



FAMINE AND EMPIRE:

GAJAH GALLERY SINGAPORE EXHIBITS 21 IMPORTANT WATERCOLORS ON THE 1943 BENGAL FAMINE BY THE LATE INDIAN ARTIST GOBARDHAN ASH

OPEN TO PUBLIC - *Extended to 30 OCTOBER 2016!*



Update: *In order to allow more visitors to experience this historic exhibition, Gajah Gallery has extended the exhibition until Sunday, 30 October 2016.*

Gajah Gallery Singapore presents **Famine and Empire**, a landmark exhibition of 21 watercolor paintings produced by Indian artist Gobardhan Ash (1907 – 1996), during the final years of the British Empire.

The exhibition relates the suffering of the Indian people in Bengal during World War II, where a confluence of factors led to one of the most catastrophic events in the last century. In 1943, over the course of a single year, an estimated 3 to 4 million people died of starvation in Bengal, in what historians refer to as a “manmade holocaust”.

Bengali author Madhusree Mukherjee wrote: “Parents dumped their starving children into rivers and wells. Many took their lives by throwing themselves in front of trains. Starving people begged

for the starchy water in which rice had been boiled. Children ate leaves and vines, yam stems and grass. People were too weak even to cremate their loved ones.”

Under the command of Winston Churchill, 60% of the region’s crop yield, already depleted by the arrival of a cyclone the year prior, was diverted to the British military front, effectively leading to widespread starvation. Steeped in controversy, the Bengal Famine is among the oft-forgotten legacies left behind by the British Raj.

This exhibition brings the artist’s experiences to the forefront, exposing the tragic conditions faced by the people of Bengal, and exploring the different ways in which the Empire made its presence known.

Gobardhan Ash was born in India in 1907, and studied at the Government School of Fine Art, Calcutta between 1926 and 1930. He was appointed Chief Artist at the Indian Institute of Art and Industry, Calcutta in 1946. After working as a teacher to young artists in Calcutta, he became an independent artist in 1953, painting his observations and recollections over the course of his life, until his death in 1996. Regarded as a pioneer of modern Indian art, Gobardhan Ash was active at a time when India was witnessing the advent of Western modernism. His contributions to the field of socio-realist painting are significant and colossal, influencing generations of artists to follow.

Celebrating its 20th Anniversary this November, Gajah Gallery is a Singapore-based contemporary art gallery dedicated to the representation and promotion of regional artists, with a specialized focus on Southeast Asian art. The Gallery program includes outstanding exhibitions held throughout the year, curated by the region’s leading academics and art historians. In addition to raising artists to the international platform, the Gallery ignites critical discourse in the contemporary art community, engaging in collaborative features with local universities and private institutions.

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