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Sajan Mani's act of history making


Avantika Bhuyan | 4 min read | 11 Dec 2024, 11:00 AM IST



Artist Sajan Mani opened the exhibition with a performance at the gallery. Images: courtesy the artist/ Shrine Empire

SUMMARY

The artist continues to create alternative ways of documenting narratives around marginalised communities

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At the Shrine Empire, New Delhi, a scarlet- New comes into sight. It serves as a backdrop to six drawings by artist Sajan Mani. Though small in scale, the layering of visuals, colours and text

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of marginalised and oppressed people.

Part of Mani's first major solo in India, the *Multiple Legs of a Historically Wing-Chopped Bird* series features drawn forms and video sequences. The show carries forth the intersectional artist's ongoing effort to create new forms of history making, and bring the personal and the political together. "I made a conscious effort to bring certain elements from Eickstedt's photos to the foreground. It was a deliberate act for me. The lives of indigenous people have long been buried in these archives," says the artist, who lives and works between Berlin and Kochi. "The post-colonial approach focuses on so-called Brahmanic history, royalty and related clothes and ornaments, but never on the people who made these and suffered through the social systems," he adds.

In the exhibition note, art historian and commentator Cleo Roberts-Komireddi refers to this aspect of Mani's practice—of opening up and creating new routes through Kerala's past. "He does history in a full-bodied way that, drawing on his ancestral memories along with their materials, mythologies and manuscripts, unsettles conventional modes of knowing those that came before," she writes.

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