



On the second day of the exhibition, May 30, Gulammohammed Sheikh was in the city and engaged in a conversation with Paula Sengupta. Sheikh spoke of his association with Somnath Hore, his own journey as a printmaker, and how he was drawn to new techniques throughout his life.

Jyoti Bhatt, Bhupender Singh and Somnath Hore.

Sheikh developed a fascination for maps and cityscapes, which makes a big splash in the first-floor room with the *Mappa Mundi Suite*. A fascinating story about a chance encounter with Ebstrof Mappamundior's world map in London enticed Sheikh to play with maps, horizons, cultures and icons, and the result is a body of work that is anchored in imagination and creativity.

Part Two of the retrospective speaks of a new chapter in Sheikh's life and underscores his openness to new media. He embraced the digital world like a traveller exploring a new terrain with positivity, and that's something rare in an artist who has lived and worked across decades. He loved the new mind-and-hand coordination, and the suspense that unfolded between the screen and the final print. With these Mind Prints, as he calls them, he has created a body of digital prints, as well as video, that uses his painterly lexicon in a new form.

The retrospective, on till August 2, invites viewers into a dialogue between the past and the present, the local and the global, and offers a rare opportunity to trace the evolution of an artist whose practice has consistently challenged conventions while expanding the possibilities of narrative and imagination in contemporary Indian art.

Farah Khatoon

Pictures courtesy: TRI Art & Culture



The *Mappa Mundi Suite*, on display on the first floor



Lithographs with metaphorical and surrealist overtones



Another accordion format, titled *Book of Memories for Bhupen*

Narratives in print

TRI Art & Culture's retrospective traces Gulammohammed Sheikh's journey from 'hand to mind prints'

Contrary to our assumption that the discourse on print-making will cease to be in the mainstream once the Print Biennale ends, the dialogue continues with 'Hand Prints/ Mind Prints, a retrospective on Gulammohammed Sheikh' at TRI Art & Culture. The Ballygunge gallery brings a solo show of a giant figure in the printmaking scene in India, who, for more than six decades, has occupied a singular place in Indian art. The octogenarian, who has won multiple awards including Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan and Sahitya Academy Award for Gujarat in 2022, seamlessly weaves together painting, poetry, storytelling, history, and philosophy.

Curated by Pushpamala N, the retrospective, spread across two floors, is divided into two parts for a better understanding of Sheikh's practice, which has evolved remarkably. Part one, featured at the ground-floor room, traces Sheikh's handmade print practice from the 1950s onwards. The introductory set includes *Still Life, River, Figure With Still Life, Sitting Woman* and *Tonga in the City*, which he made between 1956-61, while he was learning woodcut and linocut in the graphics department of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Baroda.

The artwork depicted everyday life and his growing interest in horses, which later took vivid forms in his lithographs in the early 1960s.

The retrospective makes us note the autobiographical character of his works when he started writing his memoir *Gher Jatan (Going Home)*. With the newly learned aquatint technique, he made etchings titled *Unmoolan* and a few untitled ones that were autobiographical in nature. What his eyes witnessed and what his heart ached for also found

impressions in his work. The most profound work in this set includes the *Riot, Man 1* and an untitled work, that depicted the communal riots of Gujarat. *Days of the Dagger/Still Life with a Landscape* also talks about violence in the early 1990s.

The room also lets the visitor explore his association with the literary world through magazines like *Vrishchik, Kshitij*, and *Pragati*, that he has been part of at different junctures of his life, and his association with artists like



The set includes linocut and woodcut work that Gulammohammed Sheikh did in early 1950s

Drawn from the accordion format book *Whose Kashmir?*, the images are a juxtaposition of new technology and his profound painterly practice.

