

News monitored for: Emami Group

exhibition

Thirteen shades of lockdown

Patua-artist Anwar Chitrakar's *Babu and Bibi* make their digital debut with *Tales of Our Time*, inspired by COVID-19

ANWAR CHITRAKAR, WHO is known in the art circuit for giving a contemporary touch to the age-old *Patachitra* art, takes his popular *Babu and Bibi* series to the digital realm for the first time, with *Tales of Our Time* or *Ei Samayer Patt*. Inspired by the pandemic, the Pingla-based (West Midnapore, Bengal) *patua*-artiste presents thirteen paintings that are being showcased online at the Emami Art Gallery. In the past, the artist has participated in many exhibitions in India and abroad, including The Berlin Festival, Germany and Namaste India Festival, Japan, in 2012.



Talking about the bi-lingual exposition that was triggered by the motive of creating awareness among the people of his village, the 31-year-old Anwar offers, "I have grown up watching my forefathers use the folk art, *patachitra*, to disseminate important messages among people. I have been following their footsteps and like other social issues that I have spoken in the past, I made posters and banners in

our village creating awareness about the pandemic. Later, I decided to make a series, making sure it's fun and relatable." Trained in the *Kaighat* style of art, Anwar's exhibition depicts different moods of the lockdown with a hint of humour. Some of them include couples escaping surveillance by riding the motorbike with masks titled *Amar Dushtu Koi* (*Where Is My Troublemaker*), to two women covering their faces after being chided by a policeman titled *Tumi Toh Jano*, and *dhoti*-clad alcoholic Babu carrying a bottle of wine and set to get beaten by his wife captioned *Sanitizer Vaccine*. Some paintings are thought-provoking like the one titled *Kemon Achen Bondhu* (*How Are You My Friend?*) where the animals are free but the humans are in cages. *Tales of Our Times* also instills a sense of hope with art pieces like *Shakti Rupe* where divine intervention is

expected to quell the pandemic demon.

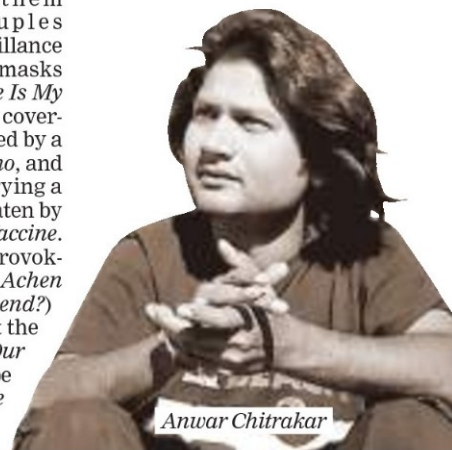
Though he emphasises that he misses the real-time interaction with art enthusiasts, he does intend to work on the extended version of *Tales of Our Times* with more emphasis on post-pandemic in the spotlight.

The exhibition is on till July 31.

— Farah Khatoon

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Anwar Chitrakar