



Global imprint

VISUAL ARTS

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Gulammohammed Sheikh is a leading artist, art historian, teacher, writer and poet of our times. Yet, little is heard of him in Calcutta and his works are rarely exhibited here. Even less is known about his printmaking practice. The exhibition, *Hand Prints / Mind Prints: A Retrospective of 70 Years of Printmaking*, curated by his former student, Pushpamala N., who too is a well-known artist, was thus quite enlightening. The exhibition, now on at TRI Art & Culture, is in collaboration with the Vadhera Art Gallery. It is in two parts: *Hand Prints*, covering woodcut, linocut, etching-aquatint, lithography, silkscreen, and *Mind Prints*, covering his digital prints, a more recent passion.

Conceived as an archive, the first part documents Sheikh's practice of printmaking by hand from the 1950s when he was a young student up to present times. He, along with artists like Bhupen Khakkar, Somnath Hore, Vivan Sundaram and Jyoti Bhatt, were engaged in producing *avant-garde* mag-

azines with original prints to make art more accessible to art lovers. His earlier prints had a painterly quality that became pronouncedly linear later. In 1969, his work turned autobiographical. His interest in cities and maps is evident. He injected politics into his work with the violence in the illuminated *Hamzanama* commissioned by Akbar acting as a stimulus for introducing the sectarian riots in Gujarat into his own work. He effortlessly internalised images and ideas culled from world culture.

He is a pioneer in the world of Indian digital printmaking. The two sections overlap from 2000 onwards. These are "basically collages", he has said about the prints in the second half of the exhibition and he has painted the backgrounds to set them apart. He called these 'mind prints' for here he used his mind instead of his hands. Sheikh has already declared his love for "quoting" images from the world of art and, in these works, he helps himself to everything, from Kabir and the Ebstorf *mappa mundi* to Mughal miniatures, Renaissance painting and world cinema, to brilliant effect.