

SOUMYA SANKAR BOSE

Let's Sing an Old Song

24 Aug – 21 Sep, 2019

Experimenter – Outpost; 53/2/2 Hazra Road, Kolkata 700019

Experimenter Outpost presents its first project in Kolkata with a solo exhibition of photographs from Soumya Sankar Bose's Let's Sing an Old Song.

"I knew I had to work on this project when my uncle retired from the Jatra and joined a railway factory, hoping to do what he could not as an artist - earn a living. I began photographing artists who are now unemployed but were once gigantic figures of the Jatra.

Dating back to the 16th century, the Jatra is a famous folk theatre form of united Bengal (Bangladesh and West Bengal), employing dialogue, monologue, songs, and instrumental music to tell stories. Jatra pala, as the plays are called, are enacted on wooden stages without any barriers between the actors and the audience, facilitating direct communication. The plots vary from Indian mythology and historical incidents, to something more contemporary and based on social issues. The partition of India had a major impact on Jatra as artistes in the newly formed East-Pakistan (later Bangladesh), a Muslim majority country, discontinued to enact Hindu religious folktales such as Krishna lila, Devi thakurani, kongso bodh, kaliadaman etc. On the other side of the border, artistes in west bengal stopped playing Muslim characters such as Siraj-ud-dullah, Shah jahan, Akbar etc. The advent of cinema and TV in the 60s and 70s blew a deadly blow to the theatre art form. In 2013, over 600 Jatra companies employed over 2,00,000 people but their situation had come to forcing them to often offer free performances. This work is based mainly on the Jatra artists, characters played by them, and the psychology that drives them to be a part of this folk cult form."

This project is made possible by a grant from India Foundation for the Arts under the Arts Practice Programme.

Soumya Sankar Bose (b.1990) completed a one-year diploma in Photography from Pathshala South Asian Media Institute, Dhaka and Angkor Photo festival and workshop. His project, Full Moon on a Dark Night was awarded Magnum Foundation's Photography and Social Justice Fellowship in 2017. Bose is the recipient of IFA grant for the project, Let's Sing an Old Song in 2015. His selected solo exhibitions include Full Moon on a Dark Night, Experimenter, Kolkata, (2018); Chitrabani, Kolkata; Goethe-Institut, Max Mueller Bhavan, Kolkata (2016). Bose lives and works in Kolkata, India.

Experimenter Outpost is an iterative exhibitions program outside the physical gallery where an extension of the program temporarily inhabits disused, characterful spaces imagining a renewed life for them.

For further information and press related enquiries please write to admin@experimenter.in