

GALLERY STATEMENT

Sangeeta Thapa

Founder/Director - Siddhartha Art Gallery / Siddhartha Arts Foundation
Founder/Chair - Kathmandu Triennale

Suresh Basnet's exhibition "Galpa: Episodes in My Life" is a socio-political narrative about the current state of politics in Nepal. Galpa which translates as 'narrative' inspires both reflection and conversations about the blind side of governments. The State itself is represented by a triptych in which a donkey occupies the highest chair of office with the flag of the nation on either side. In the background the artist paints the symbols of the three prominent political parties of Nepal – the mood of the donkey or leader varies from self-content, thoughtful, and plain worried.

Basnet portrays a disturbing and satirical vignette into stories of citizens whose voices are never heard, whose pain is never addressed, and whose plight is overlooked. The people he portrays are pockmarked, bald, blighted, and bogged down by hardships as they struggle to survive in this confounding age of the Anthropocene and equally confounding times of debilitating governance in which the ordinary citizen becomes mere pawns in a greater game. For a small landlocked nation, Nepal is a small fish that has to bite the bait dangled before it by the superpowers for sheer survival.

His paintings thus enunciate how politicians, or the state, callously manipulate the masses for their own gain with blaring political rhetoric and empty promises. Basnet draws attention to the fact that development is now viewed through a transactional lens – the much-touted railway, ship, and airport for Nepal remain a distant dream in a nation where men, women, and children in the villages still cross the river using the perilous and primitive 'twin' or rope line. The indifference shown by the State to villages submerged by the Koshi floods is mirrored by people from all walks of life. Basnet portrays a self-obsessed generation deeply engaged by technology – a baby, a woman, and men capture their now moments as they pose and pout impervious to the pain of the environment around them.

Basnet's works are therefore a reaction to the immediate socio-political reality of his time and his paintings recount episodes of incidences that have touched his psyche – be it the earthquake, his recognition of the fallout we are facing as a species in the age of the Anthropocene and the impending environmental disaster that will suffocate us all slowly but surely. These dark works prompt us to look at ourselves - as a people and as leaders and acknowledge our foibles before it's too late.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Justin Zhao,
Director of the Himalayan Light Art Scholarship Award

Sangeeta Thapa,
Founder | Director - Siddhartha Art Gallery | Siddhartha Arts Foundation,
Founder | Chair - Kathmandu Triennale, Nepal

Siddhartha Art Gallery Team:
Binod Adhikari, Binod Bhujel and Urza Acharya

Basnet family, Rajan Kumar Pant, Jasmin Rajbhandari, Uddab Raj Rimal,
Prabin Shrestha, Niraj Chitrakar, Sunil Babu Karki, Prithvi Shrestha, Sauganga
Darshandhari, Bindu Space for Artists, Susmita Rawol, Sujan Basnet



State of Somnolence (III). Acrylic on canvas, 36x48in



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Galpa: Episodes in My Life

Suresh Basnet



Virtual Illusion. Acrylic on canvas, 36x48in



THE HIMALAYAN LIGHT SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

The Himalayan Light Art Scholarship is sponsored by senior Chinese artist Zhao Jianqui to foster and promote the creation and production of Nepal's young artist generation, whose quality of work impressed Zhao greatly during his visit and exhibition to Nepal in 2015. This award intends to encourage young artists to explore deeper into their skills and the myriad of themes in Nepali art and also hopes to create opportunities for more trans-Himalayan artistic exchange in the future. Our past recipients of the Himalayan Light Award include Prithvi Shrestha and Mann Gurung in 2019, Lavkant Chaudhary in 2020, Jagdish Moktan, and Priyanka Singh Maharjan in 2021, and Subas Tamang also in 2021. Suresh Basnet is the most recent recipient of the award in 2022.

~ Justin Zhao

ARTISTS' STATEMENT

Galpa: Episodes in My Life

Suresh Basnet

I am the sum total of my perceptions, emotions, and experiences and my art is a reflection of this reality. Human beings are social animals, and we are the architects of society. Whether we realize it or not, every circumstance and every moment of our daily lives creates an impression on our psyche—directly or indirectly, positively or negatively, visibly or invisibly. We are the outcome of these experiences. We are all diverse characters in this theatre of life. I am also a “character” as I participate in the incidents. I am molded by the happenings that are natural, social, and political.

We tell ourselves that despite the thorns that surround us, we are the flowers that bloom against all circumstances. But alas, the reality of life is such that we fail to realize that perhaps we too are a thorn in someone's life. All around us we are being lacerated by negative faces and situations which we ourselves have created and manifested. My paintings are a narrative of this reality.

All these incidents have created social anomalies – each day politics and politicians become more corrupt, and nature depletes at an alarming rate—and their negative outcomes deeply affect my thoughts. My works, therefore, are inspired by recent situations I have observed, experienced, and analyzed. My paintings fuse reality with imagination to narrate the stories of pain both of an individual and of a community.



Sweet Candy. Acrylic on canvas, 30x40in



April Earthquake 2015. Acrylic on canvas, 30x40in



State of Somnolence. Acrylic on canvas, 48x48in



Flight to Extinction. Acrylic on canvas, 36x36in



Flood. Acrylic on canvas, 36x48in



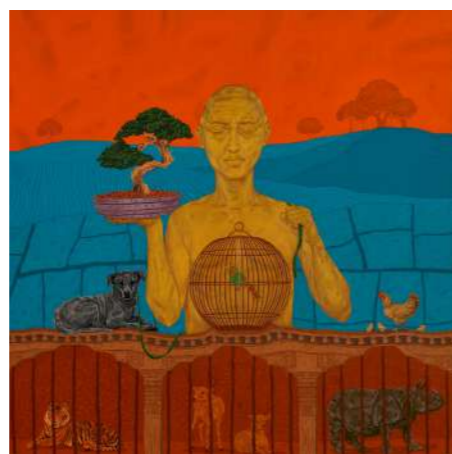
Satiated State. Acrylic on canvas, 36x48in



Drowned in Contemplation. Acrylic on canvas, 36x48in



Anxious State. Acrylic on canvas, 36x48in



The Age of the Anthropocene. Acrylic on canvas, 48x48in



Mobile Lover. Acrylic on canvas, 36x48in