

“LUSH” - BY PROKASH KARMAKAR

3rd August – 15th August, 2006

WRITE UP OF PROKASH KARMAKAR

PROKASH KARMAKAR (1935-)

The son of a renowned pre-independence artist, Karmakar was orphaned at a young age. Like many of his generation he experienced the political and social turbulence of India’s struggle for freedom. But unlike his contemporaries, there was a difference in the way he tried to express these travails. There was a tendency to metamorphose the nightmares into objects of fantasy, to escape the real into the surreal and dwell in complete physical abandon. Yet he was rooted in reality. In terms of a mental attitude he is reminiscent of Oskar Kokoschka who also refused to turn abstract. Prokash also ‘tries to liberate’ in what he sees a bird, a horse and more often in figures. The large-scale migration of people to Kolkata and its inability to cope up with this human diaspora interested him. In this context he painted the Refugees (1981) representing the marginalized sections of society. The protagonists inhabit a morbid and unreachable space entrenched in human suffering.

A successful artist from Bengal, Prokash Karmakar’s paintings are generally depictions of lush landscapes and female nudes. The landscapes quite obviously perceived more by the senses than by the spirit, comprise thick tropical forests, hills and valleys all fleshed out in their wide diversity. In Painting such as the Dream (1999) where a female nude is depicted in a state of complete abandon, the artist hints at the subject being a prostitute. The image is overtly sexual, the product of a fantasy wrought in a moment of pure fleshy desire. In some of his paintings he also commented on social issues, power equations and the repression of the poorer sections by the dominant classes and so on.

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