

## Amal Ghosh

Artist Amal Ghosh was born in Calcutta, India, in 1933. He studied at the Government College of Art and Craft in Calcutta with tutors who had graduated from the British Slade School in the 1930s. As a result, his artistic training was characterised by strong classical European bias which emphasised formal instruction. After moving to the UK in the 1960s, he completed his postgraduate education at the Central School of Art & Design in London, which later became Central St. Martin's College of Art & Design. He received an MA from Calcutta University in 1972 and did a postgraduate course in art therapy at Hertfordshire College of Art in St. Albans in 1982.

Ghosh's early paintings were heavily influenced by European techniques. Paradoxically, it was in England that he became more acquainted with his own cultural heritage with the help of his tutors, artists Cecil Collins and Alan Davie, who were familiar with Indian artists such as Rabindranath Tagore. As Amal Ghosh explains in 'Beyond Frontiers: Contemporary British Art by Artists of South Asian Descent', "*Cecil Collins and Alan Davie, two gifted artists and teachers, reaffirmed and valued my Indian heritage in a way that had not been possible in India*".

Ghosh's subsequent works underwent a gradual transformation as he moved away from formal realisation. He began teaching at Central St. Martins in 1969, which provided him with the opportunity to consolidate his vast artistic background and at the same time experiment with new approaches.

The use of visual and conceptual narrative in his works became a means of reflecting the difficulties of negotiating his artistic past and transition between eastern and western cultures. The synthesis of modernity and his two cultures highlighted the evolution of his aesthetic vision while defining a new personal artistic vocabulary.

He achieved this by manipulating ideas and images with complex references to his life with dominant themes such as transition, mythology, religion, dreams, history, storytelling, culture and spirituality - which he felt was lacking in Western art. Ghosh states, "*In each of my own paintings, I am striving for a truth - my truth - a coming together of my experiences. Given the pictures draw heavily on universalising the primary sources of the subconscious, feelings and emotions are inevitably evident*".

Amal Ghosh's technique is derived from a strong interplay of allegory, use of colours, light and scale. His paintings are designed to function on many levels and the meaning and interpretation of his works are as a result never literal. He often abandons conventional perspective and distorts the background and foreground as a device to engage the viewer. This is particularly evident in a series of allegory paintings which he produced in the mid to late 1980s which fully explore these principles and invite viewers to analyse and question the images.

In the 1980s and 90s, Amal Ghosh participated in numerous solo shows and over fifty group exhibitions in the UK, Europe, Asia and the USA. Some of his key group exhibitions include: Royal Academy Summer shows, 'Between Two Cultures' at the Barbican, London in 1982, 'Transition of Riches', Birmingham Museum in 1993, 'Confluence', Gallery Asiana, New York in 1998, the Whitechapel Open at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, the Cleveland International Drawing Biennale in Ohio and 'Contemporary Paintings' at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, London.

Public art is an important part of Amal Ghosh's work. He has received numerous commissions from institutions such as hospitals, government offices and community centres and works with the medium of vitreous enamels and stained glass. In 2002 he designed a mural for the Belgrave Library in the Cossington Street Recreation Ground in Leicester to commemorate the Test cricket matches between India and England which were held in Summer 2002. His murals can also be found at the Eastman Dental Hospital (1991), the Charing Cross Hospital (1984), and at the House of Lords with a showcase of twenty-two stained glass shields.

Amal Ghosh currently lives and works in London and travels to India annually where he has a studio and regularly exhibits his works. He is a visiting professor at the Government College of Art and the Vishwa Bharati University's Kala Bhavan or College of Fine Arts and Crafts, in Shantiniketan, Calcutta.