



M.V. Dhurandhar: The Artist as Chronicler, 1867 - 1944

19 August 2018 – 1 October 2018

Curated by Himanshu Kadam and Tasneem Mehta

Timings: 10:00 am - 5.30 pm. Closed on Wednesdays.

Venue: Special Project Space, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum, Veer Mata Jijabai Bhosale Udyan (Rani Baug), 91/A, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Road, Byculla East, Mumbai 400027



Illustration of a woman from Pathare Prabhu community, from the 'Women of India' series, published in 1920. Illustrated by M.V. Dhurandhar

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City presents 'M.V. Dhurandhar: The Artist as Chronicler, 1867 – 1944', curated by Himanshu Kadam and Tasneem Mehta.



About the Exhibition

Mahadev Vishwanath Dhurandhar (1867 - 1944) was witness to the accelerated change that was taking place in colonial India. His sharp observational skills and deep-rooted cultural sensibilities led to the creation of a humanist and humorous documentation of the era. His works are a unique depiction of life in India, defined by an indigenous perspective with a visual vocabulary that is unique and captures the authenticity of the material and style.

Dhurandhar was trained at Sir J.J. School of Art in Bombay and eventually became headmaster. His proficiency in European naturalism won him numerous awards. Like most artists of the time, he attempted to negotiate his way through colonial aesthetic standards and pry out new expressive methods (Sawant, 104). He is now known for his ability to represent timeless divinities within a “historicizing, naturalist still frame” and his “re-indigenized Indian naturalism” in response to Western ideals (Jain, 145). Renowned art historian Partha Mitter points out that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the figure of the artist as a romantic outsider was an established convention in the modernist imagination (Mitter, 86). Dhurandhar's practice breaks away from this notion. His works, often read as testaments of the time, remain faithful to the academic realist style. This exhibition attempts to explore a range of practices, themes and ideas touched upon by Dhurandhar in the illustrious life of this most experimental artist.

Unlike his contemporaries, Dhurandhar's illustrations reflect a penetrating world view. His works were not merely documentary in nature but poised as theatrical realism. Mumbai (formerly Bombay) had a flourishing Marathi and Parsi theatre industry as well as studio photography in the early 20th century. Dhurandhar had close associations with Balgandharva, one of the renowned theatre performers who often visited Dhurandhar's studio. (Dhurandhar, 43). The influence of theatre is evident in the striking poses and emotive faces of the figures in this series. It is this very lifelike quality of his paintings that make these illustrations more than mere scientific studies.

The exhibition tries to offer glimpses of Dhurandhar as a chronicler of the changing times in the bustling metropolis as well as his tenacious dedication to traditions, morals and most importantly, his art. In his biography *Kalamandiratil ekkechalis varshe* (41 years at Sir J.J.School of Art) while addressing young artists he says...

“To achieve success in this field should maintain purity of character and they should practice their art with a sense of reverence; this alone will raise their art to new heights”.

Dhurandhar became a master of academic realism style but in his personal life, he was deeply traditional. He remained true to his practice and revered his alma mater as a 'Temple', which reflects his personality as a modernist paradox!



Bibliography:

- Ambika Dhurandhar, *Mazi Smaranchitray*, 43.
Mahadev Vishwanath Dhurandhar, *Kalamandiratil ekkechalis varshe*.
Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism*, 86.
Kajri Jain, *Gods in the Bazaar: The Economies of Indian Calendar Art*, 145.
Shukla Sawant, *unpublished PhD thesis*, 104.

About the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum

The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum opened to the public in 1857 and is Mumbai's oldest museum. It is the erstwhile Victoria and Albert Museum, Bombay, which showcases the city's art and culture through a rare collection of fine and decorative arts that highlight early Modern Art practices as well as the craftsmanship of various communities of the Bombay Presidency.

The Museum was in a derelict condition and underwent a comprehensive five-year restoration by INTACH supported by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation. The project won UNESCO's international Award of Excellence for cultural conservation in 2005. The Museum re-opened in 2008 with an extensive exhibition programme and is committed to promoting contemporary art and culture.

The Museum hosts an extensive exhibitions programme which explores the importance of the collection and includes a strong focus on contemporary art and culture. The Museum has partnered with several international institutions to showcase artists and exhibitions including the Victoria and Albert Museum, British Library, Solomon R Guggenheim Museum and Museum of Modern Art in an effort to facilitate international cultural exchange.

The Museum's education and outreach programme aims to build and diversify the Museum's audiences. On offer is a rich selection of programmes including film, music and courses and lectures on history of art focused on providing stimulating, participatory experiences that respond to different age, interest and language groups, and recognize a diversity of backgrounds. These experiences are aimed at encouraging critical engagement with Mumbai's history, art and cultural developments.

For more information on Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum, please visit:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BDLMuseum

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BDLMuseum>

Website: www.bdlmuseum.org

E-mail: enquiry@bdlmuseum.org

Telephone: +91 22 23731234



For Listings

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Exhibition Venue:

Special Project Space

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91A Rani Baug, Veer Mata Jijabai Bhonsle Udyan
Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marg,
Byculla East, Mumbai 400027

Timings:

10:00 am to 6:00 pm | last entry 5:30 pm
Closed on Wednesdays and certain public holidays

For press enquiries, please contact

Ruta Waghmare | rwaghmare@bdlmuseum.org | +91 22 23731234