



BHASKAR CHITRAKAR

PAINTING KALIGHAT MODERNS

পেন্টিং
কালীগাট
আধুনিক

ভাস্কর চিত্রকর

PRESS KIT

a film by
MATTHEW RAJ WEBB
IHAAB SYED
& ROHAN SENGUPTA

PAINTING KALIGHAT MODERNS

SYNOPSIS

Bhaskar Chitrakar is among the last remaining hereditary painters of the famed Kalighat temple tradition. From his unassuming home studio in Kolkata, he creates colorful and sensuous artworks that traverse global museums and art fairs. This short documentary explores Chitrakar's painting style and eclectic sources of visual inspiration. How has an artistic tradition that was once so deeply ensconced in Hindu religious mores and British colonial patronage become a site for modern secular social criticism? What is in store for the future of this craft, as younger community members turn away from painting and are instead finding work making religious idols? With characteristically wry humor, Chitrakar takes us behind the scenes of the changing social and class landscapes of his beloved city, one painting at a time.

A SHORT DOCUMENTARY FILM

in BENGALI and HINDI with ENGLISH SUBTITLES

BACKGROUND: The directors of this documentary—two anthropologists and a lawyer—met Chitrakar serendipitously, following a request from Smithsonian NMNH Curator of Globalization, Joshua A. Bell to support tracing the provenance of a painting. This sparked the directors' outreach to friends, colleagues, and art galleries in Kolkata to track Chitrakar down. After several enjoyable phone and Zoom calls, the directors were eventually able to meet Chitrakar in person and film this short documentary in June 2023.

“... that some new work
evolves from the hand, that
is possible only by us.”

— Bhaskar Chitrakar



A RETOUCH LLC PRODUCTION

FEATURING

Bhaskar Chitrakar

PRODUCED, DIRECTED, and
FILMED BY

Matthew Raj Webb

Ihaab Syed

Rohan Sengupta

CREW

Santanu Mahalik

CAPTIONS

Nikita Jailesh Shah

PRODUCTION SUPPORT

Jaita Chitrakar Chakraborty

PRODUCTION SUPPORT

SambitC

MUSIC



WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

NYU Program in Culture & Media

Joshua A. Bell and the

Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO
ARRANGE A SCREENING EMAIL:
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PAINTING KALIGHAT MODERNS

TECH SHEET

Duration: 11 mins

Year of Release: 2024

Languages: Bengali and Hindi (English Subtitles)

Region of Production: India

Video Format: .mp4 H.264 (1920x1080)

Color Profile: HD (1-1-1)

Sound Format: AAC Stereo

Subtitles: English (hardcoded)

Short Synopsis: This short documentary about hereditary artist and flâneur Bhaskar Chitrakar, explores his painting style that reimagines a centuries-old, mixed-media tradition of religious idol representation at Kolkata's Kalighat temple.

Link to Media Assets: <http://tinyurl.com/PKM-PressKit>



DIRECTORS' BIO NARRATIVES

Matthew Raj Webb (he/him) is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Anthropology at New York University (Program in Culture & Media).

Ihaab Syed (she/her) is a public interest lawyer and labor organizer.

Rohan Sengupta (he/him) is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Anthropology at New York University.



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