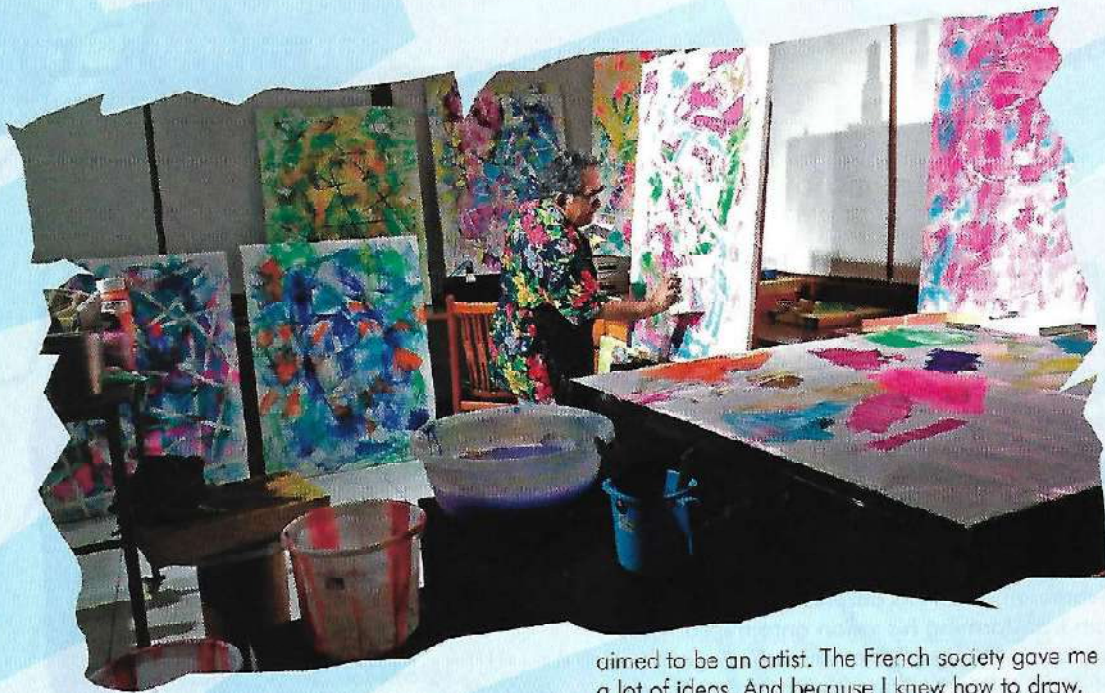


and digital technology, where everything is out in the open. But my art is not open like that. You have to use your head because there are hidden elements. Totally anti-digital generation, even though I'm an absolutely digital-friendly person. My art is not. Digitalization has provided facilities and I'm not against it, just that whatever you do digitally, everything is open, and anybody can see it. But art is the opposite – hidden; that's why 'Abstract With Figuratives'. So, Gesturism is my concept, and I will be driving this idea now and further, I don't know for how many more years.

Whenever you will see my work, you will easily recognise my paintings, but there will be always a different theme and idea. But it will broadly always be Gesturism art.

**Did one particular vision help you start this new thought?**

At a very early age of 19, I left Calcutta and went to Paris. Growing up abroad, when I went there to art colleges, I learned that in the Western world, since the 1870s, the driving idea of an artist is very important. It was when modern art started in that era. There were different artists with different schools of thought, and they created different movements and different concepts and ideas to distinguish one art form to another. The differences in Impressionism, Expressionism, all these movements started then. So my understanding from Europe was that to establish myself as an artist, I have to find my own way of thinking, what would be my roots, my



uniqueness which is unpublished, and which nobody has done yet. If I associate with one movement that exists already and I subscribe to that means, I follow that style. I'm a creative person since an early age, I wanted to create my own thing. I did not want to join any movement. Only if I publish in my way, and if it becomes a movement, then fine. But it is not yet a movement today.

**Any incidents you recollect from your college days?**

When I was studying in art college, one of the professors told me that if I go through his archives, I'd see that each drawing has its own gesture. He told me, 'You've a terrific gesture in your work, never lose this. Keep the gesture, it is very interesting.' This stayed in my head. Until 1994, I was doing different kinds of experimental work. Then in that year, I started to translate gesture as one way of looking. It gave an abstract element, but you'd always find something. I had this discovery in my heart. So this was the whole idea of creating this unique art concept, where people can easily recognise my art without my signature. Therefore, I called it Gesturism.

**Tell us about the exhibitions you did in Paris?**

I've just returned from one of my exhibitions in Paris. Even if my art is very crowded, it will show very clearly what my theme is. In producing different kinds of ideas, I had this strong concept and I knew how to go along with this idea year after year, keeping the same theme. Whatever it is, the 'Abstract with Hidden Figuratives' should be there.

**Was it only Paris, or did Kolkata play any role in bringing out the love for art in you?**

Calcutta didn't bring out such thoughts, but I always

aimed to be an artist. The French society gave me a lot of ideas. And because I knew how to draw, I got a lot more healthy opportunities in Paris like admission in good colleges. You will notice a huge difference in my paintings during the era when I was in Calcutta, and after I went to Paris. I was more of a realistic and academic man, and I learned from staying and growing in French society.

**Brief us about your learning days in the French society- a trip back in time...**

Growing up around the French colony in Chandannagar (in Calcutta), I learned a lot of things. My father, a Communist, had a lot of ideas about society, about human rights, the French Revolution, etc. And he had put in my head the idea since childhood, that if I wanted to become an artist, Paris was the place. Chandannagar was 20kms from my house and I used to visit it since 12 years of age. The French colony made a huge impact in my life. Of the two types of culture, I personally never liked the Victorian style because they massacred India, and so I've no sympathy for them. On the other hand, I was very impressed by the French society.

**How was your experience in India while doing exhibitions in Kolkata and Mumbai?**

Bombay was way too different. But Kolkata is still attached to art and culture. Bombay is commercially more advanced. It is very difficult to distinguish, the market is different in places like Delhi, Bengaluru, etc. But Kolkata people understand art very well. Kolkata has this artistic sensibility deep down. In some other places, they have both, the artistic sense, as well as the money to buy art.

**Any inspiring words for artists?**

Be humble, and be honest to your artistic work always. ✍